

Shmanners 166: Handwriting

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Travis: Uh, ice... seminar? What's this say? I can't read it.

Teresa: It's Shmanners!

[theme music plays]

Travis: Hello, Internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis: And you're listening to Shmanners!

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis: ...for ordinary occasions! Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear.

Travis: How are you?

Teresa: Oh, boy. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah! It's a house full of chaos! We're joined in the studio by special guest, uh, Bebe Lee McElroy. She's, uh, watching—

Teresa: She's going to be a silent guest.

Travis: Yeah. She's watching Daniel Tiger with her headphones on, and hopefully she'll be chill, and outside the studio we have two special guests, uh, Buttercup McElroy and Lily McElroy, who hopefully won't bark too much. It's just a house full of Saturday morning chaos! Sorry this episode's late, but you know, life. Life! And we're doing it, and we're—

Teresa: And we're living it.

Travis: We're living it, we're achieving it—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —and we're believing it. This is it. It's all coming together.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Teresa, let me ask you a question.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: How's your handwriting?

Teresa: Um, you know, I feel like my handwriting has suffered in the last few years, whereas when I was diligently writing, you know, stuff, uh, it was a lot better. So I'm gonna say I'm out of practice, but I like my handwriting.

Travis: Um, I—so, I—much like my manners, I have my everyday handwriting and my formal handwriting, and I've bragged about this on My Brother, My Brother, and Me before and I'll brag about it again, I can still write the whole alphabet in cursive, and I'm pretty proud of that.

Teresa: [sarcastically] Oh, congratulations.

Travis: 35—I'm just sayin'. But normally—and you've seen my handwriting. I write in all caps, uh, print letters, usually with a Sharpie, 'cause I'm a very bold, dynamic, and loud human being.

Teresa: It's true!

Travis: And it transfers to my writing. But, um—

Teresa: You know what's interesting about my handwriting? It looks very much like my mother's, even though she is left handed.

Travis: Oh. But did you learn—like, would your mom like, write a letter and then hand you then pen—you told me the other day that you learned on a Magna Doodle.

Teresa: Yes. I used to—I am terrible at spelling, because I am a phonetic speller, but English is not a phonetic language.

Travis: No.

Teresa: [laughs] So in order to learn my spelling words, I would use a Magna Doodle, so I could just write the words over and over and over and over, and train my hand how to write them.

Travis: See, so this is interesting, right? 'Cause I—I feel like—

Teresa: That's also how I used to learn my lines, too.

Travis: Oh, yeah? Writing them out? Well see, I would say 'em.

Teresa: Writing them out over and over and over again.

Travis: I am—I am one of those people that like, really took to spelling. I'm pretty good at it when I'm thinking about it. Um, but like, handwriting was something that took me forever and ever and ever. Maybe that's why I can still remember how to do it, 'cause I had to really, like, drill it in. 'Cause I remember thinking, like, "This is dumb."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Like, "Why do I need this?" Because that's the thing. So, our—our generation is a very transitional generation in a lot of ways, but one of those ways was computers being used in schools.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Like, I—I remember, you know, in like, fourth grade doing like, Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing. And that being—

Bebe: [babbles]

Travis: Oh, hi, Bebe!

Teresa: Oh man, I was so bad at that.

Travis: Bebe just brought me my tennis shoes, for some reason. Thank you, Bebe! Okay, great!

Teresa: I was so bad at that. I think that's the only class I ever failed. A D—a D was failure, by the way.

Travis: My—okay, listen. Here's a little behind the scenes, and we'll get to talking about handwriting in a second, I promise. But for some reason, at our school, the computers had like, two programs on 'em: Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing, and Sims Hotel.

Teresa: Oh, no. [laughs]

Travis: Like, so I—whenever the teacher wasn't looking, I would just like, alt+tab over or whatever and play Sims Hotel until she walked back by, and I would switch it back real quick. Like, I wasn't paying attention to Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing at all! And so still, to this day, I hunt and peck type. But—

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: So, handwriting.

Teresa: Handwriting. Okay.

Travis: I assume the history of handwriting goes back a good long way?

Teresa: Indeed. Um, so the Romans were among the first to develop a written script for things like transaction and correspondence.

