

# TEACH

LE PROF

MAY/JUNE 2015

EDUCATION FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW - L'ÉDUCATION - AUJOURD'HUI ET DEMAIN

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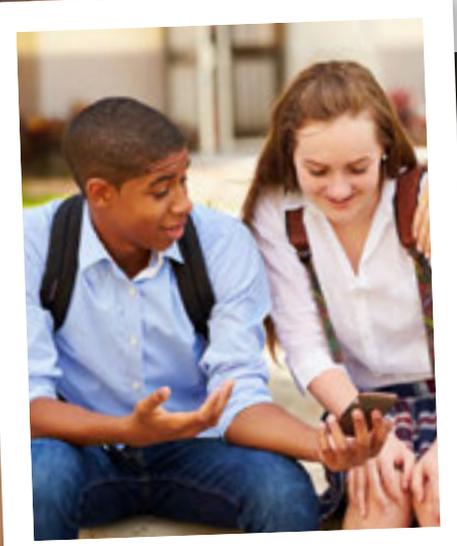
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# TEACH

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## Welcome to the last issue of the academic year.

It's surely been a fast one. We've presented many practical articles that explored fascinating topics. We hope you've enjoyed them and employed some of the ideas in your classrooms. You've been dedicated to your students all year, so for this end-of-the-year issue, we wanted to put the focus back on you.

When was the last time you picked up a pen and wrote a letter to someone? Handwriting seems to be a dying art form. Many young students cannot recognize or read it, being 'millennials' who likely learned to type and text before printing. Educators and parents alike have debated whether it should still be taught in today's schools. But students aren't the only ones struggling. Adults too—teachers and professionals—have become rusty with their handwriting. And if they can't write it, their students certainly won't be able to read it. Our first **Feature Story** looks at cursive writing in today's schools. Is it a vintage art form or can it actually benefit students? Read on and decide.

As you may already know, in addition to publishing this magazine, we also produce dynamic and interactive resources for students. They all are centred around a graphic novel and include original music, videos, and photos, and are connected to the Canadian curriculum. We have just relaunched one of our products—*The Shadowed Road 2.0*. It's now compatible with mobile and tablet devices. A lot goes into the creation of the interactive resource projects we develop. We try to create narratives that have meaning and resonance while being relevant. With the original launch, we felt that it was important to give you some insight as to how these large-scale projects came into being. And now with the relaunch of TSR, once again, we thought that the telling of the story in our second **Feature Story**—how it got made—might prove illuminating and worthwhile.

The teaching profession is unique in that it provides educators with an extended break, during, arguably, the best time of the year. So in **Classroom Perspectives**, we asked some educators to reflect on the past year (and dare we say the *next* one) and share how they'll be making the most of their summer holiday. Take a look.

Once the final school bell rings this year, it will be the the sound of a well-deserved break. Summer is short so we hope you make the most of it. And to help you do so, this time around for **Field Trips** instead of student outings, we have suggested adult activities. Whether it's a relaxing day at the spa, or an adventurous road trip across our great country, there is sure to be something that will inspire your next summer jaunt.

Also in the issue are our regular **Webstuff** column and **CURRICULA**, for those who start their planning and preparation early.

We hope you have a great summer and don't forget to look out for the **new Summer issue** coming out in July.

Lisa Tran,  
Associate Editor  
@teachmag

# The Shadowed Road

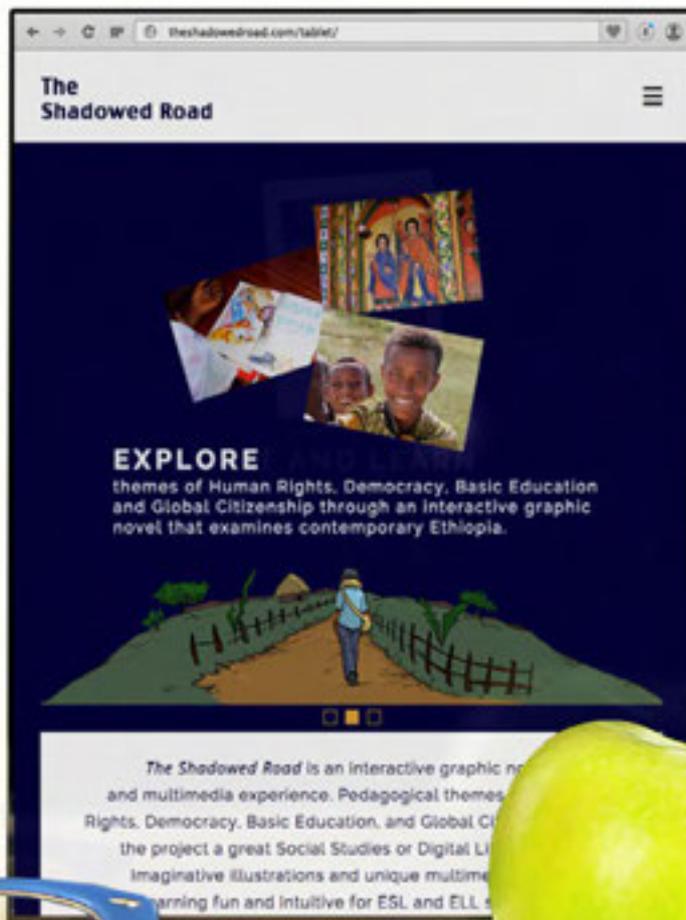
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# JOIN US on the Journey

by Wili Liberman

**W**hen we originally launched the interactive, multi-platform resource, *The Shadowed Road*, I decided to talk about what happened behind-the-scenes in the development of that project. I felt that it was important to give you some insight as to how these large-scale projects came into being. That the project tells a story but the project is also a story in its own right. Ultimately, we believe in stories and storytelling, that they are the essence of having the ability to reach and connect to teachers and students in a meaningful way. And we enjoy the entire process, finding it fulfilling. We learn too and apply this philosophy to all of the resource projects we produce.

A lot goes into the creation of the interactive resource projects we develop at *TEACH Magazine*. We try to create narratives that have meaning and resonance while being relevant. We have just launched the 2.0 version of *The Shadowed Road*. Once again, I thought that the telling of the story—how it got made—might prove illuminating and worthwhile.

And so, we pull back the curtain.

