



Transcribe Like an Archivist

Lesson Plan



Topic/Grade Level

- Cursive Writing
- Secondary (6-12)

ELA Standards

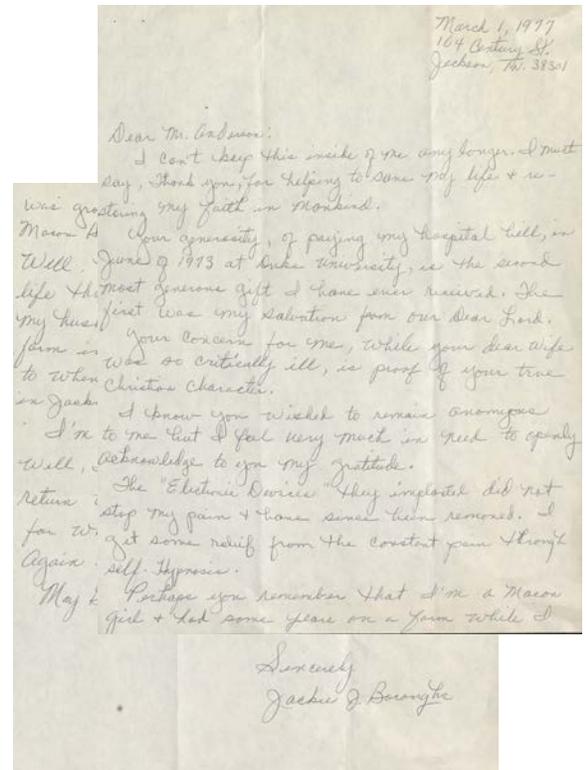
- 3-5.F.H.3: Read texts written in cursive.
- 3-5.F.H.4: Use fine motor skills to form legible letters and words in cursive.

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:

- Peyton Anderson Primary Source Set ([GHS 2864](#))
- [GHS Cursive Alphabet Chart](#)
- Whiteboard
- [GHS Digital Crowdsourcing Directions](#)
- [Primary Source Analysis Tool](#)



Lesson Summary

“Transcribe Like an Archivist” invites students to step into the shoes of a real archivist. Archivists preserve and organize historical records. One important job archivists do is transcribing, which means carefully reading old handwritten documents (often in cursive) and rewriting them as typed text so others can read and learn from them. In this lesson, students will explore the importance of transcription while working with a real historical letter from GHS 2864, the Peyton Anderson Papers at the Georgia Historical Society (GHS).

Students will learn how to read cursive, analyze a primary source, and transcribe a short excerpt using crowdsourcing tools from the GHS website. 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, “What do you think an archivist does?” and discuss their answers briefly. Introduce the word transcription and explain that archivists transcribe old handwritten documents so people today can read and learn from them. Show students image 1 of the Peyton Anderson Primary Source Set and ask them what they notice about the handwriting and how difficult it might be to read. Invite students to guess what some words might be. Then tell students that just like archivists, they will read a real letter from the Peyton Anderson Papers and help transcribe it.

Direct Instruction

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

Begin by displaying image 2 of the Peyton Anderson Primary Source Set (a short letter written in cursive). Review or introduce the GHS cursive alphabet chart to help students recognize the letters. Model reading two to three lines aloud and demonstrate how to transcribe them line-by-line on the whiteboard. As you work through the transcription, highlight important tips:

- Look for familiar letters and words.
- Pay attention to punctuation and spelling.
- Use context clues to figure out words that are hard to read.

After transcribing, guide students through a brief primary source analysis using [Analyzing Primary Sources Teacher Guide](#). Guide the discussion by asking questions such as who wrote the letter, what the letter is about, when it was written, and why it might be important. Explain that transcription is an important way to preserve history and allows others to learn from old documents.

Guided Practice

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

Provide students with image 3 of the Peyton Anderson Primary Source Set (a short excerpt of the cursive letter) and have them work in pairs to transcribe three to five lines together. Encourage them to use the cursive alphabet chart and the transcription strategies discussed during direct instruction. After about ten minutes, bring the class back together and ask a few pairs to share a sentence they transcribed, explaining how they figured out challenging parts.

Independent Practice

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

Have students use the digital crowdsourcing transcription tool available on the Georgia Historical Society (GHS) website to transcribe a letter from the Peyton Anderson Collection (page 4 of the Peyton Anderson Primary Source Set). Encourage students to carefully read the cursive handwriting and type their transcription directly into the tool.

Steps for transcribing online:

- Visit the GHS transcription tool and select a letter from the Peyton Anderson Collection.
- Carefully read the handwritten text and use the GHS cursive alphabet chart if needed.
- Type what you see exactly as it appears, check your work, and submit your transcription.

