

WebQuest Student Page

Timeless Type: Exploring Typography in Early American Printing

A WebQuest for post-secondary digital design fundamentals

Kristine Schiffbauer

November 2012



["The Art of Making Money Plenty: in Every Man's Pocket" by Doctor Franklin](#)

What typographic techniques have stood the test of time?

Introduction

Letters alone, combined into words and placed on a page have meaning for the person who reads them. Letters alone, combined into words and placed on a page also have meaning *even for the person who only looks at them*. Typography is the visual design and use of those letters. Designers use techniques such as varying the size of type, color and placement on a page to help attract the attention of a specific audience and keep that audience's attention in an effort to communicate a message. Some techniques come and go in popularity. Other typographic techniques are fundamental and useful regardless of fads. Examples archived by the Library of Congress show that Benjamin Franklin in the early days of a fledgling nation used letters for their meaning as words to be read-- and viewed. If you saw Franklin's work today, would it look dated or would it look familiar?

What typographic techniques have stood the test of time?

Task

You are in the process of exploring typography basics as a student of design fundamentals. You may have some information from previous learning. You may be working with typography for the first time and have information that is new to you. Now put that learning into practice and share it with others. After observing and analyzing selected typographic examples and summarizing their characteristics, you will design a unified series of five mini-posters. Your purpose is to share information in an effort to educate your audience on the subject of typography using content from early American printing. Your primary audience is your classmates. Your secondary audience is anyone who may view your posters in process or upon completion. Your format is print, in the size of a standard letter sheet of paper. You will use the computer and design application of your choice, such as Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator or InDesign, to create these posters and print your work for presentation.

You will analyze primary sources from Benjamin Franklin's work as a printer. Primary sources come direct from their originator. The Library of Congress curates primary sources like Franklin's work and offers them online for our exploration.

The task objectives are: to recognize the use of typography in someone else's work; employ typography in your own work; place design elements on a page according to the application of design principles such as emphasis, contrast, balance, alignment, repetition and movement/flow; demonstrate use of computer skills through creation and placement of design elements on a page and the printing of that page; and communicate a message to support your goal of educating the viewers of your designs, reinforcing your own emerging

knowledge of typography.

What typographic techniques have stood the test of time?

Process

1. Read about Benjamin Franklin and explore examples of his work in the ["Printer and Writer"](#) section of the [Library of Congress](#) exhibit ["Benjamin Franklin In His Own Words."](#) The Franklin Institute also has [biographical information](#) about Franklin as a printer.
2. Choose at least five designs and save their image files. For example, you take a closer look at the pages of one of Franklin's "Poor Richard's Almanack." You may find your images somewhere in addition to the Library of Congress, but the images you use must be from primary sources. Gettysburg College maintains an online site that includes works like the [1753 edition](#) of "Poor Richard's Almanack."
3. Evaluate the typography of each for use in a series of five mini-posters that you will create to share what you recognize as good, or maybe even poor, design practices today.
4. Your digital tools are the computer and design application with which you are most comfortable. You may use an Adobe Creative Suite application such as Photoshop, Illustrator or InDesign or a similar application to create the mini-posters in the size of a standard letter document, landscape orientation. Use a half-inch margin on all sides.
5. Give each poster a different topic in typography. For example, you may choose to diagram the anatomy of a capital letter that Franklin emphasized on the cover of a magazine. Also, you may choose to describe the formatting of the words and sentences on a page. In another example, you may choose to explain how the text portrays personality or emotion to support the topic of the design. Consider [I Love Typography](#) and [Fonts.com](#) sites for reference to supplement your classroom instruction and readings as you and your classmates research your projects.
6. View a variety of contemporary designs that feature typography. Use these designs for reference, comparison and inspiration. A suggested site is [Fonts in Use](#).
7. Follow the design process, transferring your ideas from your head to paper with thumbnail (small, rough) sketches.
8. Work with a classmate for critique and feedback of your sketches and narrow your ideas to the strongest ones for further development.
9. Use appropriate images (such as the files you obtained from "Benjamin Franklin In His Own Words") and words, along with other design elements, including color, shapes, and lines, to design your posters. If you choose to incorporate design elements that you do not create yourself, verify that you have the proper usage rights and cite your source. Do not violate Copyright.
10. Include the source citation for the images somewhere within your designs. Also, cite the sources and include that citation in your designs for any description of the images, such as the Library of Congress description and for any instructional information you may use, such as a definition for a term. Give proper and full credit for anything that is not your direct work. Do not plagiarize.
11. The posters must employ visual unity, making it obvious to the viewer that they belong together as a series.
12. Show your work again to your classmate for critique and make note of recommendations for yourself as well as your explanation of your work.
13. Revise your work according to feedback and print your posters.
14. Explain what you did. List the technical skills you practiced and explain the design principles that you followed and response you took to peer feedback in a written computer-generated document at least one page long but no more than two pages.
15. Be prepared to present your posters. Turn in your printed posters, your digital files and your written explanation on deadline.

