

## Quiz A: RI.3.5

Read the passage. Then answer the question.

### Survival of the Fittest Meme

- 1 Every day, people post new pictures and videos to the Web. Occasionally, one of these ideas will get reposted over and over through Facebook, Myspace, and Twitter. People will also recreate this posting in different, sometimes funny ways. When this happens, these pictures and videos become more than just media, they become internet memes. But how does this happen? How does a simple video or photo explode into a meme? British biologist and author Richard Dawkins, known for his work on cultural behaviors, has an idea. In his 1976 book, *The Selfish Gene*, he declared that memes are much like genes in that they are “ruthless” and competitive survivors. In other words, memes and human genes survive because they are the fittest.
- 2 The word meme comes from the Greek word *mimeme*. This means to copy. Dawkins explains that memes travel from person to person through imitation. If you are in the mall and you see a person doing an interesting dance, you may want to try it, too. If you do the same dance later with your friends, this would be like sharing a meme through imitation.
- 3 Throughout history, memes were found in popular stories. They are akin to the folktales that our parents’ parents passed down. Like the meme, the more popular the tale, the more it would stick in listeners’ minds. And the longer it would continue to be spread. However, tales lacked today’s technology. It took a long time to spread to a lot of people.
- 4 The meme is an example of cultural change. Modern memes include funny photos with short, clever captions. These types of memes spread quickly with the birth of Web sites like Facebook. Each image represents how a picture is worth a thousand words.
- 5 Memes can “go viral” in a very short time. This means they spread quickly on the Internet. One of the most popular memes is “grumpy cat.” This series features a cat with an angry expression. On each image, there is a simple caption. One of these captions is “You can’t go wrong with cute cuddly animals.” When people paste each meme into an e-mail, they share it with others. It is known all over the Internet. Sometimes, it even appears on television and in magazines. Changes in the cat’s poses and the captions keep the meme alive. This is how memes become popular. Internet memes go through a four-step cycle:
  1. A person creates or finds a photo (or graphic organizer). If the meme is referred to as a virus, we can think of this person as the meme’s host.
  2. The host remembers the photo or organizer.
  3. The host adds a short message to the photo or organizer. This message can be an inside joke, popular music lyrics, or a catch phrase. For example, it may have a caption.
  4. The host sends the meme to at least one person. The receiving person now becomes the host in Stage 1, and the cycle repeats.

