



[www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand-lessons.org.uk](http://www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand-lessons.org.uk)

[www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand-reading.org.uk](http://www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand-reading.org.uk)

[www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk](http://www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk)

Images & Text © Beryl L Pratt

## Blogs - 2012 - December

**2 Christmas Robins**

**4 Mince Pies**

**7 Let It Snow**

**10 Ted's Contribution**

**13 Merry Martian Christmas**

All material is copyright Beryl L Pratt and may not be republished, or reposted online, in any form. This file is intended for non-commercial personal study use only. The only permitted download site for this file is <https://www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand-reading.org.uk>

PDF Date: 14 June 2019



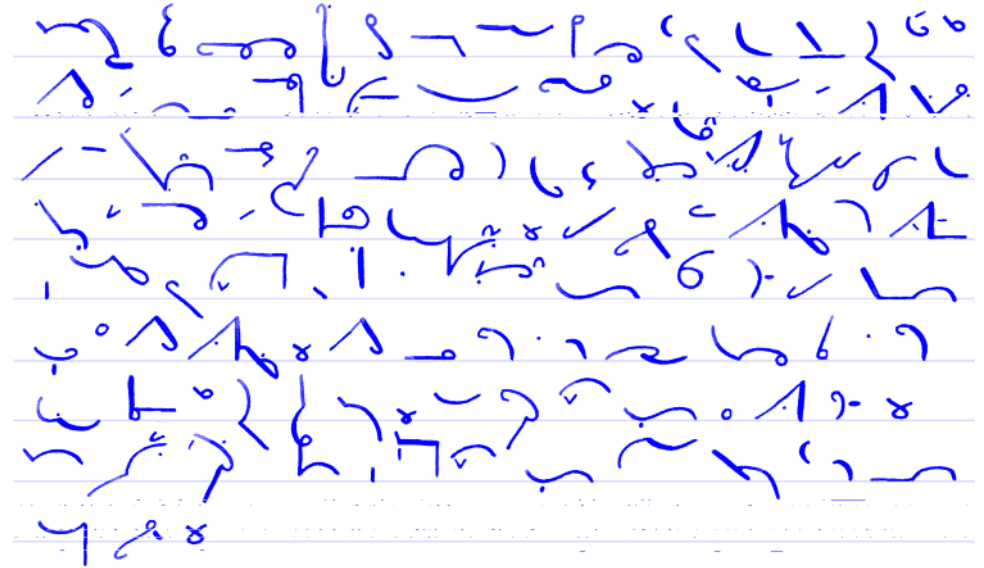
**Christmas Robins**

Hello, I'm the robin that owns the garden. As it is now December, I thought it would be interesting to mention why there are so many lovely pictures of us on the Christmas cards. When people started the habit of sending Christmas cards in Victorian times, some of the postmen who delivered them wore red jackets as part of their uniforms and were nicknamed robins. Postmen first

carried royal dispatches and red was considered a royal colour. Cards had scenes showing bird robins carrying mail, as a joke about the deliverers of the cards. I think this must have been\* because it was all rather a novelty at the time.

\* Omission phrase "must (have) been"

Horizontal lines for writing practice.

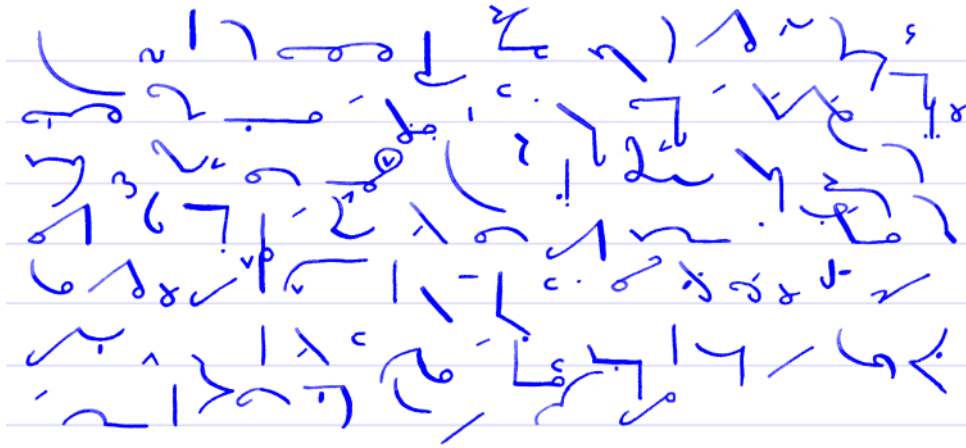


**Christmas Robins**

I am very glad that this Christmas tradition has been kept going, as it means that people have become especially fond of us robins and make us extra welcome in their gardens. Views of snow and red berries are quite popular because of the cheerful colours, so even without the postman origin, I think we would still have appeared on the cards and decorations eventually. We used to be called Redbreast or Ruddock, but in

the past people liked to add a human name as well, so we became known as Robin Redbreast. Robin comes from a word meaning "famous" which is a very fitting description of us, especially at this time of year. In French my name is "red throat". I am really orange but I got my name long before that word came into use.

Horizontal lines for writing practice.

