

## Week Three, Class One

Monday, February 3

### Quote of the Day

**“Each reader is gloriously different from every other reader, and each is also changing.”**

— Dalton Trumbo, introduction to *Johnny Got His Gun*

### Lesson

Our next few classes will focus on the responsibility we have as professional communicators, with an eye toward prepping you for your first written assignment.

To start, I want to introduce you to Jameson Meyer.

I don't actually know Jameson. I first “met” him in 2017 when my teenage son told me about him.

Jameson had the misfortune of being turned into a meme. Life was already tough enough for Jameson, who has a rare genetic disorder called Pfeiffer Syndrome. In an attempt to raise awareness about the disorder Jameson's mother was documenting his story on a blog, “Jameson's Journey.” Someone stole Jameson's photo from the blog and turned it into a meme that made fun of his disorder by comparing him to a pug. The meme made the rounds on the internet, where millions of people had the chance to laugh at it. Like most memes, people saw it, laughed, and moved on to the next meme.

I have chosen not to share the meme here, but I will share a meme Jameson's mother created in response:



The original meme has been around since 2016 or so, but I hadn't seen it before my son had mentioned it. He also told me about a story *The Washington Post* ran about the meme and Jameson's mom's reaction. As part of today's assignment, I want to share with you the *Post* story, which you can find here:

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2016/02/08/a-moms-fierce-response-to-pug-meme-mocking-her-4-year-olds-rare-genetic-disorder/?utm\\_term=.8bee760c90fe](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2016/02/08/a-moms-fierce-response-to-pug-meme-mocking-her-4-year-olds-rare-genetic-disorder/?utm_term=.8bee760c90fe)

(If the hypertext link doesn't work, copy it and paste it into the navigation bar of your browser.)

I would also like to share the blog post Jameson's mom initially wrote in response to the meme:

<http://www.bornahero.org/social-issues/stories/jamesons-journey/>

There are a couple issues at play here that you, as writers, should be conscious of. **First**, there are intellectual property rights. Someone stole the photo of Jameson from the internet. That probably seems like it's no big deal: "People use images from

the internet all the time,” right? However, as people who someday hope to make their living creating intellectual property of one sort or another, you should start being *very* concerned about intellectual property issues—and, as a consumer, you should be sure you’re respecting them. You wouldn’t want someone stealing your car, so why would you want someone stealing your intellectual property? One seems more tangible than the other, but both have real value.

**Second**, we can learn a little something here about diversity—specifically an awareness about people with disabilities. What do you think life is like for Jameson? For his family?

**Most importantly**, there’s the issue of basic human decency. If Jameson were sitting with you in your apartment, would you make fun of him to his face? So why would it be okay for people to have a laugh at his expense behind his back? How often have you laughed at a meme without thinking there might be a real person with a real story and real feelings behind that image? There’s a lesson here for those of us who not only consume media but also create it.

These questions are all going to tie into your first assignment, which will dovetail from our work today and on Thursday. You’ll find details about that assignment at the end of Thursday’s lesson sheet.

## **Journal**

For your journal, what is your reaction to all of this? (200 words min.)