What typographic techniques have stood the test of time?

Evaluation

This project will be considered among hands-on assignments. You will receive an individual grade from the instructor. Your work will be assessed based on your use of typography, your application of design principles, your skills in the use of the technology tools to apply the design principles, your communication of the message and your communication of the process you followed to complete this project. Exemplary work is work that is ready to use with little to no errors or omissions. Accomplished work is very good work that is ready to use with minimal further effort to correct errors or to add something minor that may have been omitted. Developing work needs significant effort to correct errors or has multiple omissions. Beginning work shows minimal effort. See the rubric below for details. You will receive a grade of zero if you miss the deadline. Assess yourself and at least one other classmate. At least one other classmate will assess your work. You will use this personal and collaborative assessment to help you improve your work before your final version is submitted. Use the following questions as a guide: What is the one thing about the design that stands out as best? Why? What is something that could be changed to improve the design? Why is that a problem? Suggest a change.

Rubric

Stated Objective or Performance	Beginning 1	Developing 2	Accomplished 3	Exemplary 4	Score
Typography fundamentals	Significant effort and thought is needed for the typefaces and formatting choices. The message is incomplete. Little knowledge of typography is demonstrated.	Typeface and formatting choices are inappropriate and/or inconsistent in some way that harms the message. Some knowledge of typography is demonstrated.	Typeface and formatting choices are appropriate and consistent and support the message, with minor neatness issues. Very good knowledge of typography is demonstrated.	Typeface and formatting choices are appropriate, consistent and neat and support the message. Excellent knowledge of typography is demonstrated.	
Design technique	This design demonstrates poor use of elements of design, according to recognized principles of design. No attempt was made to respond to peer and other feedback.	Revision is needed for this design to demonstrate acceptable use of elements of design, according to recognized principles of design. An attempt was made to respond to peer and other feedback.	This design demonstrates very good use of elements of design, according to recognized principles of design. Minor revision is needed. The project was revised based on peer and other feedback.	This design demonstrates excellent use of elements of design, according to recognized principles of design, as is. The project was revised based on peer and other feedback.	
Technical skills	Multiple mistakes with technology tools: Significant effort is	Some difficulty using the technology tools. Further practice with design	Very good use of technology with correct use of technical design	Excellent use of computer and design technical tools. Design software	

		needed for corrections.	software or the computer would improve the work.	techniques learned in class or through exploration. Minor errors are corrected with minimal effort.	techniques are exemplary and skills are based on classroom instruction or out-of-class exploration. No errors detected.	
Communication		Explanation is incomplete. Questions about the message are unanswered. Written and presented work is missing or has numerous spelling and grammar errors.	Explanation is brief with some background information referenced and cited, details of the design process are included, and the project result is shared, although questions about the message remain unanswered. Written and presented work has multiple misspelling and/or grammar errors.	Explanation is complete or nearly complete with background information referenced and cited, details of the design process are included, and the project result is shared, leaving minimal questions about the message. Written and presented work has minor misspellings and/or grammar errors.	Explanation is complete with background information referenced and cited, details of the design process are included, and the project result is shared, leaving no questions about the message. Written and presented work has no misspellings or grammar errors.	
Deadline		Turned in late the same day	Turned in on time	Turned in on time	Turned in on time	

What typographic techniques have stood the test of time?