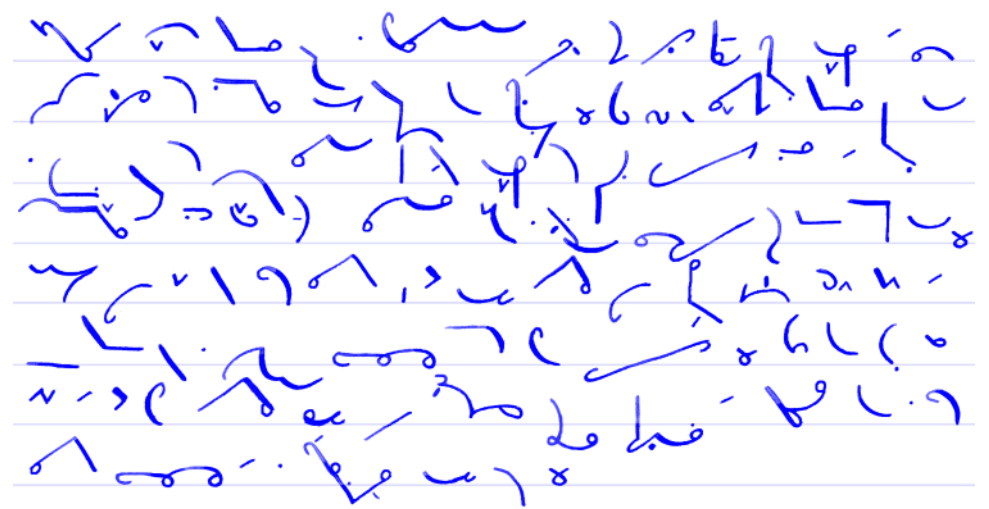


**Christmas Robins**

After you have had your Christmas dinner, I would like you to remember us robins, not so much with the crumbs from the cakes and biscuits, but with a bit of creative and purposeful activity. I am sure you would appreciate some exercise after all that eating, and there is nothing better to clear

your head than getting outside and sawing up some wood to make a nestbox or two for us robins. We like it to be quite deep, with a half open front. Don't worry, we know how to fill it up with leaves and twigs to get it into our favourite shape and make it more cosy for our little ones.

Blank lined writing area for notes.

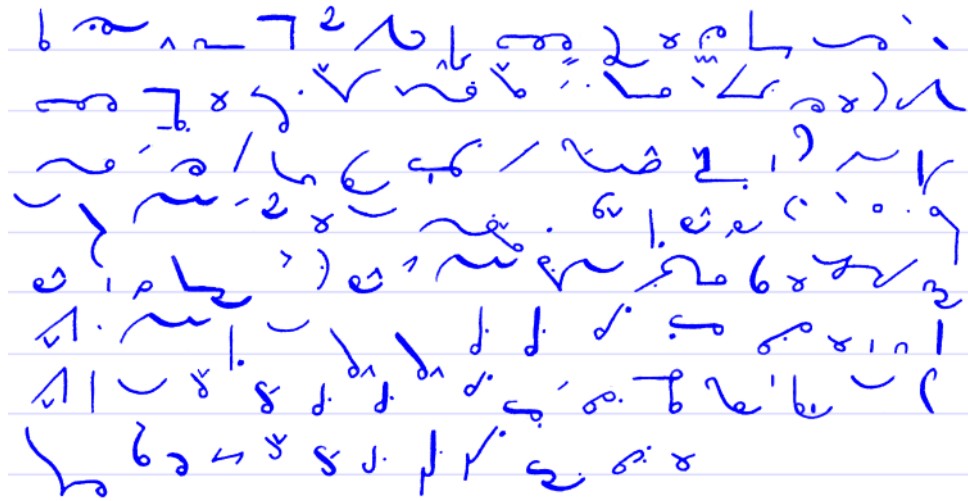


**Christmas Robins**

I prefer my box to have an overhanging roof, so the rain doesn't drip inside and some little holes or gaps in the bottom for drainage. Then you have to hide the box deep in a thick bush, or maybe hang it up inside your shed where the cats and magpies can't find us, as long as I have an opening somewhere so that I can get in. Not only will I be very happy, but all the

new robins will set up home around about and come back to be a living Christmas card every winter. Thank you for thinking of us, and I and all the other robins send you our warmest Season's Tweetings, and best wishes for a very Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year. (490 words)

Blank lined writing area for notes.



**Mince Pies**

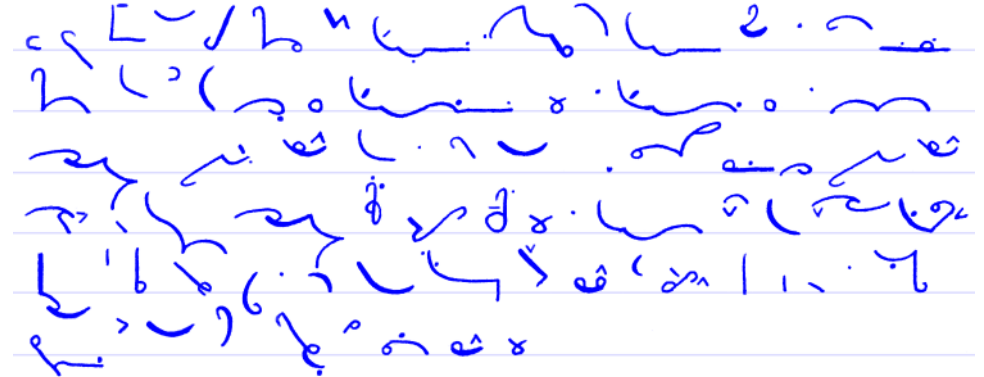
It is amazing\* how you can get shorthand revision out of the Christmas season. Let's take the names of two Christmas goodies. Here is a pile of mince pies and a box of chocolate mints. So we have mince and mints which, if you listen closely, are pronounced identically\* but they are written differently in both longhand and shorthand. In mince pies, the slight T sound is not thought of as a separate sound, but is the beginning of the S sound, and the longhand spelling reflects this. In the same way, you would not write a

longhand T in pounce, bounce, tense, dense, chance, glance, hence. But you do write it in pints, blunts, tents, dents, chants, glints and hints, because it is present on its own in other forms of those words: pint, blunt, tent, dented, chanted, glinting, hinting.

\* "amazing" and "amusing" Always insert the vowel after the M

\* "identically" Contraction, therefore on the line

Blank lined paper for writing practice.



