

Behind the Mask – what makes a character tick?

Notes from Didcot Writers Workshop 16 October 2017

Part 1

Discussion: What character do you find convincing? Give reasons

Written exercise (about 10 mins): In the Psychiatrist's Chair: Imagine you are a subject in the psychiatrist's chair (a recognisable figure - could be a real person alive or dead or a character from fiction). Sum up how you see yourself. Put name of your character at the end. When finished turn page face down and shuffle up. Everyone to have someone else's sheet. Read out – group to guess each character. What were defining characteristics?

Part 2

A brief look at the study of character

1 Holding a pencil, learning to write – why do we all have different handwriting?

2 Aristotle quote - 'Handwriting is the visible form of speech...'

3 Wikipedia definition- graphology

4 Character as described in a biography – compared with blind handwriting analysis

5 How do graphologists study character? (can refer to character exercise 'In the Psychiatrist's Chair')

A few elements of graphological study: Layout/spacing between lines/between words/degree of connection/size/zones/slant/pressure

6 Example 1 - DA

7 Example 2 - DT

Part 3

Brief exercise: based on what we have covered. Handwriting example 3: consider the image evoked by the sample. Give your impression of the writer's character.

... and finally

REPEAT - Graphology Zones: upper, middle, lower (useful reminder of aspects of character)

Andrea Scarfe study of infrequent writers – With the decline in handwriting today, many are questioning its validity. This study aims to determine the effectiveness of graphology as a personality assessment tool, regardless of how frequently people write. If you know an infrequent writer who would like to take part see accompanying file 'Research Study Handwriting Analysed'

Further reading:

- 'Handwriting Analysis' by Karen Kristin Amend & Mary Stansbury Ruiz
- More notes to accompany appendix: 'Handwriting Analysis - beginner's notes', by Gill Beale
- Stories featuring handwriting analysis – novels by Sheila Lowe <http://www.claudiaroseseries.com/SheilaLoweBooks/books/>

Appendix below: Extracts from slideshow

Layout: Margins

- 1 Narrow all round: gets involved in everything (overextended), crowds people out
- 2 V wide all round: keeps apart, can feel inadequate, shrinks from physical contact

LEFT MARGIN

- 3 Narrow: more comfortable with the past, heightened dependence, economy
- 4 Wide: desire to move forward, leave past behind
- 5 Shrinking: starts out with enthusiasm, then doubts set in, starts backing off
- 6 Expanding: growing confidence/enthusiasm
- 7 Concave: initial misgivings, overcomes them, then reverts to inhibitions
- 8 Convex: starts without hesitation, then has doubts which are finally overcome
- 9 Irregular: careless of conventions, can be moody, poor manager of resources
- 10 V straight: can have inflexible attitudes, high expectations

RIGHT MARGIN

- 11 Narrow: spontaneous, outgoing, tries new things
- 12 Wide: cautious, avoids risks, afraid of future
- 13 Shrinking: growing enthusiasm, welcoming challenge
- 14 Expanding: may start with enthusiasm but need encouragement to complete new challenge
- 15 V irregular: instability, unreliable
- 16 V straight: Self-protective, difficulty adapting

