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# Review

Pennsylvania  
Handwriting Analysis Forum  
September 19, 2015

## Stage Fright

What is it?

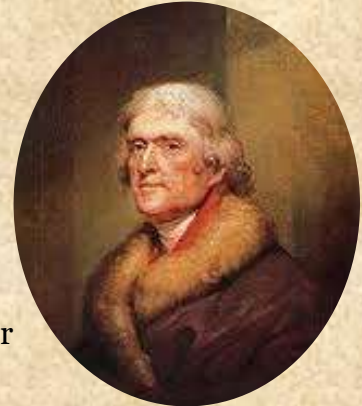
Is it curable?

Who gets it?  
*(You won't believe it.)*



W talked at length about the subject of **stage fright**. I was stirred by an article in the August 15, 2015, *New Yorker* about this common response to the stress of appearing in front of a group. In “I Can’t Go On!” Joan Acocella reviewed a few current books and other sources on this provocative topic. A survey of 815 college students asked them their three greatest fears. Heights? Flying? Financial problems? Maybe death? Number 1 was stage fright—speaking in front of a group.

What happens to us when it hits? The possible physical symptoms are familiar and many. Sweating, shaking, sprinting heart, dry mouth, dizziness, tense muscles, high voice—how many have you had? They stem from that “fight-or-flight” response Psychology 101 gave us. Originally we learned it from facing bears, or enemies with a club in hand. If trapped we grabbed a rock or our own club. Otherwise, we took off and ran



**Thomas Jefferson**

*He had it so bad that he gave only two speeches in public. Both were his dutiful inaugural addresses.*

like (your choice of simile here). Today we all must face a group, speaking, running a meeting, performing, or rousing a few homina-homina words on a special occasion. Since we can’t run from the shame, we stay and yield to a panic attack.

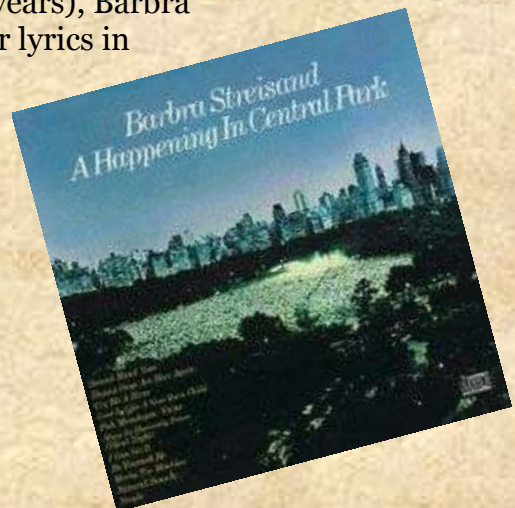
People we worship suffered from it and we can’t believe it. How about Thomas Jefferson (he gave only two speeches in his eight-year terms, both inaugural addresses), Laurence Olivier (in his late 50’s he had it for five years), dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov (he suffered and he didn’t even need to utter a word), Vladimer Horowitz, probably the most acclaimed pianist of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (he retired four times over it, once for 12 years), Barbra Streisand (she muffed her lyrics in Central Park in 1967 and refused to perform live, except at some charity

events, for 27 years). And, would you believe, brash and funny Bette Midler (who wanted to be a dramatic actress but lacked the courage, she has confessed).



