



Write Like a Historian
Lesson Plan



Topic/Grade Level

- Cursive Writing
- Secondary (6-12)

ELA Standards

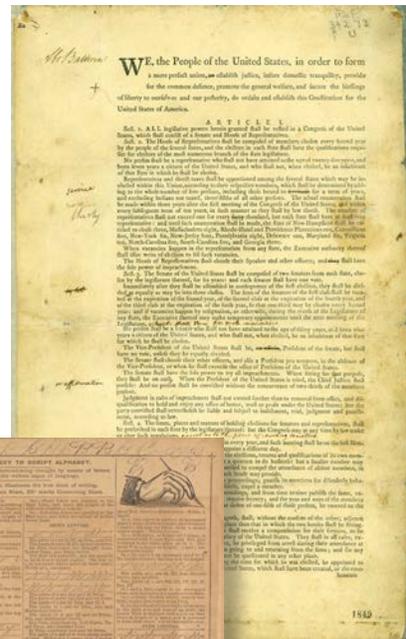
- 3-5.F.H.3: Read texts written in cursive.
- 3-5.F.H.4: Use fine motor skills to form legible letters and words in cursive.

SS Standards

- L6-8RHSS1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources
- L9-10RHSS1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
- L11-12RHSS1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

Materials Needed:

- United States Constitution draft (GHS 1703)
- Chris Murphy cursive penmanship book (GHS 2894)
- GHS Cursive Alphabet Chart
- GHS Digital Crowdsourcing Directions
- Primary Source Analysis Tool
- Whiteboard
- Quill pens or calligraphy pens



Lesson Summary

“Write Like a Historian” introduces students to the history and importance of cursive writing in American history. By examining a vintage penmanship book and the annotations of a draft copy of the U.S. Constitution, students will explore the usage of cursive in key historical documents and why being able to read and write in cursive still matters today.

Students will learn about the origins of cursive, practice reading and writing in cursive, and analyze a primary source from the nation’s founding. This lesson is part of Decoding Histories, the education program of the Community Archives Initiative, which helps students build literacy, critical thinking, and historical inquiry skills while engaging directly with Georgia’s past.

Introduction

(part of the lesson that you excite/engage about what is being introduced)

Start by asking students, “Who knows how to write their name in print and in cursive?” and discuss their answers briefly. Introduce cursive writing to the class by highlighting the GHS Cursive Alphabet Chart and watching a short excerpt of the video [Secrets of Handwriting, Ink, and Quill: Letter Writing in Early America](#) [00:00-07:03] to help students obtain a better understanding of the origins of cursive.

After the video, show a few pages of the [Chris Murphy cursive penmanship book](#) written in cursive to the class. Explain to students that in the past, students practiced their handwriting daily using various tools. Use the GHS cursive alphabet chart to help students recognize and form the letters. Model writing one to two letters of the alphabet, demonstrating proper cursive letter formation, spacing, and punctuation. Share tips for neat cursive writing, such as starting each letter at the right place and connecting letters smoothly.

After writing, briefly discuss and analyze the penmanship book by asking who owned the book, what grade they were in, what school they attended, and why it is important. Explain that cursive writing was essential for daily life and that learning to write in cursive helps us connect with history.

Direct Instruction

(part of the lesson where you are teaching the new skill)

Show a short excerpt from the draft U.S. Constitution with annotations written in cursive. Use the GHS cursive alphabet chart to help students recognize and form the letters. Model writing two to three lines of the document on the whiteboard, demonstrating proper cursive letter formation, spacing, and punctuation. Share tips for neat cursive writing, such as starting each letter at the right place and connecting letters smoothly.

After writing, briefly discuss the document by asking who wrote it, what it says, when it was written, and why it is important (Primary Source Analysis Tool). Explain that cursive writing was essential for sharing important ideas and that learning to write in cursive helps us connect with history.

Guided Practice

(part of the lesson where students practice the skill they just learned)

Provide students with a short excerpt from the draft Constitution written in cursive. In pairs, have them practice writing three to five lines in their own cursive handwriting. Encourage them to use the GHS cursive alphabet chart and apply the tips from direct instruction, focusing on letter formation, spacing, and punctuation. After about ten minutes, invite a few pairs to share their writing and talk about any challenges they faced and how they improved.

