

palaеographу

tutorial

Document 1: Letter from Princess Elizabeth to her sister, Queen Mary 16, March 1554
(Catalogue reference: EXT 11/25)

Contents

About this document	1
Introduction to transcribing document 1	2
Glossary	3
How to use the interactive transcribing exercise	6
Alphabet	7
Image	8
Transcript	11

palaeography tutorial

About this document

This document is a letter dated 16 March 1554 from Elizabeth I, as princess, to her sister Queen Mary I. (Catalogue reference: EXT 11/25)

The handwriting is in a style called italic, the forerunner of modern handwriting styles. It is easier for us to read than the handwriting used by many of Elizabeth's contemporaries. See, for example, document 3 written 34 years later. The italic style of handwriting was developed in Italy during the Renaissance period. Elizabeth's use of it would have shown how modern and educated she was and would also have ensured that her message to Mary was as clear and easy to read as possible.

At the time of writing this letter, Elizabeth was under house arrest, on suspicion of treason, having been implicated in the abortive rebellion of Thomas Wyatt. Elizabeth claims her innocence, pleading to be allowed to prove herself to Mary and be saved from being sent to the Tower of London.

Elizabeth was sent to the Tower of London on 18 March 1554. However, soon after, she was fully exonerated by Thomas Wyatt and no further evidence was found. Mary released her from the Tower of London, first to house arrest at Woodstock and then to Elizabeth's own manor at Hatfield.

palaeography tutorial

Introduction to transcribing document 1

Transcription tips - READ THESE FIRST!

In this document you should watch out for:

- Use of 'y' for 'i', for example, *saynge*: **line 1**.
- Interchangeable 'u' / 'v', such as *euer* - *ever*: **line 1**, *vnto* - *unto*: **line 6**.
- Use of 'es' for genitive, rather than apostrophe and 's'. For example, *kinges*: **line 1**. It may look like there is an apostrophe after the 'e', but what you can see is actually part of the letter 'e', called a 'horn'.
- The abbreviation *.M.*: **line 2**, which in this document means 'Majesty', that is Mary I.
- The abbreviation sign that means an 'm' or an 'n' has been omitted. This is a dash over the preceding vowel. The context will make it clear which letter it is. See for example, **line 3**: *remeber* - *remember*. The abbreviation sign shows that there is an 'm' missing. **line 3**: *demaude* - *demaunde*. The abbreviation sign shows that there is an 'n' omitted. Don't mistake the 'u' for an 'n'.
- Minims - m n u i. It can be difficult to work out these letters. Use common sense. Even if the word really does look like 'thmg', since there is no such word, it must be 'thing'. Refer to the context - in **line 4**: *am* looks a bit like *ani*, but it can't be because of the context.
- Archaic spelling and different vowel sounds, for example, *provid*: **line 5**, *sistar*: **line 37**. In line 13 when Elizabeth writes the word *parson* she is not talking about a vicar, rather this is how she spells (and probably pronounces) 'person', meaning Mary herself. Words containing 'aun', which in modern spelling would be just 'an', such as *demaunde*: **line 3**.
- Long 's'. Don't get long 's' and 'f' mixed up. See *false*: **line 6**. The 'f' will have a cross stroke, even if it's hardly noticeable, and the context will make it clear whether it is a long 's' or an 'f'. Use of both long and short 's'. See *possible*: **line 17**.
- Interchangeable i and j. *subiect* - *subject*: **line 7**.
- Use of single consonant, where you would find two in modern English. For example, *a/* - *all*: **line 8**.

palaeography tutorial

glossary

Admiral

Thomas Seymour, Baron Seymour of Sudeley, held the post of Lord High Admiral of England from 1547 to 1549. The brother of Jane Seymour and uncle of Edward VI, he strove to gain a share of the power and authority enjoyed by his elder brother, Edward Seymour the Protector. Immediately after the death of Henry VIII in 1547, Thomas sought the hand of the Princess Elizabeth but this was refused. A few months later, he secretly married Henry's widow Catherine Parr. Following Catherine's death in childbirth the following year, Thomas again sought to marry Princess Elizabeth. Once more he was refused and Thomas received warnings about his conduct. He was summoned to an interview with the Protector but refused to attend. In January 1549 he was arrested and sent to the Tower. The bill of attainder against him was passed in February, his execution being held on 20 March 1549 on Tower Hill. He was buried within the Tower.

