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## Blogs - 2018 - March

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PDF Date: 8 April 2019



**Some Stones**

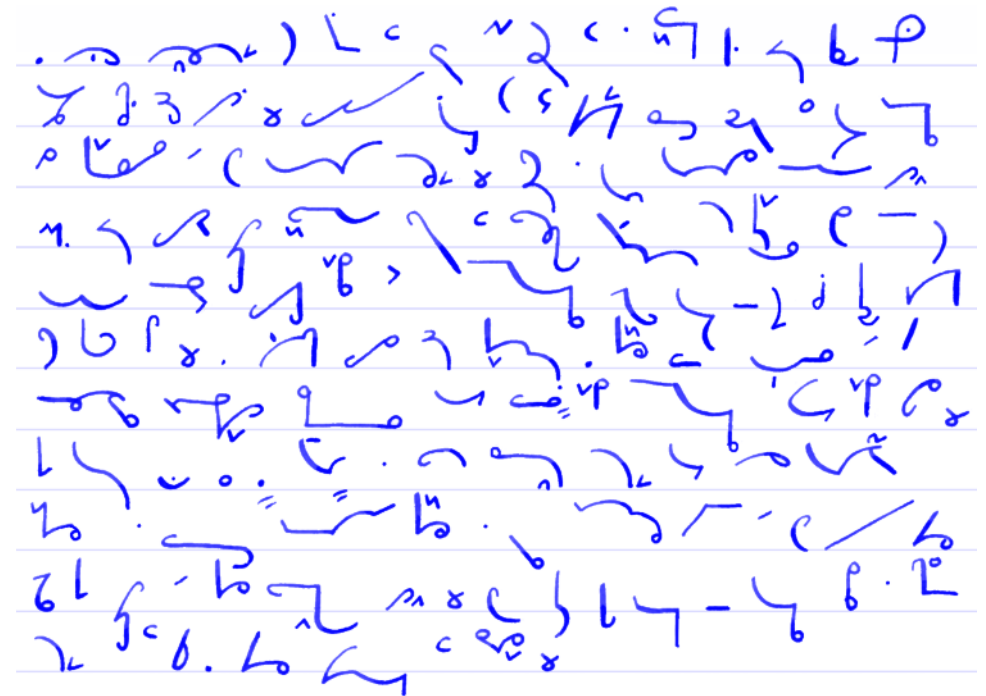
Last month was full of visits to museums. During the mostly dull British winter, there is nothing to see in the parks except muddy grass, bare branches and puddles, so we look for places of interest where we can be inside in the warm. The days are not all grey, they can be bright with blue skies and that livens up the journey to and from the places. Often we end our afternoon watching the river Thames, at its best when it is gleaming in the sun\*, with the sparkles increased by the wake of every passing boat. A few weeks ago\* we decided to "finish off" the Geology room of the Natural History Museum, of which we "did" half last

year. There are so many cabinets with hundreds of samples that it would be impractical to fit it into one day. Unlike the tourists\* or children on school outings, we are able to return at any time, so we do not have to cram the visits.

\* "sun/snow, sunny/snowy" Insert the vowels to differentiate

\* Omission phrase "a few wee(k)s ago"

\* "tourists" Keep the Ray short, so it does not look like "terrorists"



**Some Stones**

The main museum was packed with people and I suspect that a quiet day here does not exist, unless the trains were not running. We were confident though that the geology section would not be as full of kids as the dinosaurs and other animal areas. There were\* a few families going round and I did hear one or two\* children crying, probably with frustration, boredom or tiredness, as they can see nothing except the wooden sides of the cabinets, and even if they could see the contents, it would not hold their attention at all. The older ones were admiring the diamonds\*, gold nuggets\*, and large examples of crystalline structures\* in the glass-sided cabinets along the side walls. At the far end is The Vault, a more secure area for the most valuable items, a collection of coloured diamonds\*, a piece of Mars rock, and other rare gems\*, and this had the children and

adults crowding round. However it was difficult to get good photos, as it is a dark area with just the gems\* illuminated with spotlights.

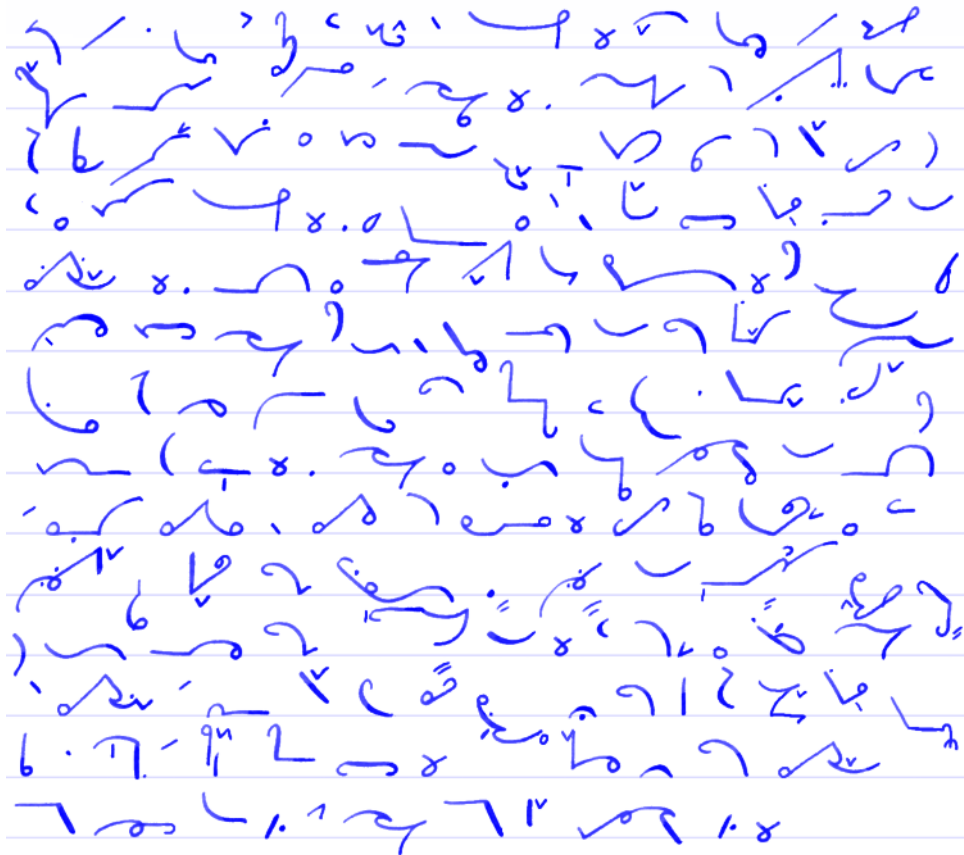
\* Omission phrases "there (w)ere" "one (or) two"

\* "diamonds" Always insert the triphone, as this is similar to the outline for "gems"

