



Cracked Smiling Face Emoji Proposal

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I. Identification

Sample Image	Proposed Unicode and CLDR name	Possible CLDR English keywords	Closest Unicode Emoji
	Cracked Smiling Face	mask, duality, hidden identity, reveal, transformation, fragile, drought, dry	

II. Images


















License

We certify that the images have appropriate licenses for use by the UTC.

III. Sort location

face-smiling





II. Selection factors — Inclusion

A. Compatibility

n/a

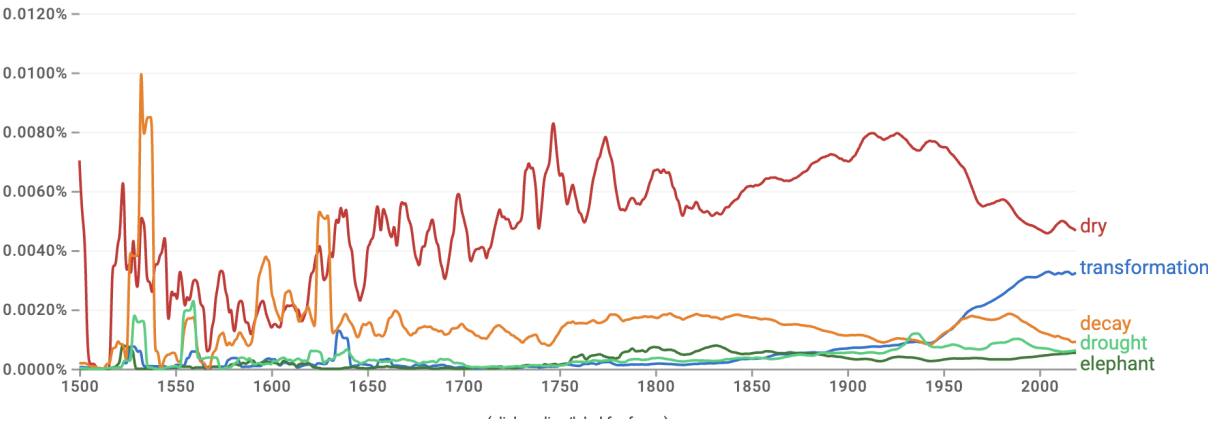
B. Expected use

1. Frequency

Given the broad representation of this concept and it's use in discussions of transformation, decay, dryness (literal and metaphorical), and performance the stats are far and above median.

Additional keywords are provided to contextualize “cracked” among other common and similar visual tropes.

Search term	Google Search	Google Video Search	Google Books
transformation	833,000,000	n/a	See chart below
dry	2,400,000,000		
reveal-face	955,000,000	n/a	
elephant	816,000,000	n/a	See chart below
cracked-face	809,000,000	n/a	
decay	125,000,000	n/a	
drought	80,000,0000	n/a	





2. Multiple usages

The "cracking" visual is a powerful and widespread metaphor across literature, art, and media, consistently used to represent a state of transition, fracture, or imminent change. It visually symbolizes a breakdown, often of an internal, stable state, making it a key expression of identity in crisis across a variety of art forms:

- **Internal Fracture** Psychological thrillers, dramas, expressing mental breakdown, trauma.
- **Imminent Change** Coming-of-age narratives, sci-fi/fantasy, expressing an emerging, new identity.
- **Loss of Control** General media, manga/anime, expressing intense anger, stress, or a failing facade.
- **Societal Decay** Gothic literature, social commentary films, expressing the collapse of institutions or moral order
- **Resilience/History** Art commentary, historical context, expressing the durability and weight of history.

The visual morpheme of "cracking" is most frequently employed to externalize an internal rupture—a breaking point in a person's psyche, facade, or established sense of self.

- Inner vs outer self
- Public persona vs private truth
- Good vs evil dualism
- Transformation and revelation
- Awakening and self-acceptance

There is one notable idiom that relates to a “cracked face”: **“cracking up”** denotes two things: (1) psychological breakdown or (2) laughter (the most popular emoji to date is used to indicate laughter).

3. Use in sequences

Here are a few examples of how a cracked face visual could be combined with other emoji to mean something new:

○ Emotional Resilience

- I survived 😊💣💣😬
- **Translation:** Used sarcastically or seriously to express that a person has been enduring an overwhelming amount of pressure and is just about to lose it.
- **Why it breaks new ground:** Shows something fragile (happiness) and then shows its near destruction, quantifying the stress as something capable of cracking but still holding strong.

○ The Mask of Perfection Fails

- I'm fine 😊✨💩😬
- **Translation:** My carefully crafted, glittering facade just cracked. I'm having a beautiful, internal meltdown.
- **Why it breaks new ground:** It moves beyond simple sadness or stress and specifically addresses the tension between public image and private reality (a common identity theme).

○ Temporary Repair

- I survived 😬💔😬
- **Translation:** The cracked face shows the damage, the Bandage shows the effort to mend, and the Exhaling Face signifies relief or a hard-won sigh.
- **Why it breaks new ground:** The combination expresses the process of mental health recovery and resilience, not just the injury itself.





4. Breaking new ground

While material (😬😬), cartoonification (😬😬😬), and contextual clues (😬😬😬😬😬) are commonly found amongst the existing smile emoji ([L2/24-250](#)) “cracked face” introduces a unique conflict in one expression. This mismatch may be unusual to the Unicode Standard but it is not an uncommon

condition. It operates as both a powerful visual and narrative device across art, media, manga, pop culture, and literature. (See *Examples in Section 3: Use in sequences as well as Section C: Image Distinctiveness*).