**Barbra Streisand**

*Her celebrated, album-producing 1967 concert in Central Park was no walk in the park. She muffed her lyrics and was so mortified that, except for some charity events, she refused to perform live for 27 years.*

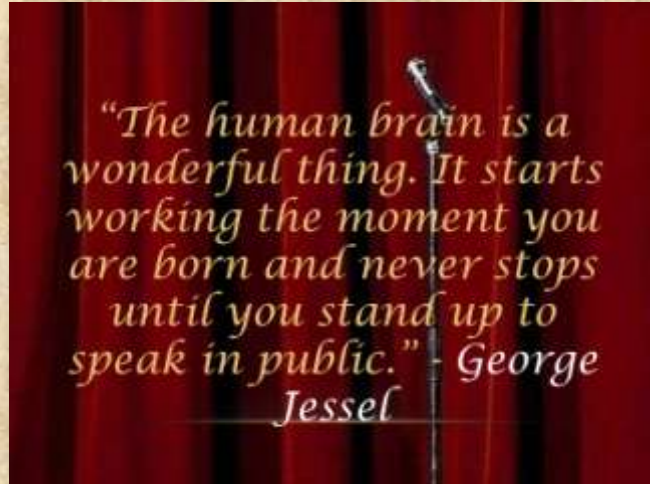




Solo performers have it worst, as actors usually have fellow actors to keep them company and cue their lines and actions. Many young people in classic music training practice several hours a day. Acocella laments their inadequate egos from their solitary settings. Thus, many lack confidence to go in front of an audience.

Today a demand for perfectionism has invaded much of our society, especially among the frail young and their pushy parents. This engenders more anxiety in those who aspire to excellence.

Coping with stagefright has spawned a variety of attempts at cures. Drugs, mostly beta-blockers, have been tried. They only assuage the physical symptoms of anxiety. You may not hear your ticker tock but you still think you'll stink. Mental and behavioral exercises thrive, few with any science under them. Cognitive behavioral therapy might help to avoid your bad thoughts. Yoga and meditation may sooth your breathing, allowing you to adopt positive thoughts, and to transport you to deeper realms.



We discussed the issue of whether a performer must be nervous to do better. Can you be indifferent and do well? Some performers feel a moral duty to their audience. The attendees paid for you to give them your practiced best. Now give it. If they didn't pay, at least they are taking the time to hear you. A portion of performers think if they have nerves, they are serious about their work. Others are more loose and carefree. They say, no one will die, so relax. On the downside, a few believe the audience is waiting for you to bomb. They aren't observing a speech; they are glaring at a failure. Or looking for one to happen. No, say still more. Take a musician zestful about his music and keen to convey it to the public. He is sharing music with those who want to enjoy it.



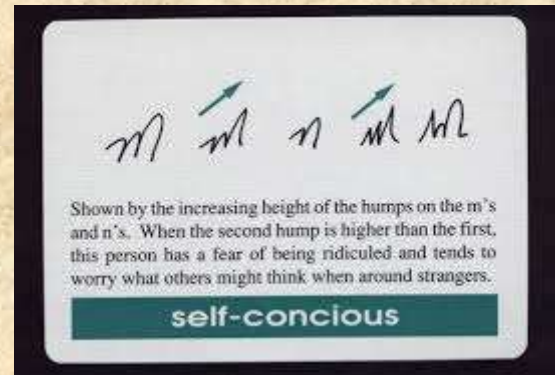
**Vladimir Horowitz**  
*He was so afflicted by stage fright that he retired four times, once for twelve years.*