\* "nugget" Note that "ingot" is written with full N+G+T strokes, to differentiate

\* "structures" Doubling is used for a small number of common "-ture" words, for convenience

\* "gems" Always insert the vowel, as this is similar to the outline for "diamonds"



**Some Stones**

Here are a few of the treasures that I found of interest. My favourites\* are always the brightly coloured rocks and minerals. The monetary or rarity value of them does not really appeal, as I am not going to find, cut, polish, sell or buy one, so that is of little interest. The first picture is of two tiny green parrots carved in serpentine. The colour is exactly right for the subject matter. They are no longer just lumps of green mineral, they are now two birds covered in very tactile\* looking feathers, and they must look even more attractive when they have a backlight shining through to make them glow. The mineral is named for its resemblance in colour and scaly surface to serpents or snakes. One of its variations is called lizardite but this derives from the place name The Lizard in Cornwall,

south west Britain, whose name comes from the Cornish language. That area is composed mainly of serpentine\* and you can buy every sort of souvenir made from it, although, unlike the parrots pictured, it is a muddy and striated dark green. Items made from serpentine can be mistaken for jade, and the mineral can be dyed to resemble jade.

\* "favourites" Note that "favoured" uses the left Vr stroke

\* "tactile" Has several pronunciations, tack-tile tack-till or tack-tl

\* "serpentine" Ensure to include the diphthong sign. This is the name of the rock that contains any of the serpentine group of minerals.



**Some Stones**

The most fascinating stone is this landscape marble, the cut face of the Cotham Marble, which is not true marble but a type of Triassic limestone. Its grey striations\* and the row of plant shapes look like a winter's landscape of snow, bare trees and leaden sky. We have just experienced this in Britain with a week of snowy weather, showing up the trees standing stark against low grey clouds, bringing yet another shower of snow\* and frozen\* rain, and the cold north wind, which has been more stormy than usual, picking up the powdery snow and swirling it around. Another similar real marble exhibit is an example of Ruin Marble due to its resemblance to a

ruined cityscape. Interesting but not so pleasant\* a prospect as the trees version.

\* "striations" Separate Ish stroke because of the preceding triphone

\* "snow/sun snowy/sunny" Insert the vowels to differentiate

\* "frozen" "freezing" Insert the first vowel, as these are similar in outline and meaning

\* "pleasant" "pleasing" Insert the first vowel, as these are similar in outline and meaning

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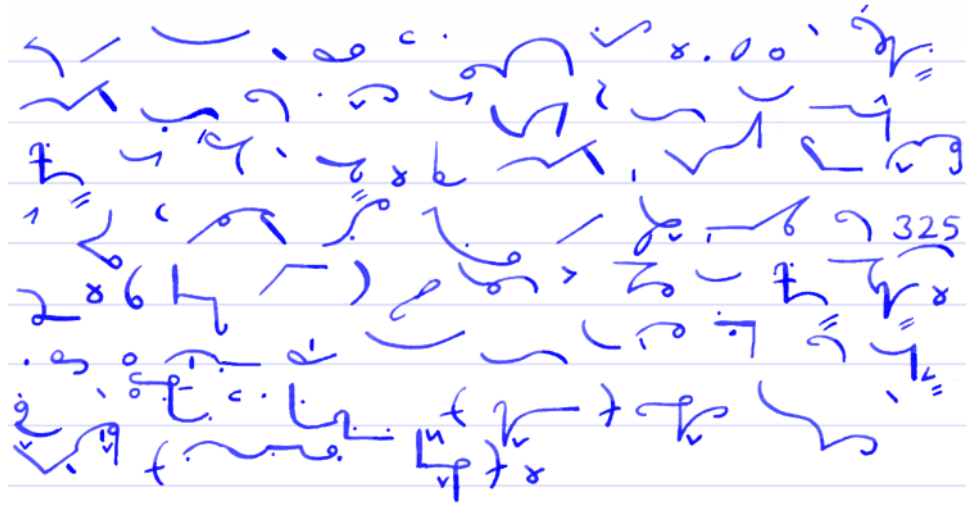
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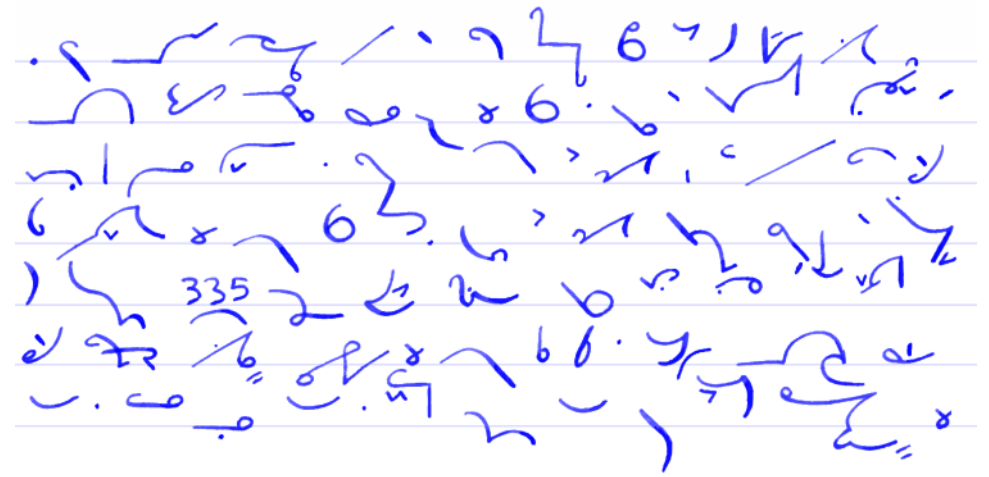


**Some Stones**

Here are another two stones with a similar pattern. The first is of Frosterley marble, named from a mine in the village of that name in County Durham in the north of England. It is not marble but polished black limestone and the shapes that resemble shells and feathers are fossilised corals

from 325 million years ago. This decorative rock was used for some of the columns in Durham Cathedral. The second is mocha stone, another name for moss agate, from India, consisting of chalcedony with a dendritic (tree-like) crystalline formation of pyrolucite (manganese dioxide).

Blank lined writing area for notes.



**Some Stones**

The blue coloured minerals are all very attractive, as this is not the usual dull earth colour that one expects stones to have. This is a piece of polished Lazurite and to me\* it looks like a projection map of the world, but with rather more ocean than real life\*. Maybe this is the view of the world before the super-continent of Pangea was formed 335 million years ago, showing drifting pieces of land mass and wild oceans from the beginning of earth's history. Maybe it is just an unusually\*

colourful stone in a glass case in a quiet room in busy noisy central London.

\* "to me" Although they are short forms, insert the vowel in "me" and "him" when in a phrase

\* Omission phrase "rea(l) life"

\* "unusually" Insert the final vowel, as "unusual" could also make sense

Blank lined writing area for notes.