Zones

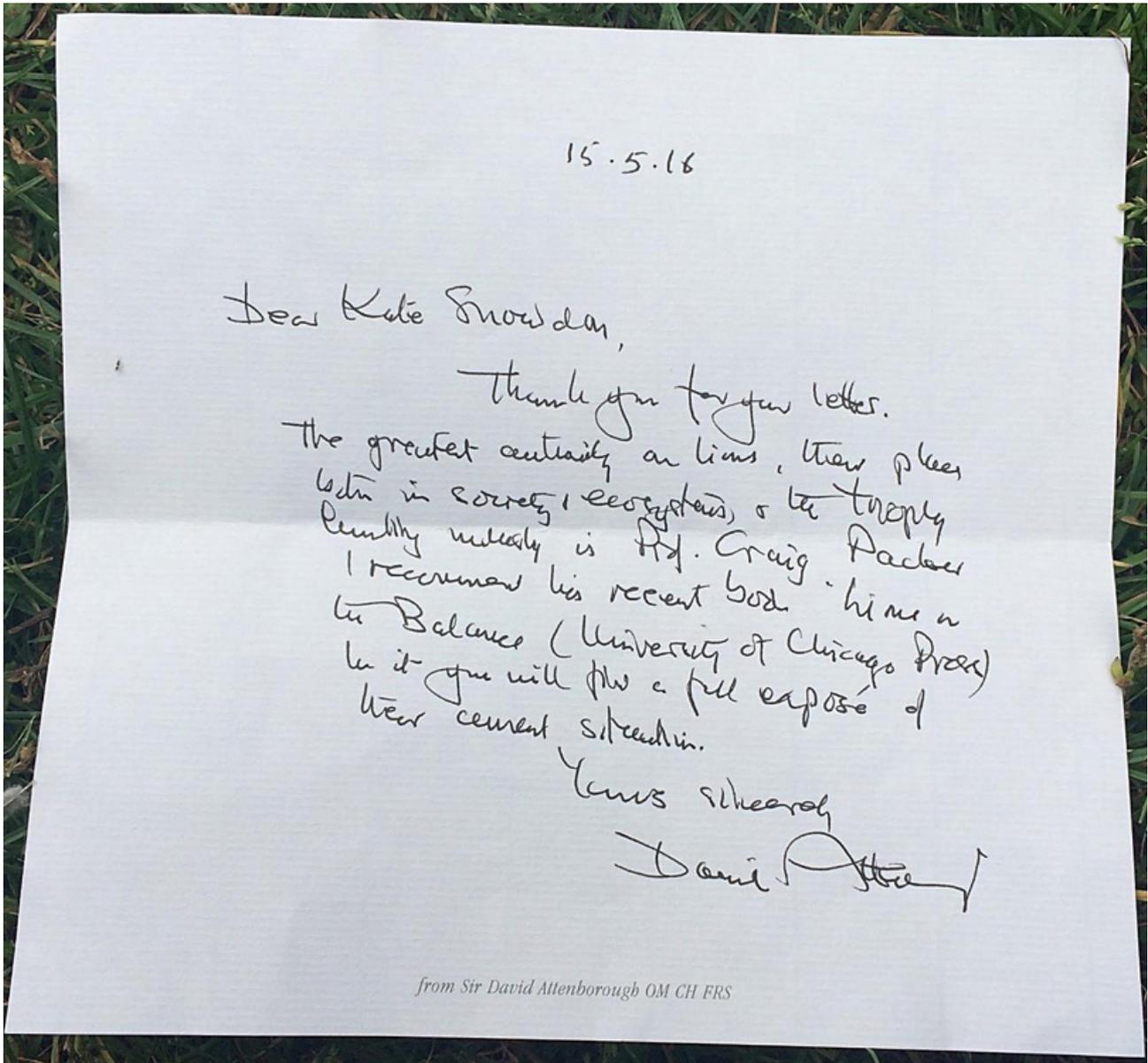


A. will get out of

B. Spend together

C. your thoughts for

Sample analyses



Sample 1: Sir David Attenborough

left margin widening: enthusiastic, moving forward, adventurous

mostly connected letters: reason, logic, concentration, but some intuitive thinking