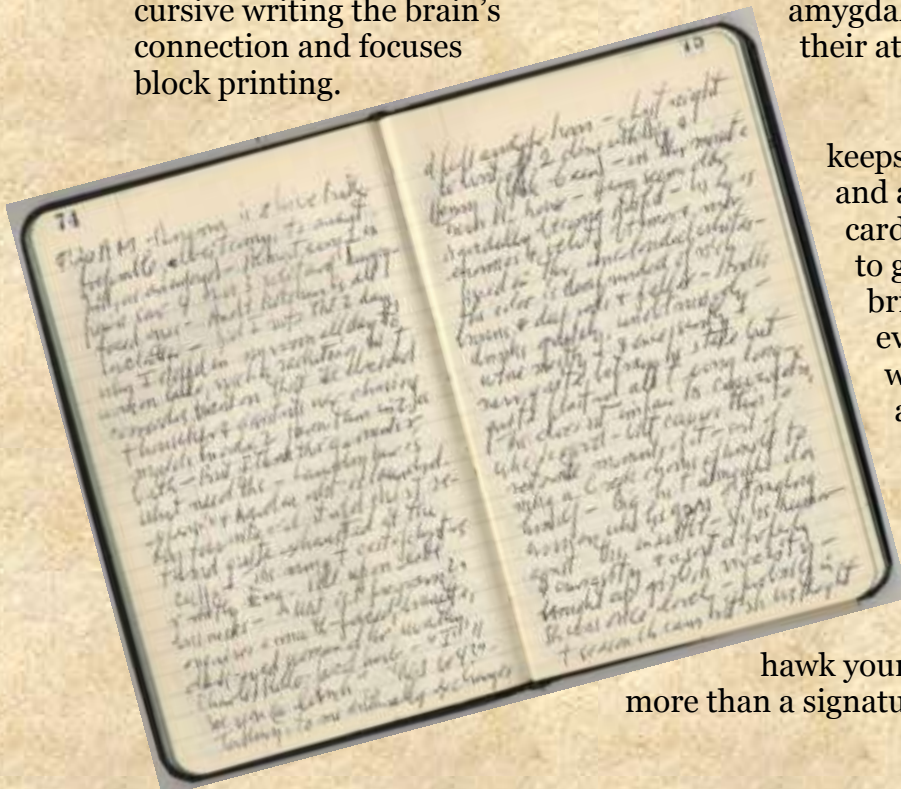
**Bette Midler Brass and funny, she actually wanted to be a dramatic actress. But she lacked the courage, afraid people would not like her, she has confessed.**

Acocella's sobering message is that we never get over stage fright. And for some, it only gets worse. Can it be found in handwriting strokes? We decided the best evidence is found in the fear called self-consciousness. Those inflicted feel they will be judged harshly by others through ridicule or embarrassment . That is the closest of any particular trait, we

concluded. Where is it found in the strokes? Look for a double upper extender with the second one higher than the first. Either a middle zone or an upper zone repeat of the same stroke will show it. It can appear within one letter or in two similar letters. For example, it can occur in the simple way the upper wedges are made inside an m or an n. Or in a doubling of l's in words such as hill or fall. The higher the second stroke rises above the first one, the greater the shame.



- 2. We discussed an article about **Handwritten Keepsakes** in the September 7, 2015, *Morning Call* in the Life Section on page 3. Writer Leslie Mann asserted what we analysts have always believed about handwriting. Computer documents don't do it. Only "handwritten items convey the writers' essence and individuality." They are "tangible reminders of the people who wrote them." Science confirms that when children learn cursive writing the brain's amygdala generates an emotional connection and focuses block printing.



Mann lists some handwritten keepsakes that should be created, kept and appreciated. One is to hand out cards at a shower and ask the invitees to give advice to the prospective bride or mother. Special public events draw people and we all write. Guest books at weddings and funerals should be only the start. Have them handwrite for any celebration and group gathering. A gathering at a vacation home. A public event you are sponsoring. A cocktail or birthday party (where you can hawk your graphology expertise too). Get more than a signature. Ask how they like the event,

how they would improve it, and what do they really think of graphology. I added that Thanksgiving, Christmas and Mother's Day should be part of the practice. Sober or not, get people, in their handwriting, to reflect on the past year and forecast the coming year at a New Year's Eve party. Traditional keepsake she cites are diaries and journals, all enjoying a comeback. I surveyed our members and was amazed how many had done them and still do. We also surveyed which members have revealed the contents of theirs to others.