**Some Stones**

The last item is a large slab, probably 3 or 4 feet long, full of gold coloured gems\*, glistening under the spotlights as one walks round it. It is housed in one of the alcoves down in the central hall of the museum. This is a slice of the Imilac meteorite, a 4½ billion year old stony\*-iron pallasite rock consisting of iron, nickel and gem\* quality olivine crystals and grains. It was formed during the first few million years of our solar system's creation. Gem\* quality olivine crystals are known as peridot\* and chrysolite\*. This latter name is from the Greek for "gold stone" describing the shining embedded fragments spread throughout the rock. The museum has a collection of 5,000 fragments of over 2,000 meteorites and this is the largest collection of extra-terrestrial material in the world.

- \* "meteorite" Essential to insert the diphthong to differentiate from "meteor" and "meteorette". Note that "meteoroid" has full stroke D.
- \* "stony" Insert the last vowel, as "stone-iron" could also make sense
- \* "peridot" Can also be pronounced as a French word omitting the T sound
- \* "gems" Always insert the vowel, as this is similar to the outline for "diamonds"
- \* "chrysolite" Not to be confused with a different mineral called "chrysotile"

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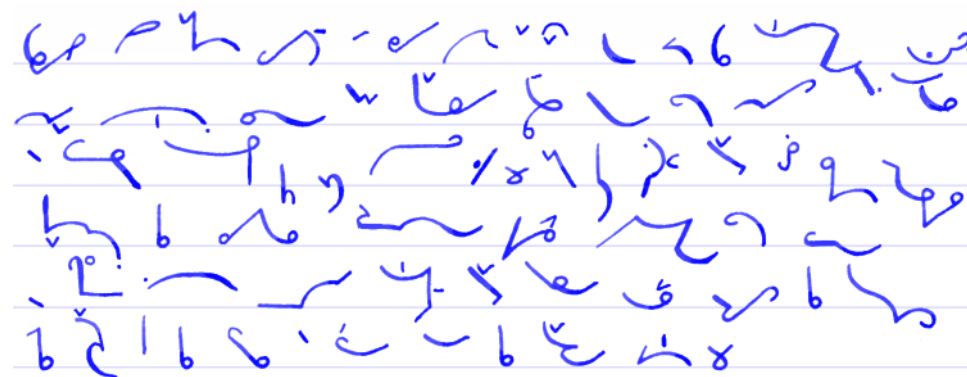
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**Some Stones**

This was the last item we saw and as we left, I might have heard this unimaginably ancient meteorite muttering something about the dinosaur fossils being very modern novelties of questionable interest due to their lack of age. I hope it was assuaged by the constant stream of visitors admiring its surface of gleaming jewels, ranging from golden\* to dark amber coloured, untouched by the passing eons between its formation and its arrival at its place of honour in its final home. (1103 words)

\* "golden" Always put the diphone in "glowing", as these two are similar in outline and meaning

Reminder of pairs to be differentiated:

- gem/diamond
- golden/glowing
- nugget/ingot
- sun/snow
- sunny/snowy
- freezing/frozen
- pleasant/pleasing
- tourist/terrorist
- meteorite/meteorette/meteor

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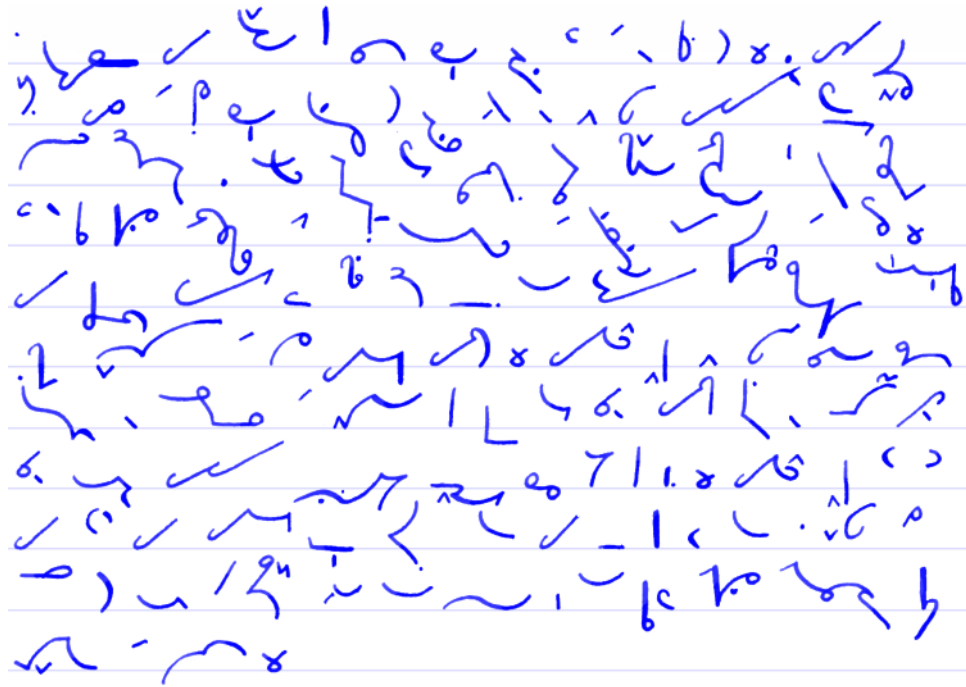
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**Wintry Battle**

A few weeks ago\* we finally had some snow to play with and to test us. The wintry showers, icy\* winds and settling snow forced us to face up to how well we were able to overcome the lack of warmth, the inconvenience of tiptoeing\* over the slippery patches, driving and travelling on public transport with all its delays and frustrations, and the interruption and postponement\* of our schedules and plans. We discovered where the cold draughts were coming in, that were strangely unnoticed during the milder and less windy weather. We found out how well the heating system conformed to expectations\*, and how long it took for the hot water tap to actually run hot, now that we were impatiently counting the seconds until it did. We found out that what we thought we

wanted to go shopping for, we could do without for a while, as the cost was now much higher, not in money but in discomfort and delays, and for some people danger to life and limb.