Elizabeth I

Queen of England 1558-1603. Elizabeth I was the daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn. She was born at Greenwich on 7 September 1533. Elizabeth was extremely well-educated and was fluent in six languages. As princess she became a focus for Protestant opposition during her half-sister Mary's reign and as such was briefly held prisoner in the Tower of London. Elizabeth came to the throne on 17 November 1558. She is said to be one of England's most popular monarchs. Elizabeth never married and died at Richmond Palace on 24 March 1603. She was buried at Westminster Abbey.

'Frenche kinge'

Henry II, King of France 1547-1559, born 1519. His wife was Catherine de Medici.

Hearken

To listen.

Italic hand

The italic style of handwriting was brought to England from Italy c. 1500. It was instantly recognised for its easy legibility. It was favoured in particular by Cambridge scholars including Roger Ascham, a tutor of Elizabeth I. It existed alongside secretary hand and gradually replaced it.

Mary I

Queen of England 1553-1558. Mary I, a devout Roman Catholic,

palaeography tutorial

was the daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon. She was born at Greenwich Palace on 8 February 1516. She ascended the throne on 19 July 1553, aged 37 years, after the death of her half-brother Edward VI. Mary restored Roman Catholicism to England. She was given the nickname 'Bloody Mary' for the persecution of Protestants - up to 300 Protestants being burnt in three years. On 25 July 1554, Mary married Philip who became the king of Spain in 1556. The marriage and the persecution of Protestants made Mary unpopular, and her Protestant half-sister Elizabeth became a focus for rebellion. Mary died childless on 17 November 1558 and was succeeded by Elizabeth. Mary was buried at Westminster Abbey.

Paraventur	Perhaps.
Renaissance	A period of intellectual, cultural and economic change in western Europe between the 14th and 16th centuries.
Seymour, Edward	1st earl of Hertford, 1st duke of Somerset, 1506[?] - 1552. 'my lorde of Sommerset' Document 1, line 31. Edward Seymour, the brother of Henry VIII's third wife Jane Seymour and uncle of King Edward VI, was one of the most powerful nobles in the kingdom. He was one of the executors of the will of Henry VIII. Seymour's actions immediately after the death of Henry in 1547 have been described as a 'coup d'etat'. Henry's death was kept secret for several days, during which time Edward took charge of the new young king, having himself declared Protector of the Realme and Protector of the King's Person. Seymour immediately began to introduce radical Protestant reform in England. In 1548, Edward's position was threatened by the intrigues of his younger brother Thomas, who was keen to share in Edward Seymour's power. Edward reluctantly assented to the bill of attainder against his brother, who was executed on Tower Hill in March 1549. In October 1549, Edward Seymour was himself sent to the Tower when the tide of political intrigue turned against him. He was deposed from the protectorate in January 1550. Although freed in the following month, Seymour was rearrested in 1551 and was returned to the Tower after further plots against him. He was beheaded on Tower Hill in January 1552. Seymour was buried between Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard in the chapel of St Peter ad Vincula in the Tower of London.
Tower of London	The Tower of London was begun in the reign of William the Conqueror (1066-1087), with successive monarchs including Henry VII, the grandfather of Mary I and Elizabeth I, making

palaeography tutorial

further additions. From the 1530s, the Tower housed many religious and political prisoners including Sir Thomas More and Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth I's mother, who was accused of treason and executed at the Tower with her brother and others in 1536. Catherine Howard, Henry VIII's fifth wife, met her end there in 1542, as did Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset in 1552 and Lady Jane Grey, the 'nine days' queen' in 1554. Elizabeth I was imprisoned in the Tower for three months in 1554.