## Peel Back

3. We passed around several issues of *Pennsylpoints*. It was the IGAS Pennsylvania Chapter's newsletter. The issues were from the 1980's. Astounding were the depth and quality of content and the number of persons who were listed as joining each month and as students of the IGAS General Course. That was a time when Jim Peel, our member from Allentown, was very active in our Chapter. Guess who was at our September 19 meeting to help us reflect on that bustling, glorious era? Jim (shown above reading a handout) was unaware that I would feature the newsletter and ask him about those times. But he enjoyed the reminiscing, we could tell. A stirring raconteur, he regaled us with some memories about the prime years of our Chapter.

4. Martha Murphy, a member from Havertown, presented a breadstick (our version of Show and Tell) that was a Commentary column from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on



June 5, 2015. It was written by Jannie Blackwell, a Philadelphia city councilperson and head of its Education Committee. She decried that **the Common Core national standards had replacing cursive handwriting education with technology instruction.** She noted that an educational summit in 2012 raised the question whether handwriting should be included in the elementary curriculum. 77% of the respondents said yes and 95% said it should include printing and cursive styles.

5. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* of August 5, 2015, had an article about a program at the Philadelphia branch of the Cancer Treatment Centers of America. It has **support**

**groups that allow persons with chronic hurt or guilt to gather and voice their feelings, whatever the origin.** An alarming segment of people retain grudges and blame and can't get over them. The group setting encourages them to vent and attempt to forgive those that continue to burden them. The unending stress wears you down mentally and physically. Those unable to forgive were twice as likely to have heart ailments, writer Stacey Burling found in her digging into the subject.



Forgiveness is a choice. Retaining anger and bitterness decimates you, not the other person. With cancer some people blame themselves. They learn to re-direct that thinking. It calms them and other people who have been plagued with rancor toward others and guilt toward themselves. For those still carrying strong resentment or shame, the sessions have enabled some to gain instant emotional relief. Can the balm of forgiveness render a person's cancer less threatening? The authorities candidly admit they don't know. It's complicated, they say.



We discussed **where handwriting strokes can be found that reveal someone with strong anger, guilt and resentment.**

For anger we pointed to the t-bars that detach from their t-stems to the right. They more specifically reveal someone struggling with their temper. For a mere proneness to temper we look for those temper tic strokes found in short angles in areas where no angle is customarily found. Often they are at the base of a letter in a brief, barbed, lead-stroke.

Guilt is tougher to determine, although we have the back-to-self ending stroke for any word where it curls back and crosses the t-stem in a right to left motion that points toward the writer. We deem that to be self-castigation, taking blame and desiring to hurt yourself even though you don't deserve what you're doing. Graphoanalysts believe the left side of any writing is the self and the past and the right is toward others and the future.

Resentment is a more common stroke that we identified as appearing in the beginning stroke. That lead-in stroke begins at or below its baseline and rises straight, without a curve, into the first letter itself. We also pointed out that Graphoanalysis does not show the basic reasons for the writer to possess these strokes. It reveals only that the person retains them and they impact their well-being.

5. An article on [ABCNews.go.com/Business/ceo-signature-size-matches-ego/story](http://ABCNews.go.com/Business/ceo-signature-size-matches-ego/story) surveyed **the signatures of 605 CEO's of corporations**. It found that **the bigger the signature, the more likely the writer was a narcissist**. Also, it found that the larger the signature, the more likely the boss would run the business into the ground. We discussed what narcissism is. The article said that it was egotism and conceit with a disregard for others. These vain CEO's not only have a heightened opinion of themselves but also will deride the abilities of others. In addition, they reject feedback or ignore it and they become bad decision makers. These CEO's also tend to make more than others even though their performance lagged behind.

Skeptics of these results say that other factors can determine a signature size, such as high self-esteem and an extrovert personality. The authors don't claim it correlates every time. They claim only that it does so on average.

How did Donald Trump fare? Much of his signature is up and down and "liney," they called it. So his score wasn't high. Besides, they declared, his signature wasn't huge compared to the other CEO's.



