

Station #1: Who Wrote That?

Use the following problem to interest your students in learning about forensic art. Remember to build a vocabulary list.

You are an art historian and curator at a prestigious museum in New York. Your employers have been offered an obscure painting by an antiques dealer. They claim it to be an original Vermeer, discovered in an attic in a 13th century building that was being destroyed. Having been fooled before, they enlist your aid to determine whether or not this painting is an authentic example of Vermeer's work. Take the following journey through the five stations below to see how you will do this. Remember your job depends on the accuracy of your results.

Aim: Students will

- Build a vocabulary list
- Identify the features of handwriting that are used to verify a signature
- Practice the skills of observation and analysis.

Materials:

3x5 cards

Magnifiers

Log sheets

Protocols:

- 1.) At least one day prior to the lesson, a set of writing samples must be produced by the class.
- 2.) Each student writes a sentence on enough 3x5 cards to supply all the lab groups. The cards should be numbered, each student using their number for every card they make. You must record which number is which student. You keep the master list.

Have each student, using their number for your reference, write a different sentence to make up the file of “unknowns”.

3.) Divide the class into their cooperative learning groups and assign these roles:

- Card holder and materials person. This person must also fill out the log sheet when they identify the hand writer.
- All others receive a magnifier, an unknown sample and a pack of numbered samples from other class member.

Sample Log Sheet

A divided page should contain one column with the unknown sample. In the other column, list the numbered samples from the class as they are compared, making notes as to how they match the unknown.

The second page should list the characteristics that the students used to determine which class member wrote the unknown.

4.) Students will attempt to match the unknown cards with the numbered cards on the log sheet. Try not to give an unknown to that person in the group.

Students should use such qualities as:

Slant, pressure, spacing, letter formation, and individual characteristics like dotting an I with a little circle, curlicues, etc.

5.) Have the “card holder” complete the log sheet and ask the students to list the characteristics that led to the match.