Travis: Yeah, this is a thing—I think we maybe have talked about this before, but like, famously, if I remember correctly, they like, developed it to keep receipts of paying soldiers?

Teresa: Yeah, mm-hmm.

Travis: Yeah?

Teresa: Things like that.

Travis: But they had—I don't know if you know this. The Romans? Pretty big army.

Teresa: Pretty big! Um, and they borrowed sort of from a lot of different people's alphabets, mainly the Etruscans.

Travis: Okay, yeah. Well, if you're gonna borrow, borrow from the best, you know?

Teresa: I mean, exactly. So, it's—it's kind of interesting that in my experience, we learn printing before we learn cursive, because intuitively, it should be the other way around. In fact, it was the way that... Historically speaking, you did cursive first.

Travis: Now, why—why—you say that intuitive—why?

Teresa: Well, because the early versions of both lowercase letters, uh, and, you know, and numbers, looked a lot more like cursive, so you can think about how, historically, it evolved that way, and why would you teach it the other way? We'll continue. Anyway, anyway, anyway.

So after the Roman Empire fell, uh, penmanship became more of a specialized discipline.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, and it was primarily for the monks, right?

Travis: Yeah, that makes sense.

Teresa: Yeah, 'cause they were in charge of, like, copying things and making books and stuff. And I know that we tend to think of the Middle Ages as kind of this backwards time, but the demand for books really increased during the Middle Ages.

Travis: So, as I understand it, and, um, I have—at this point in my life, 35 years old—negative knowledge of history.

Teresa: Uh—okay.

Travis: I have, uh, what—my, my actual knowledge of history has been replaced by watching too many TV shows and books and stuff that I don't know what's true, and... There are dragons, right? Anyways—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, but I would be willing to be that a lot of the problem was lack of, uh, spreading of information.

Teresa: Yes, definitely.

Travis: That it was like, the people who had books were the very, very rich—

Teresa: And they had a lot of books.

Travis: —like, royalty and stuff, and there weren't like, libraries, and schools, and stuff that everybody was going to.

Teresa: I mean, basically the only place to get books was from monks. Um, and if you weren't rich, you couldn't get 'em.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Um, but it vary—the style of handwriting, even spelling, really varied a lot by region. Um, so in the late 8th century, Charlemagne tasked an English monk with standardizing it, right?

Um, so what they decided was... It was heavily influenced by Roman characters, but it's called Carolinian Minuscule.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And it was designed for maximum legibility, and featured lowercase letters—

Travis: [wrestling promo voice?] Maximum legibility! [laughs] Sunday, Sunday, Sunday!

Teresa: Oh my gosh.

Travis: [wrestling promo voice?] Watch these monks write in Carolinian Minuscule! Maximum E— You'll pay for the whole page, but you'll only use the first two lines!

[normally] Sorry, go on? You were saying something?

Teresa: It featured lowercase letters, word separation, and punctuation, which, again, because of the highly stylized nature, sometimes the words weren't even separated, you know what I mean?

Travis: This is—this is something I remember, oddly, that has stuck in my mind from church, like, Bible Study stuff and everything, that for a long time monks—to conserve space, it would all just be like, one whole line. You know, everything—all the letter—and then you would have to like, go through and like, put hash marks between each word.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: But like, you would do that as the reader.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: It was—it was not... It's interesting to think about, that these—sometimes these were not done with the idea of, like, that they would be read. It was just like, "Well, we're writing this down for future posterity. This isn't like, I'm writing a book to publish and—"

Teresa: It wasn't about ease of readability, for sure.

Travis: Right, right, right, yeah. This is like, you're gonna sit down and you're gonna like, pore over this and study it and stuff. This isn't like, "Yeah, you know what? I'm gonna sit in a hammock and read this monk book."

Teresa: Um, so by the 1700s, elegant handwriting really became a status symbol. Um, and this is when, uh, penmanship schools really started to flourish.

Travis: Now, let me ask—flourish, huh? Good. Ah?

Teresa: Ah?

Travis: No, I have a question for you, 'cause this is one of the questions we got a lot when I put the call out. In some form, people asked a lot, like, "Why is, traditionally, good penmanship considered feminine?"

Teresa: Well, I wouldn't say it's considered feminine. I would say that there... When penmanship was highly valued, there was a difference between what was considered feminine script and masculine script.

