

EXPLAINING the B.I.G. METHOD

Ruth Rostron

Education Officer for the British Institute of Graphologists 2007-2011

This article summarises a presentation given to the Association of Qualified Graphologists, published in 'The Graphological Magazine' Issue No. 28 Winter 2008 – 9, revised 2012

Unfamiliar graphology systems can be mystifying, and lack of understanding does not promote good relations between graphologists. I therefore welcomed Adam Brand's* initiative to ask representatives of various schools of graphology to outline their respective methods and show how they would approach a given sample of writing (Samples 1 & 2).

* Adam Brand was then Chairman of the AQG and other methods were outlined by:

Alice Coleman	Pace School of Graphology	PACE
Lorraine Herbert	British Academy of Graphology	BAoG
Lawrence Warner	International Graphological Association	IGA

The British Institute of Graphologists

The B.I.G. officially advocates the method used by Francis Hilliger, since many of its founder members were pupils of his, and this method is required for its exams. To gain the qualification M.B.I.G. (Dip.) a student has to pass six exams in all and will normally take three or more years to do this. Part 1 covers the basic techniques of analysis, Part 2 relates psychological theories to graphology, and Part 3 applies graphology to specific situations such as compatibility, recruitment, careers etc.

The B.I.G. does not have an official course for students to follow but it sets a syllabus and gives guidelines for study. Teachers therefore have to write their own courses. Standard worksheets (14 pages) have been introduced to ensure that everyone follows the same technical procedures, and the 'Hilliger Assessment Guidelines' have been compiled so that exam candidates may clearly understand how handwriting movements should be assessed and by what criteria their technical work will be evaluated.

A holistic method

An important principle of the B.I.G. method is that there is no simple correlation between a handwriting movement and a personality trait. A personal characteristic is not indicated by a single handwriting movement but by groups of features, and any handwriting movement may be interpreted in a number of different ways. What determines which interpretation is appropriate is the context i.e. the other features that coexist in the writing. This is why the approach is sometimes called 'holistic' or 'gestalt'.

The basic system of analysis consists of four steps:

- Step 1: make a checklist of all observations and assessments of the writing features
- Step 2: grade information in order of importance by sorting the material into three groups: dominant, secondary and miscellaneous movements
- Step 3: find interpretations for the dominant movements
- Step 4: group interpretations under headings to compile a personality profile.

Grote Karmin.

Hierbij een tweede poging - dit is het zogenaamde nette schrift, waar-schijnlyk is dit bij vlaggen zelfs leesbaar. Mijn handschrift is van nature gejaagd, gehaast en gedreven - ik loop mijzelf voorbij - en niet alleen in mijn handschrift; de rechte lijn is de kortste, maar ook de gemakkelijkste lijn tussen twee punten. Keijlmaat is aan mij niet besteed. Maar in leesbaar schrijven kan ik alleen met een scherpe, vloeiend lopende pen, een volkballenpen dan een balpen. Hoe het zij, ik moet op dit moment uitkomen anderszins punten vinden voor mijn handschrift. Zoals mijn grote voorbeeld thans de groot eens schreef: ik bewijs etiam gullinae habeant manus: ook haren hebben pokers!


ii


Gusta Karms,

De afgelopen jaren ben ik heel
wat keren in London geweest,
maar ik denk niet dat ik ooit
met zoveel plezier langs de Thames
gelopen heb. Het aardige is, dat
vres al dagen voordat we naar
jullie trouwen de betekenis 'vol'
van was. Je hebt er geweldige waar-
te - en het heeft me geen dag gekost
om in te zien wat de achtergrond
daarvoor was. Je wandel waarna jullie
ons ontmoeten hebben, getuigt van de
lange vriendschap die jullie twee verbindt
en van de vanzelfsprekende vertrouwdheid
tussen twee mensen.

Van mijn kant kan ik alleen maar zeggen
dat ik jou in Jare bijzonder dankbaar ben

Sample 2a Dutch handwriting: blue biro, heavy pressure, top margin 5 cms., bottom m. 2.8 cms.



voor deze ontbrangt. De hoop zeer
dat het 't begin zal zijn van een lang
en regelmatig contact. De schied van
James van zijn kennis, zijn humor en zijn brede
interesses en kennis. Kom snel naar
De Haag, Tom praten we intensief verder!
Anthony

Sample 2b Dutch handwriting on reverse of previous page, doodle top right

B.I.G. WORKSHEETS

In order to demonstrate the procedure, I decided to complete the B.I.G. worksheets for the two samples of the Dutch male aged 58, for convenience treating them as one sample.

