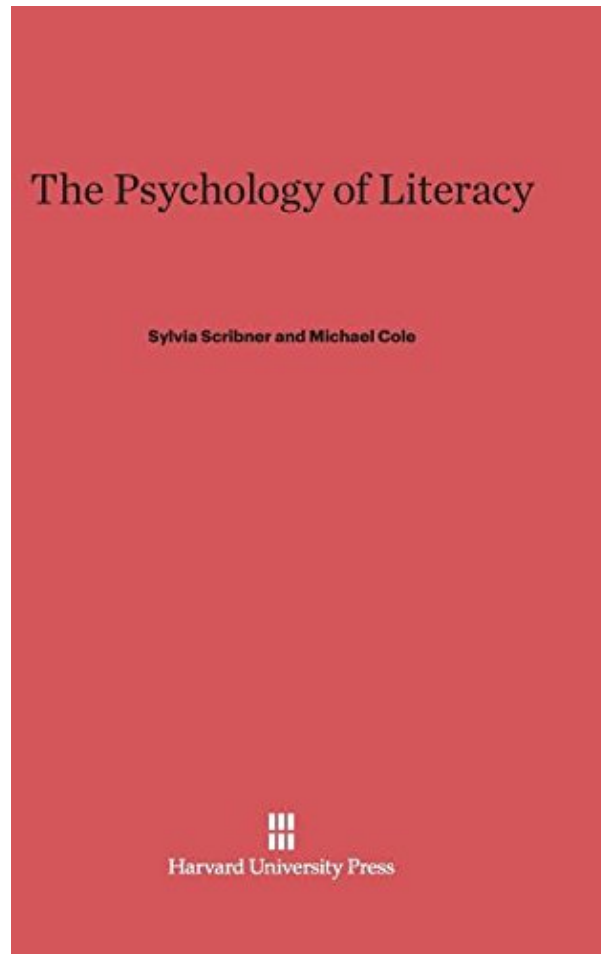


# PSYCHOLOGY OF LITERACY BY SYLVIA SCRIBNER, MICHAEL COLE



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# The Psychology of Literacy

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## **About the Author**

Michael Cole is Professor of Psychology and Communication, and Director of the Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition, University of California, San Diego.

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What are the intrinsic differences between the literate and the illiterate mind? The Vai, a small West African group, developed their own system of writing that flourishes today, although no body of written literature exists and about half of those literate in Vai have never had formal schooling. Given this situation, Scribner and Cole were able to test more than 1,000 subjects over a four-year period to measure the mental advantage of literates over nonliterates. "An ambitious and important book ambitious in scope and its continual reevaluation of aims and methods . . . and important for putting heretofore unexamined presumptions regarding the cognitive effects of literacy to empirical test" *Language and Society*

- Published on: 2013-10-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.37" h x 1.06" w x 6.46" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover

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### Literacy and the Mind

By Stephen Pellerine

This book is quite a unique contribution to language, literacy, linguistics, and cognitive psychology as it addresses such themes. The Vai people (African: near Sierra Leone and Liberia) in this "Vai Project" were subjects in the testing of linguistic theory pertaining to literacy - and its development in society. The ethnography carried out was ethical and ecological.

The act of writing is quite unique to the human species - and unarguably literature is an act only carried out by human beings and as pointed out a recent act dating back to apx. 3500 BC. This book looks at Vai script in its encapsulated environment and how written text was used in this community through bush schools (boys and girls taken from their homes for 5 years of education).

One of the most interesting chapters for me was "Chapter 13: Studies of Memory" and the effects of Qur'anic learning. I am generally interested in memory so this is a very "specialist" dealing with memory pertaining to rote learning in literacy.

If you have a deep interest in literacy studies this is quite a unique book. If you are a linguistic anthropologist I assume you know of this book as it certainly must be a classic in the field (although I cannot confirm this). If you like to think of the ways of the mind and how text/written words shape our world this will also be an

interesting academic read for you. I can recommend this book to engaged undergrads in such areas (anthropology, linguistics, linguistic anthropology, literacy studies) and certainly for graduate students in such fields.

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