Strangely, when I conceived of the online, educational project, *The Shadowed Road*, that explores the history, culture and education system of modern day Ethiopia, it never occurred to me to actually go there. At the time, Ethiopia represented a metaphor and a context in which the major themes of Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Democracy and Basic Education, were set. Ethiopia was just an idea, a faraway place that, in my untutored imagination, represented all of the clichés associated with Africa: poverty, disease, instability, blazing heat, drought and famine. Naturally, I was wrong on every count.

The project consists of a number of core components: a graphic novel of the same name, instructional videos, music, digital images, a suite of themed lesson plans that link to curriculum nationally, as well as a raft of tools and resources for educators and students.

Like most projects, *The Shadowed Road* begins with a story. In fact, it is a story. The narrative of the graphic novel revolves around its protagonist, a 14-year old girl living in the rural north of the country—Selome Fekadu. The character of Selome is an archetype, one that represents the hopes and aspirations of many young people in Ethiopia, girls in particular. Aspirations such as finishing school and getting a desirable job, breaking the chains of poverty and pushing the boundaries of cultural norms where girls in rural areas are expected to stay home and marry young. Selome becomes an ambassador for learning, as her character wants to become a teacher. To do this, she must complete her education, an impossibility in her rural village. Her father wants her to stay at home and marry someone of his choosing. Selome rebels and takes to the road—the shadowed road—to fulfill her dreams. Along the way, she has adventures and encounters that fuel her determination to be successful.

The conclusion of the story is multi-layered with three endings. Students have the option to select the one they feel is most appropriate, credible or desirable. It is an indicator that *The Shadowed Road*, no matter who travels on it, is nuanced and not always straight or easy to follow. It's a universal story not bound by geography or culture.

Early in October 2010, myself and the two members of the video crew, flew into Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital city. Addis Ababa erupted before us. It is a chaotic, frenetic city of about three million people with wide thoroughfares

**Going there, experiencing a small aspect of Ethiopian life made Selome's fictional journey more tangible and real.**

bursting with traffic. No lane markers to speak of packed with bumper-to-bumper vehicles that weave in and out whenever a tiny gap opens up. Horns blare and beep. Blue mini-buses throng the streets. It is a city with a pulse, one that's on overdrive.

October marks the beginning of the dry season. The weather was sunny and clear, but not overly hot. I hadn't realized that the parts of Ethiopia on our itinerary took us to the elevated sections of the country. Addis Ababa is 2500 metres above sea level. Much of the country is comprised of steep hills and mountains. Rarely did we encounter flat land. Driving the hill country was manageable, but walking it was arduous beyond belief, especially when the altitude came into play.



From Addis Ababa, we flew to Bahir Dar to the north. Bahir Dar is close to Lake Tana, a huge lake that is the hub of the inland fishing and resort industry in Ethiopia. On a promontory 45 minutes offshore, we motored to an ancient monastery. After a hike through the forest, a compound appeared and the monastery within it. When we arrived, a funeral was in process. We came across a lot of funerals as the life expectancy in Ethiopia is very low by western standards. The monastery, dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, approximately, was built in the round. Astonishing paintings adorned its walls and as you walked around, the entire story of the Old Testament appeared before our eyes.

Ethiopia is a religious country. Orthodox Christianity dominates while about one third of the population consists of practicing Muslims. There had been a native Jewish population, but hundreds of thousands were evacuated to Israel during the last civil war. Paradoxically, Ethiopia is governed by a socialist-military regime although some aspects of democracy have been maintained. In many ways, figuratively, physically and structurally, Ethiopia is a land of contrasts.

The Lake Tana region is also home to the breathtaking Blue Nile Falls. After an arduous climb through the hills, toiling up rocky paths peopled by goats and villagers, an amazing vista opens up. As the rainy season had just ended, the falls pounded out in fulsome glory. Yet, as the dry season continues, the waters abate and the falls come to a standstill. Watching tons of water per second pour over the



promontory, it's difficult to imagine times when it all but disappears.

We ventured further north to the town of Gondar and it seemed as if we climbed higher and higher continually. Gondar is also home to some impressive stone castles. In Gondar, we met a young woman who runs a program that houses street kids. She receives no government funding and somehow manages to scrounge enough to keep the program afloat.

From Gondar, we continued further north to the even more elevated town of Lalibela, famous for its churches carved out of a single piece of rock. There is a large restoration program under way to preserve parts of the churches that are beginning to crumble or sag, all of which however, are still used as houses of worship. The most famous carved church is that of St. George, shaped like a cross. It rises out of the ground from which it had been excavated. While wandering the grounds of that church, we heard blood-curdling screams. It turns out we'd happened on an exorcism. A young woman felt she'd been possessed by the devil while a priest sprinkled her with holy water, found in a pool on the site. It is said that the water burns as the evil spirit is driven out.

The scenery of Ethiopia is extraordinary and the views spectacular. It's difficult to convey just how beautiful the country is. And how welcoming are the people. Naturally, being foreigners and carrying video equipment, we attracted attention everywhere we went. People were

naturally curious and friendly and inevitably asked for a handout. Saying no became part of the common vocabulary but when said firmly, a refusal was accepted with good grace.

Not far from Lalibela, we visited a local rural school, Bilbala Elementary to get a sense of how education was conducted in the countryside. Clearly, the community was poor and the school had little in the way of resources. A polluted river ran near the grounds where the children got their drinking water. The classrooms had no electricity, no windows, few desks, scarce materials and resources and roughly 65 students packed each class. The goal was to get the class size down to an average of 50 students. So many children attended this particular elementary school they had to attend in shifts.

Lalibela represented the northern pinnacle of our journey. We had roughly traced the path that Selome would have taken on her journey to Addis Ababa. As we travelled the rough and tumble roads of the country where it is nearly impossible to venture out in the dark, we approached the capital city. A highlight of the back leg of the trip comprised a visit to a buzzing Muslim market where everything from camels, oxen, furniture, blocks of salt, handmade rope to fruit, honey, huge sacks of coffee beans, vegetables and clothing were sold. Set on a hillside, the marketplace buzzed with activity representing a fundamental lesson in economics. For lunch, we ate a goat that had been slaughtered for that purpose.

