

A Particular People



A Prehistoric Effect that is both a Personality Divination...
...and an Introduction to the Art of Cold Reading

by David Thiel

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The Introduction-Part-Very-Few-People-Read

Spend a few minutes on any mentalism forum and you will see people exchanging views with each other about exactly which effect is the “holy grail” of mentalism.

For a long time, many performers were entranced by ACAAN (“Any Card At Any Number”) effects. The idea was that the performer could divine the precise numerical location of a card inside a deck.

I appreciate the inventiveness that went into the six thousand and thirty seven versions of this effect that came out...but I never saw the attraction. The performer knew that the six of spades was the seventeenth card from the top.

Who cares? What is the practical application for this effect? More importantly: why do I, as a member of the audience, care?

“Holy Grail” means different things to different people. I get that. But when I consider the most powerful effect I can imagine, it would be one where nothing is written down. Nothing is said. Nothing of a pre-show nature has happened. The performer genuinely has never met his subject before...and yet he begins to tell them remarkable things about themselves...things no stranger has any business knowing.

How can this be anything but extraordinary?

Cold Reading fascinates me and my abilities to use it find their way into the majority of things I do on-stage as well as in my personal life.

But taking that first step, actually putting my props away and sitting at a table across from strangers? It scared me to death. There was still enough magician in me that the very idea of failure made my knees sweat.

I needed to ease into the exercise. I started “circling”¹ around my reveals when performing my effects and that is how I took my first baby steps into Cold Reading.

But I would have LOVED to have had the manuscript you’re about to read. I’ve written it so that it’s a solid stand-alone storytelling/personality divination effect. But it can also be a springboard into getting started with Cold Readings.

¹ This is a process I’ll explain just a little later



A Particular People

by David Thiel

When I was in the Royal British Columbia Museum, they had a MAMMOTH (as in the prehistoric animal and NOT as in 'something really big') exhibit happening. I passed from room to room and, while the things on display were quite interesting, to be honest, I was thinking more intently about where we would have lunch.

Then I saw a half shell theater. It was smallish...one of those where a small knot of people stand around and watch cartoon characters hopping around while a narrator delivers information on what's happening. But this short film mesmerized me. I watched it three times.

It was how ancient man viewed the creation story...and it is the basis for the routine that follows. It is not designed to be a "blow them out of their socks" effect. It plays well on its own. But, more importantly, it can also be used as an introduction of how to get started with what is most commonly referred to as 'cold reading.'

"Where did people come from? We aren't the first to wrestle with this question. Even before words were written, ancient man tried to figure his world out. Archeologists have examined the drawings they left behind and come up with a fascinating idea.

"Ancient man – I almost want to say "prehistoric man" believed that on the day the earth was created there was a Sacred Cave. Out of this cave came three different animals.

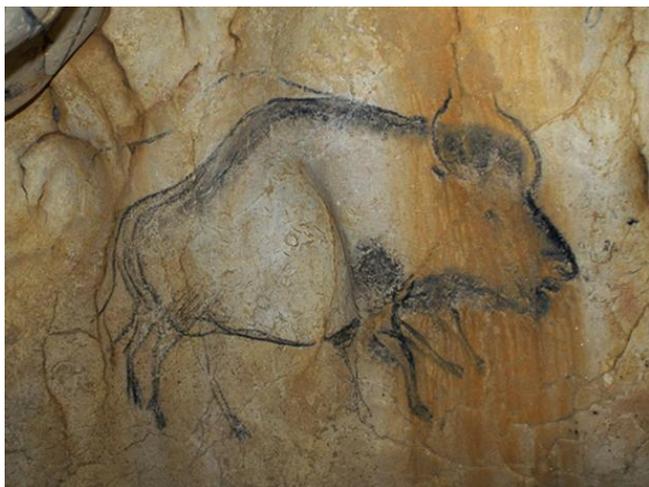


"The MAMMOTH was first." (turn over the mammoth card).
"He arrived in this world and was noted instantly for his bravery. The MAMMOTH had no issue standing before any enemy. It would fiercely protect its young and defend its territory. The People of the Mammoth followed him and they held the same values."