So, um, usually the masculine side was more kind of like, heavier. It was—the loops were fatter, you know?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Kind of like, taking up more space, whereas women's words were kind of more intricate and shaded and—

Travis: Well, man, if that isn't just a great metaphor, huh?

Teresa: So like—when you looked at someone's handwriting, you were analyzing them for how much time it would take, right? Because if you were, say, a woman of leisure, you could go back over your handwriting and shade the things that were appropriate, right? That meant that you had a lot of time.

Travis: So like, bold—like you can make 'em bold, right? You would like, bold script?

Teresa: Well, think about calligraphy. Um, like where one side of the letter is darker and thicker—

Travis: Oh, right, right, right.

Teresa: —than the other side. That going back and shading, 'cause you can do a little bit of that with a pen, right? You can make it a thin or a thick line.

Travis: Depending on pressure, yeah.

Teresa: Right. But if you have to go back and make it even thicker, that shows that you have a lot of time on your hands. [laughs quietly]

Travis: Now, was it about bragging about how much time you had? Or was it showing, like, "This mattered to me, so I put time into it?"

Teresa: Um, it was—at this time in history, it was more about social status, and also, um, different—different professions had different writing styles.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, so if you were a lawyer, you would write one way. If you were a merchant, you would write another way. So it wasn't just about, um, you know, how much leisure time you had, but also what your job was.

Travis: Mm-hmm. Okay.

Teresa: Um, so then at this point... So I've jumped all the way up to like, colonial America, at this point.

Travis: I've heard of it, yes. I'm familiar, mm-hmm.

Teresa: And reading—

Travis: Colonial Williamsburg, yes, yes,

Teresa: Uh-huh, mm-hmm. Reading and writing were very heavily separated at this point. Reading was basically measured in, "Can you read the Bible out loud?" Not, "Can you understand what you've read?" Or, "Does it—does this read well? Does this make sense?" Doesn't—doesn't matter. "Can you read the Bible out loud? Yes? Then you're a good reader."

Travis: Huh! Okay, cool.

Teresa: Right? Uh, same thing with writing. "Can you make this word look like my word?"

Travis: So it was more about—it was less about comprehension and more about just like, duplication, in both cases?

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Yeah, yeah.

Teresa: Sure, and it—penmanship was more like... When you think about, um, the quote "old masters" artists, right? Um, and what would usually happen is, you have an old master painting and you are charged with copying the old master, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So it was the same thing with handwriting. You were given a copybook, a workbook, and if you could duplicate what it looked like, you had good handwriting.

Travis: That's interesting, 'cause like, it seems to make sense, right up until I think about the idea of like, if that's all you're doing, then like, how tricky must it be if you are trying to write a word you've never seen before?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Or if you're trying to read a word you've never seen before, and you're like, "Uh—okay, wait. Give me a minute." [laughs] You know what I mean? As opposed to learning how all the pieces fit together and why, instead just learning like, "If you see this, it's this."

Teresa: Yeah. Rote memorization—

Travis: Right.

Teresa: —basically. Um, so then, going back to the idea of different styles of penmanship, um... Let's discuss print and cursive.

Travis: Yes, please!

Teresa: Uh, so—

Travis: Is it true that you have to write checks in cursive?

Teresa: No.

Travis: Aw...

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But what about just the money—

Bebe: [babbles]

Travis: —the money part? See, Bebe agrees with me.

Teresa: So these different hands were developed, and I... It's not just about print versus cursive, although it is, kind of. So, when you print something, it's harder to make them all connect, right? So it's kind of a—it's a blockier thing.

Travis: Bop bop bop bop bop. It's very staccato.

Teresa: Yeah, and—

Travis: It's staccato. Jazz!

Teresa: —that goes back to the pieces of type in the printing press, right? And also this kind of, uh, monastic hand. The Gothic look, right?

Travis: Yes. The Tim Burton-esque writing.

Teresa: Sure. And then, the other hand would be the cursive, right? Which, in its developing stage, was known as the Italian, or Italic, hand.

Travis: [gasps] Whoa!

Teresa: I know, right?

Travis: Now, see, you have made a point to me now, that I've made a connection because of the thing you said, because you are very illuminating. I've never thought about it before, but if you're good at it, because it all connects and everything, it's probably faster to write in cursive.

