

## Handwriting Analysis:

Scientists believe that no two individuals have the exact same handwriting, although some people's style may have general characteristics in common.

Detectives often call on handwriting experts known as QD examiners to analyze handwriting samples of suspects in crimes where a ransom note or other pieces of handwriting are left behind as evidence. These examiners are also experts on paper types and typewritten documents. They can appear in court to testify about QD with unknown authors.

### BACKGROUND:

Through the years, as people write, their handwriting becomes unique. It is often possible to identify an author of an unknown document by comparing the handwriting with a known source. For the most accurate comparisons, the known document, or the standard, needs to contain similar words or letter combinations to that of the evidence. QD examiners use "identifiable features" such as slant, spacing, and letter formations to make their comparisons.

Listed below are six different handwriting samples along with seven characteristics of handwriting that QD examiners use for comparison. As you read through the examples provided, use them to perform analysis on the partial ransom note and handwriting samples you have in this case.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. <u><i>I love forensic science!</i></u> | 4. <u><i>I love forensic science!</i></u> |
| 2. <u><i>I love forensic science!</i></u> | 2. <u><i>I love forensic science!</i></u> |
| 3. <u><i>I love forensic science!</i></u> | 3. <u><i>I love forensic science!</i></u> |

### Identifiable Characteristics of Handwriting

- Spacing or margins between letters and words: In sample #1, there is little space between the words. In sample 4, there is more space between the letters compared to the other samples.  
- How does the spacing in the partial ransom note compare to that of the samples from the suspects? -
- Size of the letters, especially the height compared to the width: In sample #2, the letters are tall relative to their width. In sample #6, the letters are not as tall relative to width.  
- What is the height to width ratio in the ransom note? Which sample has a similar ratio? -
- The strokes connecting capital letters to lower case letters and lower case letters together: In sample #1 some letter combinations are connected ("ov" in love, "ens" in forensics). In sample #4, the letters are not connected.  
- How do the connections compare between the ransom note and the suspect samples? -
- Unusual letter formations such as loops and curls or a hybrid of printing and cursive: Compare the l's and the f's in the samples above. Notice how they vary among the handwriting styles.  
- Are there any unusual formations or hybrids in the ransom note that can be found in the suspects' handwriting as well? -
- Slant of the letters to the right or the left and the angle of the slant: Notice the samples that slant and those that don't. Even those that slant vary in the angle of slant.  
- Which of the suspect writing samples has the same slant and angle of slant as that of the ransom note? -
- Writing above, on, or beneath the baseline: Some individuals have a tendency to write portions of some characters below the baseline.  
- All of these notes were written on blank paper so you will have to draw in a baseline and then compare -
- Crossing of t's and dotting of i's (diacritics: Individuals tend to dot their i's and cross their t's in unique fashions).  
- What unique fashion do you note about the ransom handwriter's method that can be found amongst the suspect's handwriting as well? -