**Mince Pies**

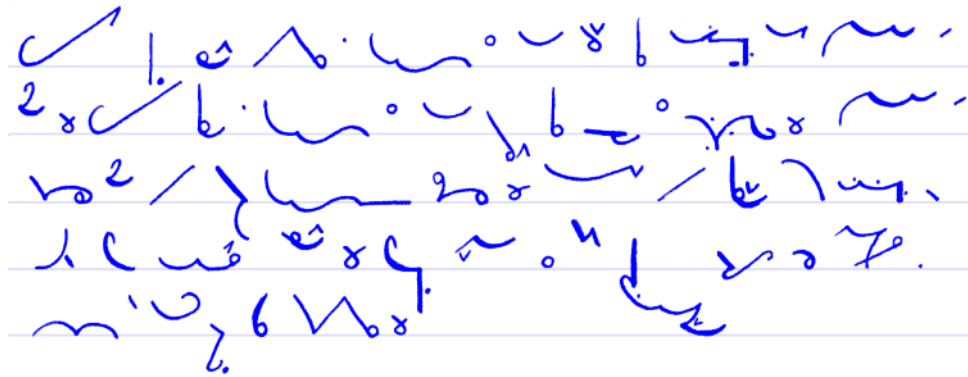
When people talk in general terms about "phonetic" alphabets or "phonetic" shorthand, a more exact term for what they mean is "phonemic". A phoneme is a minimum meaningful unit of sound for a particular language, "the smallest segmental unit of sound employed to form meaningful contrasts between utterances"\*. A phoneme might have minor variations

depending\* on its position within a word, being affected by the sounds that surround it, but to a native speaker of the language, they are perceived as the same sound.

\*Wikipedia: Phoneme

\*depending" Keep the Ing proper length, and for "dependent" always insert the 3rd vowel and ensure the N is clearly halved

Blank lined paper for writing practice.

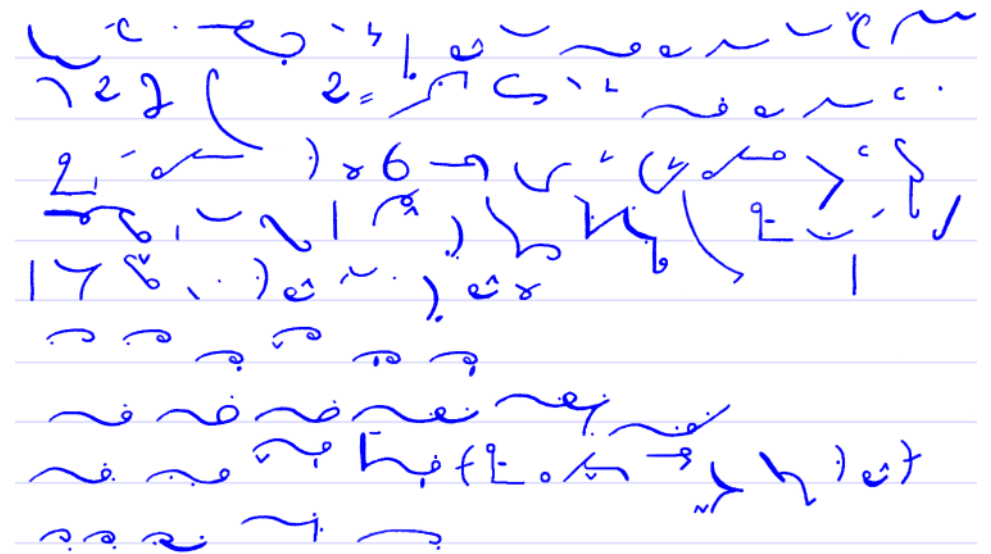


**Mince Pies**

Where the T sound represents a phoneme, as in "pints", it is included in the longhand and shorthand. Where it is not a phoneme, as in "pounce", it is ignored as irrelevant. Longhand and Pitman's Shorthand are both phonemic systems. Neither are designed or

intended to show every nuance of sound. Everyday writing is about differentiating between words and only requires the minimum of information to achieve this purpose.

Blank lined writing area for notes.



**Mince Pies**

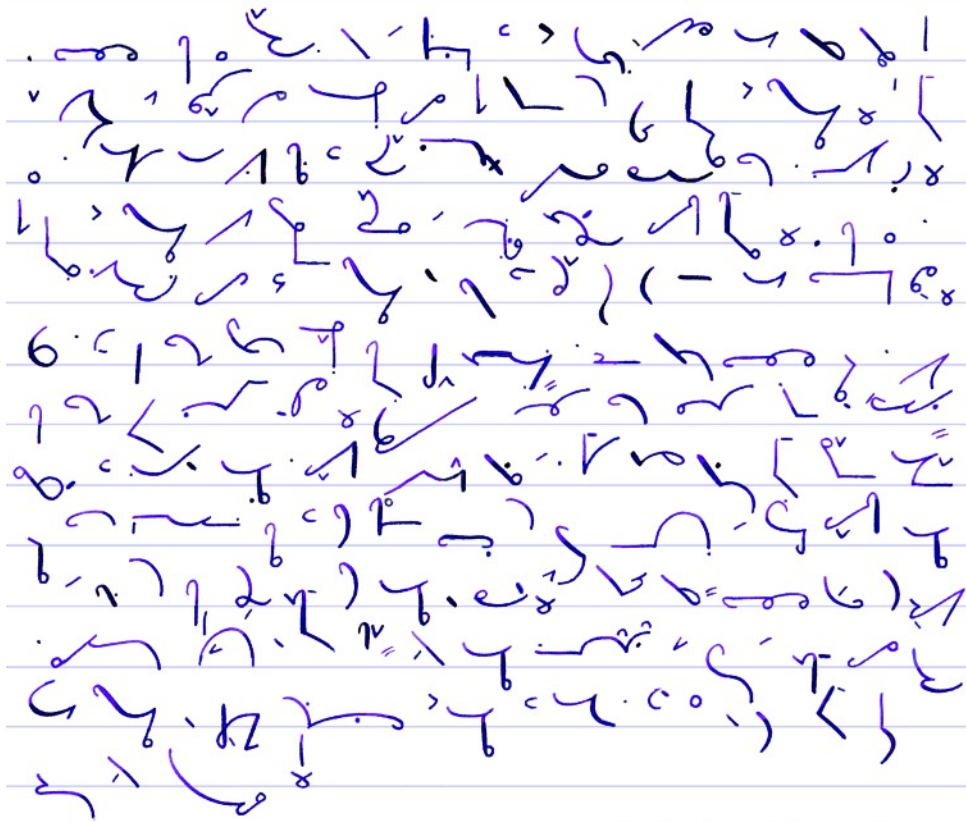
Having offered an explanation of why the T sound in "mince" is not written in either longhand or shorthand, there is the further shorthand-related question\* of why "mince" is not written with a hook and circle S. This is covered fully on the Theory Circles page, with plenty of examples, but in brief it allows an easy formation of derivatives after the stroke N and generally it only applies to an Ess sound, not a Zee sound:

- man man's means mines moans moons
- mince minces minced mincing mincingly mincer
- minis/Minnie's menace minus dominoes (Stroke is required because of the vowel before the S sound)
- mint mints minting minted minter

\* "question" Optional contraction

Blank lined writing area for notes.





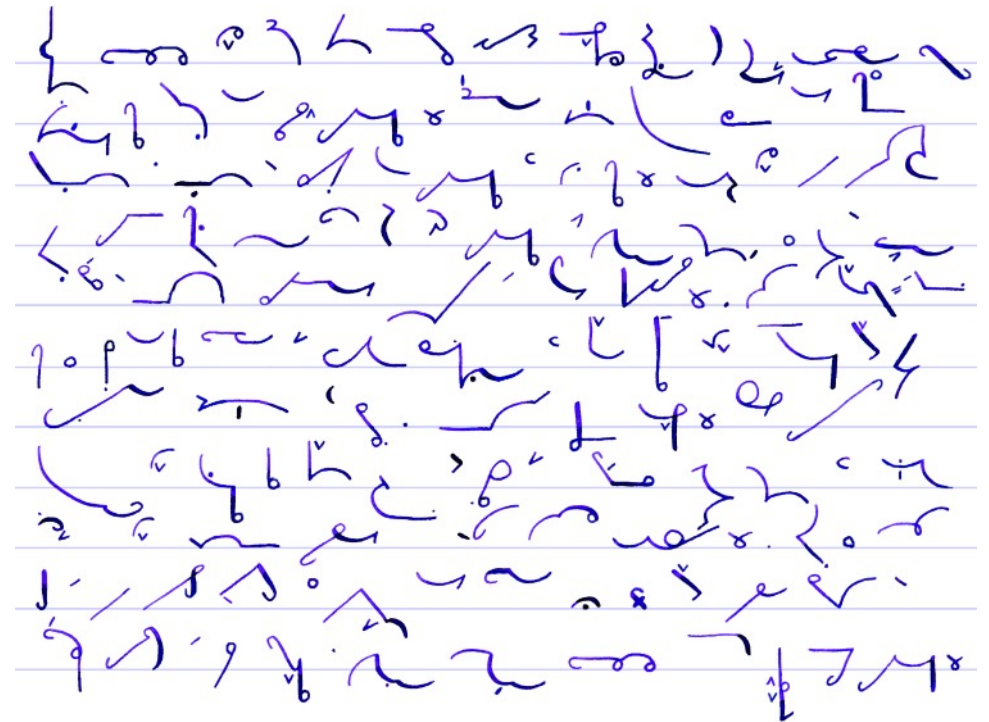
**Let It Snow**

The Christmas tree is finally up and decorated, with all the favourite\* ornaments in the best positions at eye level, and the slightly less interesting ones at the back or within the depths of the branches. On top is an angel in red dress, with shiny cardboard wings, singing from a carol sheet. At the tips of the branches are the plastic icicles and imitations of frozen\* water drops. The tree is an artificial one, with the branches all numbered according to size, so that they go in the correct slots. This is a lot different from the former exciting trip down to Greenwich a week before Christmas to choose a real tree from the cheap market stalls. These were mostly very small compact Norway spruces, with

narrow needles, a wide rounded base and a tall almost bare top spike, unlike today's more conical trees, with their darker green or bluish colouring and flattened wider needles, and bred or treated so as not to drop their needles too soon. Part of the post-Christmas fun was to watch a circular layer of dried-up needles accumulate on the floor, and to draw one's finger along the branches to dislodge the remainder of the needles, with never a thought as to whose job it was to clear up afterwards!