A Particular People

by David Thiel



“The next animal came charging out of the cave with eyes that sparked and dared anyone in the world to defy him. He was the BUFFALO.” (turn over the Buffalo card). “He was mighty and it is said that when he walked the earth shook and all enemies fled before him. The People of the Buffalo followed him and they, too, held to the same values. They were strong. They were fierce.”

“The last animal stepped out of the cave. It is said that he had such speed that even the wind wept because it could not keep up. This animal was the HORSE.” (turn over the Horse card). “The horse was intelligent as well as having a speed no other animal could match. He was followed by the People of the Horse. They were lithe and moved with grace and speed.”



“As time passed the People of each animal spread across the world, taking upon themselves the attributes of the animal they had followed out of the cave. It is said that these same people exist in the world today.

“Let me tell you about them. It is true that we all carry aspects of each of the three animals with us...but I know that one of the following will resonate more strongly with you than the other two. I am going to ask that you hold the image of the animal you have chosen in your mind. See it clearly...”

“The People of the Mammoth are brave. They are rooted in family and community. They are loyal. They will commit fully to a person or an idea.” (tap the card with your index finger as you speak.) “The people of the Mammoth are rooted in reality. They are friends you can count on. They are linked powerfully to their families. They are brave and they protect the people they care about with ferocity. Most often you will find them in professions that help others like doctors and nurses, counsellors and those in public service.”



A Particular People

by David Thiel

"The People of the Horse are swift in body and thought. They are creative...they tend toward the things of the imagination, the big dreams. They are still closest to being able to touch whatever magic that remains still in the world." (tap the Horse card as you speak.) "The people of the Horse are the singers, the writers and actors. They are driven to be creative. The people of the Horse are those who dream and help others to dream as well."

"The People of the Buffalo are powerful. Strong. They pride themselves on their ability to stand alone. They are self sufficient. They will move mountains and stars alike to accomplish their goal and let nothing stand against them." (tap the Buffalo card as you speak.) "The people of the Buffalo are most often the warriors, powerful businesspeople and the police...the people who make things happen in their world."

"Three different kinds of people." (tap on the Mammoth) "Helping others." (tap on the Horse) "Creative" (tap on the Buffalo) "Strong. One of these groups resonated with you more than the others. One of these People describes the 'you on the inside' – the person you really are. Am I correct?"

They will agree. You may need to go over the options again...but in most cases, they will agree. Pause to consider this for a moment. You have only three wildly different options. But still...only three. You have described BRAVERY, STRENGTH and CREATIVITY – all three are powerful and positive attributes.

FIRST: you watch their faces as you deliver the above paragraph about there being 'three kids of people.' You're not looking for a clear 'tell' – you are looking for a CONFIRMATION. It may or may not be delivered to you, although it may well be an expression that flickers across their face.

"And to be clear, for the benefit of those watching...I don't know you." (wait for a response) "I haven't told you what to say." (wait for a response) "You didn't have any idea what we were going to do here today. Is that correct?"

A Crossroads...

What happens next is purely a matter of personal taste...and how far you want to go with the effect and how you play it.

The Sure-fire-But-Not-As-Cool-Way

IF you are not confident in your ability to read their body language, or in the "Playing the Odds" below, you may ask them to write their selection down to a) crystalize it in their minds so they can envision it better or b) can't change their minds once you have begun...thus making you look like a goof.

Use an impression pad, or a Center Tear or Acidus Novus²...get your peek and continue from there.

Or you COULD try...

² These are, in order: a device that allows you to read an impression of what the spectator has written ([ParaLabs](#) and [John Riggs](#) are among the finest), an effect where the spectator writes a word on a small paper (aka a "billet") and you tear it up. Richard Osterlind has an [outstanding version](#). In the process of tearing it up, you peek at the answer. [Acidus Novus](#) is a different method of getting a peek, designed by Millard Longman.



A Particular People

by David Thiel

The Miraculous-But-Riskier Way

IF you are willing to take a chance and do a routine that is completely impossible for them to figure out...if you are open to really looking like you're reading their mind...and if you trust the person you're working with not to mess you up...consider this turning this presentation into a great way to start doing cold readings.