Balancing our visit to a rural school, we went to see a privately run school in Addis Ababa. The contrast between the two schools couldn't have been clearer. The private school featured modern buildings, electricity, a basketball court and bleachers, standard materials and resources and some access to computers. The children wore uniforms and were well groomed. They were taught entirely in English. Class sizes were small. Young students with whom we spoke were articulate and thoughtful. All of them were proud of their country and proud to be Ethiopian. They had a revealing sense of identity. Their destiny was to lead the country in generations to come. A heady ideal for a 10- or 11-year-old.

All of my pre-conceived notions about Ethiopia had been exploded. The country does face significant challenges and the contrast between education in the city and the country was pronounced. We witnessed scenes that might have been taken straight from the Old Testament. Yet so much of the country, its people and the countryside thrive. Going there, experiencing a small aspect of Ethiopian life made Selome's fictional journey more tangible and real. It has been a privilege to take my own journey down *The Shadowed Road*.

As we launch the 2.0 version of *The Shadowed Road*, please join us on the journey. It is a rich and varied landscape. Free trial at [THESHADOWEDROAD.COM](http://THESHADOWEDROAD.COM).

# The Remedy for Monotony

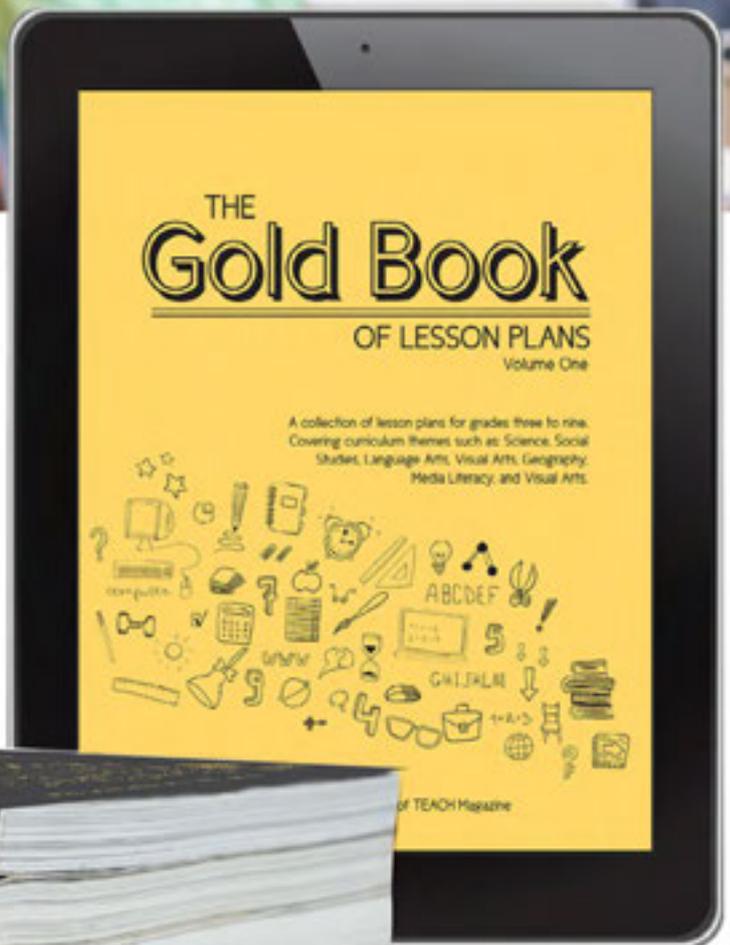
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## EVERY SUMMER HAS A STORY, WHAT'S YOURS?

The teaching profession is unique in that it provides educators with an extended break, during, arguably, the best time of the year. So we asked some educators to reflect on the past year (and dare we say the *next* one) and share how they'll be making the most of their summer holiday.



### Camelia Marks

*Primary/Junior French Immersion Teacher, TDSB*

#### What was your fondest memory this year?

So many fond memories this year! Among them, my class and I created a community garden at the school called the Elmlea Learning Garden. In October, we harvested the vegetables we'd planted the previous spring. We donated our Thanksgiving Harvest to Ernerstine's Women's Shelter and it was an incredibly enriching experience. We also received a \$1000 grant from Evergreen to build another box planter for our garden. The event was filmed by CBC.

#### Most rewarding experience this year?

This year has been full of so many rewarding experiences, none of which trumps the others. Among those is this story: I had a student who didn't talk or interact for almost the first two months of school. I'd been told by his

previous teachers that he "gave absolutely zero in class" and not to expect much from him. In October, we went on a field trip to one of our local high schools to visit their awesome community garden. I don't know how, but that trip completely opened this child up. He came back a vibrant, chatty child, and has been communicating actively ever since.

#### What are some of your summer plans?

I'll be working with a crew of parent/student volunteers to maintain the Elmlea Learning Garden over the summer. I will definitely be doing lots of hiking and cycling. So far travel plans include, one camping weekend in Sandbanks and perhaps a jaunt to Ottawa and Montreal.

#### Any annual traditions?

Weekly barbecue evenings with a close group of friends and a 'Ladies Weekend' up at my friend's fishing camp in Kippawa, ON.

#### What do you most look forward to during your break?

No alarm clock!

#### Do you participate in professional development, training, AQ's, etc.?

I did in my second year of teaching. I received my French Specialist.

#### What's the best thing about teaching?

Helping others grow, being helped to grow, and existing in an abundance of pure, authentic love.

#### When do you start preparing for the next school year?

I don't think I ever stop prepping. Seriously.

#### Do you personally buy any classroom supplies or resources for the next year? What are some of those things?

TONS! Fluorescent board markers, costumes, BOOKS for my classroom library, French/English dictionaries, dice, cards, word wall fabric and word cards... to name just a few items.



## François Doyon

Teacher at Cégep de Saint-Jérôme

### What was your fondest memory this year?

I teach philosophy and my best memory this year is when I introduced my students to a provocative idea: in discussing Heliocentrism, I told them that Christians were like terrorists

who burned libraries. My students were shocked at my bold assertion and couldn't wrap their heads around it. Then I showed them the movie *Agora*. At the end, when I switched on the lights, I watched my students' faces, and could see they understood why it is fair to compare the Christians in the first centuries to terrorists.

### Most rewarding experience?

What I valued most this year is to see my teaching materials, which are mainly commented editions of Plato's dialogues, being used in several colleges in Quebec.