\* "favourite" uses reversed Vr, "favoured" uses normal Vr

\* "frozen" and "freezing" Always insert the vowel



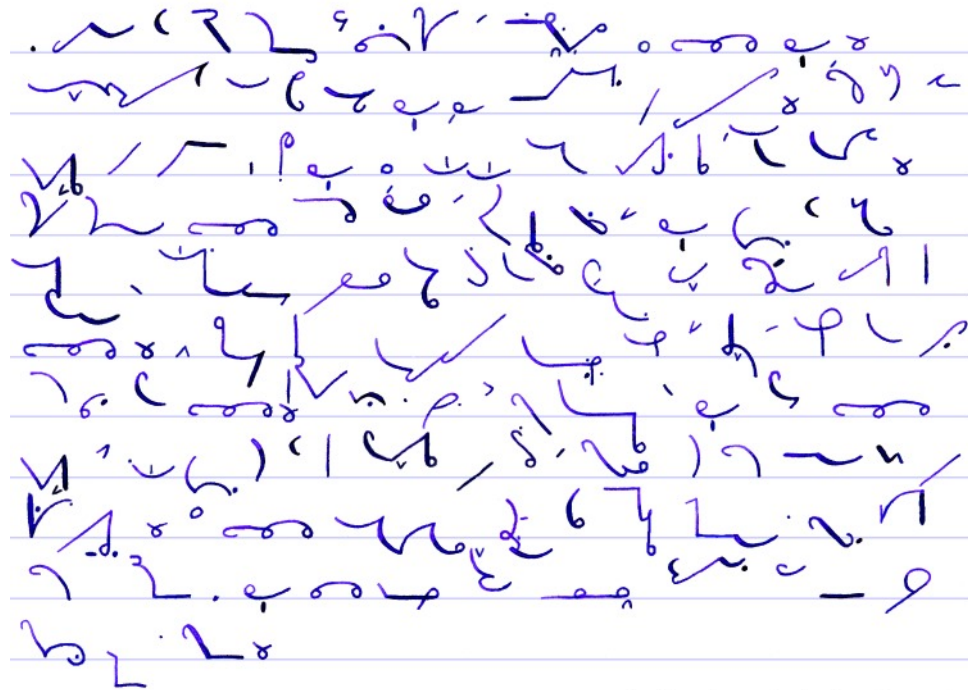
**Let It Snow**

At that time Christmas lights were much more\* expensive and one of the excitements of the season was seeing the increasing number of illuminated trees appear in house windows. Walking home after school in the dark became a game of searching for windows with lit trees. Now that lights are relatively cheap, we can drape many more of them around the windows, and the living room is full of glowing spots of colour, circling the mirror and over the doorways. The little fibre-optic tree is sitting in its corner on the shelf, scintillating with tiny dots of light,

accompanied by the gentle whirring of the motor that spins the coloured disk inside. As soon as the winter afternoon light fades, it is time to flick all the switches on the plugs and fill the room with enough ambient light to make using the wall lamps unnecessary. The shopping is mostly done and our resident robin has reappeared in the garden, made bold by the recent spell of frosty weather, and he provides a living moving Christmas card outside the kitchen window.

\* Omission phrase "much m(ore)"





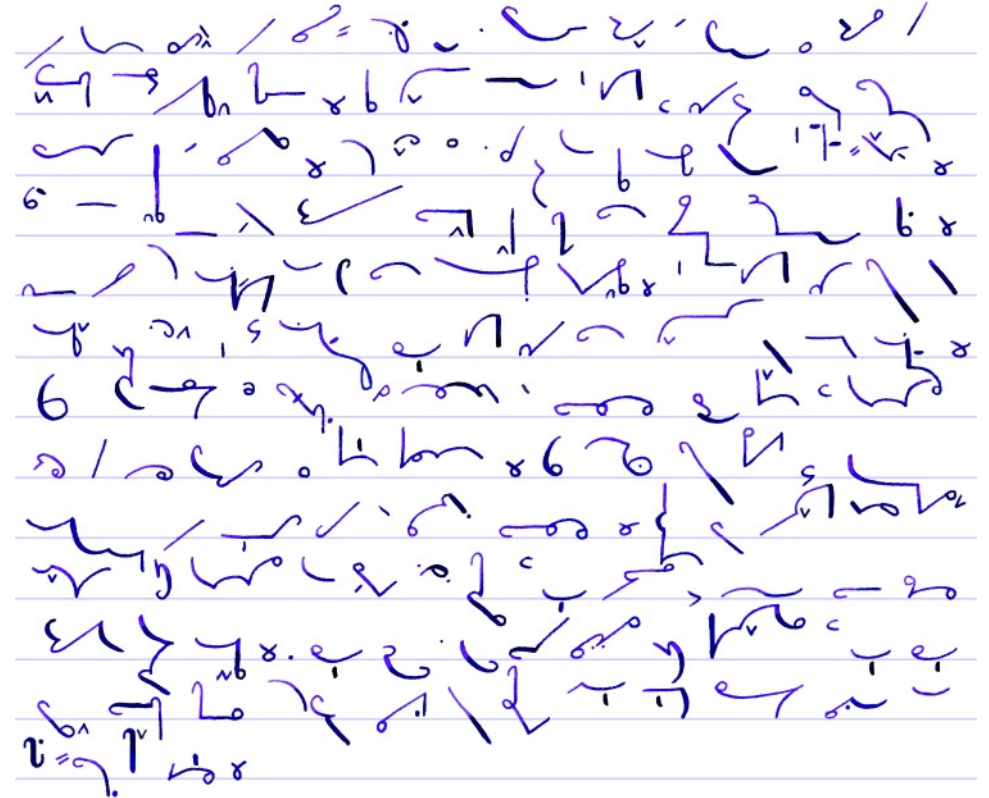
**Let It Snow**

The one thing\* that cannot be organised with the same control and exuberance is Christmas snow. In my part of the world\*, in southern England, snow is not guaranteed each winter. Frost, ice and cold periods are regular, but settling snow is uncommon enough to retain its novelty value. There are so many Christmas cards, songs and shop displays based on the snow theme, that I have been endeavouring to untangle the reasons for this passion for fluffy white frozen\* water at Christmas. How strange it would appear if we were fixated instead on the desire and necessity for rain or sleet over Christmas! I made a

list of the principal effects of snow over the Christmas period and the common theme was that it overrides our plans and prevents us from going about our daily routines. As Christmas involves suspending those activities and taking a brief holiday from work, the snow seems to give us the final excuse that we need, in order to\* give ourselves permission to take a break.

