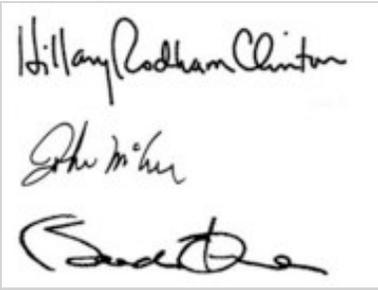


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In US election, every (written) word counts



by Virginie Montet
Sun May 18, 3:30 AM ET

WASHINGTON (AFP) - Hillary Clinton is smart and forceful, John McCain is proud but has a volatile temper, and Barack Obama is a diplomat who deals well with different people and situations.

At least, that's what graphologists say their handwriting reveals about them.

"Handwriting is a reflection of the inner personality. It shows a person's ego strength, how good they feel about themselves, their intellectual, communication and working styles," graphologist Sheila Lowe, author of "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Handwriting Analysis", told AFP.

Graphology -- the study of how we loop our Ls and cross our Ts -- is not taken as seriously in the United States as in Europe.

But every four years, when a US presidential election rolls around, practitioners of the arcane science are much sought after as Americans try everything to analyze contenders for the White House.

"Each time there are elections, I get invited to TV shows, radio shows," Lowe said. "There is always somebody who wants to know something, even if they don't take graphology seriously."

Just the signatures of the candidates are revelatory -- at least to the eye of an expert.

Republican John McCain's signature shows a proud, idealistic but impulsive, if not uncontrollable man, according to the experts.

Lowe saw impulsiveness and a "short fuse" in McCain's variable writing style.

New York graphologist Roger Rubin agreed, and also saw a powerful ego at play in the

AFP/HO Photo: These signatures obtained on May 14 show the handwriting samples of the three US presidential...

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senator from Arizona.

"The unevenness of the rhythm reflects the unevenness of his temperament," Rubin said.

"The capital J is the largest letter, which shows his strong belief in his own ego. The size of 'John' overwhelms the size of 'McCain' -- this shows how distant he is from his family roots."

Obama's signature reveals similar traits.

The vertical straight line of the B in Obama cuts through the large O -- which is nonetheless smaller than the B in Barack.

"The very large B shows he also has a very strong sense of his own ego," Rubin said.

"And he is crossing out his family name," he added, recalling that Obama's father left the family when the front-runner for the Democratic nomination was just a young boy.

Another graphologist had a different interpretation of the bisected O.

"He draws that circle and a line through it, and it's really like he has two different worlds," said Paula Sassi, who has been interpreting handwriting for 28 years.

"I think it shows his black and white heritage."

The fluidity of Obama's signature is a sign of high intelligence, while its illegibility shows he is protecting his privacy.

"He doesn't want you to know him too well," said Arlyn Imberman, author of "Signatures for Success."

"He shows a part of himself to the world but not everything," said Lowe.

The large letters in Obama's signature show that he is ambitious, self-confident and views himself as a leader, said Imberman.

"The fluid letter forms reveal that he can form a coalition, be diplomatic and get along with both sides of the aisle," she added. "He's the type of guy who could tell you to go to hell and you'd enjoy the trip."

Clinton's legible, balanced signature shows a woman of great intelligence.

It's simplicity portrays a "what-you-see-is-what-you-get" personality, said Lowe.

Her straight-up-and-down writing indicates that she "thinks with her head, not with her heart," said Sassi.

"But there is enough roundness in her writing to show that she cares about people," said Imberman.

The fact that the second leg of the H and the second L in Hillary are higher than the first show ambition.

And she's a perfectionist: "Every thing is written carefully, legibly," said Imberman.

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It is difficult, the experts say, to tell the sex of a person from their handwriting, or to discern if they are left- or right-handed.

But, interestingly enough, Obama and McCain are lefties -- just like four out of five US presidents immediately before them: Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan, George Bush Sr and Bill Clinton.

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