Why is a Raven Like a Writing Desk?

Post Office Reform, Collectible Commodities, and Victorian Culture

Dr. Catherine Golden
Lewis Carroll: Author and Mathematician

Lewis Carroll wrote the following riddle:

Why is a Raven Like a Writing Desk?

But do you know what a Writing Desk is?

http://www.jabberwocky.com/carroll/pics/carroll.jpg
Victorian Writing Desks

www.empire-antiques.co.uk

www.hygra.com
Postal Reformer Rowland Hill

postalheritage.org.uk/history/businesshistory...
Queen Victoria Ushers in Postal Reform

http://www.jewelrybyrhonda.com/queen_victoria5.jpg
Snail Mail

http://lhpantherband.com/contact_us
The General Post Office, One Minute to Six (1860)
by George Elgar Hicks

www.museumoflondonprints.com
Mulready Envelope

http://www.victorianlondon.org
First Postage Stamp: Penny Black
Sir Rowland

Born at Kidderminster 1790
Harred in Westminster Abbey 1879
To his creative mind and patient energy
the world is indebted for the
PENNY POSTAGE
introduced 1840

http://www.halftimescores.co.uk/postcard/history.html
The Crystal Palace, Great Exhibition of 1851, First World’s Fair

Postal Ephemera

digifree@blogspot.com

www.hisnibs.com/victorian.htm

www.aspireauctions.com/auction58/1579.html

antiquesinmichigan.com/barry/hastings.htm
Carroll marketed “The Wonderland Postage-Stamp Case” with *Eight or Nine Wise Words about Letter-Writing* in 1890.
Writing Slope, Ink Bottles, Pen Rest and Stamp Compartment

http://hygra.com/uk/wb2/WB143/
The Portable Writing Desk = Victorian Laptop?

http://www.hygra.com/writing.html

The Gentleman’s Desk vs. the Lady’s desk

Articles.deskarticles.oneofahindantiques.com/

www.patrick-howard-antiques.com
Antique French writing desk
What would you hide in the secret drawers of your writing desk?

http://www.hygra.com/writing.html
Edwin Hill and Warren De La Rue’s Envelope-Folding Machine
Overseas Penny Postage Envelope (1849) and Penny Red Stamp

[Image]

postalheritage.org.uk/.../oceanpennypostage
Pictorial envelope ca. 1885, rural British Scene

http://www.bathpostalmuseum.co.uk/digitalcollections/33_victorian-ephemera/27_victorian-ephemera/1989-037-01c.html
Comic valentines ca. 1860, insulting the dandy and lady of fashion. The lady’s skirt lifts to reveal a crinoline. From Valentine Cards collection, Bath Central Library.
Valentine Cards Collection, Bath Central Library
Victorian language of flowers: red rose for “love,” blue violet for “faithfulness,” red carnation for “Alas, my poor heart!” and foxglove for “insincerity”
Many romantic valentines feature flowers and church spires.
Nautical valentine, “Love & Duty”

Frank Staff Collection, Bath Postal Museum
When Alice demands to know the answer to the riddle, the Mad Hatter tells Alice, “‘I haven’t the slightest idea.’”
Why is a Raven Like a Writing Desk? (nevar = raven backwards)

www.wos.org/WOSRaven.htm

Official Descriptive Illustrated Catalogue, 1851