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Review of Books by Visual/Media Literacy Author, Thomas West

Abstract

Thomas West's: *In the Mind's Eye: Visual Thinkers, Gifted People with Learning Disabilities, Computer Images, and the Ironies of Creativity*, and *Thinking Like Einstein: Returning to Our Visual Roots with the Emerging Revolution in Computer Information Visualization*.

Keywords

book review, visual literacy

Author Statement

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Review of Books by Visual/Media Literacy Author, Thomas West

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Thomas West's: *In the Mind's Eye: Visual Thinkers, Gifted People with Learning Disabilities, Computer Images, and the Ironies of Creativity*, and *Thinking Like Einstein: Returning to Our Visual Roots with the Emerging Revolution in Computer Information Visualization*.

In his books, *In the Mind's Eye*, and *Thinking Like Einstein*, author Thomas West explores the connections between dyslexia, visual thinking, creativity, and mathematics, by sharing biographies of gifted individuals whose intellectual prowess exist partially in the visual realm. West postulates that the modern technological environment is redefining current views of intelligence. Rather than focusing on the traditional forms of academic intelligence, i.e., verbal-linguistic and mathematical-logical, West argues that current technology requires individuals to be intelligent in visual skills such as pattern recognition, imagination, and visualization. West further suggests that a link exists between high visual intelligence and learning disabilities, such as dyslexia. Utilizing biographical information, he demonstrates that many highly intelligent visual thinkers were unsuccessful in school, and most particularly, unsuccessful in the verbal-linguistic realm. West argues that our current school system is stuck in the traditional verbal-linguistic/mathematical-logical mode of education, and is not preparing students, especially those with visual-spatial talents, for success in modern society.

Both books *In the Mind's Eye*, and *Thinking Like Einstein*, postulate that education in the modern era needs to allow visual based thinking paradigms to replace the traditional word and number based modes of teaching and learning. Both books profile great visual thinkers, with mild to severe verbal learning disabilities such as Michael Faraday, James Clerk Maxwell, Thomas Edison, Winston Churchill, Albert Einstein, and Leonardo da Vinci. Further, both books present a compelling case for rethinking the concept of intelligence, especially in regards to learning disabilities and the value of visual thinking. Moreover, the books are complimentary and can be read in tandem or sequentially, because while *In the Mind's Eye* focuses a great deal on utilizing research in neuroscience to argue for the link between dyslexia and visual thinking skills, *Thinking Like Einstein* utilizes a variety of evidentiary vignettes to promote visual thinking through new technologies such as advances in computer graphics.

Both books are valuable alone, however, when read in tandem or sequentially, the books will be more interesting to researchers, psychologists, educators (especially those in the realm of gifted and talented education), and graduate students. West writes with clarity, and uses very little jargon. Further, although *In the Mind's Eye* is almost 400 pages, it is a relatively quick read because much of the book is endnotes and references. Likewise, *Thinking Like Einstein* is less than 200 pages and is also not overly time-consuming.

The issues West raises, specifically those related to high visual thinking skills and possible connections to learning disabilities such as dyslexia are especially relevant in the current educational environment. With the onset of high stakes testing, the educational system punishes those students who are less verbal and more visual, while once out of school, many visual thinkers become the leaders of society. It is time that our educational system catches up with the technology of the era.