Enrichment:

- Offer quill pens or calligraphy pens to practice writing like a historian.
- Offer the [GHS daily cursive handwriting worksheets](#) for additional practice.



Independent Practice

(part of the lesson where students independently practice the skill)

Have students independently write a short passage from the draft U.S. Constitution in cursive, using the GHS cursive alphabet chart as a guide. Encourage them to pay attention to neat letter formation, spacing, and punctuation.

Enrichment:

- Offer the [GHS daily cursive handwriting worksheets](#) for additional practice.
- Invite students to write their own “Class Constitution” using formal language and cursive handwriting.

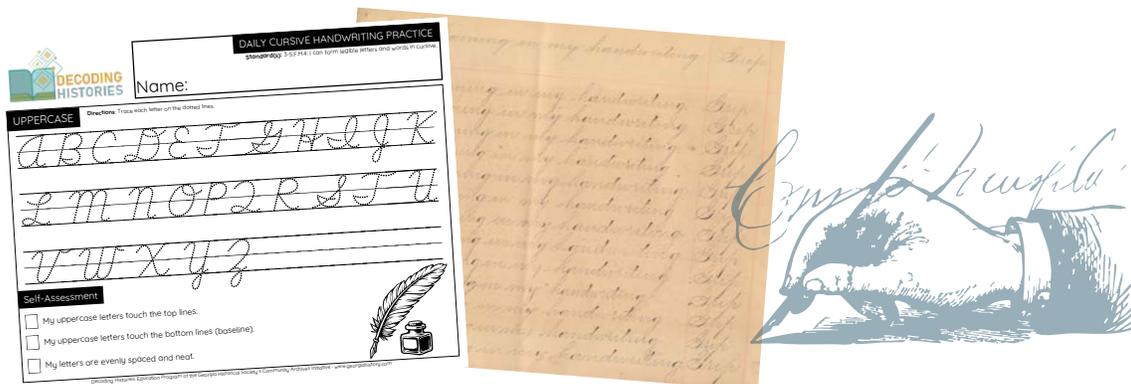
Closure

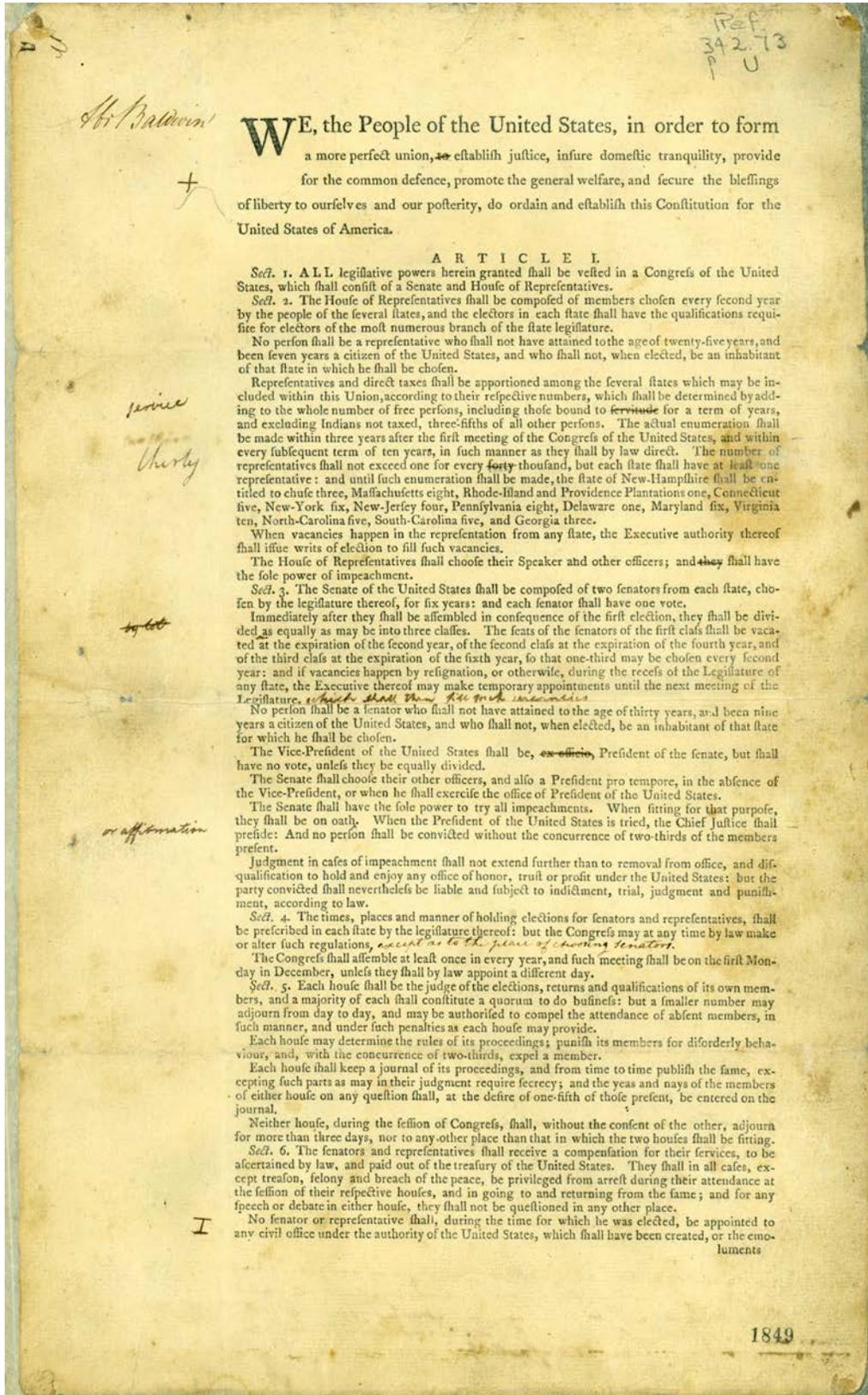
(part of the lesson where you complete a quick review of the lesson)

Bring the class together and ask students to reflect on their writing experience. Encourage them to share what they found challenging or enjoyable about writing in cursive, especially using quill pens. Reinforce that cursive writing was how many important documents were created and that learning cursive helps us connect to history in a personal way.

Early Finisher:

- Finish watching [Secrets of Handwriting, Ink, and Quill: Letter Writing in Early America](#).
- Offer the [GHS daily cursive handwriting worksheets](#) for additional practice.





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WE, the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, to establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

A R T I C L E I.

Sec. 1. ALL legislative powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.

Sec. 2. The House of Representatives shall be composed of members chosen every second year by the people of the several states, and the electors in each state shall have the qualifications requisite for electors of the most numerous branch of the state legislature.

No person shall be a representative who shall not have attained to the age of twenty-five years, and been seven years a citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an inhabitant of that state in which he shall be chosen.

Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several states which may be included within this Union, according to their respective numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole number of free persons, including those bound to service for a term of years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three-fifths of all other persons. The actual enumeration shall be made within three years after the first meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent term of ten years, in such manner as they shall by law direct. The number of representatives shall not exceed one for every forty thousand, but each state shall have at least one representative: and until such enumeration shall be made, the state of New-Hampshire shall be entitled to chuse three, Massachusetts eight, Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations one, Connecticut five, New-York six, New-Jersey four, Pennsylvania eight, Delaware one, Maryland six, Virginia ten, North-Carolina five, South-Carolina five, and Georgia three.

When vacancies happen in the representation from any state, the Executive authority thereof shall issue writs of election to fill such vacancies.

The House of Representatives shall choose their Speaker and other officers; and they shall have the sole power of impeachment.

Sec. 3. The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two senators from each state, chosen by the legislature thereof, for six years; and each senator shall have one vote.

Immediately after they shall be assembled in consequence of the first election, they shall be divided as equally as may be into three classes. The seats of the senators of the first class shall be vacated at the expiration of the second year, of the second class at the expiration of the fourth year, and of the third class at the expiration of the sixth year, so that one-third may be chosen every second year: and if vacancies happen by resignation, or otherwise, during the recess of the Legislature of any state, the Executive thereof may make temporary appointments until the next meeting of the Legislature, which shall then fill such vacancies.