Conclusion

Anyone with a computer and software application that permits the placement of words on a page can use typography to communicate a message. Technology gives us the opportunity to share that message with a global audience at the press of a button. The effect may be just as quick. Benjamin Franklin had to work harder to reach his audience with printed pages that featured words for reading and viewing. Typography in early American printing may look familiar to us, as fundamental concepts prevail, or some unfamiliar technique may serve as an inspiration for our creativity. Visual messages are all around us, competing for our attention. What attracts your attention? Take a second glance and then look even closer at the supporting typography. Use the most effective techniques in your designs.

What typographic techniques have stood the test of time?

| [Link to Teacher Page](#) |

Credits and References

Designed by **Kristine Schiffbauer**, 2012, ([e-mail me](#)) as part of the *WebQuesting at the Library of Congress* professional development course offered through [Teaching with Primary Sources at Waynesburg University](#).

WebQuest Teacher Page

Timeless Type: Exploring Typography in Early American Printing

**A WebQuest for post-secondary
digital design fundamentals**

Kristine Schiffbauer

November 2012



["The Art of Making Money Plenty: in Every Man's Pocket" by
Doctor Franklin.](#)

What typographic techniques have stood the test of time?

| [Link to Student Page](#) |

Introduction for Teachers

Designed by: Kristine Schiffbauer ([e-mail me](#))

This WebQuest serves as an assessment of a unit of study and is meant to follow and reinforce classroom instruction and assigned readings on fundamental concepts of typography: type anatomy, typeface categories, type personality, character and paragraph formatting, and choosing and using type as an element of design. Students have some experience with other design elements and can place them on a page, according to design principles they are studying. They can use the basics of design software.

School: Waynesburg University Department of Communication, Waynesburg, Pennsylvania
Textbook Publisher/Title/Date/Level:

- Delmar Cengage Learning, "The Design Collection Revealed CS6" 2012.
 - InDesign, Chapter 2, "Working with text" lessons 1-2; Photoshop, Chapter 6, "Placing type in an image" all lessons; and Illustrator, Chapter 2, "Creating text and gradients" lessons 1-3, 5-6.
- Delmar Cengage Learning, "Design Fundamentals for New Media" 2013.
 - Chapter 18, "Typography"
- Reference: Thomson Delmar Learning, "Basics of Design: Layout & Typography for Beginners" 2005.
 - Chapter 10, "Overview of Technical Terms," and Chapter 11, "A Few Simple Type Rules."
- Reference: Wiley, "Type Rules: The Designer's Guide to Professional Typography" 2010.
 - Chapter 1, "A Brief History of Type"

What typographic techniques have stood the test of time?

About the Learners

This WebQuest is designed for post-secondary students of a beginning design course in which fundamental concepts are taught. The topics include design fundamentals such as typography and other elements of design as well as principles of design and introduction to design tools such as computer applications Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator and Adobe InDesign.

This WebQuest could be used with students at other grade levels with modification.

Learners with different skills or ability levels could be addressed by adjusting the complexity of the created design. The students could be organized into teams and the task divided among members.

What typographic techniques have stood the test of time?

Academic Standards

This WebQuest is designed for post-secondary education. The apparent relevant academic standards addressed for grades 6-12 are as follows: The College and Career Readiness Standards of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (CCR-ELA) and the Common Core State Standards for History, Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (CCR-HSSSTS).

CCR-ELA: The students will:

- Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text. (reading 1)
- Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone. (reading 4)
- Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words. (reading 7)
- Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take. (reading 9)
- Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. (writing 1)
- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content. (writing 2)
- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences. (writing 3)
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (writing 4)
- Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach. (writing 5)
- Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others. (writing 6)
- Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation. (writing 7)
- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. (writing 9)
- Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences. (writing 10)
- Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. (speaking and listening 1)
- Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. (speaking and listening 2)
- Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of

reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (speaking and listening 4)

- Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations. (speaking and listening 5)
- Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. (speaking and listening 6)
- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking. (language 1)
- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing. (language 2)
- Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening. (language 3)
- Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate. (language 4)
- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. (language 5)
- Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression. (language 6)

CCR-HSSSTS: The students will:

- Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text. (reading 1)
- Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone. (reading 4)
- Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words. (reading 7)
- Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take. (reading 9)
- Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. (writing 1)
- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content. (writing 2)
- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences. (writing 3)
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (writing 4)
- Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach. (writing 5)
- Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others. (writing 6)
- Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation. (writing 7)
- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. (writing 9)
- Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences. (writing 10)

Source Authors: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers; Title: Common Core State Standards; Publisher: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, Washington D.C.; Copyright Date: 2010.