6. I gave a mini-pep talk on **the advantages of a face-to-face handwriting analysis**. You get to see the writer and how he acts and all the other aspects of his being. We tend to view body language as a few gestures someone makes with their hands, their unique walking styles, and other readily observable acts of their bodies. That is narrow. Everything we do says something about us. It reflects decisions we have made about how we will deal with our world and tell others who we are. Some can be unconscious but they still come from the writer, so they count too. Whether you call a person's choice of tie or shoes body



language doesn't matter. Each one reveals a tidbit about their behavior as a person. Therefore, observe all these often subtle and modest items that convey the writer's makeup. Add them to your judgments about his handwriting strokes and you can confirm your impressions or reject them and arrive at a more accurate analysis.

I also offered my opinion on **the question analysts ask a lot: What should I have the person write about for their analysis?**

We typically say "It doesn't matter; write anything. It's the strokes we look at, not the content." We can improve on that. Instead, ask them to write something that directly focuses on who they are as a person, which, after all, is our task. Have them write about what gets them out of bed in the morning, or what makes them want to turn over and stay in bed, or what they expect from life or what bothers them about people, or something else that would be on their minds. These will get the writer to be more spontaneous if they are interested in their thoughts being read. Hobbies, activities, and outside interests reflect what a person is interested in. Those and other subjects aid us in learning more than an idle, unfocused series of sentences. They will typically reveal little of the writer's authentic self. Often our in-person analysis faces a guarded individual. Go after the information that will more deeply uncover their true personage. But it should be something they are willing to open up about, not guard against exposing as their private information.



7. **We evaluated the signatures (and some other handwriting where available) of the leading Presidential candidates.**

We had previously done Hillary's and found some superb qualities. If you would like to know what we found, contact me by email. The ones we did on September 19 were Bernie Sanders, Donald Trump, Carly Fiorina, and Ben Carson. We had done Trump's signature years ago, but he is now prominent as a candidate and an entertaining personality. We now had other samples of

his writing and thought it worth reviewing along with updated examples of his signature. A signature reveals only a portion of the writer's makeup and is often only their public image, not their true selves. The following are the aspects of their makeups that stood out the most.

**Bernie Sanders** (Here are two signatures and a sample of his regular writing)



► Outgoing (right slanted)



► Flexible, willing to try different ways to reach solutions (strokes are not rigid, are somewhat rounded and soft, and stray a bit from strict lettering standards)

► A regular guy (conventional style and lacking any really creative or innovative strokes)

► Stable (solid and fairly regular)

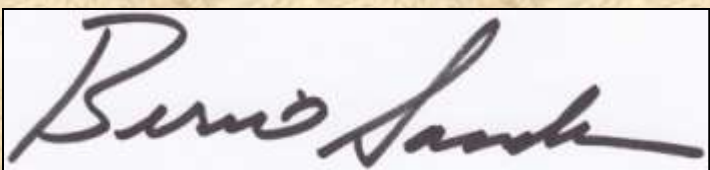
► Bossy (down-

► Cautious (long straight ending stroke on his signature)

Will we succeed? Can we transform America?  
Yes! If we can develop a strong grassroot movement.  
Now is not the time to think small. Now  
is the time to think about how we make  
fundamental changes to our economic and  
political system. Now is the time to bring  
our people together, to stand up and  
fight back.

baseline rhythm)

slanted t-bars)

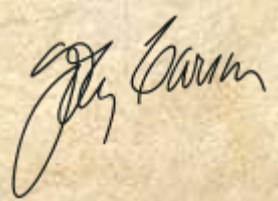
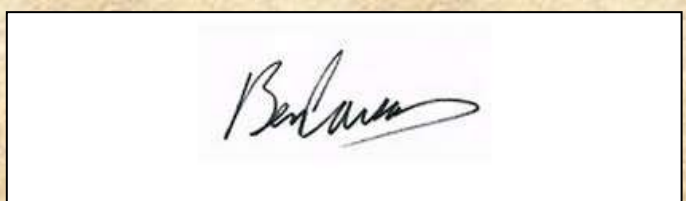


