

FOLLOWING THE TRAIL OF

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A large, light gray fingerprint graphic is centered on the page, serving as a background for the main title.

QUESTIONED DOCUMENTS HANDWRITING ANALYSIS

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QUESTIONED DOCUMENTS - HANDWRITING ANALYSIS

GOAL

An important aspect of questioned document examination is to determine the author of an unknown writing sample. This is typically achieved by performing a handwriting comparison using known writings from a suspect to directly compare to an unknown writing sample.

CLASS CHARACTERISTICS – COMMON LETTER FORMATIONS

Document examiners will analyze letter formations in a writing sample to assist in determining the author. Figure 1 displays common variations in the letter “t” observed from various writers. If similar letter formations are observed in two writing samples, then they may have been authored by the same individual. However, further distinguishing characteristics are needed prior to making a definitive conclusion.

Figure 1: Common variations in the letter “t” [1].



INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS – DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

Characteristics such as those shown in Figure 2 assist document examiners in making definitive conclusions. In the writing samples below, three different writers authored the same word demonstrating differences in individual characteristics (described below). The totality of these types of characteristics throughout an entire writing sample will be considered when a document examiner is performing a comparison of writing samples.

- **FIGURE 2**, left: short stroke at bottom of the “Z”, hook on the bottom stroke of the “E”, a short “M” relative to the rest of the characters, a single line to cross both “T” characters.
- **FIGURE 2**, middle: short stroke at the top of the “Z”, high middle stroke on the “E”, curved middle stroke on the “M”, left side location of connection on the “O”.
- **FIGURE 2**, right: lower stroke of the “Z” has a downward direction, middle stroke on the “E” crosses over to the left of the letter, initial downward stroke of the “M”, different locations of the crossing on each “T”.

Figure 2: Distinguishing characteristics indicated for three different writers [1].



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ANALYSIS

Document examiners will analyze writing characteristics like those described above to make a conclusion.

Possible conclusions consist of an identification, meaning the writing samples share the same author, or an elimination, meaning the writing samples were authored by two different individuals. In the absence of sufficient quality and quantity of writing samples an inconclusive conclusion may be the result, meaning additional writing samples may be needed before a more definitive conclusion can be made.

REFERENCES

[1] Angel, M., & Kelly, S. J. (2021). Forensic document examination in the 21st Century. CRC Press.

QUESTIONED DOCUMENTS EXERCISE

HANDWRITING COMPARISON

Using handwriting characteristics, compare the word "suspect" from the first column to each of the same word in the second column. Write the letters from the word in the second column in the boxes next to the numbers in the first column to identify the words authored by the same individual.

<input type="checkbox"/>	1	suspect	A	suspect
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	Suspect	B	suspect
<input type="checkbox"/>	3	Suspect	C	Suspect
<input type="checkbox"/>	4	suspect	D	Suspect
<input type="checkbox"/>	5	Suspect	E	suspect
<input type="checkbox"/>	6	suspect	F	suspect
<input type="checkbox"/>	7	Suspect	G	suspect
<input type="checkbox"/>	8	Suspect	H	Suspect
<input type="checkbox"/>	9	Suspect	I	Suspect
<input type="checkbox"/>	10	Suspect	J	Suspect
<input type="checkbox"/>	11	Suspect	K	Suspect
<input type="checkbox"/>	12	Suspect	L	suspect