

## The Pencil

[https://www.ted.com/talks/caroline\\_weaver\\_why\\_the\\_pencil\\_is\\_perfect?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/caroline_weaver_why_the_pencil_is_perfect?language=en)

### 1. Pre-listening questions:

What are these different types of writing instruments called?

What do you prefer to use and why?

Where do you like to buy your pens and pencils from? Why do you choose this store?

Why would someone want to produce a video on the pencil?

### 2. Vocabulary:

**Match the vocabulary in part 1 with the meaning in part 2:**

Part 1:

1. Scratchiness
2. Graphite
3. Shepherd
4. To grind
5. Fired in a kiln
6. Hardness
7. Handmade
8. Wood slats
9. Grooves
10. Breadcrumbs

Part 2:

- a. A long, thin, narrow strip of wood.
- b. To make something smooth or sharpen by abrasion or friction.
- c. The state or quality of being hard.
- d. An adjective that makes a certain, grating sound.
- e. A very tiny piece of bread.
- f. A person who looks after sheep.
- g. An oven used to burn, bake or dry something usually clay.
- h. A common carbon mineral.
- i. Something that is made by someone's hands.
- j. A long narrow cut or indentation on a surface.

### 3. Now listen to the video and decide if these statements are true or false:

- a. It's made of wood with some layers of colour an eraser and a core, which is made out of graphite, clay and water.
- b. The story of the pencil starts with graphite.
- c. Over in Belgium, Nicolas-Jacques Conté figured out a method of grinding the graphite, mixing it with powdered clay and water to make a paste.
- d. Meanwhile, over in America, in Concord, Massachusetts, it was Henry David Thoreau who came up with the grading scale for different softness of pencil.

- e. There was no easy way to make them, and it was the Americans who really simplified the craft.
- f. And they figured out it was easier and less wasteful to do a hexagonal pencil.
- g. Since the early days of pencils, people have loved that they are round.
- h. The Blackwing 702 is famous for being used by a lot of writers.
- i. There's nothing that can be done to make the pencil better than it is.

**Now listen again and complete the gaps in the sentences:**

- a. And it's that long history of \_\_\_\_\_ that, to me, makes it a very perfect object.
- b. It was so much \_\_\_\_\_ than anything else that existed at the time, and to this day, that's the method that's still used in making pencils.
- c. The result was a really strong graphite core that wasn't \_\_\_\_\_, that was smooth, usable.
- d. It was graded \_\_\_\_\_ through \_\_\_\_\_, number \_\_\_\_\_ being the ideal hardness for general use.
- e. Originally, when pencils were \_\_\_\_\_, they were made round.
- f. Since the early days of pencils, people have loved that they can be \_\_\_\_\_.
- g. The attached eraser happened in \_\_\_\_\_, when American stationer Hymen Lipman patented the first pencil with an attached eraser.
- h. And the pencil's really a thing that, I think, the average user has never thought \_\_\_\_\_.
- i. It's \_\_\_\_\_.

**The final listening exercise is to list all the descriptive words you hear. There are at least 24 of them:**

**4. Post-listening:**

What have you learnt?

Did you find the video interesting? Why or why not?

What new vocabulary have you heard?