► Outspoken and will sometimes blurt out inappropriate comments (large letter at end of word—small e at the end of Bernie is way out of proportion to the other small letters)

► Intolerant of opposing views (narrow small e's in both his signature and the rest of his writing)

### Ben Carson

we decided, was inconclusive. We had only two signatures (here they are aside each other) and they varied greatly. And no other writing of his. However, I had seen another signature that seemed to be similar to the first one on the left, especially the fading out of the last few letters of Carson followed by an ending stroke that swept back under



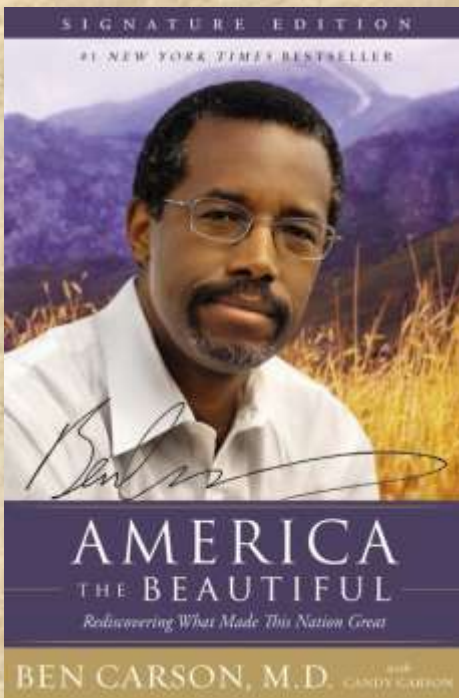
Carson. It was done on a copy of his book *America the Beautiful*. (Here it is on the next page). So we focused on the two that had the large ending stroke. Nothing else stood out that much, or it was different in each sample. The capital letters large in relation to the small letters, showed a strong ego that needs your attention. The e drops to a smaller n in Ben, a suggestion of a tactful manner. That pattern is more pronounced in the third sample, which we couldn't confirm was even his writing.

We dwelled on that ending stroke. Some offered that it was a self-reliance stroke, since it is an underline of a signature. This kind of person believes he can do any task and doesn't need your help. I

had recalled that IGAS termed that stroke to be self-reliance only if it ran left to right, or in this case ultimately returned to the right. It must be something, but what is it? Going through some IGAS materials in its graduate course, I found IGAS founder Bunker discussing signatures with these long ending strokes that run under the signature.

The closest trait to this unusual ending stroke was the showmanship-ostentatiousness partnership. A an extended ending stroke is not needed to identify any letter. The stroke is large and flaunting. It seeks your attention by extra adornment. But as showmanship it would be done artfully and would be appealing. Here the stroke looks awkward and gaudy. Thus, it is ostentatious, meaning the person tries to get you to notice them but they often do it with clumsy gestures, betraying bad taste. The showman stroke will be attractive and in artful. That person seeks your applause and approval too but will do it with good taste. We must also allow for the fact that these signatures may have been written in haste. In that light, they shouldn't be construed so strictly for what we have found. Most people can't create beautiful strokes,

especially large ones if they are drawing them much faster than their normal pace.



**Carly Fiorina** was based on only one signature and no other writing.

► Strong sense of self but with some vanity (large, sturdy capitals)

The image shows a handwritten signature of Carly Fiorina in blue ink on a light blue background. The signature is written in a cursive style with large, bold letters. The first letter 'C' is particularly large and has a thick downstroke. The signature reads 'Carly Fiorina'.

