Tech World

TIME FOR KIDS

The Language of SOCIAL MEDIA



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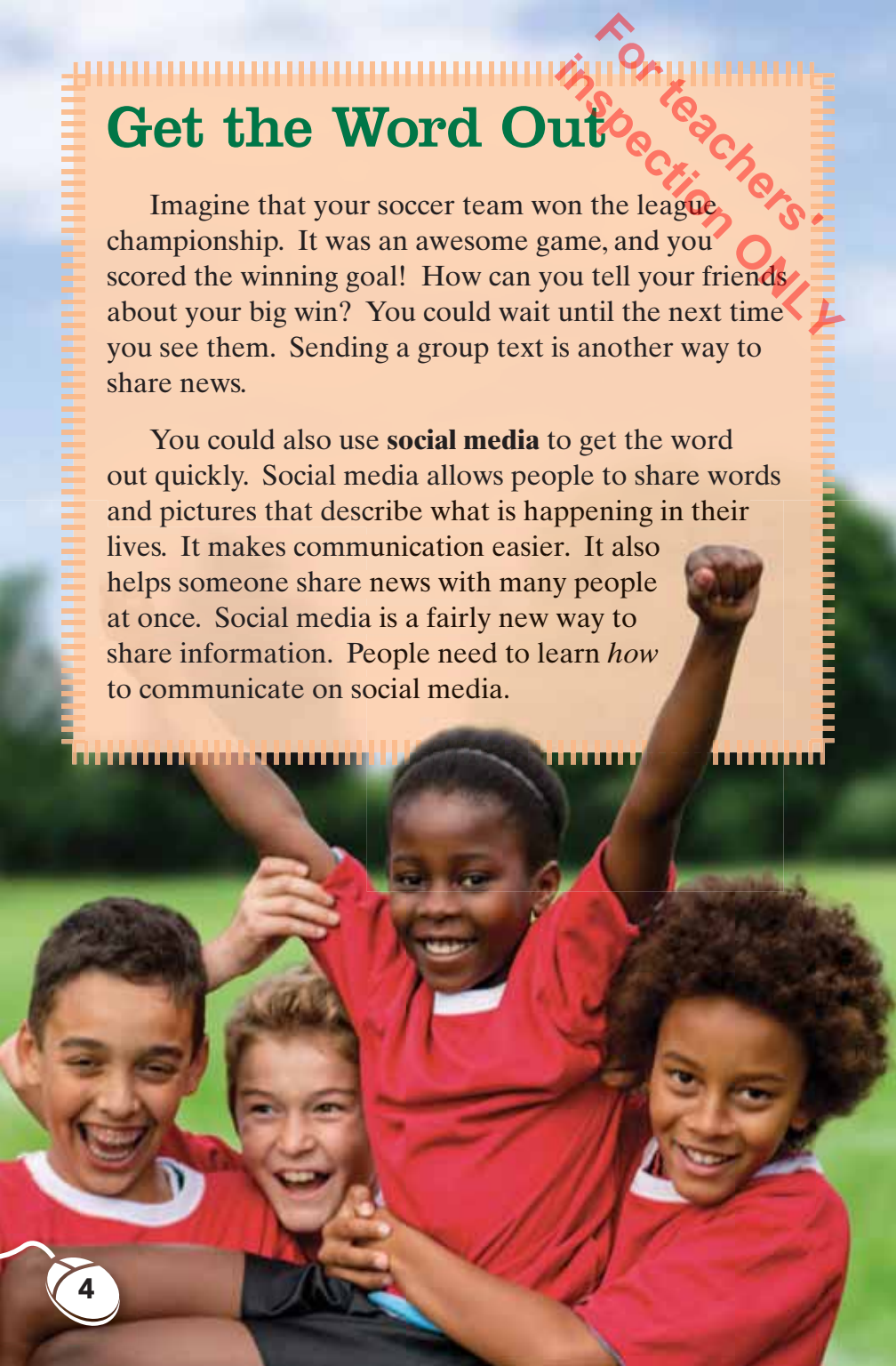


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Get the Word Out

Imagine that your soccer team won the league championship. It was an awesome game, and you scored the winning goal! How can you tell your friends about your big win? You could wait until the next time you see them. Sending a group text is another way to share news.

You could also use **social media** to get the word out quickly. Social media allows people to share words and pictures that describe what is happening in their lives. It makes communication easier. It also helps someone share news with many people at once. Social media is a fairly new way to share information. People need to learn *how* to communicate on social media.



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What Is It?

The term *social media* is used to describe types of electronic communication. It is the way people share information online. They can share their thoughts, photos, images, or videos by **posting** them for others to see.

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A New Kind of Language

Speech on social media is not the same as speech in person. It is not the same as writing a note or an email. Social media has its own unique "language." And it keeps growing because social media is so popular. People need to keep up with how to "talk" in this new way.

Social media users often make up words. They also give old words new meanings. **Abbreviated** words and **acronyms** are popular among users. Even pictures mean things on social media! It can be hard to keep up with all the changes.

Changing Definitions

How can a word's definition change? Think about the word *troll*. A troll used to be an ugly mythical creature that lived in a cave or under a bridge. Now, a troll means someone who shares ideas on social media to get strong reactions from others, usually in a way that is **hostile** or upsetting.





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Changing Language

This shift in language is not unique to social media. The words we use are always changing and **evolving**. Sometimes change happens so slowly that it's hard to notice; at other times, it seems to happen overnight! But why does language change? One reason is that it must meet the needs of the people who use it, and since people change over time, so does language.

Scientists have studied how those changes happen. One way is that inventions and technology often require new words. Social media is simply a new experience that comes with a new set of vocabulary.

Google It!

The Google™ **search engine** is so popular that people have started using its name as a verb—to *Google* something. Have you ever heard someone say, "I don't know, just Google it"? The term was used so often that it was added to the dictionary. That was not welcome news for Google (the company), since they ask that people never use it in that way!



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The Rise of New Languages

As civilizations grow, so do languages. New words and symbols express ideas in new ways. Here are some examples of new languages that have developed over time.



4300 BC
hieroglyphics



3000 BC
cuneiform language



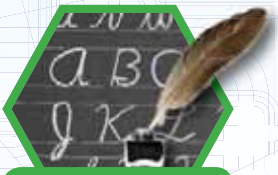
2650 BC
Chinese alphabet



730
Greek alphabet



900
Latin



1600
cursive alphabet



1900
binary code



present day
social media

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Reader's Guide

1. Why is it important to understand abbreviations on social media?
2. Why might someone add emoji or hashtags to their posts?
3. What are some examples of new words that have been created because of social media?
4. Have you ever felt that you did not understand the language used in social media? What happened?