large caps: self confidence, authoritative

small/variable middle zone: can concentrate but restless

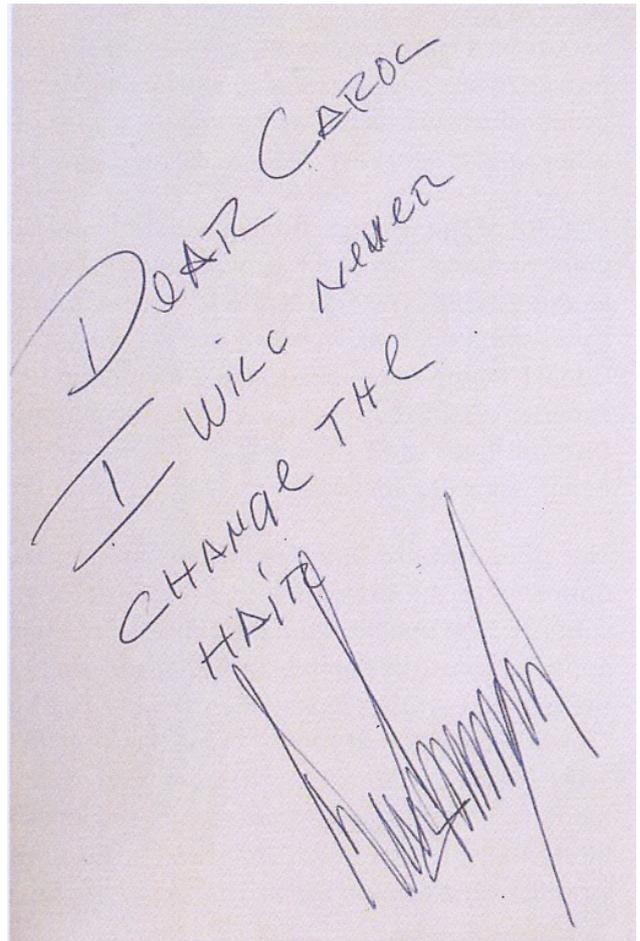
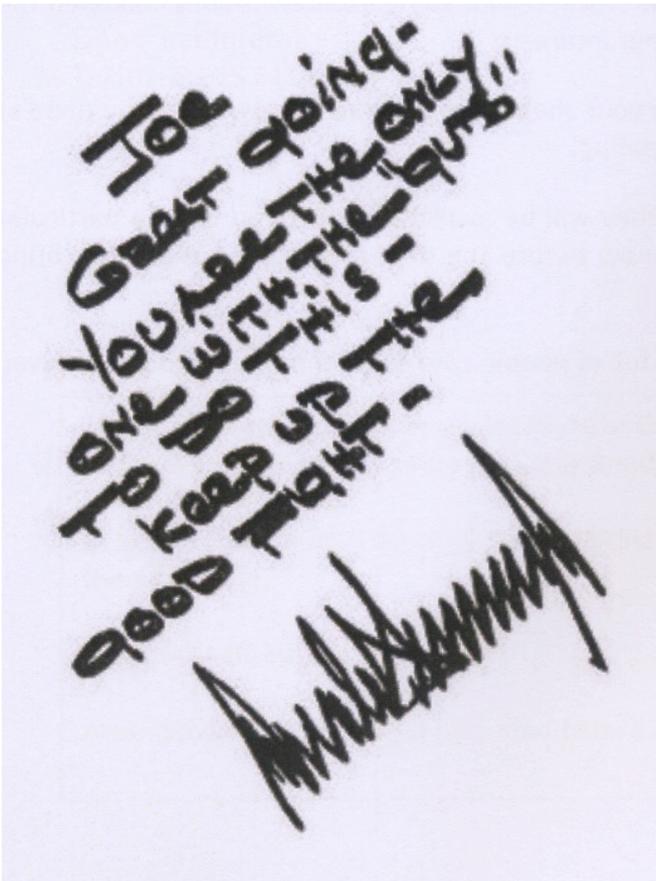
lean upper zone: analytical, curious

some irregularity: flexible, likes change and challenge

simplified forms, quick connections: agile mind, resourceful

baselines tiling down: fatigue, but uses will power to persevere

signature to right: outgoing, optimistic, engages with the world and the future



Sample 2: Donald Trump (felt pen & ball point)

Signature

extremely narrow, angular: overcontrol, repression, rigidity, tension, aggression, hostility, energy

sharp angles: exploratory/keenly incisive thought process

extreme height: narcissism, bravura, vainglory, heightened ambition

last P: argumentative; last downstroke: self destructiveness

General

extreme upward baseline slant: heightened ambition, over-optimistic

mostly block lettering: control of expression of feelings, concealment

mostly narrow word spacing: 'in your face'

hooks and knots: tenacity, doggedness

Sample 3: Beethoven

confused layout, intermingling lines

right slant, varying,

highly energetic and irregular movement

irregular size, irregular zonal ratios

Turbulent nature, high irritability, competitive, dominant, very energetic and ambitious. Strong emotional reactions, difficult social relations.