\* Omission phrase "wu(n) thing" "in my part (of the) world" "in ord(er to)"

\* "frozen" and "freezing" Always insert the vowel



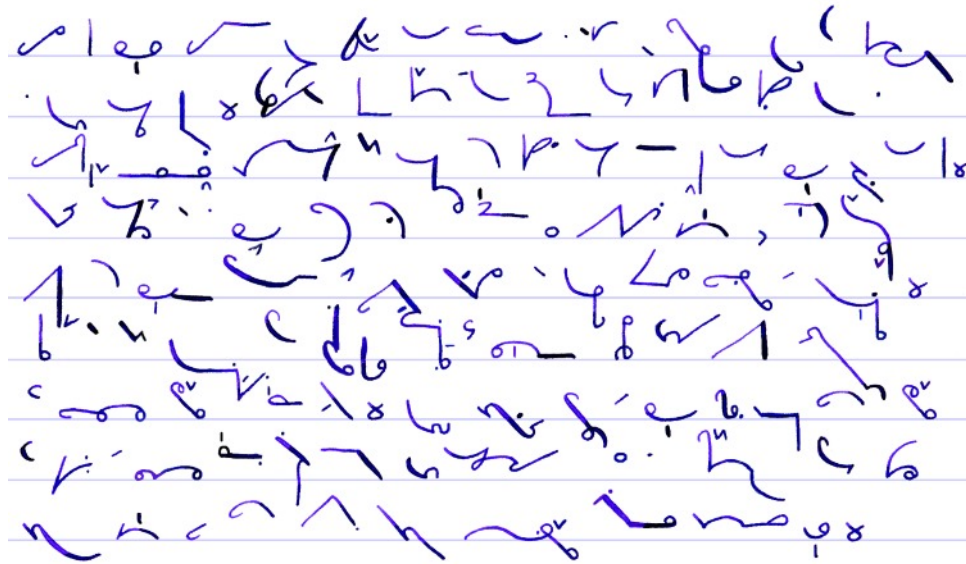
**Let It Snow**

Our familiar surroundings are half erased under a blanket of white, and everything is always much quieter because of the reduced traffic. It is like going on holiday, when you are completely separated from your normal duties and habits\*. Your mind has a chance to think for itself instead of being on auto-pilot. Thoughts can come up that were crowded out during the more hectic working days. You can rest or indulge in other more interesting pursuits. On holiday you will probably be enticed to travel around, but with the enforced snow holiday you are more likely to be kept indoors. This is exactly what is portrayed as the most important part of Christmas, spending time with family and friends,

which means everyone is at home at the same time. This emphasis probably started when the Victorians invented our current way of celebrating Christmas. At that time people relied almost entirely on their own families for support amidst troubles, with no recourse to the many care systems that we have available nowadays. The snow would have been an even greater hindrance to their daily lives, with no snow ploughs, gritter trucks or comfortable heated public transport, and no cosy central heating in draught-free dry homes.

\* "habits" Helpful to insert the vowel, as "hobbies" could also make sense in this context





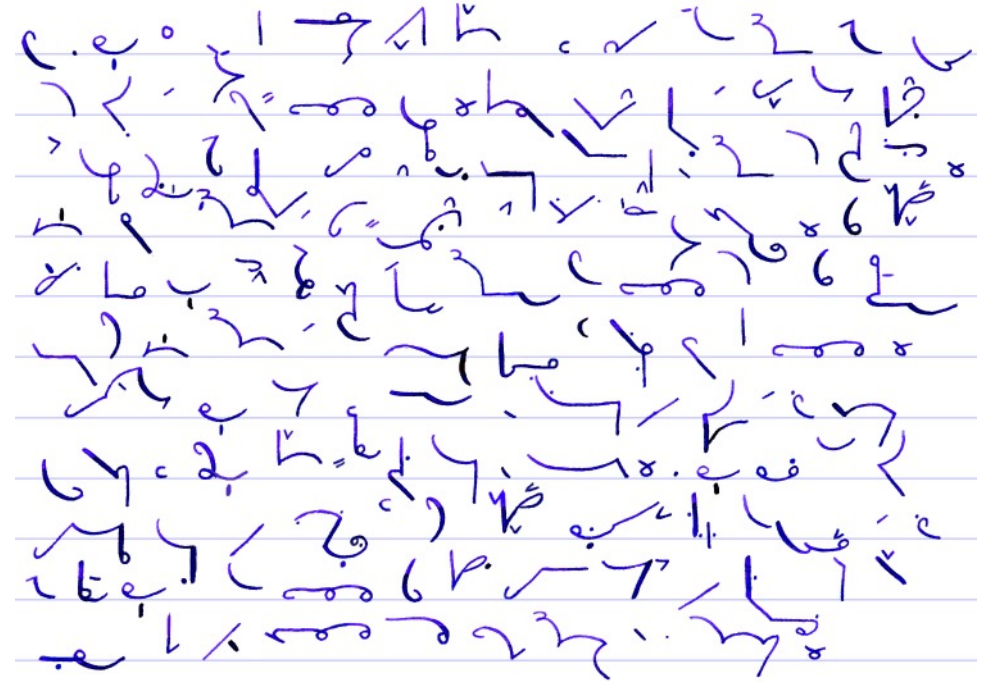
**Let It Snow**

Once it snows we can feel justified in calling a halt to proceedings, even though it may only be a few inches deep. Those who are able to take time off work for the holiday at last\* have a watertight excuse to lounge about indoors, or at least only go out in the snow to play in it. Part of the enjoyment of a snowy fresh-air walk is returning home to the cosy fireside, radiator or snuggle blanket, and the ubiquitous bowls of festive chocolates, crisps and peanuts. It is all about victory

over adverse conditions, with the smug satisfaction that you are ready and prepared, with Christmas supplies stocked up. If you have to brave the blizzard and snow drifts to get more supplies, that chilly and sometimes soggy battle can be viewed in the same way, as a triumph over the elements to bring home yet more wrapping paper, mince pies and bags of mixed nuts.