Key Vocabulary words:

- Alignment
- Ascender
- Baseline
- Body copy/copy
- Cap height
- Column
- Descender
- Folio
- Font
- Glyph
- Grid
- Gutter
- Headline
- Initial cap
- Kerning
- Leading
- Legibility
- Points
- Readability
- Sans serif
- Script
- Serif
- Symbol
- Tracking
- Typeface
- Type family
- Type style
- Typography
- x-height

What typographic techniques have stood the test of time?**Process for Teachers**

This WebQuest ends a multiple-day lesson on typography. The background fundamentals are referenced throughout various lessons, but direct instruction is featured in about one week, which is three hours of in-class time. The WebQuest posters project could be assigned at the conclusion of instruction and due up to one week later. Students need to have at least one fellow classmate assigned for critique and feedback of their work. The bulk of the students' work is intended as an out-of-class assignment.

Experience with typographic concepts is needed to teach the background information for this WebQuest.

Variations:

- The project could have several deadlines as rough and revised versions of the posters are completed and critiqued.
- The task could be adjusted to produce one poster or a team could produce the entire series. The posters could also be produced by hand instead of with a computer and design software application tools.
- The posters could be exhibited in a classroom or hallway.
- A poster or posters could be completed in class as individuals or teams.

What typographic techniques have stood the test of time?**Resources for Teachers**

- Hardware: computers with Internet access
- Software: Adobe Creative Suite Photoshop, Illustrator and/or InDesign. The current version or another earlier version is acceptable.

Resources on Benjamin Franklin:

- Online Exhibit: "[Benjamin Franklin In His Own Words](#)"
 - The "[Printer and Writer](#)" resources
 - (One of my favorite examples is the first one: "[M.T. Cicero's Cato Major, or, his Discourse of Old-Age.](#)")
- Gettysburg College has a collection of works that offer multiple pages for view like Franklin's 1753 "[Poor Richard's Almanack](#)."
- Other Franklin links including biographical information:

- [Franklin Institute](#)
- Timeline from [PBS](#)
- Details about Franklin's printing office in Philadelphia from the [National Park Service](#)

Resources on Typography:

- Articles about typography and links to other sources [ilovetypography.com](#)
- A 5-part article at I Love Typography titled "eXtreme Type Terminology" [article link](#) has a lot of helpful information.
 - Four guidelines for choosing a typeface (I Love Typography's "[On Choosing Type](#)")
- Fonts.com: "[Learn about Fonts & Typography](#)"
 - Checklist for good formatting: "[Typographic Checklist link](#)"
- Fonts in Use: [examples of contemporary designs](#) that feature type.
- Help in identifying typefaces by describing their characteristics: [identifont.com](#)

What typographic techniques have stood the test of time?

Evaluation for Teachers

The students' recognition of typography in examples from the Library of Congress Benjamin Franklin exhibit as well as students' use of typography in the poster designs is assessed. Other content incorporated into the posters should also be assessed. The complexity and completeness of the work is assessed according to demonstration of design and technical skills toward the ultimate goal of communicating the message of educating an audience on the use of typography in early American printing.

A rubric is included in the student section of this WebQuest.

What typographic techniques have stood the test of time?

Conclusion for Teachers

We gain information by reading type but also by looking at the design of the characters and how they are placed on a page. Anyone with a computer and design software, or even word processing software, can practice typography and quickly communicate messages. In the time of Benjamin Franklin, typography was not as accessible. However, the placement of type on a page was an important means of communicating the messages of a fledgling nation. A suggested discussion for reflection is the relative ease with which someone can communicate a message today in comparison to the 18th century in America. The ability to reach a large audience has changed with technology. Some techniques like the alignment of text in columns are recognizable and practiced today but other techniques like the use of unique decorative type are more possible now. Students who use this WebQuest will have practiced their use of typography to communicate a message. They will be able to analyze the effectiveness of their use of typography and the use of typography in others' work.

What typographic techniques have stood the test of time?

|Link to [Student Page](#)|

Credits and References

Designed by Kristine Schiffbauer ([e-mail me](#)), 2012, as part of the *WebQuesting at the Library of Congress* professional development course offered through [Teaching with Primary Sources at Waynesburg University](#).