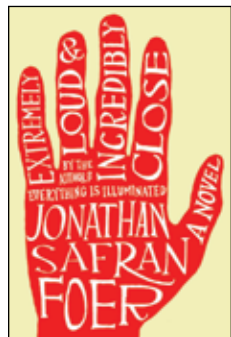


When I first saw the cover of Jonathan Safran Foer's book, *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, I was captivated by the letter forms that followed the contour of the hand silhouette. Graphic designer Jon Gray exercised artistic license with the counters, serifs and tails of the letters, as well as the orientation of the type to create an appealing and eye-catching book jacket.



Jon Gray designed this cover for the book, *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (Houghton Mifflin; 2005.)

The design was a terrific piece of work and a source of inspiration for a simple and effective typographical assignment for a group of students from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. It was also significant because the book jacket represents a trend in contemporary design that encourages the use of hand-lettered copy.

STUDENTS WERE FIRST GIVEN an introduction to typographical terms, then studied the Foer book cover, and looked at a variety of ways the hand has been used as a decorative element in art over the past one-thousand years.

Many were familiar with the amulet called the “Hamsa” (Arabic for the number “five,” but also the five fingers of the hand), which depicts an open right hand and a large eye in the palm. It is widely worn as jewelry, used as a wall hanging, and is thought to protect against the evil eye. In some Muslim circles it is referred to as The Hand of Fatima to commemorate Fatima Zahra, the daughter of the Prophet. The motif is still so popular in the region, that it has been appropriated by Christians and Jews as a good luck charm.

The class was introduced to Dürer’s praying hands, which are a universal symbol of piety, and all recognized Michelangelo’s use of the hand for the spark of creation—a device cleverly mimicked by Stephen Spielberg in his science-fiction classic *E.T.* It is interesting to note that Mr. Spock’s “Live long and Prosper” gesture is taken directly from Jewish priestly traditions and often can be seen on Jewish headstones and Kabbalist texts.

We reviewed the use of the manicule (from the Latin “manus,” for hand or fist), which was an actual punctuation mark in common use between the 12th and 18th centuries.

HANDWRITTEN MANUSCRIPTS would routinely include a drawn hand in the margin, alerting readers to important sections. Following suit, most of the early lead typefaces included a hand character and were referred to as a printer’s fist, bishop’s fist, digit, mutton-fist and pointing hand.

Even though the advent of typewriters spelled the end of the manicule in text, the hand character survived in large wood fonts and was often used as a decorative element in signage as well as magazine and newspaper advertising through the industrial revolution.

It was at this time that artists started to give the device more personality—and we begin to see very stylized masculine and

HANDS

by Irv Osterer



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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

High-school students will ...

- be able to use typographical terms to describe letter forms
- gain an appreciation of cross cultural aspect of symbols and their evolution
- create a convincing black-and-white hand, typographically inspired graphic using the hand motif

