

# Text messaging turns 20

5<sup>th</sup> December, 2012



One of the information age's biggest successes has celebrated its 20th birthday. The very first, simple, text message was sent on December 3rd, 1992. It was sent by software engineer Neil Papworth to his boss at the British mobile phone operator Vodafone. It read simply, "Merry Christmas". Little did they know that their humble mode of communication would take the world by storm. SMS (Short Message Service) is today a multi-billion-dollar industry covering every corner of the globe. An estimated nine trillion text messages are sent globally each year. Everyone from presidents to schoolchildren to villagers in remote parts of developing countries relies on it to communicate.

SMS is now an integral part of daily life for most of us. It is the preferred method of communication between family members. One study showed that the average American teenager sends up to 60 texts a day. It has also spawned countless original and innovative business strategies from sending cash overseas to voting in online polls. However, SMS has also been blamed for a decline in language ability and an increase in traffic accidents. A new sub-language has spread worldwide as texters find shortcuts to write their messages as quickly as possible using the fewest possible characters. Texting shorthand such as LOL (laugh out loud) and OMG (oh my god) has even entered the Oxford English Dictionary.

Sources: CNN / The Guardian / Digital Trends

## Writing

Texting has come under attack from teachers who say it is harming children's writing skills. Identify the problems with texting and suggest some solutions.

## Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

*information age / birthday / software engineer / communication / mobile phone / rely / daily life / teenager / innovative / business strategies / shortcuts / shorthand / OMG*

## True / False

- The first text message was sent by the creator of the World Wide Web. T / F
- The first text message said "Merry Christmas". T / F
- The abbreviation "SMS" means "Super Messaging System". T / F
- Almost nine billion text messages are sent worldwide every year. T / F
- An average US teen supposedly sends around 60 text messages a day. T / F
- People blame SMS for a deterioration in writing standards in kids. T / F
- An abbreviated, shorthand language has been created by texters. T / F
- The texting acronym "LOL" is in the dictionary as "Lots of Love". T / F

## Synonym Match

- |             |                     |
|-------------|---------------------|
| 1. age      | a. fundamental      |
| 2. humble   | b. surveys          |
| 3. mode     | c. faraway          |
| 4. remote   | d. abroad           |
| 5. rely     | e. simple           |
| 6. integral | f. depend           |
| 7. spawned  | g. held responsible |
| 8. overseas | h. era              |
| 9. polls    | i. generated        |
| 10. blamed  | j. method           |

## Discussion – Student A

- In what ways is SMS better than e-mail, chat, Facebook, etc.?
- Are there any bad things about SMS?
- What's the most useful thing about SMS for you?
- Is sending 60 texts a day OK?
- What do you think of people who send messages that say, "I'm hungry"?
- Are you a fast texter? How can you get faster?
- Do you like the texting shortcuts and emoticons?
- What questions would you like to ask an SMS expert?

## Phrase Match

- |                                   |                                  |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. One of the information age's   | a. in language ability           |
| 2. Little did                     | b. on it to communicate          |
| 3. take the world                 | c. biggest successes             |
| 4. villagers in remote            | d. language has spread           |
| 5. relies                         | e. for most of us                |
| 6. an integral part of daily life | f. they know                     |
| 7. innovative                     | g. such as LOL                   |
| 8. blamed for a decline           | h. parts of developing countries |
| 9. A new sub-                     | i. business strategies           |
| 10. Texting shorthand             | j. by storm                      |

## Discussion – Student B

- How important is text messaging to you?
- What would life be like without SMS?
- Do you think SMS will change in the future?
- Talk about the first time you used SMS.
- Have you ever sent a text message by mistake?
- Do you think SMS is good value for money?
- What new things would you like to see with SMS?
- How has SMS changed the world?

## Spelling

- biggest susseeccs
- ltcaeebder its 20th birthday
- demo of communication
- a multi-billion-dollar dsnyiutr
- An dseatiem nine trillion text messages
- lereis on it to communicate
- an niltearg part of daily life
- the erdrfeepr method
- eonitavny business strategies
- online slop
- traffic tnsidccea
- the fewest possible acesathrcr

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. h	2. e	3. j	4. c	5. f
6. a	7. i	8. d	9. b	10. g

## Role Play

**Worried parent** - You are very worried about your 12-year-old. Her written language is terrible. She can't spell. You blame texting. She spends most of the day staring at her mobile phone waiting for messages. She gets over 100 a day!! Not good. You want a law on children and texting. Tell the others 3 reasons why.

**Daughter** - You are very worried about your mother. She gets so angry when you text. She shouts at you when you spell a word incorrectly. She doesn't understand the information age. Everyone texts. You want to teach her about SMS but she isn't interested. SMS is cool. Tell the others 3 reasons why.

**Sociologist** - Your research tells you SMS is leading to behavioural problems in kids. They are losing their social skills. Their view of the real world is changing – they think the real world is online. This is bad. Tell the others 3 reasons why. If things continue, people will lose their ability to speak.

**Mobile phone boss** - SMS is one of the most important technologies ever. Tell the others 3 reasons why. People who don't like it live in the past. SMS is now the real world. Language changes - it's now changing faster. That's life. People communicate more today than ever before. That's great.

## Speaking - Communication

What's the best way? Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- |                |                      |
|----------------|----------------------|
| • SMS          | • e-mail             |
| • face to face | • body language      |
| • telephone    | • Facebook / Twitter |
| • letter       | • other _____        |

### Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	F	d	F	e	T	f	T	g	T	h	F
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.