► Intuitive (periodic breaks between the letters)

► Cultured (hint of a Greek e in her small r)

► Determined (solid downstroke on her small y)



- ▶ Strong need for attention (sweeping backward ending stroke on Fiorina)
- ▶ Steady emotions (solid, straight baseline)
- ▶ Needs her downtime without others (separation between her capital C and the rest of Carly; and downstroke of y without a loop)
- ▶ Outgoing (forward lean of strokes)
- ▶ Fast and agile mind (letters made swiftly but still legible)
- ▶ Efficient and direct and won't tolerate wasted time (letters made with little decoration, including the lead-in strokes: the a in Carly has none and the F and small i in Fiorina are deftly combined; the l and y have no loops)

**Donald Trump** is mostly based on his signatures. The other writing is block printing, which I believe provides little guidance because it is printing and because it is blocked style.

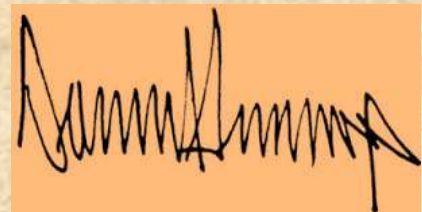


- ▶ Judgmental, rigid views, and uncompromising, and sees the world in black and white, and little grey (stiff strokes with no soft or rounded strokes, not even for the small a and o and the p)

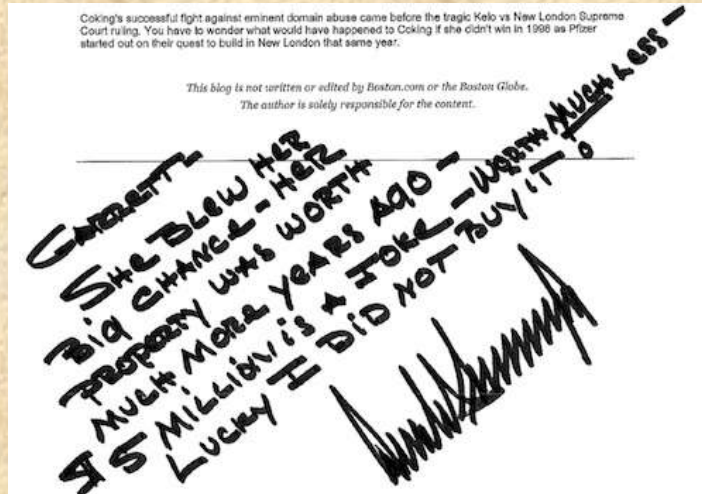
- ▶ Feelings restrained, will act based on thinking rather than feelings (vertical slant)

- ▶ Inhibited emotionally and will not freely give out his feelings, nor his time and property for the benefit of others. (little space between letters, vertical slant, no curved, outreaching ending strokes)

- ▶ Investigative, exploratory, curious about many things and wants to know for himself, will not accept what he hears (sharp upper wedges in small letters, and capitals that are made with upper wedges that have sharp points)



► Extremely analytical to the point of critical views; opinionated; stubborn, all to the extreme and therefore he will quickly see fault in others, (pointed lower wedges on small letters, as well as down-pointing wedges on other letters that typically don't have lower wedges; stiff triangle strokes throughout)



► Simple and direct, doesn't want to waste time and resources, ready to get down to business (no extra strokes, lead-in strokes are brief or non-existent)

► Bright; fast mind (upper and lower wedges on most strokes, which show a sharp, analytical mind); also logical mind (strokes retain connection, including those between names)

► Resolute and stalwart in his beliefs; will not change them without cogent counter argument (downstrokes above baseline are straight and strong and unwavering)

► Wants to be in control of everything, suppresses his feelings and his desire to reach out with his time and treasure; wants his world to have method and order, and for those he deals with to get to the heart of a situation, focuses on things that work and are practical and real, not spiritual or fanciful (Block printing for the rest of his writing. The signature itself shows a desire to control too with its rigid, straight, dense, vertical strokes)

► Sensuous, savors the physical side of life; strong depth of feelings makes him recall both prior slights and prior plaudits. Result is long memory for bad situations as well as those that delighted him. Tends to prejudice and bias as a result. (thick and heavy pen pressure on paper)