Teresa: It is! It is faster to write in cursive. That's why a lot of shorthands are based on cursive letters, and that is generally why people wrote in cursive anyway. Like, your—the hand—and this is so hard, because the name of the hand, and the hand... You know what I mean.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: A person's hand, attached to their arm, works faster when you don't have to lift up the pen.

Travis: That makes complete sense.

Teresa: So the Italic or Italian hand is faster, because you're connecting the letters.

Travis: And let's be honest, folks. If you've ever written in cursive for a big—you skip some letters. You know?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: You have those certain le—you have those letters where—

Teresa: Like the M and the N, that are just loopy loopy loop. [laughs]

Travis: They connect to the top, you know? Like—like a P loops at the top, or like a U loops—or a V... Yeah, a V connects to the top? You can skip some letters in there, right? I'm just gonna skip—and I'm reading it, I'm like, "I get it." Right? "I get this." Where if you were doing it in print I'd be like, "You left out three letters!" It's fine. I'm just sayin'. You can skip some letters!

Teresa: So, I want to talk about, uh—after the break, we'll be back with: thank you notes. Cursive?

Travis: [gasps]

[theme music plays]

Travis: Teresa, uh, we want to write a thank you note this week to ModCloth, but can you tell me a little bit about ModCloth?

Teresa: Well, at ModCloth there is no such thing as an ordinary outfit. They're crafted by a team of in-house designers. They have signature styles which include hand drawn prints and standout silhouettes, in an inclusive size range.

Travis: That's nice.

Teresa: Now, I love ModCloth because they have, on their website... They have a little drop down menu, and you can go to "Vintage Inspired." I love those designs, and this spring and summer, florals are everywhere. I love the vintage inspired florals, the great stripes as well, and it all feels very—very fresh, and still very old. [laughs]

Travis: And stylistically interesting!

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: That's one of the things I really like about ModCloth, is it's not cookie cutter. There are like, bold—not just patterns, but also like, different cuts and different styles to match a lot of different, like, personalities. You know, sometimes like, you go to a website and you're like, "This is the same shirt, just in, like, a different print."

And you know what? If you're into that that's fine, but if you're like, "Well, I need to, like, hunt through thrift shops and vintage stores in order to find what I really want," maybe try ModCloth!

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: You know? Maybe see if they've got what you need.

Teresa: And if you are not sample size, this is a great place to go, because they're expanding their size range from 00 all the way up to 28.

Travis: Wow. Well, there you go. So, to get 15% off your purchase of \$100 or more, go to modcloth.com, that's M-O-D-C-L-O-T-H.com, and enter the code "shmanners" at checkout. This offer is valid for one time use only, and expires on August 3rd, 2019. So go the modcloth.com, and enter the code "shmanners" at checkout. Go!

Speaker One: Hey, thanks for coming!

Group: Thank you.

Thank you.

Thanks.

Speaker One: These are real podcast listeners, not actors.

We took the identifying marks off this podcast. Just tell me your impressions.

Speaker Two: It's really sexy.

Speaker Three: My first thought is, like, Radiolab?

Speaker Four: Definitely something popular.

Speaker Five: Yeah, really popular. A hit show.

Speaker Three: But funny, too. Like, does Tina Fey have a podcast?

Speaker Five: Or the Marx Brothers?

Speaker Three: Yeah, is this podcast Radiolab, but hosted by the Marx Brothers?

Speaker Two: And sexy, like Sade? It reminds me of Sade.

Speaker Four: Exactly, and they're all riding in a BMW.

Speaker One: Close, but not quite. Take a look behind these panels.

[panel rolling back]

Group: [gasps]

Speaker One: And then watch this rocket blast off into space!

[rocket thrusters firing]

Group: Whoa!

Ooh.

Speaker One: And—

[ding]

Speaker One: —there's the pies we made you!

Group: [gasps]

Oh!

What? Yeah!

Speaker One: Now, let's show you the podcast.

[curtains pulling back?]

Group: Oh...

Speaker Four: Wow, it was Jordan, Jesse, Go!

Speaker Five: Jordan, Jesse, Go?

Speaker One: Hold on.

[loud, prolonged clanging]

Group: Whoa.

