

What your relatives think of your major

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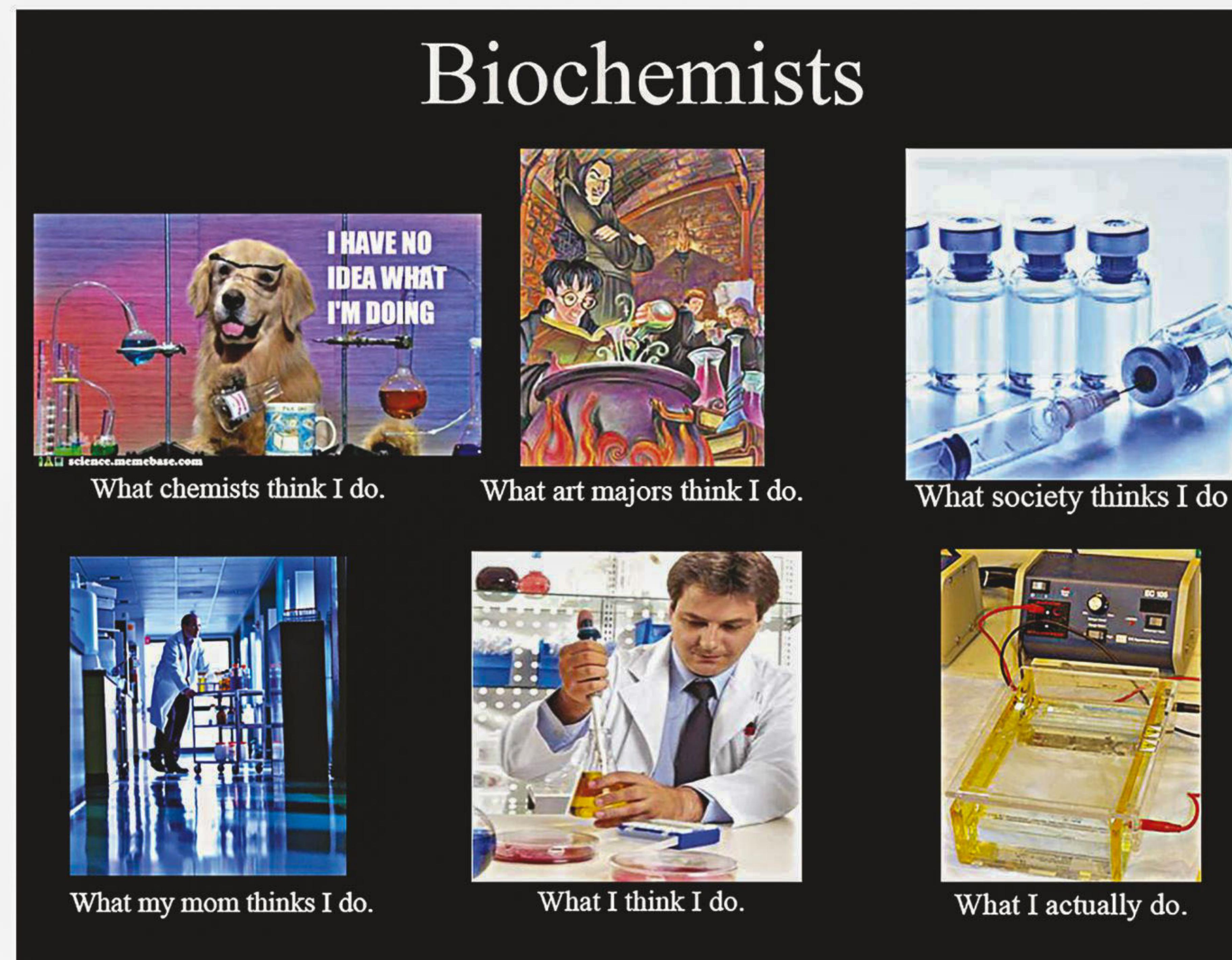
One of the best parts of the Eid holidays is getting to see your loved ones. For all the people that go back to their ancestral homes, this means seeing relatives you haven't seen for a long time. As much as you love them, you can't help but get annoyed as they ask you the same things every time: "How old are you?", "What major are you in?", "Is the planet heading toward irreversible climate change?"

