

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Public Safety & Memes

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. Over the past century, the US government has used different media platforms and formats to communicate with the American people. From 1933 to 1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered a series of radio broadcasts known as the fireside chats. Through these broadcasts, Roosevelt was able to reach millions of Americans as he spoke about the Great Depression, New Deal initiatives and World War II. His calm manner on the radio inspired public confidence and boosted his approval ratings. These fireside chats were a revolutionary use of a new form of media. Future presidents would go on to make use of other new technologies, including television and social media, to address Americans in a more informal way.

Now, some government entities are taking a new approach to communication: memes. The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is one example. This agency's mission is to keep Americans safe when they use consumer products. On Twitter and Instagram, the agency is now posting memes to educate people about the hazards of common items. The dark humor definitely captures our attention!

2. The CPSC is on the smaller side for a government agency, with just 500 employees and an annual budget of around \$120 million. But their memes have garnered them more than 60,000 followers between Twitter and Instagram. Regulations prevent the agency from using the copyrighted images involved in most recognizable memes. However, the CPSC makes do with stock images and basic Photoshop. Many of the memes feature recurring characters, such as Barks McWoofins, a dog who rides a smoke detector while talking about the dangers of fire and carbon monoxide poisoning.

Responses to government memes have been mixed. Some say memes like the CPSC's can help deliver boring information in a fun and interesting way. Memes may be a government agency's best shot at engaging people in an era of information overload. Others say memes may make information more difficult to understand or undermine the seriousness of the message.

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