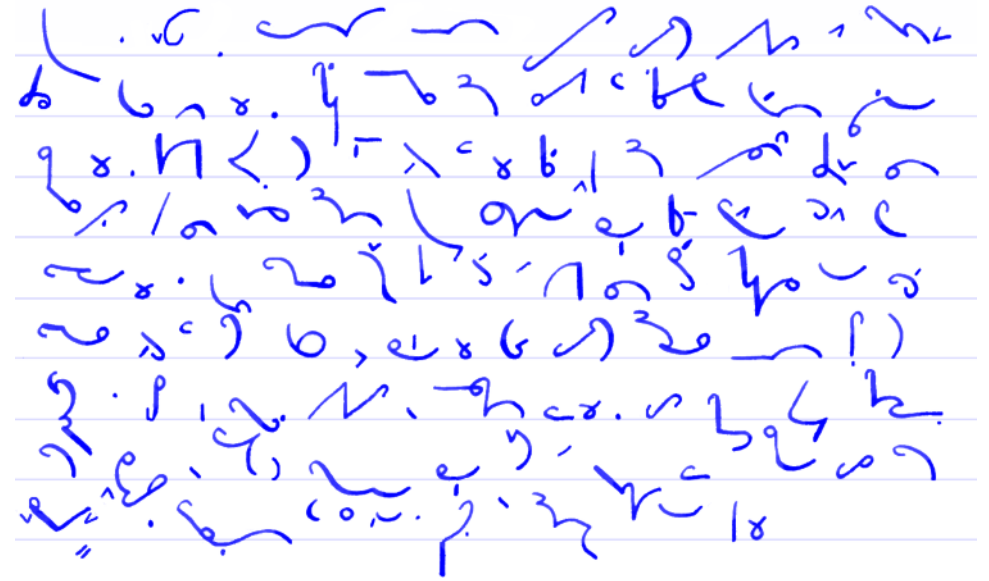
- \* Omission phrase "few wee(k)s ago"
- \* "icy" Insert the final vowel, as "ice" could also make sense
- \* "tiptoeing" No diphone, as the Dot Ing includes the I sound
- \* "postponement" Omits the first T and uses "-nt" for "-ment" as the latter would not join
- \* "expectations" Optional contraction

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**Wintry Battle**

After a while, the normal calm winter weather returned and the appropriate\* adjustments have been made. The draughty gaps were sorted with adhesive foam sealing strips. The delayed shopping was caught up with. Days out were resumed, despite some rain which seemed almost warm after the swirling snow dust blowing around every corner. A few frogs arrived at the pond and laid some spawn, and daffodils in front gardens opened with their faces to the sun. Then the weather

warnings came telling us that there would be a sudden but brief return to extreme cold. The wind direction changed dramatically from south west to north east, bringing snow, ice and bitterly cold strong winds from Siberia, a place name that has not a shred of warmth in it.

\* "appropriate" Insert the diphone, and the first vowel in "proper", as these are similar in outline and meaning

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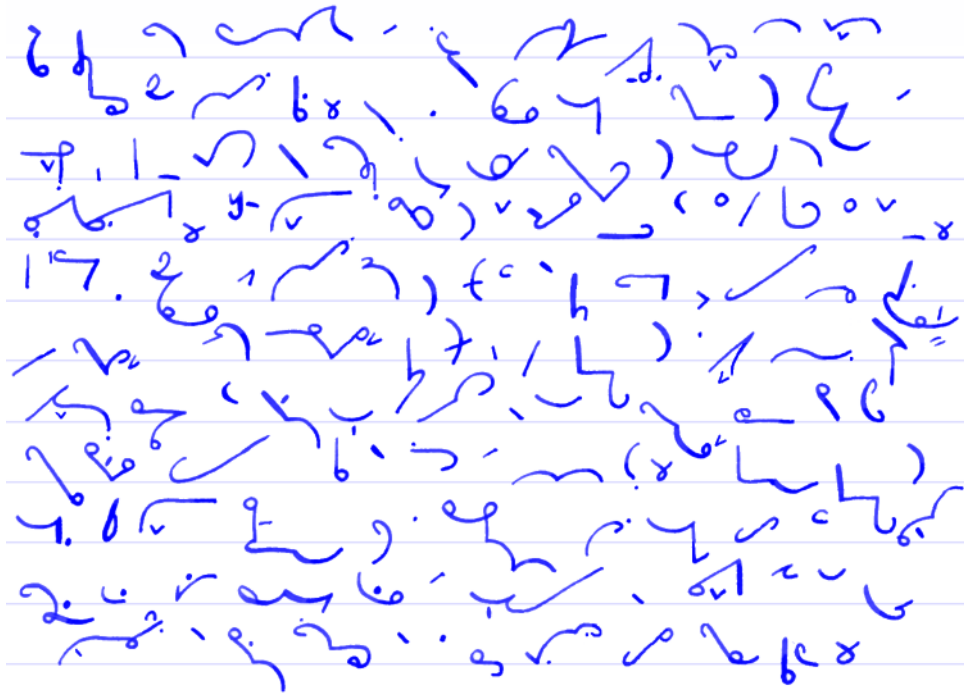
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**Wintry Battle**

All these distractions from normal life\* and comfortable leisurely routines remind me of my shorthand learning days. Putting the lessons into practice was challenging and exciting but it could also be frustrating if the necessary preparation was insufficient or half-hearted. I don't like surprises, so I always gave that as much attention as I could\* . At college, the shorthand lessons and the learning were easy (with all due credit to the wonderful Miss Jefferson, our brilliant and very experienced teacher) but each dictation was a real mini battle, requiring skills that bore no relation to any previous school subject, other than perhaps sports where it is all action and minimum thinking. Taking dictation was indeed just like struggling through a snow storm, leaning into the wind, with slowly freezing\* feet, hail stinging the face and nowhere\* to

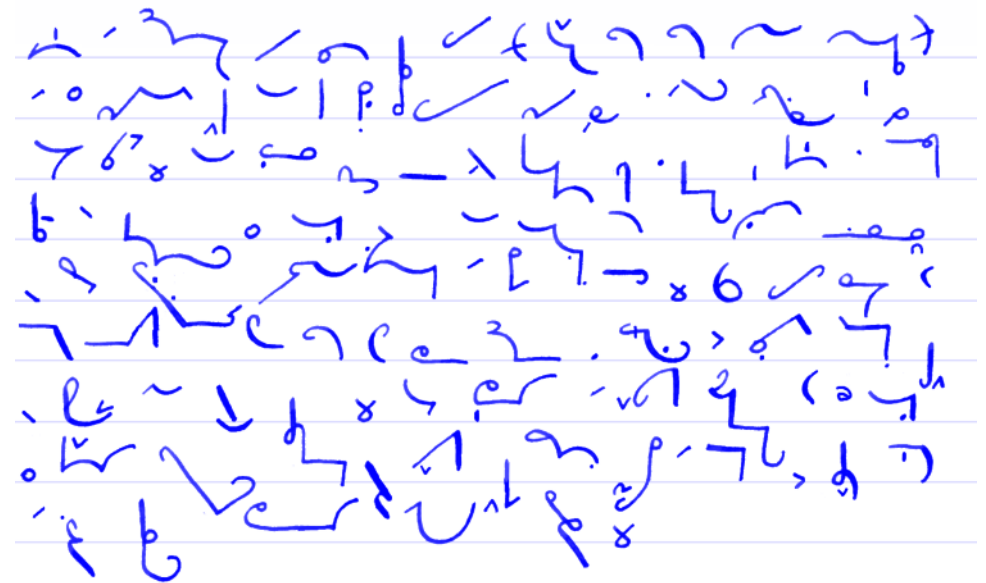
hide, and with not even the luxury of spare fractions of a second to lament one's present discomfort.

