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Appalachian Englishes in the Twenty-First Century Educational Materials

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Chapter 8

Redneck Memes as an Appalachian Reclamation of Vernacular Authority, Language, and Identity Jordan Lovejoy

Study Questions:

1. Before you read this chapter, what did folklore mean to you? What does folklore mean to you now?
2. Appalachians are often stigmatized because of stereotypes that homogenize the Appalachian experience into a single story, and often both folklore and dialect features are employed to further cement the stigma. What other groups do you notice are treated in similar ways?
3. How are various groups reclaiming representative power and diversifying their stories through folklore and language?
4. What folk groups are you part of, and how are dialect features used to identify or differentiate group membership?

Project Ideas:

1. What digital folk groups are you in, and what cultural logic do you hold? Using the [ethnography of communication](#), observe and gather some memes from your own digital groups (like a group chat, a subreddit, or a social media group). What kind of memes are commonly shared in your groups? What language features are used in the memes, and how are they used? Do you see any patterns emerging across the memes? What about these memes could be considered traditional, and what about these memes could be considered dynamic?
2. What is your favorite meme format (like Surprised Pikachu, Tired SpongeBob, Kylo Ren's "More, More!", or the always classic Doge—and its more recent Swolo Doge), and how would you describe it? Visit a digital archive site like Know Your Meme ([knowyourmeme.com](#)) or Imgur ([imgur.com](#)), and browse the variations of that format. Choose some of those variations to analyze. How is language being used across this meme format? How are creators using the combination of words and images to send a message, and what are some common messages being conveyed through this meme? Are there conflicting messages in this meme format (like Almost Politically Correct Redneck)?
3. What are some common vernacular features of your own dialect, and how are those features used or conveyed in a digital environment or through a digital medium like a meme? Using the format of your favorite meme(s), visit sites like [imgflip.com/memegenerator](#), [imgur.com/memegen](#), or <https://spark.adobe.com/make/meme-maker/> to create your own memes that incorporate some of your dialect features. For example, in this chapter you read about the use of alveolar *-ing* and demonstrative *them* in a Dale Earnhardt meme ("We're seizin' them means!") where the alveolar *-ing* is marked with an apostrophe to note the intentional absence of the *g* and to convey the dialect feature in writing. How does your meme work similarly to express your dialect? Use your meme(s) to explore how dialect features like the *pin/pen* merger, the *cot/caught* merger, coronal stop deletion, or others could be expressed through a digital medium.