\* "at least" and "at last" Always insert the vowel

Blank lined paper for handwriting practice.



**Let It Snow**

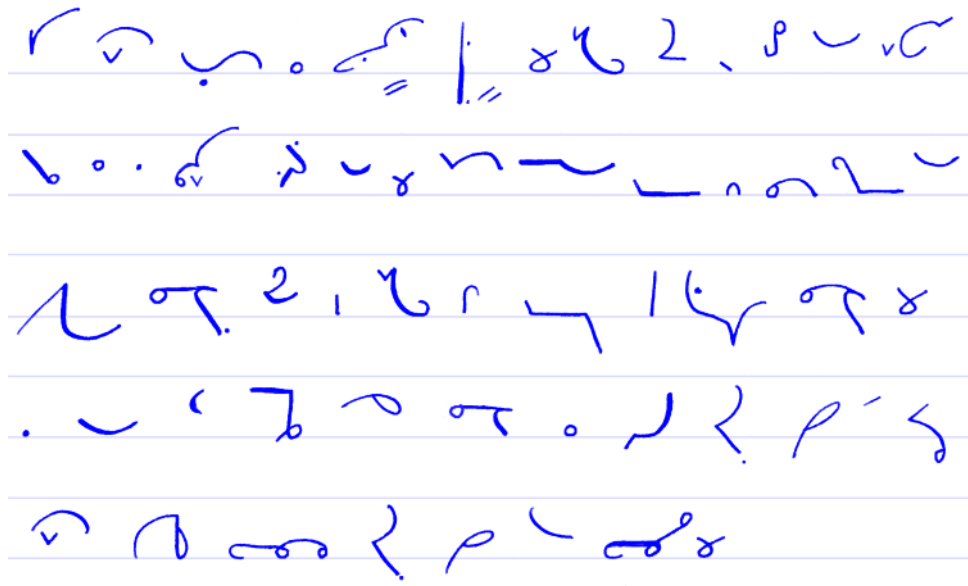
However, the snow has to fall at exactly the right time, when you are off work, and have finished your shopping and pre-Christmas visits. It must be pure, deep and white for the duration of the festive season, and then disappear once you need to get back out to work or travel again. Home has to be warm and well insulated, and the pantry stocked full of provisions. This idealised story takes no account of those who have to travel and continue working over Christmas, or those struggling to keep their home warm, and many other\* difficulties that beset people at Christmas. We love the snow only when it is not going

to affect our schedule and comfort too much, even better when there is no timetable for it to interrupt. The snow scenes in shop windows feed our imaginations with their idealised scenario, edited for convenience and comfort, and if it doesn't snow for Christmas, then at least\* we can enjoy our depictions of it by gazing at the row of Christmas cards from the warmth of an armchair. (1112 words)

\* Omission phrase "many oth(er)

\* "at least" and "at last" Always insert the vowel

Blank lined paper for handwriting practice.



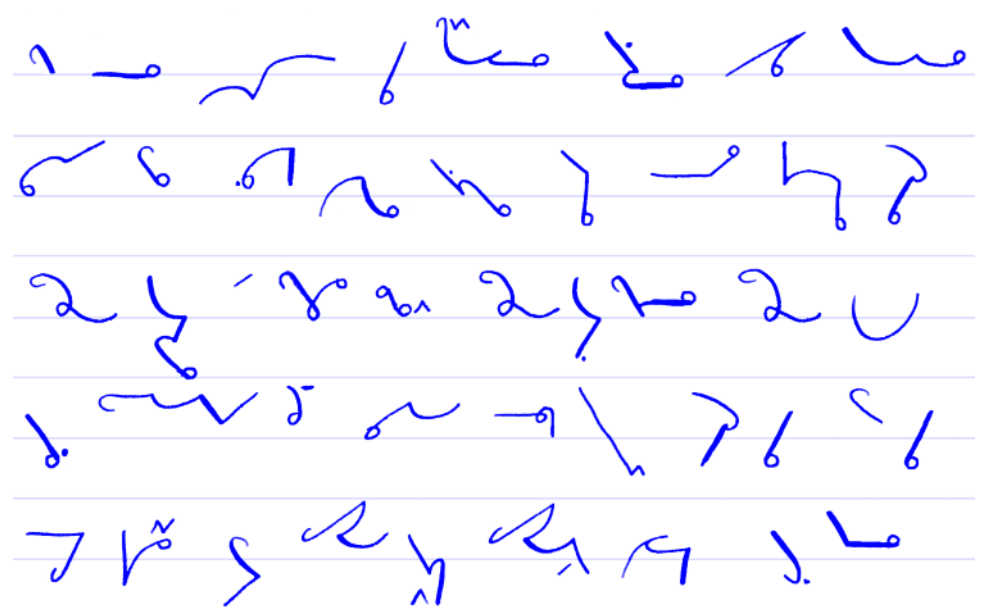
**Ted's Contribution**

Hello, my name is Yellow Teddy\*. I have been asked to stand in while the boss has a slightly bandaged hand. I am going to give you some practice in reading scribbly shorthand but I have been told to keep it fairly simple. The thing that gets the most

scribbled is usually the shopping list and here is my latest Christmas shopping list for groceries.

\* "Teddy" Insert the last vowel, to differentiate from "Ted"

Horizontal lines for writing practice.



**Ted's Contribution**

bread, eggs, milk, cheese triangles, bagels, rolls, bananas,

celery, apples, salad leaves, peppers, potatoes, carrots, tomatoes, oranges,

frozen vegetables and Brussels sprouts, frozen vegeburgers, frozen fish,

beans, cranberry sauce, honey, custard powder, orange juice, apple juice,

kitchen towels, bleach, washing powder, washing up liquid, bin bags

Horizontal lines for writing practice.



