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Quill Skill

In Chapter 6, Johnny was told to inform John Hancock that the Observers' Club was meeting that very night. But Johnny couldn't get in to see Mr. Hancock because he was in bed with a headache. He solved the problem by writing a note and sending it to Mr. Hancock on his tea tray. What tools did young Johnny use to write with? The ballpoint pen was not available until the late 1800s. During the 1700s, quill pens were used. A quill is the hollow shaft of a bird's feather. Geese or swans provided the best quills for pens. By making your own quill pen you will discover first-hand what it was like to write with such a tool.

Materials needed:

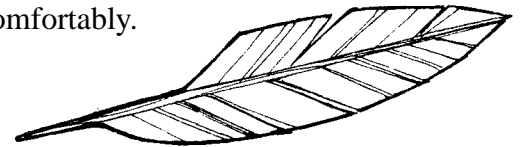
- bird's feather (available at a craft or hobby store)
- paper towels
- sharp scissors or a penknife*
- washable ink (available at a craft or hobby store)

Procedure:

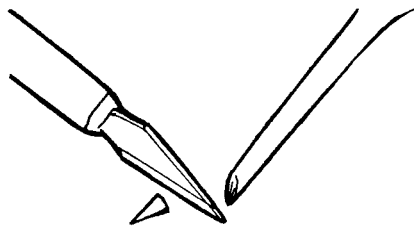
Step 1: Find a suitable feather.



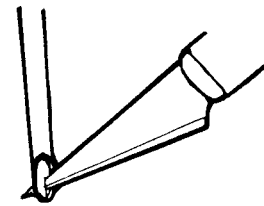
Step 2: Strip off the feather from the flat end of the quill. This will allow you to hold the pen comfortably.



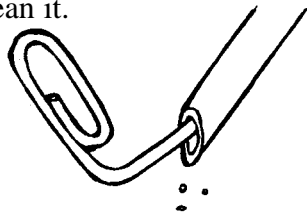
Step 3: Using scissors or a penknife, form the penpoint by cutting the fat tip at a slant, curving the cut slightly.



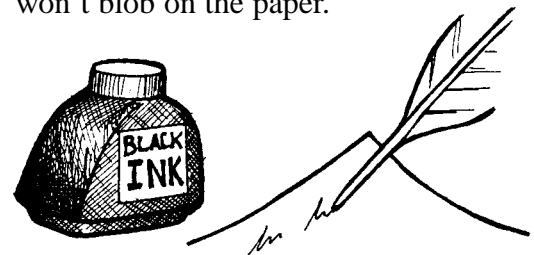
Step 4: Cut a small slit in the penpoint, about one-eighth inch (3.1 mm) right up the middle from the tip.



Step 5: Check the inside of the hollow quill point to be sure it's open and smooth. If the point is not open, use the end of a paper clip to clean it.



Step 6: Dip the tip of your pen into the ink. After some practice you'll get a feel for how far to dip so the ink won't blob on the paper.



Step 7: Experiment! Hold your pen at different angles or cut a new point at a slightly different slant.

***Safety Warning:** Students should be careful when using a sharp object.

Uniforms Then and Now

For Dr. Warren's sake, Johnny had to sneak past British forces and make it to Lexington. He wore Pumpkin's old uniform so that he would blend in with the Redcoats. The shiny black hat, braided hair, and scarlet tunic made Johnny feel like a different person. All at once he felt happy, confident, and grown up.

Below are two military uniforms: one worn during the Revolutionary War and the other worn today.

1. Compare the two uniforms for comfort and usefulness.
2. Why do you think soldiers wear uniforms?
3. What uniform would you be especially proud to wear? Give the reasons for your choice.