\* Omission phrase "normal (l)ife" Keep the R hook clear, as this is similar to "animal (l)ife"

\* "I could" Differentiate "could" from "can " by never joining it in the middle or end of a phrase. The exception is "could not", because that is entirely different in shape from "cannot".

\* "freezing" and "frozen" insert the first vowel, as these are similar in outline and meaning

\* "nowhere" Best not joined in a phrase, so it is not misread as "anywhere"



**Wintry Battle**

Home and warmth are some distance away (five very very long minutes) and as you are now out in it, staying where you are is not an option and pressing on is the only choice. In class you cannot give up at any time during a dictation, but at home an extra dose of determination is needed, to eliminate any nifty or lame excuse to stop the playback of the recording and start again. This is one skill that can be carried over from other school work, the cultivation of the habit\* of getting down to studying and not becoming distracted. For the squally\* and wild shorthand dictation

though, what is needed is timely preparation, to be able to ride out the stormy\* situation and get to the desired cosy and comfortable destination as quickly and efficiently as possible. (593 words)

\* "habit" and "hobby" Insert the first vowel, as these are similar in outline and meaning

\* "squally" Note that "squall" has a downward L

\* "stormy" Insert the final vowel, as "storm" could also make sense

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Recently we went to see the Albert\*  
 Memorial which is on the south east corner  
 of Kensington Gardens in Central London. I  
 had seen pictures of it and realised that I  
 had never seen it, despite several years of  
 scouring London for places of interest to  
 visit. We chose a dry sunny day and walked  
 through St James's Park, past Buckingham  
 Palace and through Green Park, arriving at  
 the eastern end of Hyde Park. We then  
 walked along the edge of the Serpentine, a  
 long narrow lake on the south side of the  
 park. There were\* birds everywhere, swans,  
 geese, ducks\* , pigeons, crows and a few  
 starlings, and crowds of people standing  
 around feeding them, sitting on the  
 benches watching them, and taking  
 photos\* of their friends being besieged by  
 expectant feathered friends, with  
 everything from phones to business-like  
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 Victorian postcard\* , minus the long  
 dresses and top hats, with everyone  
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### Albert Memorial

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much further\* along, but we were still  
 accompanied by a few seagulls\* , and one  
 slightly lame pigeon who got a personal  
 supply of crumbs without having to  
 compete for them.

\* "Albert" Compare with "Robert" Ray + B + Ray halved

\* Omission phrase "there (w)ere"

\* "ducks" In another context, inserting the vowel is helpful to differentiate from "dogs"

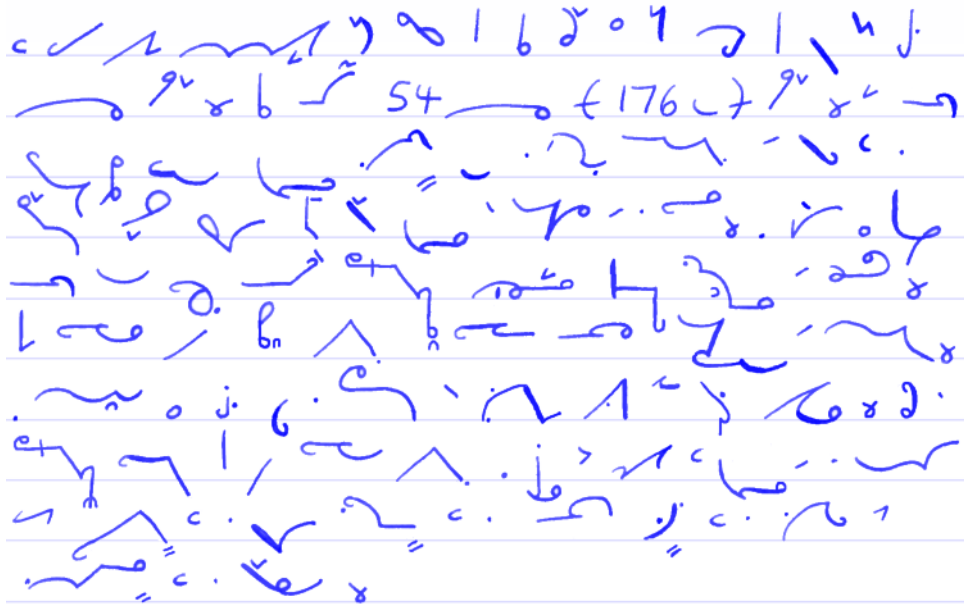
\* "photos" Helpful to insert one of the vowels, as "videos" is similar

\* "postcard" Omits the lightly-sounded T

\* "further" Note that "farther" is F + Ar + Thee with R hook

\* "seagulls" Keeps the stroke S, to match the original "sea"





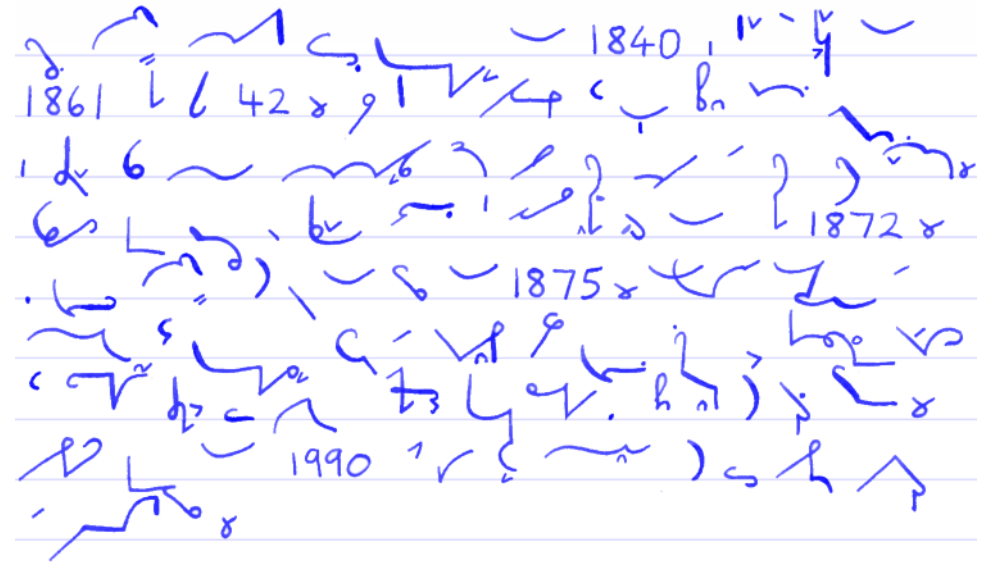
**Albert Memorial**

When we reached the memorial, I was surprised at its size, as I had imagined it to be about 10 metres high. It is actually 54 metres (176 feet) high. On the covered plinth sits the golden\* figure of Albert under an ornate canopy and above that a spire rises steeply, topped by figures of angels and a cross. The whole is densely covered in friezes, carvings, sculptures, mosaics\*, decorative artworks and inscriptions. At the corners are statues representing agriculture, commerce, engineering and manufacture. The monument is contained within a square of

elaborate red and gold painted railings. There is a sculpture group at each corner representing the continents of the world, with figures and an animal: Europe with a bull, Africa with a camel, Asia with an elephant, and the Americas with a bison.