No person shall be a senator who shall not have attained to the age of thirty years, and been nine years a citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an inhabitant of that state for which he shall be chosen.

The Vice-President of the United States shall be, *ex-officio*, President of the senate, but shall have no vote, unless they be equally divided.

The Senate shall choose their other officers, and also a President pro tempore, in the absence of the Vice-President, or when he shall exercise the office of President of the United States.

The Senate shall have the sole power to try all impeachments. When sitting for that purpose, they shall be on oath. When the President of the United States is tried, the Chief Justice shall preside: And no person shall be convicted without the concurrence of two-thirds of the members present.

Judgment in cases of impeachment shall not extend further than to removal from office, and disqualification to hold and enjoy any office of honor, trust or profit under the United States: but the party convicted shall nevertheless be liable and subject to indictment, trial, judgment and punishment, according to law.

Sec. 4. The times, places and manner of holding elections for senators and representatives, shall be prescribed in each state by the legislature thereof: but the Congress may at any time by law make or alter such regulations, *except as to the place of choosing senators.*

The Congress shall assemble at least once in every year, and such meeting shall be on the first Monday in December, unless they shall by law appoint a different day.

Sec. 5. Each house shall be the judge of the elections, returns and qualifications of its own members, and a majority of each shall constitute a quorum to do business: but a smaller number may adjourn from day to day, and may be authorized to compel the attendance of absent members, in such manner, and under such penalties as each house may provide.

Each house may determine the rules of its proceedings; punish its members for disorderly behaviour, and, with the concurrence of two-thirds, expel a member.

Each house shall keep a journal of its proceedings, and from time to time publish the same, excepting such parts as may in their judgment require secrecy; and the yeas and nays of the members of either house on any question shall, at the desire of one-fifth of those present, be entered on the journal.

Neither house, during the session of Congress, shall, without the consent of the other, adjourn for more than three days, nor to any other place than that in which the two houses shall be sitting.

Sec. 6. The senators and representatives shall receive a compensation for their services, to be ascertained by law, and paid out of the treasury of the United States. They shall in all cases, except treason, felony and breach of the peace, be privileged from arrest during their attendance at the session of their respective houses, and in going to and returning from the same; and for any speech or debate in either house, they shall not be questioned in any other place.

No senator or representative shall, during the time for which he was elected, be appointed to any civil office under the authority of the United States, which shall have been created, or the emoluments

