mystery science

Grades K-5
Mini-Lesson + Activity: “How were emojis created?”

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

MINI-LESSON VIDEO 1

Hi, it's Doug! So my friend has these pillows—these smiley face things that people send each other on their smartphones—you might know they're called emojis. Well, someone named Pedro has a question about emojis. Let's give him a call.

[Video Call]

- Hi, Doug!

- Hi, Pedro!

- I have a question for you. How were emojis created?

- That's a great question.

You might have seen emojis before—you know, these little smiley faces people use on phones? And they're not always smiling like some of them show silly faces. And some are like a hand, giving a thumbs up. Some are even animals, almost anything you can think of. But Pedro asked such an interesting question. His question was, "Who created emojis?" And that's the thing. Emojis were created? You might not have thought about that before, but just like a lot of things in our lives, emojis didn't always exist. They weren't always a thing. Someone had to create them. So who created them and why? Well, it turns out emojis were invented back in the late 1990s when computers looked more like this, and your parents were probably kids then. Emojis

were invented by this person, a man named Shigetaka Kurita. Shigetaka is from the country of Japan. In fact, the word emoji comes from Japanese. In Japanese, emoji means something like picture-word. Now, as an inventor, the reason Shigetaka Kurita came up with the idea of emojis is that he was trying to solve a problem. Huh, now what do you think it was? What problem do you think emojis solve?

MINI-LESSON VIDEO 2

Well, imagine if there were no emojis and a person went to send their friend a message. For example, imagine someone asks their friend, "Want to work on our project after school today?" And then, the friend responds like this: "Sure." But wait, what does she mean, sure? I guess that means she wants to work on a project. Think about it though, does she mean, sure! Like she's excited about it? Or, sure, like eh, she's not really wanting to do this. Typing or writing a message to someone, it might not be clear how that person feels. Compare that to when someone is talking to you in person. Like, you can tell here, this person is excited or happy. You can usually see and hear how excited someone is. But when you write or type something, you can't hear someone's voice and you can't see their face, so Shigetaka Kurita invented emojis to solve this problem. Emojis help people share how they're feeling when writing or typing. Another name for that is what we call tone. Tone isn't what you're saying, but how you're saying it. When you're speaking you give tone to your words by doing things like changing your voice and your facial expressions. You do things like smiling to show you're happy about something. Or maybe doing this when you're nervous about something. Or frowning like this when you're mad. But when you're writing or typing, the tone can get lost. When someone reads what you wrote, they might hear your words in their head with a totally different tone than what you meant. Emojis help solve this problem. They can show how you're feeling. Like if you write sure and you

include a smiley face emoji when you send it, then someone will know that you mean you're excited. And there are emojis for just about any feeling you have. Like an emoji for when you feel shy. An emoji for when you feel angry. There's even an emoji for those times that you're laughing so hard that you cry. And emojis have become really popular. When they were first invented there were only 200 emojis, all of them, really simple emojis in black and white. But now there are over 1,000 emojis, colorful and detailed, covering all kinds of different feelings. So, in summary, emojis didn't always exist. They were invented by someone, an inventor who wanted to solve the problem of sharing how we're feeling over text. Now there are over 1,000 emojis used by people all over the world. That's all for this week's question. Thanks, Pedro, for asking it. Now, after this video is done playing, my friends and I here at Mystery Science have created a special activity where you'll learn how to use science to fool someone into liking your artwork. You can do this in a group or all by yourself, I hope you'll try it. Have fun and stay curious!

ACTIVITY INTRODUCTION VIDEO

In today's activity, you're going to learn how you can use science to trick people into liking pictures that you draw. You're going to start off by looking at pictures two at a time and picking the one that you like the most. We're not going to show you the pictures until you get started though because we want to see if you notice something very interesting about those pictures. You'll do this experiment by yourself first and then you'll create a new experiment that you'll do with a friend or family member. We'll show you how to get started, step by step.

ACTIVITY STEP 1

Get your supplies. You'll need a paper and pencil. The paper can be blank or have lines. Either one will work. You won't need them right away so you can set the paper and pencil off to the side for now. Tap the arrow when you're ready to start.

ACTIVITY STEP 2

These are pictures of real eggs, cooking in real pans. Do you like one of the pictures more than the other? Remember your choice, then tap the arrow to move on to the next pictures. We'll look at a few more, and then tell you which ones we chose.