STEP ONE: Did you see any kind of "tell" as you tapped the cards one at a time? It will be most likely seen when you do the second "summary" in which you give one word linked to each animal. It is most likely to be something you see happening at the corners of their mouth or around the eyes.

There is no clear-cut answer here. All I can suggest is that you are looking for an expression on their face that is different for one of the options than the other two. (You are most likely to get this when you are working with a woman or a young person.)

STEP TWO: Play the odds. Keep in mind that you are dealing with the way these people SEE THEMSELVES...and not necessarily who they really are. When you are playing the odds, you are simply trying to manipulate probability so that it works in your favor.

It is something you may even want to consider BEFORE selecting your volunteer...to see if they fit any of the profiles below. ³Playing the odds looks like this:

Most Older Women are going to choose the Mammoth. While there is a pretty funny joke hiding in there, it's a fact. Older women have most likely been in charge of raising children or putting their careers behind family needs. This is often true of older men as well.

Young men and women are most likely to choose the Buffalo. You'll note that the narrative put great importance on *physical strength* and an *independent* nature. The people who choose this one are most likely to be well (or conventionally) dressed for their age group. They have taken care that they look good. You will also often see this in the conventional "businessman" – the clean cut go-getter types.

"Odd" people of all ages will choose the Horse. We are looking for people who don't put as much care into ensuring that their appearance fits in with conventions...or make a point of NOT fitting. These are inward facing people. You may see bitten nails, hair that is not as well groomed, odd pieces of jewellery. They have chosen to present themselves as individuals. And 'individual' = "creative thinking" person. "Creative thinking person" = "Horse."

³ In reading over the list that follows, you will want to remember that if you are mentally PRESELECTING your volunteer, you don't want their probable "type" to be wildly obvious. For example: it's going to be clear even to the most casual observer that a girl who has purple hair, tattoos and is toting a notebook is an obvious choice for "Horse." You are looking for the subtler signs.



A Particular People

by David Thiel

The key in “playing the odds” is that you are assembling *probabilities* and not necessarily the definitive answer. It is entirely possible, for example, that the straight-laced looking businessman considers himself Bob Dylan on the inside...or the girl with tattoos and piercings may consider herself a mover and a shaker of business.

STEP THREE: Take your shot. The staging for this is important. You don't say a single word. You pause dramatically, allow your hand to pass over all three cards while you watch your spectator carefully. (This is more for drama than actually looking for information. Their expressions are most likely locked down by now.)

You mentally review which one (if any) of the cards produced a “tell” on the face of your volunteer.

You consider the information in Playing The Odds.

You put the two together and **wordlessly push your best guess forward**. Don't let your expression give away ANY information as to what your real intentions are. The audience should have no idea why you are pushing that card forward.

Yes. It is your ‘best guess.’ Most of the time you will be right and the participant will verify this to you (and the audience) with their reaction. Remember that all these people, particularly your volunteer, have been watching you intently.

If you DO get the “money shot” reaction, pat yourself on the back and follow it up with a reading if you are so inclined. (Information on doing a cold reading follows this effect.) You have just performed a miracle.

IF they give you a YES...you're done. And in the VAST majority of the time, that is exactly what will happen.

IF you don't get a reaction from the participant, tap the card several times with the tip of your finger. If they are playing hard to get, that will break the ice and you will get your confirmation reaction. To the audience, it will simply look like you KNEW what was true all along.

Of course, you may continue to get a blank unsatisfied stare.

“This one isn't you though, right?”

HOW you say this is said in a way that leaves what you actually mean open to interpretation. Think of it as a form of Dual Reality that is spoken out loud.

One of two things is going to happen now. The volunteer will most likely agree with you...that this is NOT the one they chose. You say “I didn't think so.” And go to Step Four.

There is a distant outside possibility that they will actually admit that this IS the one they chose. If they do this the timing of you saying something to the effect of “Exactly. It IS you. I KNEW it all along.”