The second question is the most easily answered of the three, especially given how finicky we Bangladeshis are about our official age not matching our actual age. Oftentimes, however, we don't think about how there is a communication gap between our answer to the question and what relatives hear. The following are some of the most confusing interpretations relatives have of your major in university.

COMPUTER SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING: As impressive as your workload and skillsets might be, your relatives will place you in one of two extremes. Maybe they'll think you're the brown Mark Zuckerberg, and spam you with requests to hack into Facebook and email accounts they've forgotten the password for. Sometimes they might even tell you their billion-taka idea for an app, which is almost always identical to an existing app, and expect you to come up with a working prototype for them overnight.

On the other end of the spectrum, some of your relatives will act like people in your major do nothing too important. They've successfully installed an application on the computer once, so how hard could this *computer engineering* really be? Really, the only common ground between these groups of people is that they will both ask you to fix their computer. Free of charge, of course, because how could one ask for money from their own family?

LIBERAL ARTS: I'm sorry, but none of your relatives take you seriously. Liberal arts are scary to Bangladeshi families, especially since most of them don't understand it. They're also very likely to belittle



you based on this, so that should explain the condescending attitude they have towards you almost 24/7. If you're a history major, get ready to hear many iterations of "What is there to study about history? We lived through it, just pay us your university tuition and I'll tell you all about it."

Anthropology majors don't really bear the stigma of liberal arts. Mostly because the moment your relatives hear *anthropology* they think of *archaeology* and their mind goes to Indiana Jones and Jurassic Park. Once you see the excitement on their faces, you don't have the heart to correct

them and so they go on believing that you explore tombs and excavate dinosaur remains.

English majors fly under the radar, mostly, until it's time to come up with a caption for the group photos you'll take with your cousins. At least you don't get mistaken for Indiana Jones, so I guess you can call it a win.

MEDICAL: Everyone loves doctors, and they love would-be doctors even more. You are the apple of everyone's eye, and you can do no wrong because you spend all day studying. Your relatives might even be obliged to give you more *salami* because "what a good child you are". One problem that comes with fame, however, is being asked to conduct full medical examinations of anyone feeling under the weather. In addition, you might have to fend off some extremely unsubtle marriage proposals from relatives who want to keep such studious children in the family.

BIOLOGY: "Oh, you mean you're studying to be a doctor?" No. "Then what's the point?" I ask myself that, too.

ARCHITECTURE/ART: If the liberal arts people thought they had it bad, they really wouldn't want to be in your shoes. Any sort of creative endeavor in Bangladesh is only supported until the sixth grade. After that you're just "wasting time instead of studying". Imagine their horror when you make that the focus of your study.

All the hard work you pour into your models and art is immediately forgotten

and you are assumed to be a hobo who wanders around all day doing nothing. God forbid if you have unconventional hairstyles, because now you're just walking into the stereotype. Besides telling you that you'll never get a real job doing that, and that you should have studied a real subject like engineering, they'll also mention how your art is ugly. Because of course, having never read up on art styles or been to a gallery means that they are the perfect person to critique your work. My only advice to you would be to smile and wave.

BUSINESS: Since the BBA is the most common undergraduate degree nowadays, you'll get a little more respect than the other majors. However, remember to go along with the expectations to be a banker/accountant. If you mention that you're studying marketing your relatives might be inclined to believe you spend your free time calling people about new internet and data plans from Urbanphone. Not far from the truth, if you've seen how business competitions have the contestants spamming shares of the same post to win. Still, you're going to make money when you graduate, and that's enough for your relatives to respect you. Even if your ultimate goal is to plant trees to save the environment. Keep fighting the good fight, kids.

Wasique Hasan came back to Bangladesh to eat mangoes and get heat-stroke, and he hasn't found any mangoes yet. Send him information that will lead to the acquisition of mangoes at fb.com/hasique.wasan