ACTIVITY STEP 3

These are the fronts of real cars that real people can drive. Do you like one of the pictures more than the other? Remember your choice, then move on to the next pictures.

ACTIVITY STEP 4

These are pictures of real washing machines. Do you like one of the pictures more than the other? Remember your choice, then move on to the next pictures.

ACTIVITY STEP 5

Alright, last ones. These are pictures of real cups. Do you like one of the pictures more than the other? Remember your choice.

ACTIVITY STEP 6

Let's look back at all of the pictures. Do you remember which ones you liked the most? Tap the arrow to see which ones we chose.

ACTIVITY STEP 7

When we studied the pictures, these were our favorites. Have you noticed anything that they all have in common yet? Because we noticed that they all sort of look like faces. The first two look like happy smiley faces. The next one looks like a funny face with its tongue hanging out, and the last one looks like it's falling asleep. It turns out that many, many people see faces in things all around them just like in these pictures. Scientists thought that this was so interesting they just had to study it. Here's one way that they did it.

ACTIVITY STEP 8

Scientists made pairs of pictures just like what you're seeing right now. They both have the same outline, and they both have three squares in the middle. Which picture do you like looking at more? Tap the arrow when you've made your choice.

ACTIVITY STEP 9

When scientists have shown images like this to people, it turns out that most people like looking at the one that looks like a face, even though it only *barely* looks like a face. Is it the one that you chose?

ACTIVITY STEP 10

This is going to sound like a silly thing to do, but scientists were curious if even babies liked to look at things that look like faces. So they studied that too. They showed pictures just like the ones from before to very young babies. I bet you can guess which picture the babies were more likely to look at. It was the one that sort of looks like a face. It's something so funny that so many people have in common. We love looking at things that look like faces. And now that you know this, you can sneak faces into your drawings to see if you can trick people into liking them even more than they already do. If you're ready to be a scientist and study this, tap the arrow to get started.

ACTIVITY STEP 11

Get your paper and pencil that you set off to the side earlier. When you're ready, tap the arrow to get started.

ACTIVITY STEP 12

Fold your paper in half like this, and then open it up nice and flat.

ACTIVITY STEP 13

Your paper is split into two parts now. Draw a circle on one side in the shape of a face. And then another circle on the other. They should both be about this big. Try and make them the same size and the same shape, but it's okay if they aren't perfect.

ACTIVITY STEP 14

We'll start with this one. Draw three squares in a line just like we saw before. It's okay if they aren't perfect.

ACTIVITY STEP 15

For this one, you're going to draw three squares as well, but this time you're going to put them where eyes and a mouth would go, just like a face, then draw a line under both faces.

ACTIVITY STEP 16

For our next drawing, draw this chocolate chip cookie. Do you see how the chocolate chips sort of look like eyes and a mouth? Make your own drawing of it on this side of the page. Make it about the same size as what we already drew, and make sure the chocolate chips sort of look like eyes and a mouth.

ACTIVITY STEP 17

Now on this side, draw the same cookie, the same size and shape, but add new chocolate chips that don't look like eyes and don't look like a mouth. Be creative in how you do it.

ACTIVITY STEP 18

Now, draw a line under your cookies.

ACTIVITY STEP 19

On this side of your paper, draw this house. Do you see how the windows look like eyes and the big open area underneath looks like a great big mouth? Make your own drawing of it on this side of the page.

ACTIVITY STEP 20

Now on this side, draw the same house, the same size and shape as the one you just did, but add new windows and doors that don't look like eyes or a mouth. Be creative in how you do it.

ACTIVITY STEP 21

Now is your opportunity to be creative. Think of other objects that you might be able to draw on the backside of your paper. Make one drawing of that object, so it sort of looks like it has eyes and a mouth, and one that doesn't. When you're done, tap the arrow on the right.

ACTIVITY STEP 22

Now, take your page to a friend or family member. Ask them to choose their favorite drawing from each pair. It's okay if they don't see the faces. This is just your first try. Teach them what you learned, and why you made the drawings that you did, and keep practicing ways to sneak faces into all of your drawings. You have a good chance of tricking people into liking your drawings, even more than they probably already do. Have fun and stay curious!