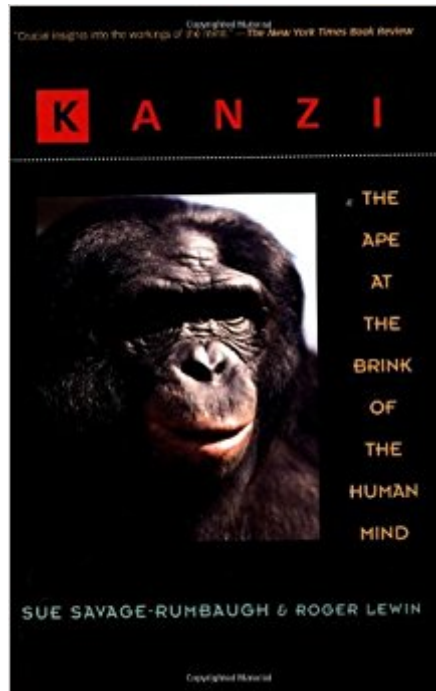




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Kanzi: The Ape At The Brink Of The Human Mind



Synopsis

The remarkable story of a "talking" chimp, a leading scientist, and the profound insights they have uncovered about our species. He has been featured in cover stories in Time, Newsweek, and National Geographic, and has been the subject of a "NOVA" documentary. He is directly responsible for discoveries that have forced the scientific community to recast its thinking about the nature of the mind and the origins of language. He is Kanzi, an extraordinary bonobo chimpanzee who has overturned the idea that symbolic language is unique to our species. This is the moving story of how Kanzi learned to converse with humans and the profound lessons he has taught us about our animal cousins, and ourselves." . . The underlying thesis is informative and well argued . . Savage-Rumbaugh's results are impressive." • The Washington Post "This popular, absorbing, and controversial account is recommended." • Library Journal

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Customer Reviews

When ape-language research fell into disfavor in the 1970s, Savage-Rumbaugh, associate professor of biology at Georgia State Univ. and a leading researcher in the field, set a new course, focusing on apes' ability to comprehend symbols. At the Yerkes Regional Primate Research Center in Atlanta, she worked with common chimpanzees and bonobos (pygmy chimps), using a computer-based keyboard system. With Roger Lewin (coauthor with Richard Leakey of *Origins*), she tells the remarkable story of Kanzi, a bonobo who at 14 understands spoken English well enough that his teachers spell out words they don't want him to hear. He asks and answers

questions and invents games by manipulating an electronic keyboard. His accomplishments prove chimps can spontaneously acquire language skills through social interaction in a language-rich environment. For readers interested in the origin of language and those who have followed Washoe, Koko and Lucy. Photos not seen by PW. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Much initial ape-language research has fallen into disfavor in the last two decades. Linguists, in particular, claim that the apes' failure to demonstrate syntactical competence precludes real language ability. Savage-Rumbaugh, a leading researcher in the field, disputes their rationale, arguing that the cognitive foundations of human speech can be found with these animals. Working with chimpanzees and later Kanzi, a bonobo, the author focused on the ape's ability truly to comprehend symbols-something that earlier researchers had neglected. As an infant, Kanzi demonstrated a surprising ability to learn symbols spontaneously and to understand human speech. Savage-Rumbaugh, who has been shunned by some of the major scientific journals, has been encouraged and assisted by scientific writer Lewin. Their popular, absorbing, and controversial account is recommended for wide purchase. Laurie Bartolini, Legislative Research, Springfield, Ill. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Surprisingly more global than I had presumed. Although the bonobo Kanzi gives his name to the title of the book, the book itself allows itself intelligent extrapolation of the data he provided. All in all it was an interesting mix of data, anecdote, evolutionary history, as awareness plea, and philosophy. This was an easy read which flowed well. I was simply surprised about how much information there was with regard to things learned through the research with, and directly from, Kanzi. My only complaint is that my copy of the book for some reason repeated pg 181 on 183 for no apparent reason and the contents of 183 were missing.

This is one of if not the most important continuing research relationships (the word 'experiment isn't right) with primates, ever. Savage-Rumbaugh is careful, innovative, disciplined and restrained in her work and writing, which open many doors that needed to be opened and jammed open. Other work on primates and language was earlier rejected out of hand, and its researchers punished by derision and withdrawn funding, or funding never given. Kanji's (and his family's) continuing relationships with human beings demand our attention and that we learn about ourselves as much as the bonobos.

Interesting. ...I learned alot.

I enjoyed meeting Kanzi.

After reading Ape House by Sara Gruen I was trapped and when she recommended Kanzi I ordered it from and found it to be absolutely awesome. After reading both books it is hard to think of a Bonobo as an animal and not one of us. The work that has been accomplished with the Bonobo and Chimps and how they have taken this knowledge and used it to help challenged individuals to become productive human beings is awesome. Makes me wish I was 50 years younger and starting over in a career. It is a wonderful read.

This book was disappointing -- really didn't live up to its title. A rather boring read for such a potentially interesting subject.

This book is hard to understand and has not been dumbed down enough for the average reader. I do not recommend this book.

This book makes plausible claims that some bonobos have learned to handle language in a way that is approximately as sophisticated as that of a two year old human. But their anecdotal evidence is somewhat hard to evaluate, and they didn't quite convince me that they were careful enough to rule out the possibility that their biases caused them to overestimate the sophistication of Kanzi's understanding. The book is a bit long-winded about research that Savage-Rumbaugh did before working with Kanzi, and I was a bit disappointed that the book didn't provide more of the anecdote about Kanzi that made the book worth reading. But those anecdotes convinced me that much more is going on than some authors such as Pinker had led me to believe. I still hope for better evidence that will help clarify how much bonobos can understand. But that will be hard, and I don't know how it should be done.

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