The Tower of London was also used to store important official records. Large quantities of records were stored in the White Tower - above a store of gunpowder. From the early 17th century visitors could visit the Tower and consult the records for a fee. During the 19th century the records were taken to the new Public Record Office in Chancery Lane in London. These can now be consulted at The National Archives at Kew.

Wiat/Wyatt the Younger, Sir Thomas

1521[?] - 1554. 'the traitor Wiat' document 1, line 45.

The son of the English poet, Sir Thomas Wyatt the Elder, Thomas Wyatt the Younger was said to be of a 'wild and impulsive temperament' (Dictionary of National Biography). In the spring of 1554, he organised an insurrection against Queen Mary. Known as 'Wyatt's Rebellion', this followed the announcement of Queen Mary's plan to marry Philip, the future king of Spain. Wyatt had supposedly received a vague promise of help from the French ambassador and led a force of 4000 men to London. He reached as far as Ludgate before his forces began to desert, a circumstance that forced him to surrender. Wyatt was committed to the Tower of London and sentenced to death for high treason. He was beheaded on 11 April 1554, after having fully exonerated Princess Elizabeth.

palaeography tutorial

how to use the interactive transcribing exercise

Help - using the interactive transcribing exercise

Step 1: Study the line of text from the document image

Step 2: On the document image, use the interactive magnifying glass to zoom in/out of image by clicking on a particular word

Step 3: Using the textbox below the document image, type in your transcription

Step 4: When you have finished the current line of text, click on the Submit button

Step 5: The results will be shown and will give you the option to either retry or move onto the next line of the current document.

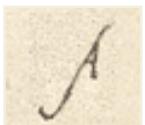
Help - instructions on typing your transcription

- 1) For every word you cannot transcribe, put in a dash character ' - '
- 2) Every word you transcribe should be separated with a single space
- 3) The transcribing text must match, whether it is in capital or lower case
- 4) Expand abbreviations in square brackets where necessary.

