LOL

LOL. I text it, I write it, I even say it... But what does LOL really mean? Sure, it stands for laughing out loud, but most of the time when I say LOL, I am far from laughter. I say LOL when my teacher announces yet another homework assignment to add to my already impossibly huge pile of work. I say LOL when my friend says something ridiculously incorrect, mildly depressing, or even something that qualifies as both incorrect and depressing, like “Piper you are good at math!” or “Piper, how do you not have a boyfriend? You’re so great!” The more I think about LOL, the less I feel like laughing...

The evolution of LOL has been lengthy, many derivatives such as ROTFL, (rolling on the floor laughing), and IMAO, (laughing my a** off), have grown from the three simple letters. LOL has become a verb, a noun, and an adverb. Yet, more importantly, LOL has become the catch-all expression to show just how little one cares. Urban Dictionary says LOL “should be redefined as ‘Lack of laughter.’” In modern culture, there is a certain cynicism, a view of the world which encourages us not to get too excited. When we squeal with excitement over a band or our favorite book, we are branded as silly, or nerdy. Enthusiasm equates in the eyes of society with the behavior of preteen girls-- it is not highly valued. LOL is our attempt to dampen foolish eagerness.

On the entertainment website, BuzzFeed, the current meaning of LOL is defined as “feeling nothing, wanting the sentence/conversation to be over but lacking the wherewithal to end it directly and with purpose” or alternately “I want to laugh, really laugh, but do not
remember how...” Have we as a culture forgotten how to laugh? I notice myself judging others for displays of needless emotion. I sometimes scowl at people who loudly shriek over boy bands, or run up and down the school hallways in excitement. It is difficult for me to get pumped up about things... or maybe I’m just afraid to.

To our parents, maybe, LOL stills means laughing out loud. But to me and many of my peers, it has come to stand for something else altogether. It has come to represent our disillusionment, our guarded state in an age where everything is up for scrutiny, and ‘hating’ on things is a favorite pastime. It is safer simply not to care. LOL is a response to this projected societal apathy. It is a shield against the strength of real laughter and real emotion.

When I make a mistake I am too lazy to fix, or lose my retainer for the thousandth time, instead of getting upset, I respond with LOL. No, I’m not laughing... “Piper, did you do the Spanish homework?” LOL. “Piper, are you going to prom?” LOL. “Piper, that curb you hit is going to cost 400 dollars in car repair!” LOL... maybe I should learn to use reverse.

Sometimes, I wonder what it is like to actually mean LOL, not LOL I want to die, or LOL I hate everything, but LOL I am actually physically laughing. I wonder what it is like to try, to be filled with excitement, to actually care. Sometimes, I consider the effort. Then the moment passes, and I LOL.