A Particular People

by David Thiel

STEP FOUR: This is the make it or break it step. If you become adept at using steps 1-3 it's very unlikely you will ever get here. If you do it's no big deal. You are about to repeat the exact step you just took...in a different way.

TAKE A LONG PAUSE. Look your volunteer right in the eye.

I suppose it is POSSIBLE that at this point your confidence will be in bloody softly moaning tatters on the ground before you. Can I make one gentle point?

MOST of your audience has NO IDEA YOU GUESSED WRONG!

So tell that gibbering inner child inside to suck it up and continue as though things are going the EXACT way you expected them to.

You COULD simply take another shot. Let's face it...at this point the odds are 50/50 that even a monkey could get it right. Of course, your audience doesn't see it that way. If you have played it right, it looks to them as though you have eliminated the one option THEY thought was most likely.

They see you zeroing in on the correct reveal.

What you do at this point is going to depend on the volunteer. Since your FIRST guess was wrong (again, only you know this) there's got to be a strong contender in either of the remaining options.

In ALL cases you are going to take a dramatic pause. You MAY pass your hand over top of the two remaining options as though you are trying to get a "reading" from them. You may take the your volunteer's hand by the wrist and pass it over top of the two remaining options to do some very simple muscle reading. (Where there is resistance this is most likely the correct choice.)

You can also simply skip the "passing your hand over the options" part and guess.

This is how you are going to "present the second option" (AKA 'Your Second Guess'):

Put your finger on your second choice. Do NOT push it forward because this is the pattern you just set for "eliminating an option."

Look your volunteer in the eye and tap your finger against the card that is your SECOND choice. Don't say a word. Simply raise your eyebrows and cock your head slightly. This is body language for "so?"

UNLESS you have really misread your volunteer this is the right choice. When you get confirmation be absolutely assertive. Act as though you knew it all along. No question.

It is possible that you don't get the confirmation that you are correct, but that the volunteer will shake their head. Occasionally you will hear them say "so...do you want me to tell you?"

Nod. Say something like "Sure. I've seen it before."

This is a statement that means absolutely nothing...but it allows you to respond in the classic "it could mean this...or it could mean this" way.



A Particular People

by David Thiel

Your response to what they say **MUST** be immediate...almost as soon as you know what it is going to be and ideally before the word "yes" or "no" has left their mouth.

If it's "yes" – celebrate. You did it again.

If it's "no" – you knew it all along because THIS (the third option) is the correct choice...and you eliminated the throwaways one at a time. "Know what's amazing about this? Very few people know that this is who you are on the inside. You hide it well...but because it is so close to the surface it shines brightly."

The key to selling this is YOUR conviction.

As any actor will tell you, the *critical* part of the equation is to BELIEVE it yourself as you perform it.

The fact that the reality of what you believe is dictated by the reaction of your volunteer is something the audience never needs to know.

A Few Points About This Routine...

It is infinitely adaptable. The example here deals with prehistoric drawings and how pre-historical man explained creation. Ultimately, it's all window dressing. You are suggesting your volunteer say whether he/she sees themselves as Brave, Strong or Creative.

Those three attributes can be changed to whatever you choose.

You don't need to use prehistoric animals. Most often I have used the standard ESP cards with the **square** representing STRENGTH (aka Buffalo), the **circle** representing FAMILY/BRAVERY (aka the Mammoth) and the Star representing CREATIVITY (aka the Horse).

I have done the routine with Universal Monster Cards with Frankenstein's monster representing Strength, the Wolf Man representing Bravery and Dracula representing Drive and/or Focus.

It's also been done with book covers, Route 66 Postcards and movie titles (liberated from Director's Cut.) You get the idea, right?

As you get more comfortable with the effect, add more options to the list. It's going to be much easier than you think it will be.

The attributes can change (although I strongly suggest that you keep them both POSITIVE and UNIQUE) ...the props can change...the system never does.



A Particular People

by David Thiel

About What's on The Next Page...