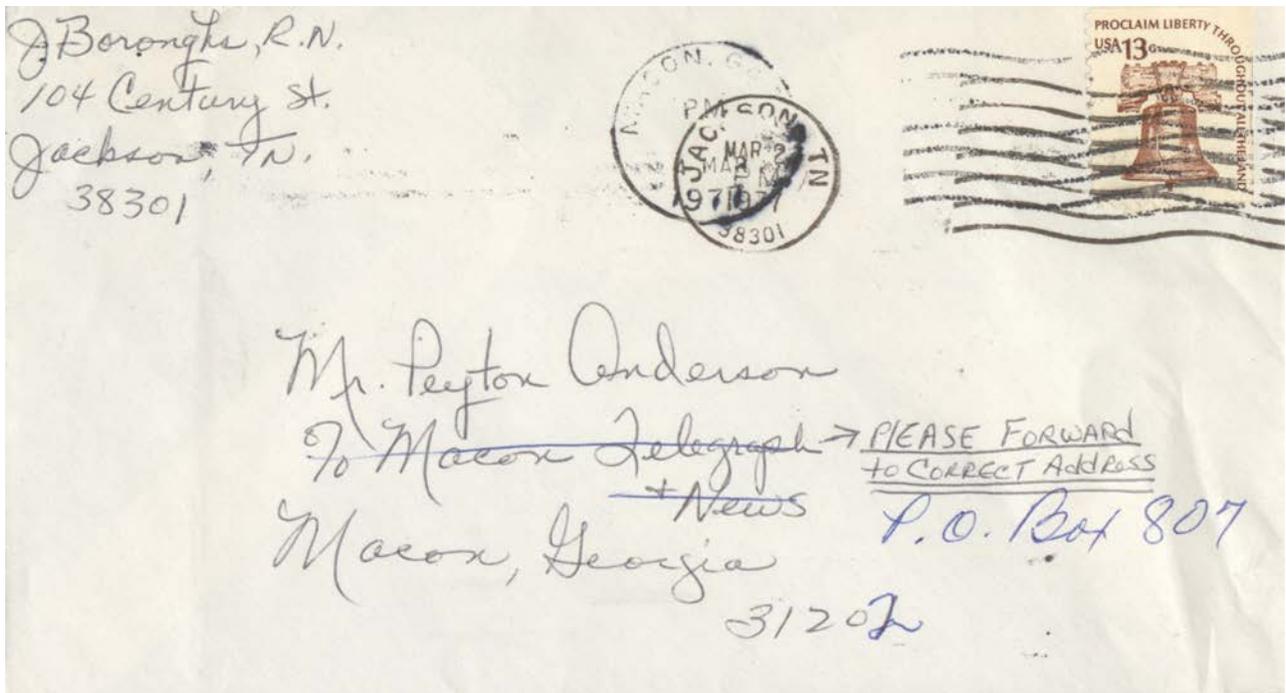
For further assistance, utilize the GHS Digital Crowdsourcing Guide.

Closure

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

Gather the class to reflect on their transcription work. Ask what was challenging and which strategies helped them read cursive. Remind students that transcription preserves history and makes old documents accessible.

Primary Source: Personal letter to Peyton Anderson (GHS 2864)



Primary Source: Personal letter to Peyton Anderson (GHS 2864)

March 1, 1977
104 Century St.
Jackson, TN. 38301

Dear Mr. Anderson:

I can't keep this inside of me any longer. I must say, thank you, for helping to save my life + restoring my faith in mankind.

Your generosity, of paying my hospital bill, in June of 1973 at Duke University, is the second most generous gift I have ever received. The first was my salvation from our Dear Lord.

Your concern for me, while your dear wife was so critically ill, is proof of your true Christian character.

I know you wished to remain anonymous to me but I feel very much in need to openly acknowledge to you my gratitude.

The "Electronic Devices" they implanted did not stop my pain + have since been removed. I get some relief from the constant pain through self-hypnosis.

Perhaps you remember that I'm a Macon girl + had some years on a farm while I

Primary Source: Personal letter to Peyton Anderson (GHS 2864)

- 2 -
was growing up prior to becoming a nurse at
Macon Hospital School of Nursing - (Class of (58-59))
Well, the good news for my (Jackie Johnson
Smith)
life that I'd like to share with you is that
my husband (of 3 years) & I have purchased a
farm in West Tennessee to which we'll retire
to when he completes his Military Career here
in Jackson, Tennessee.

I'm sure you saw the show "Roots",
well, I'm a Georgia farm girl attempting to
return to my roots & you're a part of that
for which I wish to thank you once
again!

May God bless you & yours forever.

Sincerely
Jackie J. Boronghe