· h b ÷ s ✓ r a e  
 ✓ s o m y x ( n r l -  
 d s . y ✓ y ( l o o i x y  
 u ) u - z r r y . y a ' b x  
 y ( > y y z r o v . y ' b x

**Ted's Contribution**

A few days ago we went to our local garden centre where we saw some reindeer. They looked very big and heavy. The only way to get them off the ground is to suspend

gravity under their feet and I would be very interested to know how that is done. I am sure that all the scientists in the world would like to know that as well.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

y o p e o n l y l e y  
 ' . i o ( o t i g . . T . i f x .  
 j r e y → y v o e r s v - ✓ 6  
 l r x y w . r o l o o z y d o f  
 j - y . l o n e v o ✓ r y y  
 y o k | = e y - z z .

**Ted's Contribution**

Here is my snow scene with some colour-changing tiny plastic trees on a tray, some other green wire trees and a model of a church. The cotton wool snow covers up the patterns on the tray. I could watch this for hours. I hope you have a very Happy Christmas and if the dinner is late, don't

forget to practise some shorthand while you are waiting for it!

Yours very truly, Yellow Teddy, Executive Assistant and Shorthand Trainee (392 words)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Handwritten shorthand text in blue ink on lined paper, consisting of approximately six lines of dense, cursive symbols.

**Merry Martian Christmas**

I would just like to say a big thank you to everyone who worked on and supported our Help Christmas campaign this year. As you know, millions of people on planet Earth, especially the children, spend Christmas Eve looking up at the sky waiting to see an unusual light or red streak going

past. As usual, we at Martian Central Observatory have done our best to fulfill this wish by providing a visible reminder to everyone who is looking in the sky for something flying past that really needs to remain invisible at certain times, due to security issues.

Handwritten shorthand text in blue ink on lined paper, consisting of approximately six lines of dense, cursive symbols.

**Merry Martian Christmas**

We have made a careful study of the quadruped powered anti-gravity aircraft, with full permission of the owner, and have created devices to provide a visual experience similar to the real thing. You may be aware that one of the designers of Earth navigation systems was inspired by this special one-of-a-kind aircraft. He

actually saw it as a small child, and decided to have a white landing light and coloured side lights (red on the left and green on the right) but the general population are mostly not aware of this. Those in charge of the original aircraft did not see fit to change their lighting system, and so the two look very similar.

Handwritten shorthand text in blue ink on lined paper, consisting of approximately six lines of dense, cursive symbols.

**Merry Martian Christmas**

Our mission is to provide the "Lights In The Sky" experience to as many places as possible, but always avoiding being in the direct flight path of the real one. What we have done, on instructions from the boss, is cover those areas where his aircraft has to become invisible for a short time\*, or where his movements are so fast that they cannot be perceived with normal Earth eyes. Earthlings who have access to time lapse

photography or filming have a very slight chance of being able to capture something, but we think it is highly unlikely that their cameras are fast enough. This is why our own Christmas mission operations are carried out on Earth Normal time, seeing as our purpose is to be seen.

\* "short time" Halving to represent the T of "time"

A series of horizontal lines for writing, currently blank.

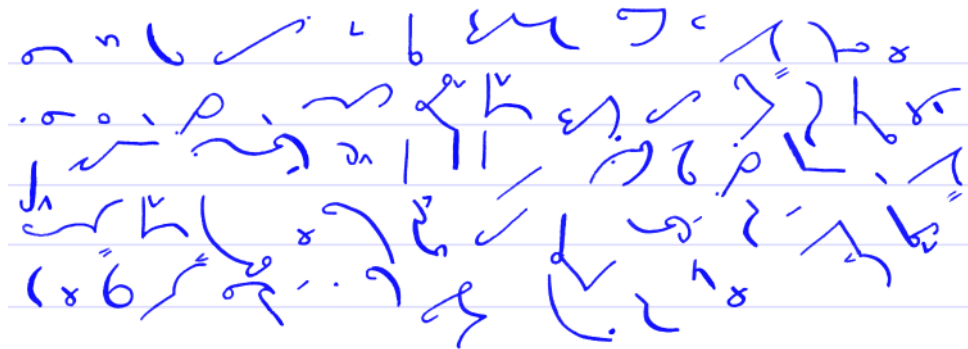


**Merry Martian Christmas**

Our method of operation is exactly the same as they do in Earth High Streets where they provide volunteers, toys, decorations and wrapping paper that all demonstrate the characteristics of what they are trying to teach their little ones, clothing (red and white), behaviour (generous) and smiles (beaming). We hope that it is only the\* older ones who are

looking out of their windows, as the tinies should really be asleep. Our craft make no noise at all, so there is no clue to our passing by unless the Earthlings are quite vigilant to keep looking.

\* "it is only the" On its own, "only" is written with full N and L strokes



**Merry Martian Christmas**

Some of you have been wondering why it is that we never crash with Earth aircraft. The secret is to switch to Martian High Speed time when we see one approaching, so that it appears to slow down and we can manoeuvre around it at our leisure, and

then switch back to Earth Normal time afterwards. From their point of view\*, we disappear in front of them and reappear behind them. This is really simple and a very useful feature to have on board.

\* Omission phrase "point (of) view"



**Merry Martian Christmas**

We hope you all enjoy your own Christmas celebrations and we are all looking forward eagerly to the beginning of next year when we will be honoured with a visit from a very special person, who wishes to enjoy a break after all his hard work and activities. We have made Hotel Water Paradise available for his every wish, including hot spas, swimming pools, fountains, aquaria and gardens. All this has been created

especially for distinguished visitors and is housed under the giant Crystal Dome, which was built to preserve the precious water which can so easily be lost to the Martian atmosphere. Once again\*, thank you for your part in this grand adventure and a Merry Martian Christmas to one and all! (643 words)

\* Omission phrase "wu(n)s again"

Blank lined paper for writing.