\* "golden" Insert the diphone in "glowing" to help differentiate

\* "mosaics" The dictionary outline has diphone, although modern pronunciation is often just the "A" sound mo-zake



**Albert Memorial**

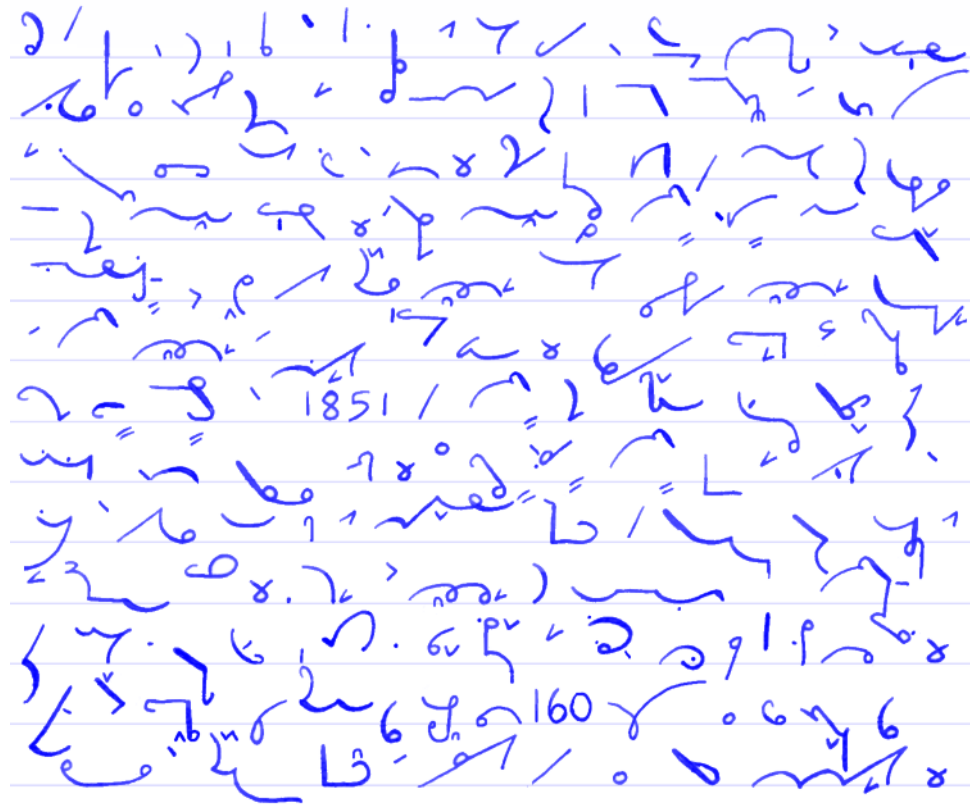
Prince Albert married Queen Victoria in 1840 but died of typhoid in 1861 at the age of 42. He had requested that no statues of him should be made but despite this many memorials were raised throughout the country and throughout the British Empire. This one took two years to design and agree on, and was opened in 1872. The figure of Albert was put in place in 1875. Unfortunately the engineering and manufacture that the Victorians developed\* and pursued\* with such vigour contributed to the atmospheric pollution that gradually destroyed the gold leaf, and at the

beginning of the twentieth century the statue was painted black. Restoration took place in 1990 and the whole monument was cleaned, restored, repainted and re-gilded.

\* "unfortunately" Optional contraction

\* "developed" Optional contraction, full P for present tense, halved for past tense

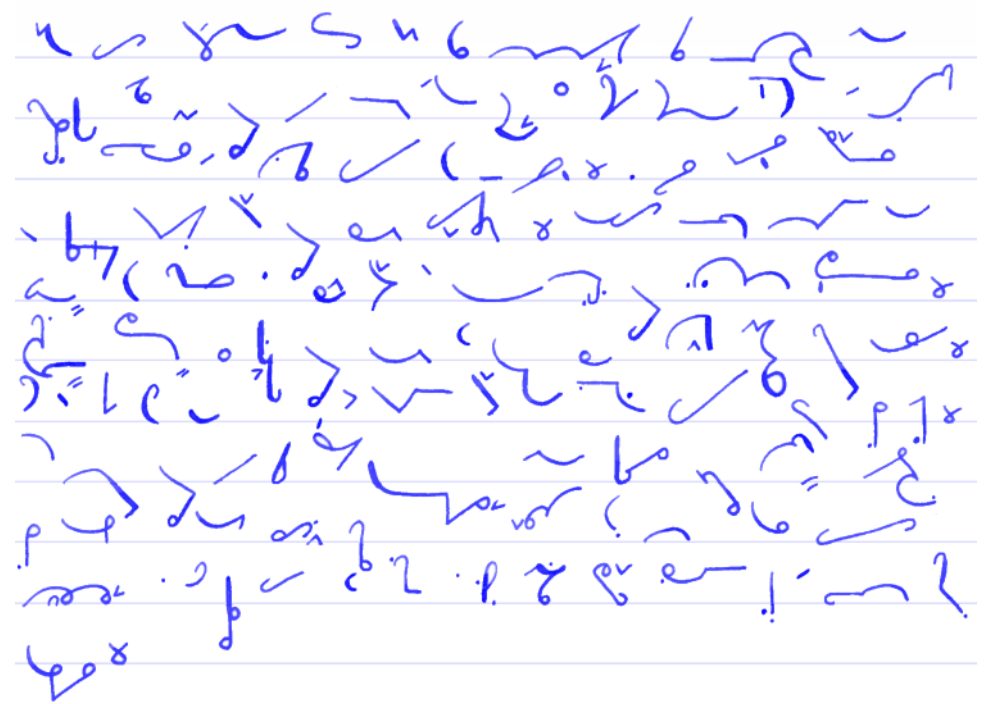
\* "pursued" Note "pursue/s/ing/er" all use full stroke S



**Albert Memorial**

There is much detail to see but it is all at a distance, and the only way to overcome the limitation of the enclosing railings is to use the zoom on the camera, so that it can be captured and viewed later, on the computer screen in the comfort of home. There are tours held each month so that visitors can see the monument close up. Opposite the monument is the Albert Hall, and in nearby Kensington to the south are the Science Museum, Natural History Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum, and Imperial College London. These were created with the profits from the Great Exhibition of 1851, which Albert was the driving force behind

and which was intended to improve business and trade. As Prince Consort, Albert took on the role of initiator of reforms in trade and the modernising of education, which benefited both industry and the working classes. The area of the museums was nicknamed "Albertopolis", which was not only a bit of fun but also a slight satire on the ambitious mission he had set himself. Judging by the crowds still thronging these institutions some 160 years later, his efforts to provide these centres of scientific education and research are his best memorial.