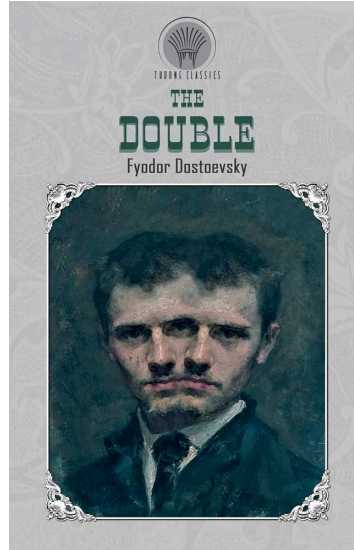
C. Image distinctiveness

A cracked face is visually unique from existing emoji and distinct from other similar “duality” imagery.

Literally Two Faces	
	
<p>Janus (Roman mythology): The god with two faces — one looking forward, one backward. Symbol of transitions, duality, beginnings/endings.</p>	<p>Two-Face (Harvey Dent) One face handsome, one disfigured: a visual metaphor for moral split.</p>
Face Peeling - already an emoji 🤢	
	
<p>Tokyo Ghoul: Kaneki’s transformation visually depicted by a mask and eye shift.</p>	<p>Orochimaru (Naruto) Orochimaru frequently sheds skin or peels his face off, like a snake. This grotesque “face peel” shows his inhumanity and rebirth</p>
Mirror Imagery	



Black Swan: Nina sees herself as both the white and black swan — reflected double.



The Double (Dostoevsky)

A character is haunted by their mirrored self — often one is “normal,” the other threatening or suppressed.

Cracks/shattering



Francis Bacon (painter):

Distorted faces that look like they’re cracking open — metaphors for psychological unraveling.



Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

Dual moral selves — physically and spiritually distinct.

D. Completeness

The proposed “Cracked Smiling Face” provides a significant advance in coverage to depict simultaneous, complex feelings by filling a significant gap in existing emoji expression; However, it does not “complete” a well define set.

III. Selection factors — Exclusion

F. Overly specific

It is a visual trope that is effective at communicating a remarkably broad range of concepts including transition, fracture, or imminent change. It visually symbolizes a breakdown, often of an internal, stable state, making it a key expression of identity in crisis and intense emotional vulnerability. It does so by not being overly specific. Literature is and pop culture is rich with references to cracking (*The Lady of Shalott*, 1832; Darth Vader in *Return of the Jedi*, 1983; *Clayface* in DC Comics, *The Cracked Looking-Glass*, 1932; etc)

While there may be concern that this emoji runs the risk of needing to add other expressions (beyond smiling) to a cracked motif there is no evidence to indicate those expressions are more common or on equal footing with a cracked-smiling-face. “Smiling through the pain” is much more common than masking happiness¹. Masking, or hiding true emotions, is a common behavior in social settings, often used to present a positive facade.

G. Open-ended

While there are many ways to denote transition, breakdowns, or change this particular way of visually representing these concepts is the most historically long-standing and universally recognized visual motif legible at emoji size.

To avoid association with popular contemporary memes which have many permutations (cowboy face revealing sad face, clown face, revealing sad face, happy face, revealing sad face) this emoji is deliberately designed in a manner that is not transient and can be traced back to [ancient](#) times.



¹ <https://www.embarkbh.com/blog/depression/smiling-depression/>

H. Already representable

While Section 4. *Breaking New Ground* goes into detail about how it is different from other existing emoji, it is also conceptually different from existing emoji such as 🤖 and 😊 or combining two existing emoji such as 😊😞.

🤖 represents performing arts or *D R A M A* but not *emotional or moral duality*. There is no reveal and thus represents a spectrum of emotion that we associate with performing arts.

😊 represents a lot of things including slightly smiling (cause: unknown), a restrained smile, and in some cases inauthenticity (can't trust a smiling face that doesn't have smiling eyes!) but it doesn't represent change, resilience, or repair.

The second example — simply pairing two existing emoji with different emotions — is effective at expressing conflicting feelings but not resilience in the face of struggle. Cracked-smiling-face is a verb, when one's identity is challenged

Take the examples listed in *Sequences*. Replace the proposed emoji with existing ones and they mostly fall short of capturing the intent of the message:

- **The Mask of Perfection Fails**

- I'm fine 😊 ✨ 🤖
- **Falls Short:** Existing face is too positive for situations where you suspect duplicity, irony, or withheld meaning.

- **Emotional Resilience**

- I am usually resilient but this has been a rough semester 😊 💥 💣
- **Falls Short:** Without the cracks it fails to fully convey the complex emotional state—masking distress with politeness.

- **Temporary Repair**

- I survived 😊 🩹 😞
- **Falls Short:** Existing face is too positive for situations where you suspect duplicity, irony, or withheld meaning.

I. Logos, brands, UI icons, signage, specific people, deities

There are no logos, brands, signage or otherwise among the proposed characters.

J. Transient

The cracking of one face to reveal another can be traced back to ancient times and has global relevance:

- **Ancient and classical Greece** - Actors swapped masks to convey emotions and identities)
- **Roman theater** - which used early metaphors for dual natures
- **Japanese noh and kabuki** - Exaggerated makeup or mask manipulation)

- **African, Oceanic, and Indigenous Ritual Masks** - Worn to channel spirits, removal marks the return to the human self, a sacred kind of reveal.
- **Commedia dell'arte (Italy)**: Characters defined by their masks which are used as a literal and narrative tool for shifting identity or revealing hidden intent.
- **Chinese Opera (Peking, Sichuan)**: “Face-changing” (变脸, *bian lian*) is the art of quickly switching painted masks, often signifying a sudden moral or emotional shift.

K. Faulty comparison

Justification for encoding the proposed emoji does not depend on analogy with other emoji that were encoded only for compatibility reasons.

L. Exact Images

An exact image is not required.