Ooh...

Oh my goodness...

Speaker One: That was 514 JD Power and Associates Podcasting Awards.

Speaker Five: That was really scary.

Speaker Four: But compelling.

Speaker Two: I guess I should definitely subscribe to Jordan, Jesse, Go!

Speaker One: Um, yeah. I'd say so.

Jordan, Jesse, Go! A real podcast.

[crowd cheering]

[punching]

Hal: Welcome, everyone, to the live wrestling spectacular in Los Angeles.

Danielle: So far, the world's most boring wrestling podcast has been destroying the competition.

Speaker 1: Isn't there anyone who can save us from this travesty? Wait, could it be?

Danielle: It's Tights and Fights, the perfect wrestling podcast!

Hal: Tights and Fights is here to save us from the monotony of boring wrestling podcasts with hilarious conversations!

[punching noise]

Danielle: Woke trips through the history of wrestling!

[punching noise]

Hal: And joke about the finer points of people wearing spandex!

[punching noise]

Audience: One, two, three!

[bell rings]

Hal: What a match!

Danielle: And the Tights and Fights podcast will be back every week!

Speaker 2: Thursdays on MaximumFun.org, or wherever you get podcasts. Please, these hosts have families!

[Tights and Fights theme music plays]

Travis: Okay, we have a ton of questions, but first, you wanted to talk a little bit about thank you notes. Do they have to be in cursive? Can I print them? What about letters in general? Can I print them? Is it different if I type out a letter and print it on a computer versus hand write it? Theresa? Wha-a-at?!

Teresa: Okay. Let's start with the thing I'm absolutely certain of: even if you type a thank you note, you should sign your name with pen.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Okay?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Now, the other arguments, one way or the other, have different merits, okay? I mean, you said earlier that it does show a certain care, a certain attention, to see someone write out in, you know, their own hand, the thank you note.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: On the other hand, ha-ha— [laughs quietly]

Travis: You just made yourself laugh, and then made yourself really laugh—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —and I appreciate you a lot.

Teresa: [clears throat] If you are illegibly writing, what's the point?

Travis: Right.

Teresa: So maybe you need to type it. I do say that two or three sentences, handwritten, is enough. If you need to type, perhaps you should try and make it a little longer, a little more involved, a little more personal, because—

Travis: To balance out...

Teresa: To balance it out, right? So maybe not just the standard two or three lines. Should be a little more, you know, informative of—or even like, more like correspondence.

Travis: Mm. So, what about if I'm handwriting the letter or the note or whatever? Does it have to be like, fancy, or cursive or whatever, or can I write in my—in my, you know, all caps, uh, print kind of handwriting?

Bebe: [babbles distantly]

Teresa: If the alternative is illegible, write in your all caps printed business.

Travis: This is my—so, this is my feeling about it, right? And this is me, Travis McElroy, not an etiquette expert. But I would say, write in your handwriting. Like, my handwriting is all caps, print letters, right? If you get a note from me, that's what it looks like. And so, to decide to try to write in cursive, 'cause that's what it feels like I'm supposed to do... It feels weird, you know what I mean?

Teresa: Sure, yeah.

Travis: I'm gonna write in my form.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Okay. Now, shall we do some questions?

Teresa: Certainly.

Travis: Yes, let's do it. This is from Kay Bees. I've always been super curious about handwriting analysis, the kind where folks claim to be able to determine someone's personality from handwriting, not the forensic kind. What can you tell us about that?

Teresa: Well, there—I mean, it really is a very pseudoscience. It's—

Travis: It's more of a... For fun!

Teresa: Yeah, it's definitely up to interpretation, but there are, perhaps, some things that can be gleaned.

Travis: Like if you put a heart over your I's, you know? That's—that's a clear and obvious symbol, you know? Like, aw, that's nice. You know?

Teresa: Um—

Travis: Although, I could see a very creepy circumstance—like if a serial killer dotted the I's with hearts. Then it maybe wouldn't be so nice. But you know what? That's off topic.

Teresa: It's thought that more outgoing people tend to write in large, dark letters, whereas more shy, introverted people tend to write smaller. Uh, I suppose, unless you have a lot to say, right? That makes sense. Um, same thing about spacing. People who leave larger spaces between words are thought to be more independent than people who crowd them together. Maybe it's kind of like a... If you crowd your words together, it's saying about you, "Don't look at me," like, "This is unimportant."