As "one in three" effects go...this is a solid performer. But it's designed to be a working workshop in:

- 1) Storytelling
- 2) Presentation
- 3) Reading body language and facial cues
- 4) Using words wisely
- 5) Learning the nuances of Equivoque⁴

But you can ALSO take it much further. You can use this design as an exercise in how to get started in doing what I consider the holy grail of mentalism: cold readings.

The next pages detail some ideas about where you can go with this effect...how you can take a 1 in 3 routine and create a literal miracle – a session loaded with "How did the mentalist know that?" moments.

There are many excellent books on cold reading available to the performer. You'll see some of them listed on the last pages. Study them and incorporate the things they teach into your performance. You and your audiences will be much richer for it.

⁴ This is the souped-up version of what is commonly called "The Magician's Choice" where the spectator only has the illusion of free choice. The performer eliminates options one at a time depending on what the spectator says and does. It's very powerful.



A Particular People

by David Thiel

How to Turn this into a Cold Read...

...About Your Relationship with Your Volunteer

The mistake some mentalists make in their interactions with volunteers is that there is an adversarial relationship created. This is particularly common when a male performer is working with a male volunteer. If you present this as a "competition" you have created a much more difficult effect to perform.

Think of your volunteer as someone who is your PARTNER in the effect. Treat them as partners...not mentalism meat. You're not trying to "get" them or rip the thought out of their mind. You are creating a cooperative relationship.

I will nearly always choose a female for my volunteer for this effect. There is significantly less likelihood that she will see me as an adversary. Females, as a group, are far more open to being the center of attention. Finally they are also, as a rule of thumb, much more expressive than men.

I will also aim for a woman who is smiling, making solid eye contact...one who is open.

Remember your audience sees the effect primarily through the reactions of your volunteer.

...About the Technique

As I have said: the vast majority of the time you WILL get it right on the first guess. It's almost a 'given' if you have:

- Chosen a volunteer that **subtly** fits into one of the three categories
- Watched them for 'tells.'
- Applied reasonable probability

On the occasions where you have been "off" or worse, the volunteer is being dishonest...essentially the technique is "Equivoque In Reverse." Their reactions dictate what you do and most importantly: you **NEVER EVER say where you're going with the card you've selected until your spectator gives you their response. Give NO indication at all...**

The beauty of this idea is that, given that you don't go with an impression pad or peek technique, that you truly HAVE read the mind of the volunteer. Nothing was written down. Nothing was said out loud.

It is a miracle.



A Particular People

by David Thiel

"I'm Getting Some Impressions..."

You may choose to end your presentation with the reveal of the personality type of your volunteer. But you are missing an opportunity to carry the effect to an even higher place.

I don't know you or where you are in your journey...or how comfortable you are with taking a stroll out on a tree limb. But the thing that happens after the reveal can be both very simple and pee-their-pants effective.

Performers talk about "Cold Reading" with varying degrees of anxiety. Essentially a "Cold Read" is what happens when you try to come up with things about a person that you genuinely do not know.

Consider where you are at the conclusion of this effect.

You already know how they see themselves...and what they believe is the most important part of who they are in the inside.

Continuing on from here is NOT a 'cold read.' It's not even a 'warm read' – which is the term applied to times when you know a little something about your subject ahead of time.

This is a "hot read" – because the hard work is already done. You KNOW what the volunteer is about.

Try speaking the line "I am getting some impressions. Can I share them with you?"

In preparing for this routine, sit with a pen and paper and write words that fit with each of the attributes you have just presented in the effect. For example: HORSE...a creature of creativity. This is most often going to be a person who has spent a lot of time thinking. They have a very specific way of communicating.⁵ They also have a very specific and unique way of sharing their impressions.

Wonderful books have been written about how to do Cold Reading. (My favorites follow this section.) It's not my intent to turn this effect into a book.

Ultimately the way to learn Cold Reading is to grab yourself by the you-know-whats and start performing it. So, I'll give you some pointers to get you started.

Let me tell you about a very powerful technique I have used for years. While it may be called by other names, I have always internally called it 'circling.'

⁵ As you do the reading, there's nothing wrong with taking their hand in yours. People kind of expect you to do this. As you do so, gently touch the tips of their fingers. Are there callouses? This means that your subject plays a stringed instrument. THINK of the many ways you can circle around revealing this.