palaeography tutorial

alphabet

A



B



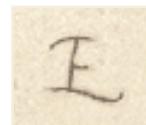
C



D



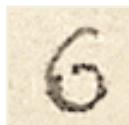
E



F



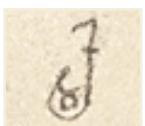
G



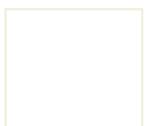
H



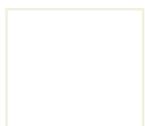
IJ



K



L



M



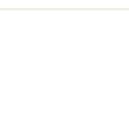
N



O



P



Q



R



S



T



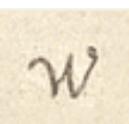
U



V



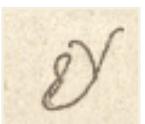
W



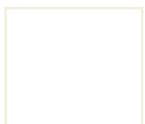
X



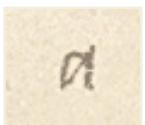
Y



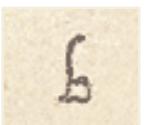
Z



a



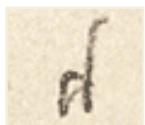
b



c



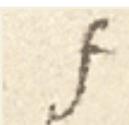
d



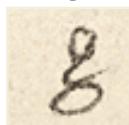
e



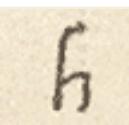
f



g



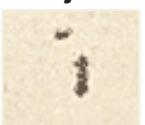
h



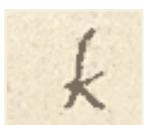
i



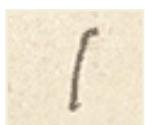
j



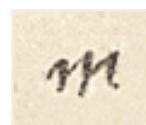
k



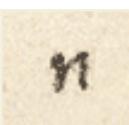
l



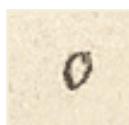
m



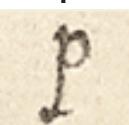
n



o



p



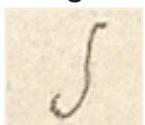
q



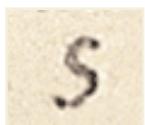
r



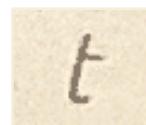
long s



short s



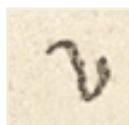
t



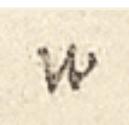
u



v



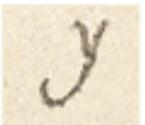
w



x



y



z



palaeography tutorial

1 Of any other did by this oþer man that a kynge's wroþe was more þan
2 another man's oþer I moþ hardly ſeche your. It to verifie it in
3 me and to rememb're your left prouys and my ſtafford. Nowe þat
4 be not commenched without my vermeit þis is that nowe I ſay for
5 that without caſe prouid. I am by your comandement from me your commandent 5
6 to go unto the tower a þane more wanted for a falle traitor, thi a ring 6
7 ſubiect wiche thought I knowe 8 deſerne it not yett in the trice 7
8 at this realme avers. That it is promed wiche I pray god I may haue 8
9 harmefullle deſire that every anythen glorie 9 I may meynglymme
10 himme and to his present power. I proteſt for God. O my ſelfe 10
11 my truthe what ſocier malice (that hevys) that I never ſtrayed 11
12 concied nor coemend to any þinge that moþt be preuentioun 12
13 to your þayson any way or þamevors to the þate by an 13
14 mene and therfor 14 beſeeche your maieſtie to let
15 me anſwer agafe your ſelfe and not ſuffer me to haue þer 15
16 conſelor. Yet and that aforo. I go to the tower. God 16
17 be poſſible if not agor. I be further commenched. Nowbent 17
18 byt poſſuredly our bithnes wil geue me leue to do 18
19 of þis þat my selfe may not becaueth out on as now. I haue 19
20 beea and withouþ come ſee ſafegens more your hifte to 20
21 take ſome better wiþ. With me tha to make me be taken 21

palaeography tutorial

22 at mes right as for my desert knowne. Also in 22
23 beseeche your highnes to perdon this my boynes. Wiche
24 innoency procure me to do together with hope of your uniting
25 kindnes wiche ~~is~~ my self wif not le me call any without stet
26 no more of God but thys. On 26
27 Wiche what it is ~~is~~ wch wch decy no thynke not belene you 27
28 truly & newe. Wiche thynge ~~is~~ Hertage not belene you 28
29 never by report knowe vñles by your selfe you haue
30 bame in my tyme of many cōsideration for want of comminge
31 to the presence of ther prince as in late tyme 30
32 for of Somerſet say that if his brother haue neuer suffred but the 31
33 to speke with him he haue never suffred but the 32
34 perwasions ther made to hym to set forth he was amys
35 in beseche that he coulde not haue safetly if the admiral lised 33
36 and that maner hym gome his consent to his perteinours 34
37 ther pursonas not to be compred to your maiestie yet 35
38 ther pursonas perswade not one, han 36
39 pray god for the 37
40 the other 38
41

palaeography tutorial

51 *humblye came but only one worte* 51
52 *of any ver frā your selfe* 52

53 *our higheſt most faufulſt ſubjeſt that* 53
54 *had be done from the beginninge and wyne* 54
55 *to my ende.* *The rebbe* 55