### What are some of your summer plans?

This summer, in addition to preparing my lessons for the next semester, I plan to finish my annotated edition of Plato's *Symposium* and I also intend to spend time taking care of my garden.

### Any annual traditions?

I do not really have a summer tradition, except for spending as many evenings as possible on patios with my boyfriend and friends.

### What do you most look forward to during your break?

What I need most during my holiday is a simply, a break. Sometimes you have to get away to be able to find the serenity needed to think clearly.

### Do you participate in professional development, training, AQ's, etc.?

Summer is important for professional development because it's the *only* time I have for some in-depth readings to improve my knowledge and continue learning.

### What's the best thing about teaching?

What I like most about teaching philosophy is conveying a legacy of wisdom. Teaching the youth to think critically is to fight against desertification of minds.

### When do you start preparing for the next school year?

Preparing the next semester begins immediately after the previous one, because that's where I see most clearly which things need improvement. I constantly take notes for the future.

### Do you personally buy any classroom supplies or resources for the next year?

I mainly create my own teaching materials, which are annotated editions of major works in the history of philosophy. I also like to buy books, *many* books.



## Chris Cocek

Grade 6 Teacher, Halifax, NS

### What was your fondest memory this year?

I would definitely say a social studies lesson where we were discussing Middle Eastern culture. My students are a diverse group, representing many countries from around the world. Three in particular have lived in the Middle East so I turned the lesson over to them. They were passionate and immediately started to share their knowledge. They talked about their experiences and the misconceptions that the media portrays. Another teacher stopped by to ask me a question, but didn't dare interrupt because he could see that the kids were so engaged in the discussion. The rest of the class gained knowledge beyond what I could offer them and certainly what was expected of the curriculum.

My students wouldn't have benefited from me standing up there and lecturing; I had to become the facilitator. And it wouldn't have worked had I not known that my students were capable.

### Most rewarding experience?

Although the social studies lesson was a really rewarding moment, I would say additionally, seeing my students break through challenging circumstances. I have two students who arrived in Canada from refugee camps only three years ago. Over this time, it's been fantastic to see their growth from quiet listeners, to regular classroom participants who are quickly grasping the English vocabulary. They inspire me!

### What are some of your summer plans?

Lots of things are happening this summer. First, I'll be busy preparing for my new role next year as a Math coach with the school board. I'll be gathering key resources and reviewing math methods. I'm also a PhD student at St. Francis Xavier University. So I'll be busy working on my dissertation that is focused on the experience of online professional learning for educators. Also, I'll be taking some small trips to visit family in Ontario and another one to a beach!

### Any annual traditions?

Every year we take a trip to Cape Breton to see family.

### What do you most look forward to during your break?

A break from routine. A change in scenery. An opportunity to recharge.

### Do you participate in professional development, training, AQ's, etc.?

In addition to my preparing for my new job and working on my dissertation, I actually will be teaching a Math Methods teacher certification course for St. Francis Xavier University this summer.

### What's the best thing about teaching?

No day is exactly the same! It's like being a ringmaster for a 21-ring circus. I try to keep my students engaged with a variety of learning opportunities by knowing their different learning styles, their specific academic needs, and their

abilities. Teaching is also dynamic. It's fun. You feed off of the kids—their positive energy, their curiosity, their openness to learn. It's a fantastic feeling. I also love seeing the little breakthroughs from them. People think it comes naturally, but it doesn't. It's a lot of work, and I love it.

### When do you start preparing for the next school year?

I'm always preparing. I'm jotting down notes all year: "do this next year." It's always in the back in my mind, even when I'm browsing articles online. There never is a clean break from planning and the classroom.

### Do you personally buy any classroom supplies or resources for the next year?

I usually use resources from years past. As a staff, we do a lot of sharing here at the school. The one thing we tend to buy now are online subscriptions and licences to educational websites.



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## Overview

Throughout this lesson package, students will analyze, synthesize, and evaluate historical information through studying biographies of significant people, including the Métis, visual arts, and audio clips, in regards to the War of 1812. Students will further develop their current schema of Aboriginal People's perspectives and Early Canada during the Wars of 1812. Finally, students will demonstrate their learning through the creation of a historical narrative video as their final performance task.

## Key Concepts

Students will explore the following concepts:

- Students will explore the following concepts:
- Analyzing media works
- Understanding Aboriginal worldviews
- Exploring new vocabulary and concepts relating to the First Peoples of North America
- Synthesizing historical concepts

## Learning Skills

- Research skills
- Creative thinking skills
- Media literacy skills
- Communication and information technology skills
- Cooperative learning skills

## Time Required

Each lesson step may take one or two class periods, plus the performance task to complete this package, based on student needs and inquiry.

## Lesson Steps

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| Step One   | Research — Biographies and Autobiographies                          |
| Step Two   | Métis Soldiers/Warriors   |
| Step Three | Visual Arts rendition   |
| Step Four  | Métis Soldier — Autobiographical Radio Clip                         |
| Step Five  | Performance Task — Create A Moment in History Commercial — You Tube |

## Blackline Masters

- #1 Biography/Autobiography Rubric

- #2 Radio Clip Checklist
- #3 Performance Task Criteria
- #4 Performance Task Rubric

## Appendices

- Appendix I Teacher Checklist

## Materials Required

For Teachers

- See Suggested Resources document
- Teacher Checklist (Appendix I)
- Computer, document camera

For Students

- Copy of *The Ruptured Sky*
- Student handouts
- Access to a computer, if possible
- Chart paper, markers, tape

## CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

### Overall Curriculum Expectations

The overall expectations listed below serve as an entry point for teachers. Teachers are encouraged to make connections to specific expectations in their region and grade.