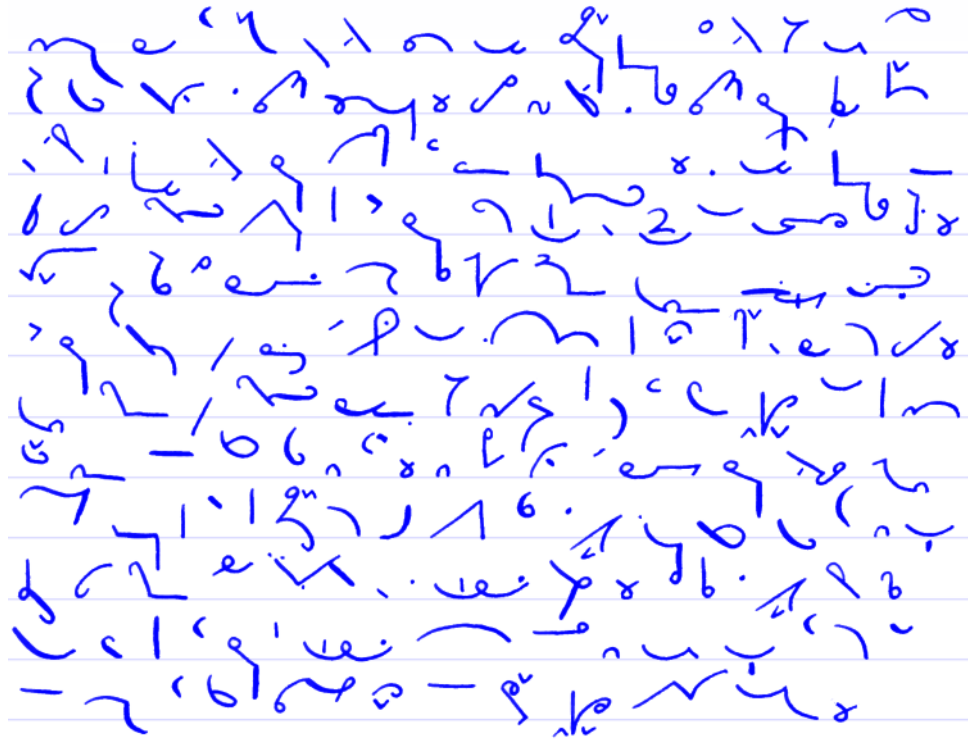


**Albert Memorial**

I have one puzzling question about this memorial, which is colourful and in pristine condition, and that is how the pigeons are kept off, seeing as there are so many cosy and sheltered corners and ledges where they could roost\* . The use of rows of spikes to discourage perching by pigeons is now widespread. In one covered market in London they broadcast a sound file of intermittent pigeon alarm squawks. Trafalgar Square is devoid of pigeons now that feeding is not allowed and I think this is probably the answer. They are all at the

other end of the park by the café, where people sit and eat. Or maybe the pigeons are just staunch Victorians and, in deference to Prince Albert, respectfully sit instead in the surrounding trees, silently thanking him for his wonderful museums a short distance away that attract a steady and endless supply of snack eating and crumb dropping visitors. (821 words)

\* "roost" Insert the vowel, as "rest" is similar in outline and meaning

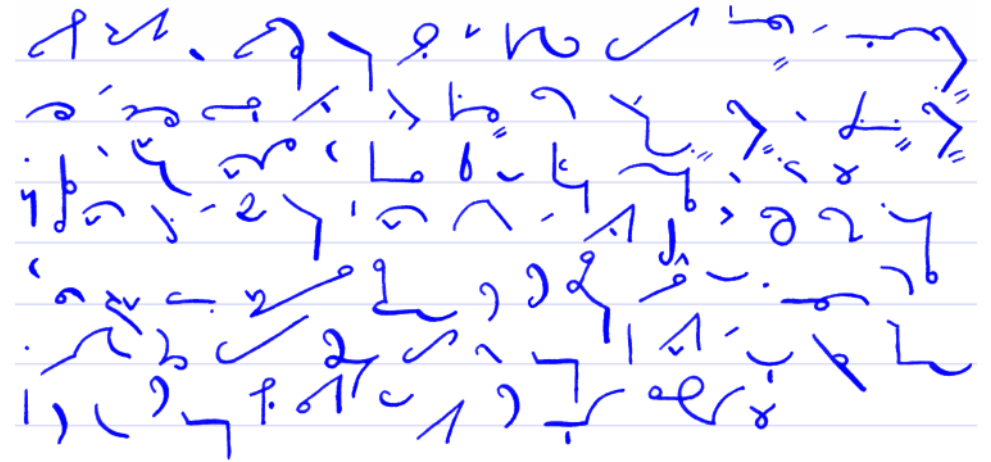


**High Speed Race**

You may have seen that I have put up some new high speed dictations, as up until now most of them have been below a hundred words a minute. Once you have bust\* the 100 speed mark, it is not time to stop but continue up the speed ladder with equal determination. The new dictations give just one paragraph repeated at all the speeds from 100 to 200, in increments of ten. I like to think of this as the sneak method, and it will work if you can ignore the indication of the speed before each section, and resist any alarm it might try to send your way. If you practise each paragraph singly until you are completely at ease with every outline in it, you may

find you can go faster than you thought. You start low and sneak the speed upwards, and if you manage to get it all at higher than your usual rate, that is a real confidence booster, even though you know it has been well practised and is not comparable to an unseen passage. It is a real step towards being able to do that speed on unseen matter, because you now know that your hand can move that fast, as long as the mind can supply the outlines rapidly enough.

