

Quill Pens & Berry Ink

Grades 1-3

History depends on writing, and writing has changed over time from scratches on clay to digitalized codes and letters.

What You Need

For quill pen:

feather, scissors, a paper clip

For berry ink:

1/2 cup of ripe berries (blueberries, cherries, blackberries, strawberries, or raspberries work well), 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1/2 teaspoon vinegar, food strainer, bowl, wooden spoon, small jar with tight-fitting lid

Paper

Paper towels

What to Do

* Place the berries in the strainer and hold it over the bowl. Have your child use the wooden spoon to crush the berries against the strainer so that the juice drips into the bowl. When all the juice is out of the berries, throw the pulp away. Tell your child to add the salt and vinegar to the berry juice and stir it well. If the ink is too thick, have him add a teaspoon or two of water (not too much or he'll lose the color). Help him to pour the juice into a small jar and close it with a tight-fitting lid. (**Note:** Make only as much ink as you will use at one time, because it will dry up quickly.)

* Have your child watch as you form the pen point by cutting the fat end of the feather on an angle, curving the cut slightly. (**Note:** A good pair of scissors is safer than a knife. But play it safe, and always do the cutting yourself.) Clean out the inside of the quill so that the ink will flow to the point. Use the end of a paper clip if needed. You may want to cut a center slit in the point; however, if you press too hard on the pen when you write, it may split.

* Give the quill pen to your child and tell him to dip just the tip in the ink. Keep a paper towel handy to use as an ink blotter. Allow him to experiment by drawing lines and curves and by making designs and single letters. Show him how to hold the pen at different angles to get different effects.

—Have him practice signing his name, John Hancock style, with the early American letters. Then have him write his signature in his history log.

—Have him write his name again, using a pen or pencil. Talk with him about how the signatures are alike and different.

Let's Talk About It

<http://www.parenting-by-example.com>

Ask your child:

Why do we write?

When do people in our family use writing?

What written things do you see every day?

What are their different purposes?

What effect do different writing tools have on writing, for example quill pens, ballpoint pens, typewriters and computers?