

## Questions and Answers

1. Sometimes we all retouch our writing to make it neater or more readable. How can one tell the difference between this sort of retouching and a forger patching up his forgeries to make them look more like the original?

2. Are signed checks safer than signed photos as far as authenticity is concerned?

3. Can a letter of great content, but written by an unknown individual, have value?

4. Why are some French documents dated with a peculiar month and year: II to XVII?

5. Who was the great man who often signed his correspondence "Bapu"?

6. What factors come into play when putting a price on a signed check?

7. Did President Kennedy ever sign his name as "JFK?"

8. Did Eisenhower ever sign as "Ike?"

9. Did Lincoln ever sign as "Abe?"

10. Among the last seven Presidents, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush and Clinton, which one is most popular with autograph collectors?

11. Is there any value to the envelope with a Presidential signature in the upper right corner?

12. What is a letter signed in the third person? How does it affect the value of the letter?

13. Who was William Bligh, and is his autograph available?

14. If you were putting together a set of twentieth century Presidents and their wives, which autograph would make this collection virtually impossible to complete?

### Answers:

1. When we retouch our writing, we don't try

very hard to hide it. But forgers attempt to hide theirs. Forgers aren't trying to make the individual letters look more readable; they're just trying to match the original author's handwriting.

2. As a general rule, signed financial documents are more likely to be authentic. However, there are exceptions, since many people have entrusted a secretary or accountant to write and sign checks on their behalf. But overall, checks are far more reliable than signed photos.

3. A letter that has important content relating to a very important historical event, like the signing of the Declaration of Independence, can have value, as long as it is contemporary to the event. The closer it is to the actual date of the event, and the more details it relates about that event, the higher the value.

4. After the French Revolution, the French decided to change their calendar, with the first day of the "new era" (the 22nd of September, 1792) to be designated as Day 1 of Year I. But since this decision was not made until November of 1793, all documents were dated in the Year II, and none are dated in the Year I.

5. Mahatma Ghandi used his nickname "Bapu" in much of his correspondence with close associates and his family.

6. Signed checks are a breed of their own, because usually there is no special content. If the check was used for an important purpose, the value goes up. So, first look at the payee. Is there any important connection or historical event attached to the check? Since most checks are routine financial transactions, the primary factor in determining value is the available supply. For example, Presidents Ford and Eisenhower are both plentiful in signed letter format, but very scarce in signed check format, so their checks are expensive. Carter, on the other hand, is plentiful in signed checks and therefore rather inexpensive in that format. Look at condition: does it detract from the signature? Is the check mint? In the case of Presidents, Presidential salary checks are very rare.

7. Yes, President Kennedy did sign as "JFK," although this is one of the rarest forms of his signature. He most often signed "John Kennedy."



8. Yes, President Eisenhower often used "Ike" for his correspondence to close associates and to family members, especially his wife.

9. No, Lincoln always signed his letters "A. Lincoln," and official documents were signed "Abraham Lincoln." I have never seen a document or letter signed "Abe."

10. Reagan is the most popular with the public at large and also with autograph collectors. I get many more requests for him than I do for any of the others. The supply of Reagan autographs is rather plentiful, as Reagan was a prolific writer before, during and after the Presidency. Yet the demand is very strong for Reagan material in all forms: signatures, ALsS, TLsS and even signed books.

11. Yes, these are called free franks, and some collectors specialize in these items. The post office will accept the signature of the President instead of a stamp to deliver his mail. However, most modern Presidential free franks are nothing more than a printed signature on the envelope. These printed signatures have no value. This has made genuine modern Presidential free franks very scarce and valuable.

12. Letters signed in the third person are letters that are not signed at the bottom of the letter, but instead are "signed" in the text. Thomas Jefferson would often use this format, starting his letters with: "Mr. Jefferson would appreciate..." Wellington also used this format in his earlier correspondence. Usually, there is a slight discount to these third person letters, yet if the content were important enough, this becomes a relatively minor factor.

13. William Bligh was the captain of the *Bounty*, and he survived the most famous maritime mutiny of all time. His autograph is available, but very rare and rather expensive.

14. You would need the autographs of McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, Taft, Wilson, Harding, Coolidge, Hoover, FDR, Truman, Eisenhower, JFK, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush and Clinton. None of these would pose a problem, other than a

small dent in your pocketbook. But then you would need their wives. Here again, most are readily available, except for McKinley's wife, and Wilson's first wife, Ellen Axson Wilson. Still, in time you could find samples of all these ladies. On the other hand, Theodore's first wife, Alice Lee Roosevelt, who died at the young age of 22, is virtually unavailable in any form and would make it difficult if not impossible to complete your collection.

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