[Phaedrus: Plato](http://www.english.illinois.edu/-people-/faculty/debaron/482/482readings/phaedrus.html)

Question: Why would Socrates think written words unable to convey new information, an only be able “to remind us of what we already know”?

“He who thinks, then, that he has left behind him any art in writing, and he who receives it in the belief that anything in writing will be clear and certain, would be an utterly simple person…” (para 5).

“And so it is with written words; you might think they spoke as if they had intelligence, but if you question them, wishing to know about their sayings, they always say only one and the same thing” (para. 7)

[Pencils to Pixels](http://www.english.illinois.edu/-people-/faculty/debaron/essays/pencils.htm) Baron, 2000

Question: How could we solve the issue of literacy being divided between the haves and have-nots?

“Digitized text is even easier to corrupt accidentally, or to fiddle with on purpose” (para 51).

“Initially, people were unsure of the appropriate ways to begin or end phone conversations, and lively debates ensued. The terms “hello” and “good-bye” quickly became standard, despite objections from purists who maintained that “hello” was not a greeting but an expression of surprise, and that “good-bye,” coming from “God be with you,” was too high-toned and serious a phrase to be used for something so trivial as telephone talk” (para 41).

Summary in Conversation

I see these articles in conversation with each other on the evolution of writing as a technology itself. First, as seen in the discourse between Socrates and Phaedrus, Socrates argues against writing itself. He argues mainly that writing will reduce the effectiveness of the learner’s memory and also that writing is inferior, only a shadow or representation of the spoken word. He argues that the written word cannot respond back to anything said. However, despite his arguments, a writing system is put in place and is used more and more as literacy spreads.

In “Pencils to Pixels”, writing technology is tracked through the evolution of the pencil, coming after ink pens. Thoreau, a famous transcendentalist, was also an innovator of the American pencil. Baron continues in his piece, sharing the impact of the telephone and word processing in computers. With each technology piece, Baron mentions the resistance and changes in human patterns that each of these technologies had to overcome before being widely accepted.

Both of these pieces are part of a wider story. The story of our evolution in the technology of writing, and the resistance encountered by each piece. Ultimately, this speaks to humans as innovators, but also a stubborn group, opposing change.