B.I.G. worksheets are divided into 8* sections, the first 6 of which are all part of Step 1 noted above. In Section 1, handwriting movements are described, assessed and defined. Section 2 consists of a table for measurements of size, zones and slant, with space to note conclusions and add comments. In Section 3, 5 aspects of the writing are assessed for regularity. In Section 4, 13 movements are assessed separately for speed, so that the overall speed can be calculated. Section 5 is for the assessment of originality and Section 6 for the layout and Form Standard (the general standard or quality of the writing). In Section 7 (Step 2), movements are graded in order of importance and listed as dominant, secondary or miscellaneous. In Section 8, interpretations of dominant movements are listed under six headings: Vitality and wellbeing, Personality, Social attitudes and Reactive behaviour, Intellectual qualities, Working qualities, and Interests and tastes. These are Steps 3 and 4.

* *Section numbers were altered in the B.I.G. worksheets 2012, so in this article section numbers and related text have been revised accordingly.*

WORKSHEETS

Dutchman Samples 1 & 2

Throughout the worksheets I noted a great number of observations and measurements as I assessed all the handwriting movements in the Dutchman's samples. These were too numerous to be included here, but my conclusions were these:

Section 1

First impression:	hasty, purposeful
Rhythm:	rhythmic but impulsive
Size:	mainly medium but variable
Zones:	dominant LZ
Slant:	right, variable
Pressure:	given as heavy but looks variable
Type of stroke:	medium width, pasty on p1
Currency (fluency):	generally good
Connectedness:	fairly connected
Forms of Connection:	mixed – angles + threads + garlands + arcades
Style:	simplified
Legibility:	some illegibility suspected
Width:	broad + narrow ovals
Letter spacing:	irregular
Word spacing:	tending to wide
Line spacing:	mostly average but tending to close
Baselines:	flexible and tending to be convex; rising, level and then falling
Left/right margins:	both tending to become narrower
Upper/lower margins:	wide / balanced
Full / lean:	generally lean apart from Greek δ
PPI:	not applicable
Signature:	similar in style but larger, convex underlining, phallic shapes; placed right p.1, placed left p.3
Capitals:	initially very large and phallic, later in proportion
Ovals:	often narrow and slightly open
i dots / t bars:	both various
Starting / ending strokes:	few starts, many long ends
Right / Left tendencies:	some of each
Horizontal tension:	quite strong

Miscellaneous movements were noted as follows:

some retracing
frequent clever linking
hooks
triangles
suspendu
numbers
braced strokes
tapering forms
prominent punctuation marks

Section 2

In this section I set out measurements of size, zones and slant, giving maximum and minimum sizes, variants and dominant measurements, with comments and conclusions as noted in section 1.

Section 3

I concluded that this sample was irregular overall.

(The degree of regularity indicates to what extent control is generally exercised over feelings and behaviour).

Section 4

After assessing 13 movements for speed, I decided that the general speed was quick.

(Speed reflects pace of life and the speed at which the mind works).

Section 5

Originality was assessed from the degree of deviation from the copy model (taking into account the legibility and how graceful it appeared) and appeared quite high.

(Originality correlates with individuality).

Section 6

The layout was judged to be good and the Form Standard high.

(Layout reflects social adjustment and Form Standard gives a guide as to how interpretations should be selected).

Section 7

The dominant movements were considered to be:

right slant

medium size + dominant LZ

heavy pressure

mixed FOC (forms of connection)

line direction

simplification

left margin

Section 8

Interpretations for dominant movements were grouped under six headings, with at least two more back-up movements being listed as evidence to support each interpretation.

N.B. Selecting the dominants correctly is crucial to the success of this method, since dominant movements correlate with dominant features of the personality and most interpretations are derived from them.

INTERPRETATIONS

For every handwriting movement a great number of interpretations are possible. The overall Form Standard or quality of the writing indicates what balance of positive and negative interpretations is appropriate.

As I assessed the Form Standard of the Dutchman's writing as high, the interpretations I chose were mostly positive. To illustrate how one handwriting movement may be interpreted in a variety of ways, in Table 1 I have set out my interpretations of the right slant (the first dominant) for each section of the report. Notice that the different interpretations are backed up by different combinations of supporting movements.