41 *therfor oys agam with bablenes of my hart because* 41
42 *ſuffered to bow the knees of my body & hubby craft to ſpeke* 42
43 *With your higheſt wiche wolde not be fo bold to refier* 43
44 *if I knewe not my ſelue moft cleare as I knowe my ſelue moft* 44
45 *trou - and as for the tritoſt what he moft pararenthy writ* 45
46 *men a letter but on my ſhulders never recerched any from him and* 46
47 *AS for the copie of my ſetter ſent to the frache kinge I pray* 47
48 *God ſet my eternally if ever I ſent him word meſſage* 48
49 *Inke or ſetter by my menes and to this end my frinch* 49
50 *Saynt george he my deſter* 50

palaepgraphy tutorial

transcript

1. If any ever did try this olde saynge that a kinges worde was more tha[n]
2. a nother ma[n]s othe I most humbly beseche your M[aiestie] to verefie it in
3. me and to reme[m]ber your last promis and my last demau[n]de that I
4. be not co[n]demned without answer and due profe wiche it semes that now I am for
5. that without cause provid I am by your counsel frome you co[m]manded
6. to go vnto the tower a place more wonted for a false traitor, tha[n] a tru
7. subiect wiche thoght I knowe I deserve it not, yet in the face of
8. al this realme aperes that it is provid wiche I pray god I may dy the
9. shamefullist deth that ever any died afore I may mene any suche
10. thinge, and to this present hower I protest afor God (who shal juge
11. my trueth) whatsoeuer malice shal devis that I never practyced
12. conciled nor co[n]sented to any thinge that might be preiudicial
13. to your parson any way or daungerous to the state by any
14. mene, and therfor I hu[m]bly beseche your maiestie to let
15. me answer afore your selfe and not suffer me to trust your
16. counselors yea and that afore I go to the tower (if it
17. be possible) if not afor I be further co[n]demned howbeit I
18. trust assuredly your highnes wyl give me leve to do it afor
19. I go for that thus sha[m]fully I may not be cried out on as now I shal
20. be yea and without cause let co[n]sciens move your hithnes to
21. take some bettar way with me tha[n] to make me be co[n]de[m]ned
22. in al me[n]s sigth afor my desert knownen. Also I most hu[m]bly
23. beseche your higtnes to pardon this my boldnes wiche
24. innoce[n]cy procures me to do togither with hope of your natural
25. kindnis wiche I trust wyl not se me cast away without desert
26. wiche what it is I wold desier no more of God but that you
27. truly knewe. Wiche thinge I thinke and beleve you shal
28. never by report knowe vnles by your selfe you hire. I have
29. harde in my time of many cast away for want of comminge
30. to the presence of ther prince and in late days I harde my
31. lorde of So[m]merset say that if his brother had bine sufferd
32. to speke with him he had never sufferd but the
33. perswasions wer made to him so gret that he was brogth
34. in belefe that he coulde not live safely if the admiral lived
35. and that made him give his consent to his deth thoght
36. thes parsons ar not to be co[m]pared to your maiestie yet I
37. pray god a[...]l perswatio[n]s perswade not one sistar again[st]
38. the other and al for that the have harde false report and
39. not harkene to the trueth
40. knownen
41. therfor ons again with hu[m]blenes of my hart, bicause I am not
42. sufferd to bow the knees of my body I hu[m]bly crave to speke
43. with your higtnis wiche I wolde not be so bold to desier
44. if I knewe not my selfe most clere as I knowe my selfe most
45. tru, and as for the traitor Wiat he migth paraventur writ
46. me a lettar but on my faithe I never receved any from him and
47. as for the copie of my lettar sent to the fre[n]che kinge I pray

palaeography tutorial

48. God co[n]fou[n]d me eternally if ever I sent him word, message
49. toke[n] or lettar by any menes, and to this my truith
50. I will stande into my dethe.
51. I humbly crave but only one worde
52. of answer fro[m] your selfe.
53. Your highnes most faithful subiect that
54. hathe bine from the beginninge, and wylbe
55. to my ende. Elizabeth