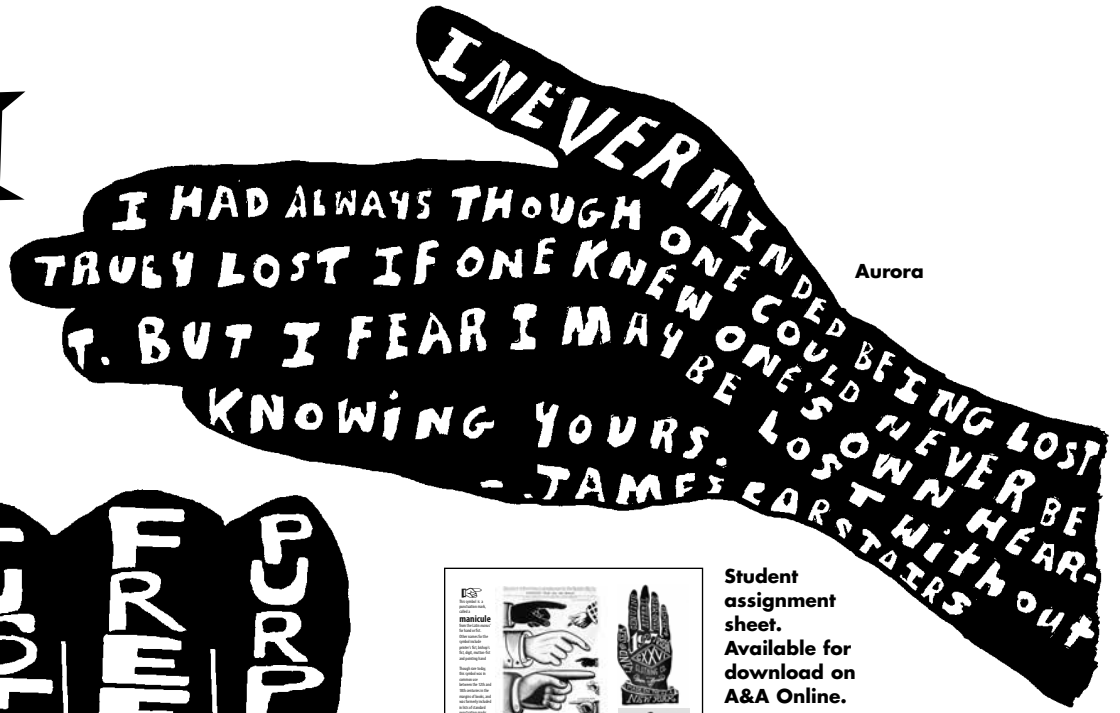
MATERIALS

- Sketchbooks, pencils
- Uni-ball® Vision Elite® Rollerball pens
- Black acrylic paint
- Card stock

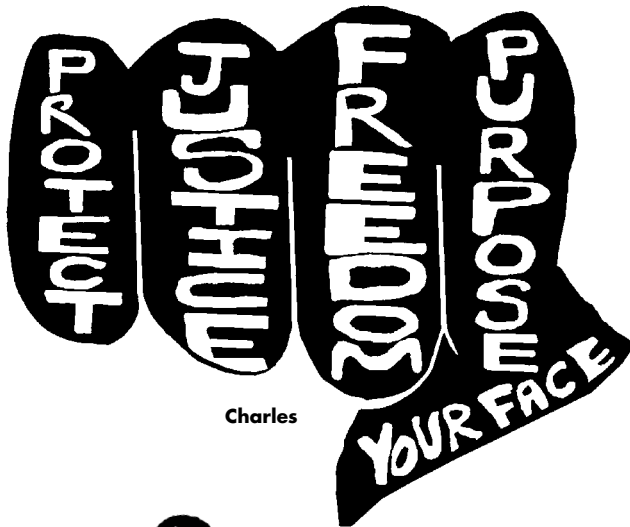


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ON



Aurora



Charles

Student assignment sheet. Available for download on A&A Online.



feminine hands. The Arts and Crafts movement (1880–1920), which followed, spawned a variety of hand labels affixed to products alluding to their manual origins.

Some students were able to make the connection to the hand glyphs that were reintroduced as “dingbats” in the first postscript fonts created by Apple, and designed by Herman Zapf and after this overview were able to see evidence of these traditions in the 1927 Land & Sea textile graphic which strongly resembles the *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* book jacket and in contemporary designer Ginny Branch’s wonderful take on this motif (ginnybranch.blogspot.com/).

IN MY CLASSROOM, where I had a virtual meeting of Eastern and Western cultures, there was something to inspire everyone. All the students were asked to carefully trace their hands in their sketchbooks as a preliminary exercise, and then proceed to carefully fill these shapes with copy relating to their own personality. Each work had to contain a personal message, and students were asked to activate the space by letting the shape of their hand influence the length, width and contours of the letters they were creating.

When they were finished their preliminary studies, the students proceeded to render their designs in black ink on 10" x 13" cover stock.

This exercise encouraged thee young artists to make interesting combinations of letters, and through this project they expanded their typographical vocabulary and also arrived at an understanding of the constructs that guide the art of font creation. ■



Daniel

Arts & Activities Contributing Editor Irv Osterer is Department Head – Fine Arts and Technology at Merivale High School in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.