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#### Amazon.com Review

David Abram's writing casts a spell of its own as he weaves the reader through a meticulously researched work that gently addresses such seemingly daunting topics as where the past and future exist, the relationship between space and time, and how the written word serves to sever humans from their primordial source of sustenance: the earth.

"Only as the written text began to speak would the voices of the forest, and of the river, begin to fade. And only then would language loosen its ancient associations with the invisible breath, the spirit sever itself from the wind, the psyche dissociate itself from the environing air," writes Abram of the separation caused by the proliferation of the written word.

In writing The Spell of the Sensuous, Abram consulted an engaging collection of peoples and works. He uses aboriginal song lines, stories from the Koyukon people of northwestern Alaska, the philosophy of phenomenology, and the speeches of Socrates to paint a poetic landscape that explains how we became separated from the earth in the first place. With minimal environmental doomsaying, Abram discusses how we can begin to recover a sustainable relationship with the earth and the nonhuman beings who live among us--in the more-than-human world. --Kathryn True

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Winner of the International Lannan Literary Award for Nonfiction

Animal tracks, word magic, the speech of stones, the power of letters, and the taste of the wind all figure prominently in this intellectual tour de force that returns us to our senses and to the sensuous terrain that sustains us. This major work of ecological philosophy startles the senses out of habitual ways of perception.

For a thousand generations, human beings viewed themselves as part of the wider community of nature, and they carried on active relationships not only with other people with other animals, plants, and natural objects (including mountains, rivers, winds, and weather patters) that we have only lately come to think of as "inanimate." How, then, did humans come to sever their ancient reciprocity with the natural world? What will it take for us to recover a sustaining relation with the breathing earth?

In The Spell of the Sensuous David Abram draws on sources as diverse as the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, Balinese shamanism, Apache storytelling, and his own experience as an accomplished sleight-of-hand of magician to reveal the subtle dependence of human cognition on the natural environment. He explores the character of perception and excavates the sensual foundations of language, which--even at its most abstract-echoes the calls and cries of the earth. On every page of this lyrical work, Abram weaves his arguments with a passion, a precision, and an intellectual daring that recall such writers as Loren Eisleley, Annie Dillard, and Barry Lopez.

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• Great product!

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David Abrams takes us on a journey back to ourselves ...

#### By F. B. Steele

David Abrams takes us on a journey back to ourselves and the route passes between the Scylla and Charybdis of discursive language. Abrams' thesis is that phonetic writing and the language associated with it separate us from the natural world. The primitive had language tied to the hunt and landscape; the modern has language in books and in his cerebrum. In one of the longer acts of irony I have ever observed, Abrams uses exquisite language to return us to an appreciation of and participation in the natural, "more than human"

world from which he claims language has estranged us. His examples are marvelous. Consider the Judaic scholars of the early middle ages, penning their Torahs and other documents without vowels; this syntactical arrangement forced the reader to consider where "the wind is to blow" and in so blowing infuse language with the creative wind of God. But we are far from that today. Now we must put down our books, listen to the wind, and consider the hawk on its windhover. If we do we are returned to ourselves.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Intelligent and thought-provoking

By Bill

A fascinating analysis of how written phonetic language has contributed to our cultural disengagement from the natural world, the author argues that beginning with the introduction of written language humanity began to lose its deep and profound connection with the natural world, replacing our perception of the language of nature with a kind of animistic interaction with written words. Thought-provoking, even if tedious at times. Whatever you think of the rest of the book, be sure not to miss the final chapter (Coda), which is brilliant and beautiful.

As an aside, I tried the meditative technique the author recommends in Part II of Chapter 6 and was thrilled with the results. Highly recommended.

8 of 9 people found the following review helpful.

I would purchase this book again, if only for the last chapter

By Goldin

Mr Abram spent 250 some pages painstakingly building an argument that the human race was, but is no more, grounded in the wisdom and in communion with the natural world. He challenges the perception of past, present, and future as being separate and builds a case for renewal through reconnecting our surroundings.

The average reader could get discouraged by the seven chapters of analysis and hypotheses written in formal, if not scientific language, that begged the necessity of the Kindle dictionary at many of the page turns.

But, the Coda. Ahh, the Coda at the end is beautiful prose filled with hope and wisdom for seekers who, in their hearts, know that connection with our earth and each other is the only sustainable path forward.

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