### History

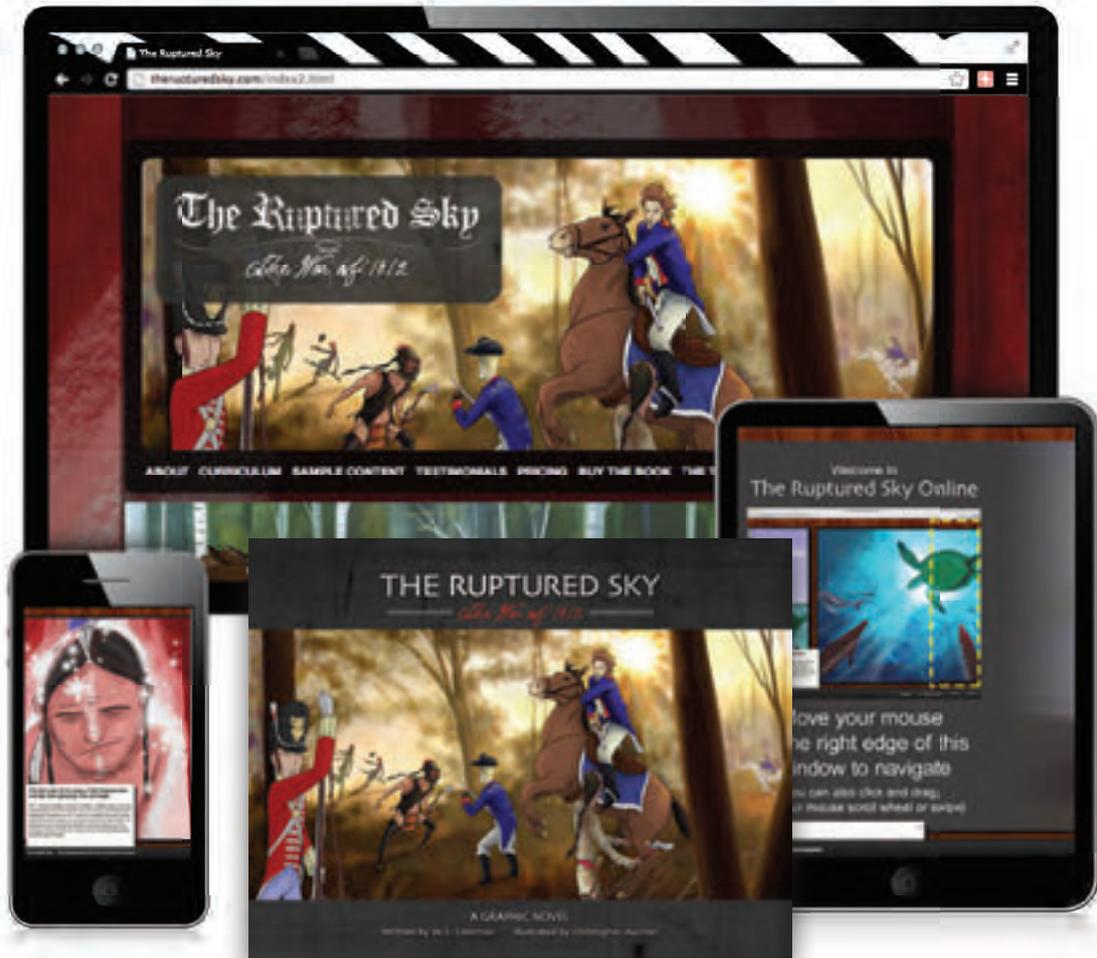
Outline the reasons why settlers came to New France; identify the social, political, religious, and economic factors that shaped the colony; and describe how settlers and fur traders interacted with the First Nation peoples.

Identify and explain similarities and differences in the goals and interests of various groups in New France, including French settlers, First Nation peoples, and both French and English fur traders.

### Media Literacy

Demonstrate understanding that different media texts reflect different points of view (e.g., compare pictures of the same character and/or event in media texts aimed at different audiences and identify the different perspectives represented). Teacher prompt: *“What differences can you*

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\* Officially approved resource for the Manitoba Ministry of Education, York Region District School Board and the Toronto District School Board.

*identify in the way the character is represented in the different texts? Which representation seems most/least fair? Why? What explanation can you suggest for the differences in the representations?"*

Identify who produces various media texts and determine the commercial, ideological, political, cultural, and/or artistic interests or perspectives that the texts may involve (e.g., films may be classified as artistic, commercial, documentary, etc., reflecting the different perspectives and approaches they take; one magazine contains a majority of pieces offering a political perspective, whereas another features various pieces written from different perspectives).

Create a commercial through media.

## Language

Write complex texts of different lengths using a wide range of forms (e.g., a description of the procedure for growing rice or coffee; an explanation of multiple ways to solve a mathematical problem or investigation; an argument stating the opposing points of view on a community issue, including the response of each side to the points made by the other side, for a class/school debate, or to report on the debate in a newsletter; a fictional narrative about a historical event to dramatize material studied; a mystery story modelled on the structures and conventions of the genre).

## STEP ONE: Research — Biographies and Autobiographies

### Background Information

- Teacher should establish the checklist for organizational purposes (included in the appendices).
- Teacher should spend some time navigating the websites to ensure fluency during lessons (bookmark and number the video clips for ease of reference).
- Teachers may want to spend some time reviewing appropriate terminology for this unit, as well as possibly printing some resources off in advance if access to Internet is an issue.
- It is imperative to model and guide students through internet searches, to foster excellence in internet researching skills

## Materials Required

For Teachers:

- Appendix I — Teacher should establish the student checklist as an organizational assessment tool to record completion of student assignments
- Internet access
- Chart paper, tape, markers
- Terminology resource: [www.canadahistory.com/sections/documents/Native/docsnativesoldiers.htm](http://www.canadahistory.com/sections/documents/Native/docsnativesoldiers.htm)

For Students:

- Markers (one each)
- Terminology resource: [www.canadahistory.com/sections/documents/Native/docsnativesoldiers.htm](http://www.canadahistory.com/sections/documents/Native/docsnativesoldiers.htm).
- Métis Website featuring Métis Soldiers: [www.metismuseum.ca](http://www.metismuseum.ca)
- Paper to write on

## Teaching/Learning Strategies

Establish learning goals with your students. Write the learning goals on the chalkboard, on chart paper, or under the document camera, for students to see daily. Post them in the same spot to use as anchor charts. Pique student interest with a hook.

Learning Goals/Engaging Hook: If you were alive in the 1800's, whom do you think you would be like? For the next few days, we are going to look at the key people, the role of the Métis people, and their biographies in regards to their roles in the battles of the War of 1812.