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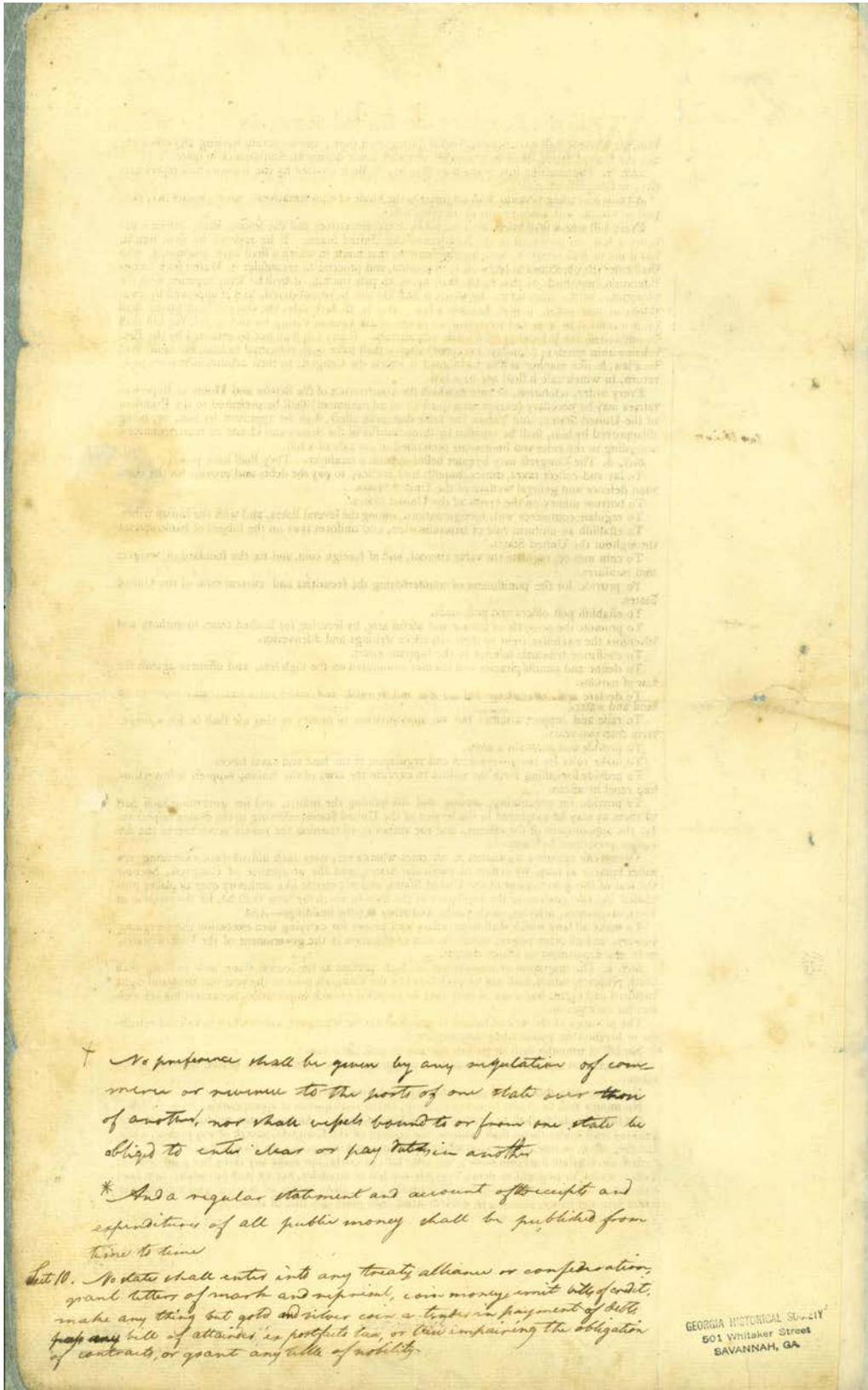
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Primary Source: United States Constitution draft (GHS 1703)

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† No preference shall be given by any regulation of commerce or revenue to the ports of one state over those of another, nor shall vessels bound to or from one state be obliged to enter clear or pay duties in another.

* And a regular statement and account of the receipts and expenditures of all public money shall be published from time to time.

Section 10. No state shall enter into any treaty, alliance or confederation, grant letters of marque and reprisal, coin money, emit bills of credit, pass any bill of attainder, ex post facto law, or law impairing the obligation of contracts, or grant any title of nobility.

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luments whereof shall have been increased during such time; and no person holding any office under the United States, shall be a member of either house during his continuance in office.

Sec. 7. The enacting style of the laws shall be, "Be it enacted by the senators and representatives in Congress assembled."

All bills for raising revenue shall originate in the house of representatives: but the senate may propose or concur with amendments as on other bills.

Every bill which shall have passed the house of representatives and the senate, shall, before it become a law, be presented to the president of the United States. If he approve he shall sign it, but if not he shall return it, with his objections to that house in which it shall have originated, who shall enter the objections at large on their journal, and proceed to reconsider it. If after such reconsideration two-thirds of that house shall agree to pass the bill, it shall be sent, together with the objections, to the other house, by which it shall likewise be reconsidered, and if approved by two-thirds of that house, it shall become a law. But in all such cases the votes of both houses shall be determined by yeas and nays, and the names of the persons voting for and against the bill shall be entered on the journal of each house respectively. If any bill shall not be returned by the President within ten days (Sundays excepted) after it shall have been presented to him, the same shall be a law, in like manner as if he had signed it, unless the Congress by their adjournment prevent its return, in which case it shall not be a law.

