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The Mind Of An Ape



Synopsis

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Book Information

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Customer Reviews

David Premack (born 1925) is currently emeritus professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, and wife Ann was a science writer (e.g., *Why Chimps Can Read*). The authors state in the Introduction to this 1983 book, "Our own attempt to teach language to an ape was not based on the belief that a chimpanzee could be turned into a child. We were interested in the human mind. In order to understand the mind of the human, it was essential, we thought, to compare it with other minds. But were there other minds that were comparable?... We began, then, to teach a simple, written language, one we invented, to a creature that in the ordinary course of its natural life does not acquire a language..." "Chimpanzees, we now know, are not initiators of language; they will, however, engage in dialogue once drawn into an exchange. It was this ability, through the system of language that Sarah learned, that gave us an invaluable tool for investigating a far more important issue, the mind of an ape." (pg. 34) They admit, "contrary to popular belief, though we may give the chimpanzee a human hand in place of its own, it will not draw representational pictures--not any more than the chimpanzee will, if given a human larynx, produce even the most childish conversation." (pg. 108) Also, "Children have these concepts, but they do not apply them in all cases. With the chimpanzees it is not yet clear whether they even have the abstract concepts, let alone can use them consistently." (pg.

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