

# AWAY WITH WORDS

## A PRESENT FOR A PRINCESS

What's the fastest way that you can send a message to someone?

Now try again but without the internet, social media platforms, a smartphone, television, a telephone, radio, a typewriter, a telegram, a message in a newspaper, or a carrier pigeon.

You might have to find some paper, attach a nib to your pen or quill, dip it in some ink and begin to write. Take care that you don't cause any ink blots or splodges on your precious paper and that your handwriting is legible. Don't forget to wait for the ink to dry. The ink will dry faster if you sprinkle the page with some fine grains of sand or use a blotter. Then, it's just a matter of ringing the bell and telling your servant to deliver the letter and wait for a reply!

### Talking points

Consider communication methods past and present, and their pros and cons.

### Creative challenges

Write a letter to the past; make a quill pen; compose a storyboard with character development.

### KEY WORK



Inkstand, 1759

# INKSTAND

AWAY WITH WORDS  
A PRESENT FOR A PRINCESS



**DATE** 1759  
**SIZE** 17 x 38 x 27.1 cm  
**MATERIALS** Soft-paste porcelain,  
painted and gilded and  
silver-gilt mounts

---

**MAKER** Manufacture de Sèvres  
**DESIGNER** Jean-Claude Chambellan  
Duplessis, the Elder  
(1695-1774)

**PLACE** France

## ECRITOIRE 'À GLOBES' INKSTAND

This porcelain inkstand combines all the ingenuity, technical brilliance and vibrant colours for which the Sèvres manufactory was renowned in the 18th century. The two globes acted as containers for ink and sand (for blotting) while under the crown a bell was hidden for summoning a servant to take away the written letters.

The celestial globe is pricked with holes that match the position of the stars in the sky; the liner inside would have twinkled brightly through these. The gilding is of superb quality and includes inscriptions showing the longitude and latitude of major cities and the signs of the zodiac.

The royal imagery of the three gold fleurs-de-lis and the overlaid initials 'MA' suggest it was a gift from the French King, Louis XV, to his favourite daughter, Madame Marie-Adélaïde.

## THE MANUFACTURER

The Manufacture de Sèvres is an important and influential European porcelain manufacturer. Porcelain is a type of very fine pottery where the materials are 'fired' or heated at a very high temperature (1200–1400°C) making the porcelain very strong and vitrified (glass-like).

The company was set up by the French crown in the 18th century and is still in production today. It takes its name from the town of Sèvres on the western outskirts of Paris.

Celebrated for making refined and exquisitely decorated porcelain, it became a standard-setter for quality and design.

## GLOSSARY

### **Ecritoire**

French for writing case or desk.

### **Porcelain**

A type of fine, hard white pottery, first made in China more than two thousand years ago.

### **Sèvres porcelain**

Often elaborately decorated porcelain made at Sèvres, near Versailles in France, from 1756.

### **Fleur-de-lis**

An iris-shaped decorative symbol that is particularly associated with the French monarchy.

## VOCABULARY

porcelain	blotting
cherub	crown
celestial	cushion
terrestrial	oval
sand	plateau
ink	

## DISCUSS



- How would things be different if we only had pen and ink and letters to communicate? Consider the pros and cons. Is it always a good idea to have so many ways of instant communication? Is it too easy to hurt people's feelings or spread lies or 'fake news'?

## ACTIVITIES



- Write a letter to the princess Marie-Adélaïde telling her you are sending her a laptop for her birthday and explaining how it works. Explain to Marie-Adélaïde about the internet, including instructions on how to send an email, and ways to keep yourself safe online.
- Make a quill pen out of natural materials, then practice some calligraphy (see animation on page 5).
- Plan an animated film called 'A Present for the Princess'. Imagine animating parts of the inkstand to create characters e.g. the celestial globe, terrestrial globe, crown and cushion, cherubs, dove and pen. Make up a storyboard.

# ANIMATION > OLD WRITING TECHNOLOGY

[HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/H9WC4GUA6CI](https://youtu.be/H9WC4GUA6CI)

AWAY WITH WORDS  
A PRESENT FOR A PRINCESS

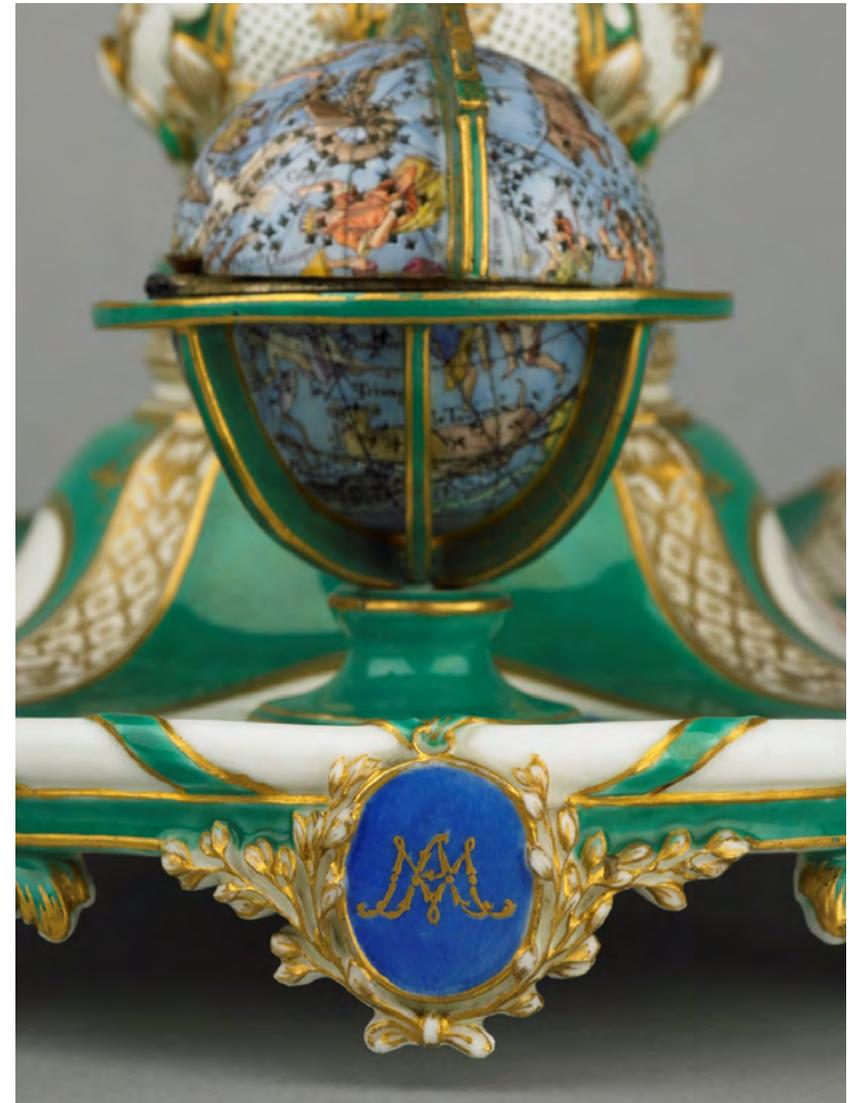


# INKSTAND

AWAY WITH WORDS  
A PRESENT FOR A PRINCESS



## IN DETAIL



# INKSTAND

AWAY WITH WORDS  
A PRESENT FOR A PRINCESS



## IN DETAIL

