

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.

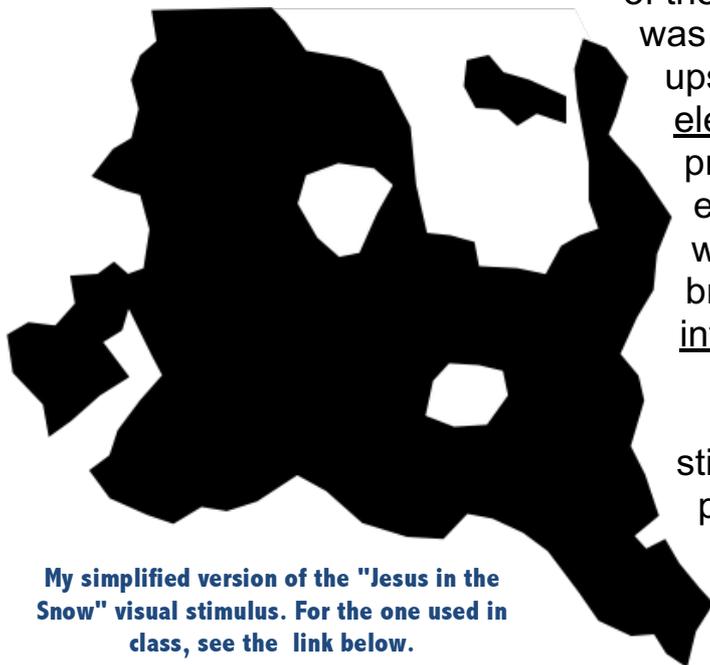
The "Jesus in the Snow" stimulus, **for instance**, was **initially** detected by all members of the class in the same way. The light energy was received and the image was represented upside down on the retina. **Subsequently**, the electro-chemical energy resulting from this process was sent to the 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



My simplified version of the "Jesus in the Snow" visual stimulus. For the one used in class, see the link below.