Travis: I don't know. Or it's saying like, "I'm gonna crowd my letters, just like I'd like to be crowded together with people."

Teresa: Could be.

Travis: As opposed to saying like, "I'm gonna make each word stand out, just like I like to stand out."

Teresa: Um, same thing with heavy and light pressure. It might feel—it might appear that if you have heavy pressure, it is something that you feel strongly about.

Travis: Or you just have big, heavy, ham-hands like I do.

Travis: Maybe, maybe.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Whereas—so, like that suggests maybe anger, or tension, or just a big feeling, right? Whereas soft pressure might mean that you're feeling sensitive, or treading lightly about the subject.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Um, you talked about dotting your I's.

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: Uh, the... The site that I looked at—and there are lots of these, by the way. It's almost like—like dream analysis. You can—

Travis: Or like, we talked in the flower episode about like, what different flowers mean. And it's like, whatever.

Teresa: Yeah. Who's saying it, is really what it means. Um, if you dot your I's closely to the actual stick of the I, it might mean that you are an organized and detail-oriented person.

Travis: 'Cause you're like, bap bap bap bap bap, doing them all together.

Teresa: Whereas if they are further away from the I, even over another letter, that might mean that you are kind of more playful or you are, um—you know, your brain is thinking faster, or even that you're a procrastinator, because you wait until you're done with the word to dot it.

Travis: You know, what's really interesting is like, if you think about the phrase, you know, "I'm gonna dot my I's and cross my T's," right, and make sure everything's done, that phrase really only makes sense if you know that cursive exists, right?

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Because the idea is that you connect it all together, you finish the word or you finish the sentence or you finish the document, and then you go back through and dot—because if the whole idea is like, you don't lift the writing utensil to write the whole word, right, then to cross T's and dot I's you have to like, go back and do it. And so that's why you would go back and make sure you've dotted all the I's and crossed all the T's once you were done.

Anyways, it's not important. Okay, another—

Teresa: But it makes sense.

Travis: Yes. Another question. Uh, this is from Mike.

"What's your stance on how legible a signature should be? A friend who worked at a bank was told to make hers illegible, because it's more secure somehow. Are there different rules for famous people who sign autographs?"

Now, here's the thing, Mike. If you want to get pedantic, there is a different between your signature and your autograph.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Right? A signature would be your, like, legally binding, this is... I would almost say like a fingerprint, even though now forensics knows that fingerprints aren't, uh, as individual as we once believed. But anyways, it is like... Your signature is like your script fingerprint, of like, "This is my signature."

And an autograph is, to your point, something that someone can 'wib-whup-dup'! And be done quickly, so that if they were like, doing a meet and greet signing, they're not having to write their name out each time.

That said, I think a lot of people use those words interchangeably, um, and I think in modern speech that that's totally fine.

I think a signature should be more legible than an autograph, right? Just inherently so. But we talked about this, like, why does a signature exist, and why do we write it in script? I think it's so—

Teresa: Because it's—it's the thing that you write most often with a pen, and so you would use cursive or script because it's faster.

Travis: It's faster, and I think it also is more individual, right? Like, the way that you shape a, like, print T, is pretty straightforward, you know what I mean? But I think people's... Uh, if you're looking at like, comparing it to a different signature, right? Script, I think, is a lot easier to identify as individual versus print. But I don't think it has to be, like, super legible. I think as long as it's the same every time, that's really all that matters.

Um, this question is from Ian.

"Why do doctors have awful handwriting, especially on prescriptions?"

Now, I a—we reached out to Dr. Sydnee McElroy, our sister in law, um, because I had a suspicion, but I wanted it—so, this is her quote.

Teresa: You wanted your suspicion corroborated.

Travis: This is correct. I wanted to be proven right, because I'm me.

"Primarily it's the—" this is from Sydnee. "Primarily, it's the amount of writing that we have to do relative to the time. The saying is, 'If you didn't document it, then it didn't happen,' so we try to write down everything we can, and that leads to sloppy notes. A secondary factor is probably that sloppy handwriting can cover spelling mistakes, and some medical jargon is hard to spell. There's a trade secret for you!"

