

Name _____ Date _____

WRITE ON!

A Lab on Document Forgery

Objective

You will analyze handwriting on a questioned document to determine the author of the document.

Background Information

Royston Textiles called the state bureau of investigation last week to report a problem with one of their canceled checks. This check was made out to their consultant, Julian Harston. It had been mailed to him more than a month ago. However, Mr. Harston reported that he never received the check. Yet, the canceled check was in Royston Textiles' bank statement this month. It had been endorsed.

Mr. Harston feels that someone in his neighborhood took the check from his mailbox and forged his name on the back. Today you are provided with copies of Julian Harston's signature written by people in his neighborhood. Your job is to decide which signature most closely matches the one on the check. This decision will help you determine if the check endorsement was forged.

Materials

- Stereomicroscope or hand lens
- Unlined white paper
- Document in question
- Black pens, all of same brand, one per lab group
- Protractor (*optional*)
- Ruler
- Paper clip
- Notebook paper
- Scissors

Procedure, Day 1

1. In Figure 2 you see a check that has been written with a typewriter. It is made out to Julian Harston and signed with a Royston Textile stamp.
2. Cut out the check with scissors.
3. Turn the check over and write the name Julian Harston on the back.
4. Write your name on a piece of notebook paper and attach the check to this notebook paper with a paper clip. Give this to your teacher.

Procedure, Day 2

1. Your teacher has selected one of the checks that was turned in yesterday and made several copies of the back of that check for each lab group. In today's lab, your copy of that check is referred to as "the document in question."
2. Each person in your lab group should cut out the check in Figure 3 and sign the name Julian Harston to the back in his or her own handwriting. Write your name on a piece of notebook paper and attach the check to the notebook paper with a paper clip. Place this on the table at the front of the room, so that each person's paper is side by side.
3. Your lab group is a team of handwriting examiners. Using the information in the Background, the document in question provided by the teacher, microscope, ruler, and protractor, examine the check your teacher handed out to you today. Complete the "Analysis of the Document in Question."
4. Taking turns with other lab groups, compare the checks at the front of the room with their analysis. Determine which student committed the forgery.

Postlab Questions

1. In your opinion, who forged the check?

2. Give the main points, according to the 12 criteria, that helped you make this determination?

3. Are you so confident of your decision that you would testify in court?

4. List two checks that looked similar to the original. What helped rule out these two checks?

	34566
	June 14, 1999
Royston Textiles	
PAY <u>Julian Harston</u>	\$ 2,546.12
<u>Two thousand five hundred forty-six and 12/100</u>	<u>Dollars</u>
<u>Consultant fee</u>	Royston Textile Corporation

Figure 2. Day 1.

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Figure 3. Day 2.

ANALYSIS OF THE DOCUMENT IN QUESTION

Name of Experts _____ Date Examined _____

Criteria for examination

Notes

1. Color of ink used by person forging the check: _____

2. Handwriting style: Are all parts written in cursive or are some letters printed? _____

3. Description of quality of stroke: Is it smooth, nervous, or jittery? _____

4. Description of spacing of margins and spacing between words: _____

5. Are the letters similar in size? _____

6. Describe any penlifts between words: _____

7. Does the author write along a straight line or does he/she write up- or downhill? _____

8. Description of unusual or fancy strokes: _____

9. Describe the i's and t's in the signature: _____

10. Do the letters slant? If so, in what direction? _____

11. Is the pen pressure light, medium, or heavy? _____

12. Any additional observations you made: _____