Every order, resolution, or vote to which the concurrence of the Senate and House of Representatives may be necessary (except on a question of adjournment) shall be presented to the President of the United States; and before the same shall take effect, shall be approved by him, or, being disapproved by him, shall be repassed by ~~three-fourths~~ ^{two-thirds} of the Senate and House of Representatives, according to the rules and limitations prescribed in the case of a bill.

Sec. 8. The Congress ~~may by joint ballot appoint a treasurer~~ shall have power To lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts and excises; to pay the debts and provide for the common defence and general welfare of the United States.

To borrow money on the credit of the United States.

To regulate commerce with foreign nations, among the several states, and with the Indian tribes.

To establish an uniform rule of naturalization, and uniform laws on the subject of bankruptcies throughout the United States.

To coin money, regulate the value thereof, and of foreign coin, and fix the standard of weights and measures.

To provide for the punishment of counterfeiting the securities and current coin of the United States.

To establish post offices and post roads.

To promote the progress of science and useful arts, by securing for limited times to authors and inventors the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries.

To constitute tribunals inferior to the supreme court.

To define and punish piracies and felonies committed on the high seas, and offences against the law of nations.

To declare war, grant letters of marque and reprisal, and make rules concerning captures on land and water.

To raise and support armies: but no appropriation of money to that use shall be for a longer term than two years.

To provide and maintain a navy.

To make rules for the government and regulation of the land and naval forces.

To provide for calling forth the militia to execute the laws of the union, suppress insurrections and repel invasions.

To provide for organizing, arming and disciplining the militia, and for governing such part of them as may be employed in the service of the United States, referring to the States respectively, the appointment of the officers, and the authority of training the militia according to the discipline prescribed by Congress.

To exercise exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever, over such district (not exceeding ten miles square) as may, by cession of particular States, and the acceptance of Congress, become the seat of the government of the United States, and to exercise like authority over all places purchased by the consent of the legislature of the state in which the same shall be, for the erection of forts, magazines, arsenals, dock-yards, and other needful buildings—And

To make all laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into execution the foregoing powers, and all other powers vested by this constitution in the government of the United States, or in any department or officer thereof.

Sec. 9. The migration or importation of such persons as ^{any of the} the several states now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the year one thousand eight hundred and eight, but a tax or duty may be imposed on such importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each person.

The privilege of the writ of habeas corpus shall not be suspended, unless when in cases of rebellion or invasion the public safety may require it.

No bill of attainder shall be passed, nor any ex post facto law, shall be passed.

No capitation tax shall be laid, unless in proportion to the census herein before directed to be taken.

No tax or duty shall be laid on articles exported from any state.

No money shall be drawn from the treasury, but in consequence of appropriations made by law.

No title of nobility shall be granted by the United States. And no person holding any office of profit or trust under them, shall, without the consent of the Congress, accept of any present, emolument, office, or title, of any kind whatever, from any king, prince, or foreign state.

Sec. 10. No state shall coin money, nor emit bills of credit, nor make any thing but gold or silver coin a tender in payment of debts, nor pass any bill of attainder, nor ex post facto laws, nor laws altering or impairing the obligation of contracts; nor grant letters of marque and reprisal, nor enter into any treaty, alliance, or confederation, nor grant any title of nobility.