Thank you, Sydnee. That makes a lot of sense, you know? Especially when you, say—especially for prescriptions.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Like, the spelling of a lot of drugs is weird. And so probably if you can get the point across, without having to remember exactly how it's spelled, like, it saves you having to look stuff up every time, right?

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Yeah. That's my bet. Uh, it's not my bet. Sydnee told us.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, let's see. This is from, uh, Luddles.

"How do you politely tell somebody you can't read their handwriting, and you'd like clarification on what something says? I can't ever seem to find a way to phrase it that doesn't sound like I'm criticizing them."

Teresa: Oh, boy. [sighs] I think you're just gonna have to let go of that idea of criticism, um, because it is not rude to ask for what you need. Um, and as long as you don't start it with, "Your handwriting is terrible—" [laughs]

Travis: Right. I think, you know—

Teresa: It's not—it's not criticism. You need clarification. All you have to do is say, "Can you clarify this word for me?"

Travis: And I think—you know, we've talked before about "I" statements. I think say like, "I'm sorry, I can't read this."

Teresa: You don't even have to say "I'm sorry."

Travis: Oh—"I can't read this," or "I can't quite make it out." Like, that's the thing is like, there's always... You know, social contracts. We all understand. You know? I guarantee you, if someone's handwriting is illegible, they probably know about it by now.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And so if you say like, "I can't quite make this out," I guarantee it's not the first time they've heard it, you know what I mean?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I think it's one of those things—that's like saying... Like, if somebody said something and you didn't understand what they said.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Would you feel bad saying like, "I'm sorry, could you repeat that?" No! You, like—you didn't hear what they said.

Teresa: As long as you didn't say, uh, "You're terrible at speaking, I need you to say it again."

Travis: "Yeah, you're mumbling! Speak up!" Say like, "I'm sorry, I didn't catch that." If you say like, "I'm sorry, I can't quite make it out." Right? You know, like, it's fine. It's fine.

Um, Moonsoother asks:

"Is it uncouth to write in all caps?"

And let me answer that for you. No?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: It shows a refined palette, a discerning taste—

Teresa: You often will even make the first letter bigger.

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: And make the smaller, like.. They're still capital letters, but they're lower?

Travis: I have smaller—what I'm always picturing is like, at the beginning of like... What I think about, like, with Canterbury Tales or like, Robin Hood or whatever, where you have the one, like, almost stained glass capital letter at the beginning of the chapter, right? And then you go into, like, smaller capital letters. That's what I always picture when I do it.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I think that's like, the beginning of *Sword in the Stone*, too. Anyways.

Teresa: A lot of those early Disney movies opened with words on a page.

Travis: Like, storybook stuff. But I—you know, here's the thing. If that's what it takes for it to be legible... I think the only time I would be, uh, cautious about it, is if you are writing a note that is... I don't want to say angry, but maybe not happy, that then how you write it might—might convey a tone that you don't necessarily mean. Right?

That's the only time that I would worry about it. But if I'm writing a thank you note and it's like, "Aw, man, this is amazing!" I'm not worried about writing in all caps. But if I was like, leaving a note on someone's windshield or something... I don't know. Then I might, uh, think about how my all caps would come across, if somebody read it out loud.

Teresa: Okay, all right.

Travis: Yeah?

Teresa: I mean, that's a little bit of personality, uh, gleaning, as we talked about. That pseudoscience.

Travis: Right. Well, that's the thing. Like, someone might know, quote—no pun intended—"read into it," but like, that's... You know.

Teresa: So many great puns this episode.

Travis: I know! It's almost like there's a lot of words to describe writing.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, so let me ask you this, Teresa Marie. And this is—we're all wrapped up with questions and stuff, but this is more prediction. Do you think that as, like, everybody has a tiny computer in their pocket and like, digital correspondence becomes more and more prevalent, do you think that things like cursive writing, and like—

I already think handwriting's not really taught in schools, the same way it was when we were in school. Do you think eventually, like, handwriting will, uh, be a lost art?

Teresa: Um, I think that it will probably go out of style in the way of like... We don't use typewriters hardly anymore, but we use a computer processor. But, you—I, I do think that as long as we continue to try and express our individuality, it's going to be an art form.

Travis: That's fair.