### Part A

Gathering prior knowledge: Ask the students if they are aware of the correct terminology when referring to Aboriginal People, and discuss the term, "politically correct," and that, often times, terms can change. Let the students know that the following website provides a brief description of the current terminology to refer to Aboriginal, First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Peoples: [www.canadahistory.com/sections/documents/Native/docsnativesoldiers.htm](http://www.canadahistory.com/sections/documents/Native/docsnativesoldiers.htm). Encourage students to ask questions. Discuss the term Métis as being a new term, and how it came to be.

### Part B

You will need five pieces of chart paper for the following task. On each piece of chart paper, write the following names (Tecumseh, Joseph Brant, Laura Secord, Captain Billy Caldwell a.k.a. Chief Sauganash, and The Role of the Métis)

at the top. On the piece of chart paper that reads The Role of Métis, also pose the question: How much do we really know about the role of Métis people in the War of 1812?

Post the pieces of chart paper around the room. Give each student a marker. Invite students to rotate around the room and write one important piece of information they know or wonder about this person. They cannot duplicate answers, but they may add to an already existing idea.

### Part C

Have the students read the following article. Provide them with a copy or have them look it up, at [www.metismuseum.ca](http://www.metismuseum.ca). They will also need some paper to write on.

When the student has arrived at this web page, type in “Métis Soldiers in the War of 1812” in the search icon. Then have students read the 27-page article.

The article may be assigned for homework if not completed on the first day. Teachers may want to print off some copies for students.

Have students decide which person they would like to conduct some further research on and write a biography on, perhaps someone who caught their interest or someone they made a connection to.

As the students read, have the students write one or two ideas on their paper regarding the role of Métis in the War of 1812, based on this article.

Conduct a gallery walk. Leave the students’ papers on their desks so students can circulate and read other’s work. Circulate and check for understanding.

### Literacy Extension

Have students begin searching for biographies of significant Métis soldiers/warriors in the War of 1812 on the Internet.

## STEP TWO: Métis Soldiers/Warriors Biographies

### Materials Required

For Teachers:

- Internet
- Heritage minute clip of a Métis Icon [www.historica-dominion.ca/content/heritage-minutes/louis-ri-el-0](http://www.historica-dominion.ca/content/heritage-minutes/louis-ri-el-0)
- Chart paper, markers

For Students:

- Access to a computer
- Article at [www.metismuseum.ca](http://www.metismuseum.ca)
- Biography/Autobiography Rubric (BLM #1)
- Voice Recorders



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## Teaching/Learning Strategies

### Part A

Establish learning goals with students. Let the students know they will be creating a radio clip in a few lessons, and in order to complete an accurate biography-radio clip of a Métis Soldier, they must first learn some solid researching skills, with a focus on biography writing, perspective, and authenticity.

Discuss the term authenticity: How will they know if an article or information is authentic? As a group discuss and record ideas on how we might review websites/research, and decide if they are authentic. Often if the website is a government website, or from a university, they might be fairly accurate.

Students may refer to their first attempt at biography writing from the previous package, if applicable. The goal in this series of lessons is to transform a biography into an autobiography to complete the task of creating an autobiographical audio/radio clip.

Play the radio clip [www.historica-dominion.ca/content/heritage-minutes/louis-riel-0](http://www.historica-dominion.ca/content/heritage-minutes/louis-riel-0) After playing the radio clip, invite students to search, how to write a biography on the internet, or do this as a whole class on an interactive white board or with the projector and screen. Review what a level 3 and 4 biography might look like with the students.

Discuss components of a good autobiography: catchy title, interesting and detailed opening paragraph, important details, an interesting fact, the use of humor, the writer's voice in first person, editing skills, reading aloud to check for meaning/understanding.

### Part B

Have the students revisit the following article. Provide them with a copy or have them look it up at: [www.metismuseum.ca](http://www.metismuseum.ca).

When the student has arrived at this web page, type in War of 1812 in the search icon. Then, click on the "Métis Soldiers in the War of 1812" document. Pages 1-27.

Ask students to choose a Métis Soldier from this article. Once students have a clear idea of the soldier on whom they would like to write a biography and a solid understanding of how to write a biography, have the students review BLM #1, the evaluation rubric for this step.

Students may also conduct an Internet search on how to write an interesting biography.

Complete a writer's workshops in writing biographies. Provide students with ample drafting, writing, editing, and publishing time. Collect student biographies and use BLM #1, the evaluation rubric, to assess student assignments.

## Literacy Extensions

Have students complete their biographies using a word processing program.

## STEP THREE: Visual Art Rendition and Teacher- Student Conferencing

### Materials Required

For Teachers

- Computer and Internet access
- Visual Arts renditions  
[www.kspcommunityculture.ca/history/techumseh.html](http://www.kspcommunityculture.ca/history/techumseh.html)
- Time: This lesson will allow teachers class time to conference with students about their biographies

For Students

- Art supplies: charcoal pencils and paper
- Internet access

## Teaching/Learning Strategies

### Part A

Establish Learning Goals: *Today we are going to look at the following clip to help us in our learning about historical pictures and renditions from this era.*

First of all, let's brainstorm, and discuss the term rendition. What is a rendition? (A rendition is a replica, a reproduction, or an interpretation of another's work.) How do you know if work is authentic or a rendition? Do you know of any famous renditions by famous artists? Why would looking at renditions be helpful for us to look at? (We can gain a greater insight to the era with visual images, a picture says a thousand words.)

Look at the following site: Visual Arts renditions  
[www.kspcommunityculture.ca/history/techumseh.html](http://www.kspcommunityculture.ca/history/techumseh.html)

Encourage students to peruse this site.

Encourage students to research video clips on artistic/shading techniques to assist them in completing this art assignment. Students will sketch a rendition of a person or scene from this historical time of war.

Frame their rendition with black construction paper, and post it in the classroom, hallway, etc.

Use a Visual Arts rubric from your local Ministry for this assignment. Provide positive and constructive feedback.

### Literacy Extension

Have students write a reflection on this lesson, their art process, and their new learning in their reflection journal.

