Explaining the Distinction between Sensation and Perception

- **words in bold** = useful for **structuring response** and focusing on the distinction/contrast between the two processes
- **underlined words** = key terms for showing your **understanding** of the distinction and **explaining it clearly and comprehensively**

While the process of sensation is purely **physiological**, occurring at the site of the **sensory organs** (such as the eye, the ear and the tongue), the process of perception also requires **psychological** processes such as **organization** and **interpretation**, which can only occur in the **brain**. **Consequently**, sensation takes place **in a similar way** for all people with functioning sensory organs: the physical energy is **received** and then **transduced** into electrochemical energy, which is then **transmitted** as electrochemical energy to the brain. **Conversely**, the process of perception **varies** according to the person’s **experience**, **motivation**, **interests** and **cultural background**.

The “Jesus in the Snow” stimulus, **for instance**, was **initially detected** by all members of the class in the same way. The **light energy** was **received** and the image was represented upside down on the retina. **Subsequently**, the **electro-chemical energy** resulting from this process was sent to the brain. All students executed this **sensory process** in the same way, **yet** once the information reached the brain, their individual **organization** and **interpretation** led to different **perceptions**.

Some could not **organize** the parts of the stimulus into a meaningful figure and ground, perceiving only random blobs of black on white. Others perceived a man, which a few **interpreted** at once as the face of Jesus. **Those who** perceived it in this way **demonstrated** that their upbringing in a predominantly Christian **culture** had affected how they interpreted such an image. The stimulus, which during the **process of sensation** was essentially **meaningless** and **passively received**, had in the **process of perception** been **actively interpreted** in various ways, from “weird blobs” to a man’s face to the face of Jesus. The variety of perceptual responses clearly **illustrates** the individual nature of perception.

**Original source of image:**
http://new.rejesus.co.uk/images/area_uploads/unexpected/snow.jpg