

THE RISE OF CALLIGRAPHY

Read this article and do the multiple choice.

What beautiful writing you have: the rise of modern calligraphy
Fiona Wilson tries the art of creating elaborate decorative writing

I'm sitting at a desk in an immaculate stationary shop named Quill, attempting to master the letter M. "I've got this," I think with the false confidence of the beginner, as I dip my pen into the ink and drag the tip across the page. "Wait," says my teacher, Quill owner Lucy Edmonds. "You're not holding your pen correctly. Loosen your grip." I look at my hand. I'm unexpectedly tense, holding it like a caveman might have held a spear. Lucy tells me to stop treating it like a weapon but to regard it as my friend. "Try again," I make a shape. Ink goes everywhere. "Well done!" Lucy cries politely. The letter may be unidentifiable, but I feel wonderful.

I have always valued good handwriting. I spent three years of my childhood in the USA, where at school I was taught to write using D'Nealian manuscript form, an ornate style of writing that looks rather old-fashioned, and one that I've long since abandoned in favor of general, neat handwriting. With my wedding coming up at the end of the year, and invitation letters to be sent out in the post, this seemed like the ideal time to polish my writing skills. Eight personalized envelopes to write by hand - doesn't sound too hard a task under normal circumstances. But modern calligraphy, I'm learning, is a completely **different animal**.

I signed up for a modern calligraphy tutorial with Lucy, a 33-year-old who opened Quill five years ago. She impresses upon me the need to change my mindset: with calligraphy you are essentially drawing a letter rather than writing it. She gives me a dip pen, which can create a finer line than any fountain pen. It's made up a wooden penholder into which you push a special, delicate tips. Preparing this is an art in itself - you can pass it through a flame, which for me has the right amount of drama and ritual. Others use toothpaste. Then comes the hard bit; holding it correctly. Your fingers should not curl round too much and your thumb shouldn't cross them; the tip has to point to the top of the paper at all times, with the length of your pen in line with your arm.

I'm later reassured by one of Quill's former tutors, Chiara Perano, who runs her own design studio called Lamplighter, that I'm not the only one who has struggled to master this most basic of skills. "My job is essentially teaching grown-ups how to hold a pen." Among them, she tells me, she's had a number of primary school teachers trying to get some quality time for themselves. Their reaction is, "Gosh I feel sorry for the kids now." Appreciating that it's harder than it looks, the teachers get an insight into what it feels like to learn normal handwriting.



The appeal of modern calligraphy for many is that it looks attractive and requires a fraction of the years that are needed to master the traditional art. Modern calligraphy is loosely based on the ornate copperplate style, but there are far fewer rules and you are encouraged to put your personality into it. With regular practice, you can write reasonably confidently in this style within six months. Which is, mercifully, as long as I have to get my wedding envelopes right.

So why is calligraphy becoming more popular? People have always delighted in the beauty of a calligraphy script, as well as what it communicates. In an age where thankyou letters are texted and essays typed, that value is all the more noticeable. In a recent survey of people's writing habits, one in three said they had not written anything by hand in the previous six months. Is all hope lost? I'm not so sure - the revival has started!

For questions 1-8 choose the answer - A, B, C or D.

1. What do we learn from the first paragraph?

- A. Lucy thinks Fiona is not treating the activity seriously enough.
- B. Fiona thinks calligraphy will be easier than it turns out to be.
- C. Lucy is pleasantly surprised by Fiona's initial efforts.
- D. Fiona is discouraged by Lucy's instructions.

2. When Fiona uses the words "different animal" (paragraph 2), she is contrasting modern calligraphy with

- A. regular handwriting.
- B. the typed out letters of today.
- C. the D'Nealian script she used previously.
- D. the highly decorative style used in wedding invitations.

3. What does Fiona typed-outout using the dip pen?

- A. It looks fragile but is in fact very tough.
- B. It is easier to draw with than write with.
- C. The technical side of it is what appeals to her.
- D. There are several possible variations in how you can hold it.

4. Chiara Perano says that trying calligraphy has given primary school teachers

- A. A feeling of inadequacy.
- B. A great deal of enjoyment.
- C. Ideas for their own lessons.
- D. A sense of sympathy with their pupils.

5. In the fifth paragraph, Fiona says that the version of calligraphy she's learning

- A. has to be followed very strictly.
- B. is ideally suited to wedding invitations.
- C. takes a long time to become proficient in.
- D. is easier to learn than ancient forms of the art.

6. What does Fiona say about the popularity of calligraphy now?

- A. It may be short-lived as it requires a lot of patience.
- B. It may may return of some unknown point in the future.
- C. It will continue as people react against social conditions.
- D. It is surprising given that most people no longer write by hand