## STEP FOUR: Métis Soldier — Autobiographical Radio Clip

### Materials Required

For Teachers

- Internet access
- [www.historica-dominion.ca/content/heritage-minutes/jacques-cartier](http://www.historica-dominion.ca/content/heritage-minutes/jacques-cartier)
- [www.historica-dominion.ca/content/heritage-minutes/laura-second](http://www.historica-dominion.ca/content/heritage-minutes/laura-second)
- [www.historica-dominion.ca/content/heritage-minutes/peacemaker](http://www.historica-dominion.ca/content/heritage-minutes/peacemaker)
- Heritage minute clip of a Métis icon: [www.historica-dominion.ca/content/heritage-minutes/louis-riel-0](http://www.historica-dominion.ca/content/heritage-minutes/louis-riel-0)

For Students

- Internet access
- Radio Clip Checklist (BLM #2)

### Teaching/Learning Strategies

#### Part A

Establish learning goals with students: *Today you will learn how to transform a piece of narrative writing from third person, to first person.* (A biography transformed into an autobiography), using the Métis Soldiers as a topic.

Engaging Hook: Play the video clips and explain to students that these clips are examples of biographical videos. That is, they are written and narrated in the third person. They tell a brief story, like a narrative.

[www.historica-dominion.ca/content/heritage-minutes/jacques-cartier](http://www.historica-dominion.ca/content/heritage-minutes/jacques-cartier)

[www.historica-dominion.ca/content/heritage-minutes/laura-second](http://www.historica-dominion.ca/content/heritage-minutes/laura-second)

[www.historica-dominion.ca/content/heritage-minutes/peacemaker](http://www.historica-dominion.ca/content/heritage-minutes/peacemaker)

Play the Radio Clip — Heritage Minutes of a Métis Icon:

[www.historica-dominion.ca/content/heritage-minutes/louis-riel-0](http://www.historica-dominion.ca/content/heritage-minutes/louis-riel-0)

Explain to students that this clip is an example of a biographical radio clip, with autobiographical content. It tells a brief story in third person, and then quickly turns to first person, as if you were actually listening to that person in the moment.

Critical thinking activity: Have students gather in small groups to discuss and compare how the clips are different. Which clip did they like the best, and why?

#### Part B

Encourage students to rewrite their biography in the form of a radio clip, including a first person voice as if they were that person telling the story themselves.

Hand out the Radio Clip Checklist (BLM #2) and remind students that after writing, their next step will be providing peer feedback with peers to improve their writing. Then, they will be recording an audio radio-clip, so they should keep the length of their writing in mind. The radio clip should be no longer than one minute, to express a significant moment in time during this era.

Provide students with ample writing, editing, publishing, and recording time. Have students provide peer feedback to improve their written works. Record the audio clips, and provide more time for peer feedback of the audio clips. Finally, play the audio clips for the entire class.

Teachers/Students may choose an audio recording device of their choice e.g., voice recorder, laptop, iPad, iPhone, tablet, etc.

The assessment of the audio clip will be the presence of frequent peer feedback, and descriptive feedback given by the teacher.

## Travel

Final report cards have finally been submitted and summer is on its way! The extended break provides a great opportunity to travel. Whether you're venturing off to far and distant lands or staying close to home, there are several unique travel opportunities exclusive to educators. Below are some suggested websites that may inspire your next vacation or holiday, including special educator discounts and an oceanic program that sends educators out to sea to participate in real-world research.



**Educators Travel Network**  
[www.educatorstravel.com](http://www.educatorstravel.com)

Educators Travel Network is a travel network for those who work in, or are retired from the teaching profession. A membership costs \$36 USD and entitles you to low-cost accommodations offerings. Members can stay with other members for \$45 USD/night for two people, or participate in home stays that cost \$55 USD/night. A home stay is where a member is away for at least 5 days and another stays at their home. With over 6000 registered users who live all over the world, there are thousands of destinations to choose from for your next vacation. Educators Travel Networks charges small processing fees, but they also offer loyalty rewards for each of your stays.



**NOAA Teacher at Sea**  
<http://teacheratsea.noaa.gov>

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Teacher at Sea Program aims to provide educators with hands-on, real-world, research experience working at sea with their scientists. While certainly not a typical vacation, selected participants will gain invaluable scientific knowledge by living and working side-by-side with scientists aboard one of NOAA's ships. The three main types are: fisheries research cruises,

oceanographic research cruises, and hydrographic survey cruises. Participants are typically at sea from one week to one month, but the average cruise is 12-14 days long. The program pays for all necessary travel costs is open to all educators, including those in Canada. To be eligible, applicants must be currently employed full-time as a teacher, post-secondary instructor, museum or aquarium educator, or an adult education teacher. Other requirements and more information can be found on the NOAA website.



**STA**  
[www.statravel.com/teacher-discount-card.htm](http://www.statravel.com/teacher-discount-card.htm)

Start the Adventure Travel (STA) is a global travel agency specializing in tours and expeditions for young people. They also offer the well-known ISIC student discount card. But who says only students should get discounts? Teachers deserve them too. The ITIC (International Teacher Identity Card) is the only internationally recognized proof of full time teacher status. The card costs \$25 USD, is valid for 16 months, and entitles you to over 120,000 discounts around the world on lodging, shopping, dining, and more in over 133 countries. Lecturers, professors, and tutors are also eligible to purchase the card.



**Teachers Travel Web**  
<http://teacherstravelweb.com/members/registration.asp>

Teachers Travel Web is a network that offers unique travel experiences for teachers. There is an annual membership fee for \$60 USD a year, but teachers can then stay with members around the world—for free. There is no booking or processing fee. The network is open to all current, former, or retired teachers, educators, school staff, or counsellors and their partners. There are three accommodation choices: home hosting, which is a bed and breakfast-style stay for a maximum of three nights; home exchange, where members swap homes and can stay for a longer period of time; and house sitting, where another member looks after your home while you're away or vice versa. With thousands of members around the world, you'll be sure to meet people with similar backgrounds and interests wherever you go.

# THE power OF THE pen



by Meagan Gillmore

Want to build your students' minds or bodies, or just need something new to add to your art lessons? You might want to consider re-introducing handwriting.

Sylvia Chiang can teach students different languages. She's taught French for more than a decade. But this past school year, the Toronto teacher discovered that some students in her Grade 5 core French class couldn't understand the lessons. It wasn't a matter of learning her spoken words. Rather, they couldn't decipher her written ones.

