

1 Autograph or Autopen?

Have you ever gotten a **photograph** with an **autograph** on it? If so, you probably believed that a celebrity took time to sign it.

Think again. A machine might have written on that photo. That's right. That "handwritten" autograph might have been made by an **autopen**. An **autopen** is a machine that writes **autographs**. It is made up of a fake hand and a real pen that write things **automatically**.

How can you tell whether an **autograph** is real or fake? To detect a fake **autograph**, ask the following questions:

- Does the **autograph** look a little shaky?
- Do the curved letters look scratchy?
- Is there a little ink dot at the beginning or end of the **autograph**?
- Do two or more of the same person's **autographs** look exactly alike?

Did you say "yes" to one or more of those questions? If so, then an **autopen** probably made the **autograph**!

Word Count: 149



Glossary Links

handwritten
automatically



Whose autograph would you like to have? Tell why.



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Resource Links

Decodable Digest: p. 230

SAM Keyword: DD 25.1

1 Cuban Import Goes Bananas!

In 1804, Captain John Chester's ship **imported** Cuban bananas to the United States.

As he entered New York's **seaport**, Chester could not have **predicted** what would happen next with his tropical fruit. Imagine his dismay when no one bought his bananas. The reason? Nobody, except for sailors, had ever even seen a banana. People had no idea what a banana was for! So the entire load of bananas rotted.

In 1830, another shipper **imported** bananas. This time, produce sellers bought them to sell from pushcarts. People understood what a banana was when they saw it next to other fruits.

But, because bananas were still so rare and costly, they were eaten only at very special events such as weddings. But by 1905, bananas were so common and cheap that they were enjoyed by the rich and poor alike. Now, bananas are America's best-selling fruit.

Word Count: 145



Glossary Links

produce
pushcarts



Why didn't people buy bananas from Captain John Chester?



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Resource Links

Decodable Digest: p. 232

SAM Keyword: DD 25.2

1 Mt. St. Helens Erupts!

Mount St. Helens is a volcano in Washington State. On May 18, 1980, it **erupted**.

A huge earthquake sparked the **eruption**. The quake caused the north face of the volcano to crumble, leaving a mile-wide crater in its place. An avalanche of rock roared down the mountain. The avalanche destroyed nearly 230 square miles of forest land.

At the same time, a huge cloud of volcanic ash rose thousands of feet into the sky. It deposited ash in 11 states. Hot lava flowed from the top of the volcano. It kept flowing for nine hours.

By the time the **eruption** ended, it had killed 57 people. It had destroyed bridges, roads, railways, and homes. It had caused more **destruction** than any other volcanic **eruption** in U.S. history.

Will Mount St. Helens **erupt** again? Minor eruptions happen fairly often. Experts monitor the volcano's activity. They look for signals that a major **eruption** is brewing. If a big **eruption** seems likely, experts will tell local residents to be prepared. They will provide **instructions** that **prescribe** the steps for escaping the disaster.

Word Count: 180



Glossary Links

crater
avalanche



Imagine you are a news reporter. You see Mt. St. Helens erupt. What might you say on the news?



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Resource Links

Decodable Digest: p. 234

SAM Keyword: DD 25.3

1 An Invisible Force

What lies between the stars? It may look like nothing. But astronomers say that the space between stars is more than just empty space.

Astronomers think this space is filled with **invisible** matter called “dark matter.” We cannot see it because it produces no light.

But astronomers still think dark matter exists. They say the **evidence** lies in the way that galaxies hang together.

It is hard to tell from Earth. But galaxies and stars are in constant motion. They rotate extremely fast. In fact, they go so fast that they *should* fly apart. The stars should fly out of their galaxies. But an **invisible** force holds them together.

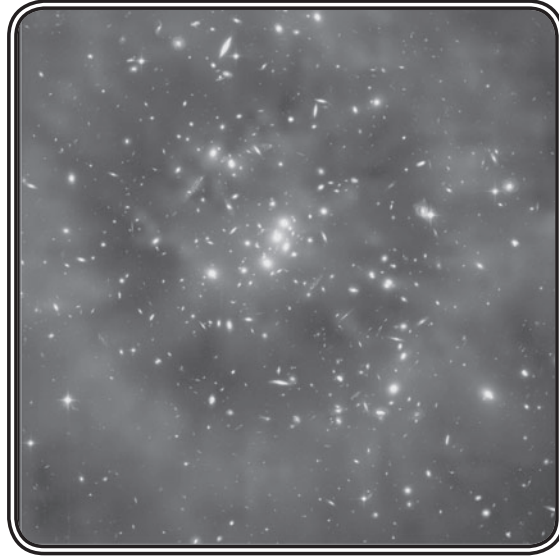
Experts say that force is dark matter. They say dark matter has its own gravity. Its gravity pulls on stars and keeps them together. So, what is in dark matter? It might include gases, planets, and old stars that don’t produce light. But so far, experts don’t know for sure.

A project is underway to map the dark matter in two distant galaxy clusters. Experts will use photos from the Hubble Space **Telescope** to make the map. They hope this map will shed light on dark matter!

Word Count: 196



Why do experts think dark matter exists?



Glossary Links
astronomers
galaxies



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Resource Links

Decodable Digest: p. 236

SAM Keyword: DD 25.4