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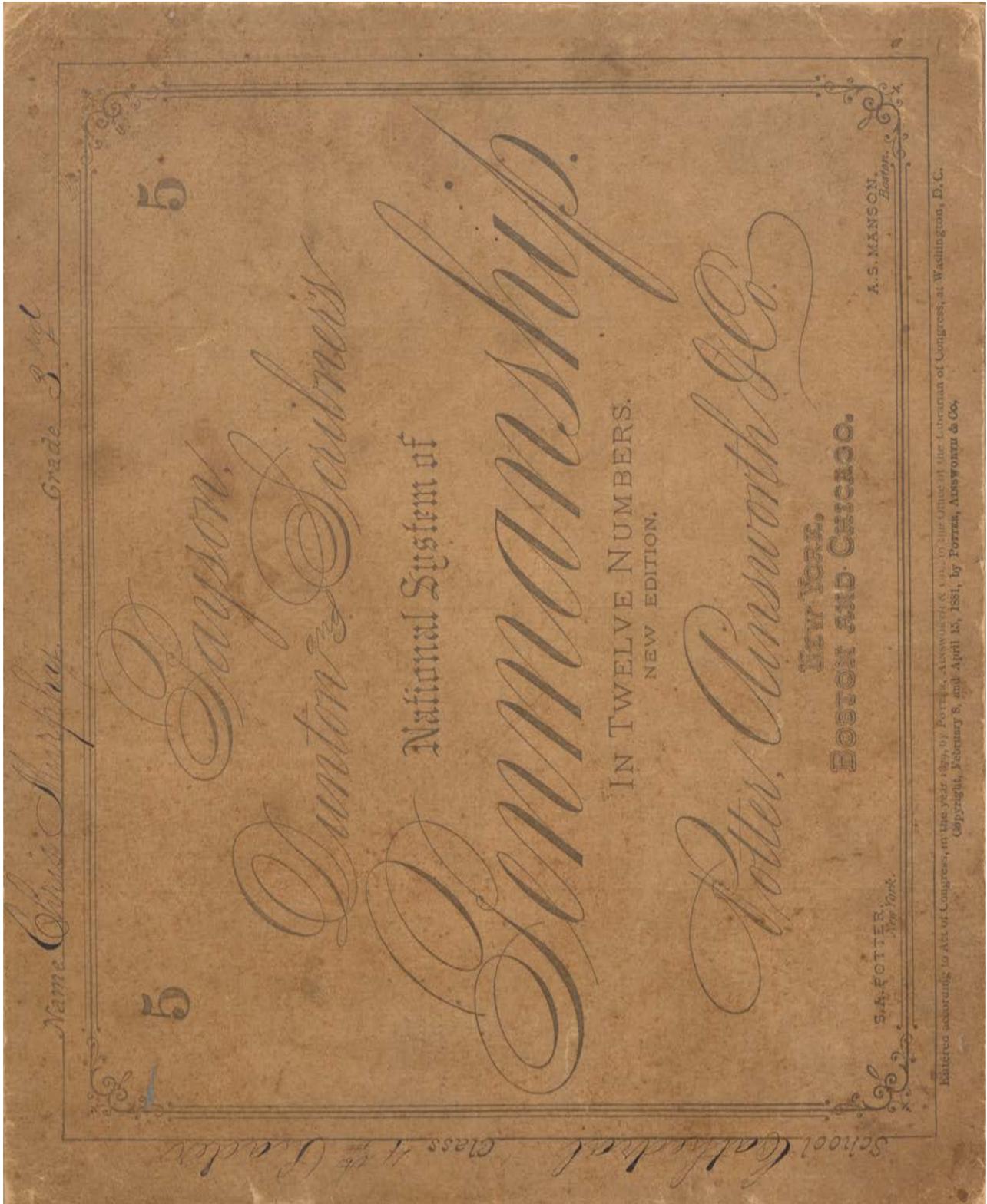
Provided that no state shall be restrained from imposing the usual duties on produce exported from such states for the sole purpose of defraying the charge of inspecting, packing, storing and insuring the same or such produce while in the custody of public officers, but all such regulations shall in case of abuse be subject to the revision and control of Congress. No state shall, without the consent of Congress,

* No state shall, without the consent of Congress, lay ^{any} ~~any~~ ^{any} duties on imports or exports except what may be absolutely necessary for executing its inspection laws, and the nett produce of all such duties and imposts laid by any state shall be for the use of the ^{in imports or exports} and all such laws shall be subject to the revision and control of Congress because of the United States. No state shall, without the consent of Congress lay any duty of tonnage, keep troops or ships of war in time of peace enter into any agreement or compact with another state, or with a foreign power or engage in war unless actually invaded, or in such imminent danger as will not admit of delay

† And he shall not receive within that period any other emolument from the United States or either of them.

§ But the Congress may by law vest the appointment of such inferior officers as they may think proper in the President alone, in the courts of law, or in the heads of departments.

Primary Source: Chris Murphy cursive penmanship book (GHS 2894)



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