\* "bust" Insert the vowel, as "passed" could also make sense here



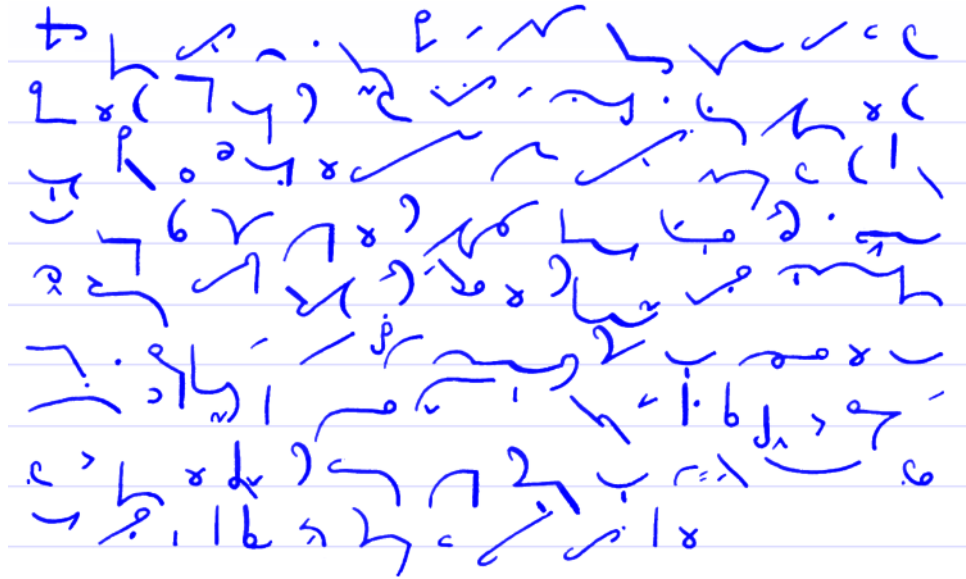
**High Speed Race**

Yesterday I watched the two University boat races on the television, where the Oxford and Cambridge men's and women's crews row up the Thames from Putney Bridge to Chiswick Bridge, a distance of four miles that takes just under 20 minutes to complete. I had my pen and shorthand pad on my lap and wrote down all the phrases from the commentators that seemed to apply equally to shorthand

writers\* struggling through their own high speed race in an exam or a real-life\* assignment, where there is only one opportunity to get it right and no possibility of taking it easy, if they are to get and stay ahead, in order to\* reach their goal successfully.

\* Omission phrases "rea(l) life" "short(hand) writers" "in ord(er to)"

Blank lined area for notes or practice.



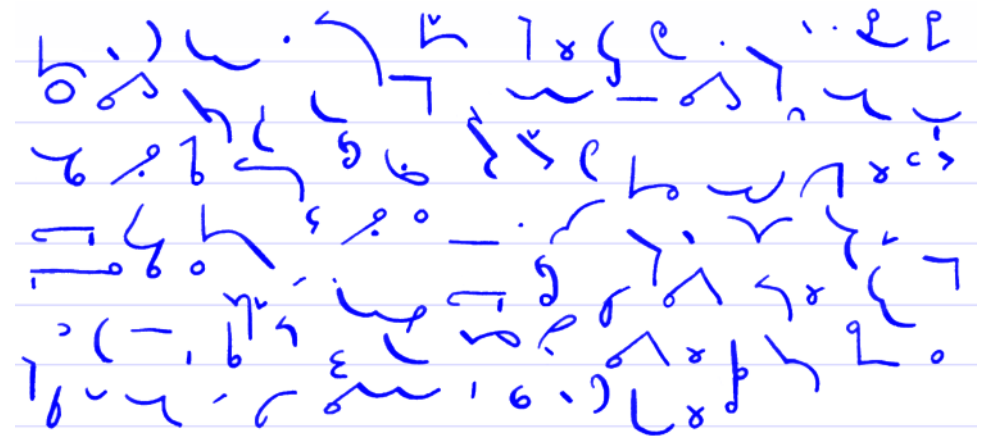
**High Speed Race**

At the beginning Team One made a powerful start, and rapidly began pulling away with every stroke. They got into their pattern and maintained a fair rhythm. They know that stability is what is needed. We are not left wondering how much\* effort they had put in, to get this early lead. They are ruthlessly taking the focus and there is a growing amount of clear water between them\* and their opponents. They are continuing to raise momentum, keeping the speed continuous, and are constantly making sure there are no mistakes. No

matter what it looks like on paper, on the day it is down to the skill and effort of the team. Despite their clear lead, there can be no let-up in their efforts in the race, but it does not hurt so much\* when you're winning it.

\* "how much" "so much" These phrases are quicker than writing two separate outlines, even though they include the M stroke

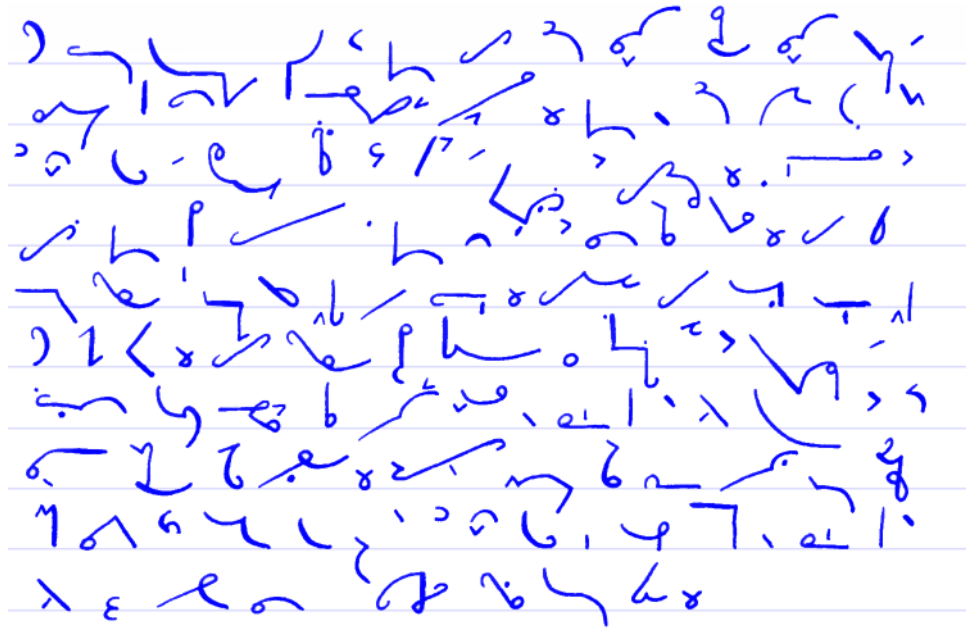
\* Omission phrase "betwee(n) them"



**High Speed Race**

Team Two was having a harder time of it. They did not suffer a bit of a standing start as has happened before, but they have got to believe that anything can happen, you never know in this race, and it is clear that they are not fazed by the other team's initial lead. With all the crew changes, it may be that the race has come a little bit

too early for them, but the cox has to try and convince the crew that there is still hope here. They have got to do what they can, but it is hard when you have almost lost hope. Distance per stroke is just not enough and, well, hanging on, that is all they are doing.



### High Speed Race

Their clear victory showed that Team One were slightly stronger\*, slightly better and certainly had more experienced rowers. Team Two were left thinking about what might have been, and suffering the contrast with the joy and jubilation of the winners. The cox of the winning team said, we are a team made of the sum of its parts. We just keep pressing on to get the best out of our crew. We knew we needed to go out there and do the job. One person said that adventure is addictive and with all the publicity and acclaim for their exploits, it is really nice to suck it all up, after all the

hard slog of training and then racing. I wonder how much\* of this you can relate to your shorthand tests, and I do hope that you never have to think of "what might have been" but instead get to "suck it all up" when you receive some well-deserved praise for your achievement. (764 words)

\* "stronger" Optional contraction that omits the hard G sound

\* "how much" This phrase is quicker than writing two separate outlines, even though it includes the M stroke

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