Teresa: Um, there are actually— I saw—you know, because when you look up this kind of stuff there's—there's a lot of debate out there. Should we teach cursive? Should we only teach print? Like, why are schools getting rid of cursive teaching? Things like that.

The new wave, uh, as far as education goes, is to teach cursive first, because like I said before, it probably came first. It's a little more intuitive. Um, it's easier because every, at least lowercase letter, starts at the same point on the line.

Whereas with printing, you have to start—I think I read something like, there are seven different start points.

So, just like, the rote memorization that it takes to learn the letters is a lot easier, because they all start the same, and end the same, I think, because they end at the bottom line, too. So, do I think that it will ever completely disappear? No. Do I think that it will move to a different place in our life? Yes.

Travis: It's especially interesting if you consider, like... If you look at the way, like, computers and devices have evolved that we're kind of back to tablets now, much like how kids used to learn on, like, chalkboard tablets.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And now we have, like, computer tablets that you can use a stylus to like, hand write on. It's really interesting, the way it's all kind of cycled back to tablet.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Um, okay. So, that's gonna do it for us. Thank you for joining us. Uh, Bebe, thank you so much for joining us. I hope you enjoyed Daniel Tiger. Uh, Buttercup and Lily, thank you for scratching at the door.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: We really appreciate you. Um, and you know what?

Teresa: Everybody just wants to be close to us, darling.

Travis: Listen, I get it—

[dog whining]

Yes, Lily. We hear you. Um, so we're gonna wrap up, but before we do, we want to remind you: this week, My Brother, My Brother, and Me and The Adventure Zone are coming to Nashville, Tennessee, and Indianapolis, Indiana; and Shmanners and Sawbones are going to be opening for My Brother, My Brother, and Me in Indianapolis and Nashville, so—

[dog whining]

—if you want to get those tickets, go to mcelroy.family and click on tours. And while you're there—

[dog whining]

—if you're a fan of the Adventure Zone, you can get your tickets for our graphic novel book tour, coming in mid July. Uh—

[dog whining]

—we're coming to Portland, Los Angeles, um... Bebe found her binoculars—

[dog whining]

—and she wants to wear them. Uh—

Bebe: [babbling]

Travis: [quickly] We're gonna be in Austin, we're gonna be in New York, and we're gonna be in San Diego—

[dog whining]

Bebe: [babbling]

Travis: [quickly] —go get those tickets, the price of the ticket includes a free copy of the, uh, graphic novel—

[dog whining]

—and if you're not gonna be able to make it to those, you can go to theadventurezonecomic.com—

[dog whining]

—and preorder. Go to—

Teresa: Oh my gosh, things are devolving so fast!

Travis: I know! It's all melting!

Teresa: [laughs] It's all—

Travis: [quickly] Maximumfun.org, check out all the other amazing shows! Mcelroymerch.com, check out all the great McElroy merch! What else, Teresa? What am I forgetting?

Teresa: Thank you to Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music. It's available as a ringtone where those are found. Thank you to Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art. You can tweet at us @shmannerscast—

[mic thumping]

No, don't touch the microphone, honey! And then, uh, thank you to Keely Weiss Photography, for the cover banner of the, uh— [laughs] the fan—

Travis: All Bebe wants to do is hit the microphone!

Teresa: [laughs] The fan-run Facebook group—

Bebe: Bebe!

Teresa: Yes, yes.

Travis: That's Bebe, yes!

Teresa: Shmanners Fanners, which you should join if you want to give and get excellent advice. Uh, please submit your topic [crosstalk]—

Travis: [laughs loudly] It's all melting!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Bebe—

Bebe: [babbling]

Travis: —do you wanna say hi?

Bebe: Yeah?

Travis: Say hi!

Bebe: I!

Travis: Hi, Bebe.

Teresa: Please submit your topic request to—

Bebe: I!

Teresa: Shmannerscast@gmail.com.

Bebe: [unintelligible]

Travis: Okay. Bebe, you wanna say bye? Say bye to everybody!

Bebe: Ah—eye!

Travis: Bye, everybody! All right, that's gonna do it for us! Join us again next week!

Teresa: [quickly] No RSVP required!

Travis: Manners, Shmanners!

Together: Get it?

Teresa: [laughs]

[theme music plays]

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