Twitter has a unique ability to quickly capture otherwise-fleeting thoughts. Frequently, Twitter users adopt Twitter as a platform to share insights, opinions and commentary. This project explored one such Twitter feed - WeRateDogs.

By themselves the tweets are an amusing commentary on pictures of dogs presumably submitted by their owners. The writer or writers of WeRateDogs provide a 140 character commentary on the context of the dog in the photo. For example a recent tweet had a photo of a dog sitting in the front seat of a car looking over its shoulder at the viewer, the caption read - “This is Woody. He would like you to know that this car doesn’t move an inch until you buckle pup. 13/10”.

By unpacking the above example we can learn a few things. We know for instance that there’s a picture, we know the dog’s name, Woody. We also see that there’s a score. Interestingly, most of the Tweets from WeRateDogs while unique contain attributes similar to those described.

To get an idea of certain characteristics or trends, regarding the dogs we as a society hare on Twitter we can use Twitter’s application programming interface (API). The API allows us to programmatically conduct an in-depth data exploration of those trends.

Using Python’s Tweepy library we get Twitter to give us our desired data. For example if we wanted to know the top 3 most common dog names, with a little data wrangling we can say the 3 most common names are Charlie, Oliver and Lucy. We can also see statistics to relating specifically to WeRateDogs, we know for instance that over time WeRateDogs has a grown in popularity. We can also tell that the month of May historically is pretty full of re-tweets.

Data exploration is something we all do regularly, whether casually comparing prices in our heads’ or rating a dog’s cuteness factor. Programmatic data exploration and visualization provides a more meaningful way to frame data, from the mundane to the important.