Chiang had been using cursive writing on the board. "A lot of students wouldn't be able to read it," she says. The shapes of the letters were foreign to them. She resumed printing, but wondered if they were lacking a valuable life skill. (While not necessarily a specific curriculum expectation in all jurisdictions, cursive is typically introduced in Grades 3 and 4. If students can't read it by Grade 5, Chiang says, it could be "too late" to teach them.)

Chiang isn't the first to notice handwriting illiteracy—the inability to read cursive writing. Educators and parents alike have debated whether it should still be taught in today's classrooms. This is particularly true in the United States, where more than 40 states have adopted the Common Core State Standards that provide consistent education standards across the country. These standards emphasize keyboarding skills. In some jurisdictions, schools no longer formerly teach cursive.

The situation highlights a key tension in education today. While many educators were taught cursive before the advent of the Internet and digital-based technologies

in every aspect of life, their students have only known life after the Internet. Kindergarten students may not be able to print their names when they begin school, but they've likely seen family members or friends using keyboards, or used one themselves—even if just to play games on mobile devices. Previous generations didn't use computers regularly until they were much older—and then, often for business purposes.

Eliminating cursive education can make it seem like "a vintage art not necessary for communication in the adult world and the business world," says Michael Sull, an advocate for handwriting education in America. ('Handwriting' refers to any writing done by hand. Printing is also called 'manuscript' writing. 'Cursive' refers to forming joined letters. There are various systems of cursive writing.) But people need cursive, if only for signing their names. Canadian passports require a handwritten signature. Students aren't the only ones with handwriting illiteracy. Many teachers also have difficulty reading and writing cursive.

In 2010, Heather Held, a professional calligrapher in St. George, ON, began teaching calligraphy workshops, mostly to graphic artists or at calligraphy guilds. But when she began offering handwriting classes at a stationery store in Cambridge, ON, she noticed a shift. Professionals were enrolling. They'd been told their handwriting at work was



illegible. Some of her students were teachers.

"The kids can't read it because the teachers can't write it," says Held. Some think they can write as fast as they can type. Some teachers, says Held, were never taught to handwrite themselves. That makes it hard for them to teach it to their students.

That's concerning. Handwriting can benefit a child mentally, physically, and emotionally.

Forming letters by hand helps prepare children to learn to read. It helps solidify the knowledge that certain shapes stand for certain sounds, and that, when put together, they make words, explains Joanne Melo, a literacy and library services co-ordinator with the Toronto Catholic District School Board. Tracing letters by hand, or making them out of playdough strengthens brain pathways crucial for reading.

Writing by hand also strengthens the body. Children develop fine motor skills by writing with pencils, markers, crayons, and pens. Keyboarding alone doesn't offer this. In 2012, Sull was a featured speaker at a conference about teaching handwriting in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Many presenters weren't educators or those interested in handwriting's historic and cultural value. They were neuroscientists and occupational therapists who spoke about writing's physical and neurological benefits. Proper cursive instruction involves the whole body, says Sull, who self-published a handwriting curriculum a number of years ago. Proper handwriting instruction takes into account posture and body positioning, he says.

Some students struggle to develop fine motor skills. But the answer may not be abandoning pens and pulling out

the computer. Instead, cursive writing may offer a solution. Sherrie-Mae Guthrie, an Ottawa teacher and vice principal, saw this happen with her daughter. When her daughter was seven years old, she struggled to master the exact circles and lines printing required. Guthrie, who had taught cursive writing to her students, pulled out her old lesson plans. Cursive allowed her daughter to communicate in a more creative way, without the restrictions of printing. Her printing improved, and so did her confidence. More than two years later, she takes pride when people notice her "very beautiful" cursive, her mother says.

Teachers need to watch for frustration when introducing cursive writing, Guthrie says. When she taught it, she kept ledger-sized paper, black paint, and fine paintbrushes handy. Students sometimes found it easier to write with paint and paintbrushes than pencils, she said. Keeping pencils as sharp as possible also helped, she said.

While many teachers may agree children still need to be taught to write properly, they're still bound by the limits of time and curriculum expectations. Melo compares it to government requirements for daily physical activity in schools. Research shows regular physical movement helps students learn. Teachers "need to be thinking with intentionality" about when it's best to include it in the school day, she explains. If teachers think dedicated time for handwriting will help learning, then they'll need to figure out how to incorporate it best. "It's about priorities," she says.

If teachers want to prioritize their students' well-being in an increasingly connected, and often chaotic, world, perhaps handwriting—printing or cursive—should take priority.

Chiang remembers how excited she and her classmates were to learn cursive writing. "It kind of felt like a rite of passage," she says, "that you were getting to the next stage of writing." A good signature is something to take pride in, says Sull, who runs after-school handwriting clubs in Kansas. "We are all people, we are not machines," he says. "There's a human element to handwriting because it's so personal."

**Writing by hand also strengthens the body. Children develop fine motor skills by writing with pencils, markers, crayons, and pens.**

Tapping into that personal element may be the best way to introduce handwriting. Held recommends teachers incorporate it into art lessons. This helps students see it as a creative outlet, and not a rule-confined activity.

The creative act of writing can reach any child, even those drawn to dark expression, says Held. Their faces light up when she demonstrates what she can do with pointed pens and real ink. "They say, 'Wow, I didn't know a pen could do that,'" she says. "I think they are eager."

"Kids can't wait for me to come in and teach them,"

says Sull, who has taught children as young as seven years old. "It's the adults who think they are wiser and are basically throwing this out the window." He understands keyboarding skills are necessary, although he admits he does very little. He uses an iPad to check emails, tapping messages letter-by-letter. But relying solely on keyboarding removes the thoughtfulness and nuance required by good communication, he says.

The thoughtful, meditative space handwriting creates is one reason Held will continue to practise and teach it, even as she watches regular cursive use diminish. Children's constant reliance on technology means "their mind is constantly active," she says.

Writing gives children a chance to be still. Constant activity impairs their ability to sit quietly, putting undue pressure on students, parents, and teachers, says Held. The child who can't stop fidgeting or who needs to doodle to stay alert, needs to learn handwriting, she says.

Handwriting creates room for peace. "Calligraphers can lower their heart rate just sitting in front of their paper to work," Held says. "You can't do it if you're fighting, if you're agitated. You have to be at peace."

Meagan Gillmore is a Toronto-based editor and writer. She's studied publishing in both print and digital formats, but tries to send a couple of handwritten letters a month.



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