Table 1 Interpretations of Right Slant for each section of the Report

<i>Section</i>	<i>Movement</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Supporting movements</i>
Vitality & Wellbeing	Right slant	lively vitality	quick speed, irregular, rising lines
Personality structure	Right slant	feels strongly about things, has an emotional nature but controls it	heavy pressure, garlands, var. MZ + angles, arcades, narrowing L margin
Social behaviour	Right slant	can be friendly, outgoing and sociable	large size at first, secondary width, sig on R p1, garlands, extended ends
	Right slant + Word spacing wide/average	conflict between need for company and personal space	letter and line spacing variable, broad + narrow width, variable ends
Intellectual qualities	Right slant	natural curiosity about the world	rising lines, angles, i dots open to right
Working qualities	Right slant	enterprising, uses initiative opportunist, able to envisage possibilities	simplified, original, clever linking mixed FOCs, few starting strokes, irregular, t bars rising from base
	Right slant	ambitious, competitive, goal-oriented	angles, high t bars, strong horizontal tension, rising lines
	Right slant	prepared to assert himself	rising lines, heavy + lateral pressure, roofing / blunt t bars
Interests and Tastes	Right slant	enjoys some socialising	word/letter spacing wide/average, some lines close, garlands, signature on R page 1

Interpreting Dominants

For each section of the report most of the dominants and possibly some of the secondary movements should be interpreted. The dominants are listed in order of importance, so that the related characteristics may be given the correct degree of emphasis when the profile is compiled. My interpretations of each dominant for the Vitality and Wellbeing section of the report are set out in Table 2.

Table 2 Interpretations of each Dominant in one section

<i>Section</i>	<i>Movement</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Supporting movements</i>	
Vitality and Wellbeing	D1 Right slant	lively vitality	quick speed, irregular, rising lines	
	D2 Medium size	active	heavy pressure, dominant LZ	
	D3 Heavy pressure, looks irregular	energetic, some restlessness	right slant, dominant LZ, irregular, impulsive rhythm	
		some impatience and irritability	quick speed, hooks, angles + threads, congested ovals, slashed i dots	
	D4 Mixed FOC (Forms of Connection)	resilient, able to bounce back after setbacks, tries to be cheerful	flexible baselines, irregular, heavy pressure, rising lines, quick speed	
		angles	tension needs to be released	rising lines/tiles, hooks, congested ovals
		threads	some stress, rather driven	quick speed, rising lines/tiles, irregular MZ
	garlands	able to relax at times	pasty stroke, good currency (stroke quality), rhythmic	
D5 Line direction varying: rising - level - falling	lacks stamina for the long haul, gets tired, runs out of steam	pressure variable (?), variable LZ, narrowing L margin, speed slower on p2		
D6 Simplified	efficient use of energy	quick speed, medium / small size, clever linking		
D7 L margin narrowing or concave	loses interest or enthusiasm	line direction rising – level – falling, size becomes smaller p2		

Compiling the Report

A description of this man's vitality and wellbeing would be based directly on these listed interpretations. Other paragraphs for the report would be built up in a similar way after dominants have been interpreted and suitable supporting movements cited as evidence. The headings give structure to the report and help to make it coherent and comprehensible, and more or less detail can be included in any section to meet individual requirements (job application, stress assessment etc).

B.I.G. EXAMS

For **Part 1A** exams, students are sent two samples of writing to work on at home for a month. For each sample they are required to complete a full set of worksheets and compile a report of 500 - 700 words without assistance from anyone. For Part 1B they have to complete the worksheets for one sample in just three hours, under supervision.

In **Part 2** students study the theories of Freud, Jung, Adler, Maslow and Fromm and learn how to apply them in order to gain greater insight into the writers. In Part 1 they learn to recognise people's characteristics, while in Part 2 they try to understand why they think and behave as they do. The two reports for the 2A exam have to be 1500 - 2000 words each, and in 2B students must show they know and understand the theories and can apply them swiftly to various samples without assistance.*

* *The format of the 2B exam was changed in 2012. Students now have to assess one sample of writing by compiling a summary of working notes and lists of interpretations (Sections 7 & 8 of the B.I.G. Worksheets) and answer questions on psychological theories in relation to the sample provided.*

Part 3 covers Human Development and the writing of children and adolescents, Career Guidance, Partnerships and Relationships and Personnel management. For the 3A exam, three reports have to be written to a professional standard, while in 3B students are tested on their ability to make quick assessments of several samples. Typical questions relate to assessing the suitability of candidates for a job or the prospects for a partnership.

I hope that this account of the way that I approached the Dutchman's writing may have helped you to understand and appreciate the B.I.G. method of handwriting analysis. The system is essentially simple but requires meticulous attention to detail at every stage of the process of observation, assessment, definition and interpretation.