



Lesson Plan: #NoyesArtatHome

19th Century Writing

Activity: Pen & Ink

Activity based on letters on display in the Noyes Museum's *Estell Empire* Exhibition

For ages 12 & up

Experience with **cursive*** writing not necessary
Assistance from an adult would be helpful.

Overview:

Round Hand Script: This was the dominant **cursive*** writing style among 19th century writing "masters," whose models were engraved on metal. Letters sloped to the right, and thick lines were produced on the downstrokes using a flexible, straight-edged (not pointed) pen **nib** (tip). Thin lines were made by using the corner of the nib. Round hand included decorative swirls referred to as "command of hand."

Copperplate: This type of writing was made with a flexible, pointed metal pen. Copperplate script differs from round hand in the gradual swelling of the broad strokes on curved forms and the narrowness of the backstrokes of *b*, *e*, and *o*.

Definitions from Britannica.com: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/black-letter>

Project Description: This lesson provides a brief overview of handwriting in the 19th century and a hands-on writing activity. First, paint with a teabag to make "old" looking paper. To write, use a **quill**** pen with black ink or watered-down paint, or a marker. Try to read and copy the example of 19th century writing. Can you write your own name, or a whole letter to a friend?

Supplies:

8.5 x 11" piece of paper

A tea bag; preferably a darker tea such as black tea (Lipton, Red Rose)

A watercolor brush

Your choice of: a **quill**** pen and black ink, watered-down black paint with a fine-tipped brush, or a black marker (for example: Crayola – "broad line" or Sharpie – "fine point," the newer, the better)

***Cursive** writing is a style of writing in which all of the letters in a word are connected.

****Quill** pen: A pen made from a main wing or tail feather of a large bird by pointing and slitting the end of the shaft.



An account book from John Estell's general store
Circa 1836 – 1837

© Collection of Stockton University

Steps:

1. Take a look at **Image 1**, a picture of the address on the outside of a letter. Take a moment to read it. Can you read to whom it is addressed? The address reads: "Mr. D. E. Estell, Jr. Stevens Creek Jersey." In the bottom left corner it reads: "Mail."
2. Take a look at **Image 2**, a picture of a letter from Anna Smith to her sister Alice Smith, from December 2nd, 1849. Can you read the letter? It's probably very difficult!
3. Now, write your own 19th century letter! First, make a cup of tea. Have an adult boil water and steep the tea bag in a cup of hot water for about five minutes. Let the tea cool.
4. Dip your paintbrush in the tea "paint" and cover the entire piece of paper. Place paper towels or newspapers under your paper to absorb the excess moisture. To dry faster, place your paper in the sun. Once dry, flatten the paper with newspapers or magazines on top.
5. While your "old" paper is drying, try your hand at the practice worksheet in **Image 3**. Trace over the grey letters. When writing in **cursive**, the writer does not lift their pen. For each word, the letters are connected, usually at the bottom. Remember that this activity is just for fun! Your writing will not look perfect the first time. It takes lots of practice to achieve good penmanship!
6. Follow steps A through D on the practice worksheet in **Image 3**.
7. Finally, once your "old" paper is dry, use a **quill** pen and black ink, or a brush and watered down black paint, or a black marker to write in **cursive** on the "old" paper. Who will you write to?

Image 1: Outside of letter, addressed to "Mr. D.E. Estell, Jr. Stevens Creek Jersey"



Image 2: Letter from Anna Smith to her sister Alice Smith, December 2nd, 1849

December 2nd 1849

Allace, you good for nothing m
Dear Alice

While I have been looking for a good pen Dan Estell has ~~scribbled~~ scribbled the top of the letter all up; I sit down with pleasure this morning to write to you but I cannot think of any thing worth writing; but as I can think of nothing else I will give you a statement of our position. Beck is sitting by the fire reading about the Wood-picker Dan Estell is sitting by fire reading the News; Mother is cooking a pair of Duck for dinner.

Alice I want you to get 50 cents worth of very narrow velvet ribbon and send it by Mr Estell he is going to get Beck a new bonnet and you can put it in the bonnet box.

If you see Dan tell him that Mother thinks he had better come home and stay this winter. Enoch is going in Dano's New vessel. I expect he is in Phila now he left here about a week ago in the R. H. Estell

Al what a pity you went a way from home so soon as you would have been likely to had a beau as George Gill has been enquiring after you; he started to come

Image 3: Printable 19th Century Cursive Writing Practice Worksheet



A. Follow the small numbered arrows and trace over the capital letters.



B. Trace over the lowercase letters below.



C. Trace over the letters below that read the lastname "Estell."



D. Try writing your name below!



Learn more about penmanship! Here are some additional resources:

Lessons in Ornamental Penmanship, by P.Z. Bloser, 1948

<https://archive.org/details/BloserLessonsInOrnamentalPenmanship/page/n35/mode/2up>

Teaching of Handwriting: The Eighteenth Century, The Nineteenth Century, The Twentieth Century, Manuscript Writing and Other Systems

<https://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/2027/Handwriting-Teaching.html>

The Art of Writing, by John Jenkins, 1813

<https://archive.org/details/JenkinsArtOfWriting/mode/2up>

Spencerian Key to Practical Penmanship, by Henry Caleb Spencer & Platt Rogers, 1800 – 1864

<https://archive.org/details/cu31924029485467/page/n9/mode/2up>

Share pictures of your 19th century script writing and your artwork with us!

Post your pictures using the hashtag **#NoyesArtatHome**.

We are posting work by community artists on our Noyes Museum social media pages.

The Noyes Museum of Art of Stockton University · <http://www.noyesmuseum.org> · (609) 626-3420

The Noyes Arts Garage of Stockton University · www.artsgarageac.com · (609) 626-3805

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