A Particular People

by David Thiel

On the off chance that you are not a footnote reader, please take a second to read the small print after the little number at the bottom of the previous page. That's where you will find the basis of the example we're using.

It's okay. I'll wait here.

SO...we have discerned that our subject is a probably a musician...likely a guitar player.

We know this to be a very probable fact about our subject. Not only was she a "Horse person" but she has callouses. And she has no idea that you know what you know.

The "Circling" technique is not about pretending to get a revelation and blurting out "Gee...I have this sense that you play the guitar."

Circling goes like this: "I have an idea that the things you hear are important to you. Sound...harmonies. You speak their language. Does that make sense?"

They will agree...most likely.

"I have this image of you...a much younger you...sitting and listening...attentively. I have the idea that you felt a powerful connection to the things you are hearing. Is that accurate?"

Take a second look at that sentence. You've actually said nothing new. It's essentially a restatement of the first thing you said...the statement they already agreed with. It SOUNDS like you are being more precise in your "vision" – but there's no new information here. This is also a valuable technique because it gets your subject into the habit of agreeing with you. Readers call this a 'hit.' As you circle around this reveal you will be aiming for as many hits as possible.

Never ever underestimate the power of the pause when doing a 'reading.' Silence...especially when you are trying to get an "impression" is a powerful device.

Depending on how things are going and my sense of the engagement level of the audience I may put my hands out very roughly as though I am holding a guitar. This needs to be done slowly...as though you start off with no idea of what you're doing. Your hands are doing what your brain is dictating, even though you don't understand it.

I always think of a figure walking toward me in thick fog. At first I can't make it out...as it gets closer I have a sense of how tall they are. Closer still and I can get an idea of whether they are a man or a woman. It's *gradual*. Rushing to the reveal runs the risk of turning what you are doing into a magic trick instead of an exhibition of mind reading.

It's important for you to have your own internal dialogue about this. Answer the question: How does this process work for the mind reader you are portraying? Some see a series of impressions that get more and more precise as they work like in the example I outlined above.



A Particular People

by David Thiel

Others will talk about minds being on different frequencies...like radio stations. This explains why it's easier to read some people and more difficult to read others. Think in terms of one radio station that comes in with crystal clarity and another one that so far off the station that all you can hear is a fuzzy drumbeat.

REALLY think about the PROCESS by which you are forming your impressions and when you are performing? Believe it. Act it. Consistently.

The critical thing for doing 'circling' properly is to allow it to be a gradual process...one where you discover what the vision is all about at roughly the same time your audience does. It is a journey you are all on together.

The key? Watch...**study** the person you are working with. Does their belt show a mark to indicate they have had to take it in recently? No one loses weight by accident. This is either a case of a person who has been working out, dieting...whatever...and doing so has been a focus of their lives. They're going to be glad to talk about it and have it recognized. (It is also possible, although unlikely, that they've been sick.)

Are they wearing religious jewellery? Odd jewellery? Interesting rings? Bracelets?

Look at the way they are dressed. The way we dress speaks volumes about who we are...or the way we want to project who we are to the world. One person carefully considers every aspect of what they are wearing so it all coordinates. Another is dressed in rumpled clothing with stains on it. In both cases – and everything in between – there is valuable information being imparted by the subject.

Consider also things that don't fit. What if you have someone who looks like they picked their clothes out of a donation bin at a thrift store...and yet they identified with the Buffalo? Or another person who could be on the cover of a Brooks Brothers catalogue who has declared themselves for the Horse?

Don't think that you can't work – even gently – with the notion that they are being pulled in two directions at once OR that they are completely comfortable with who they are on the inside and have no need to groom themselves for the thoughts of others.

A fat person thinks a great deal about being fat. It is in their minds every time they get out of a chair, each time they have to gird themselves to pick up something they have dropped on the floor. They see judgement in the eyes of people around them all day. Ask yourself how you would feel if YOU were the fat person. What kinds of things would you feel?

Do they meet your eyes directly...or do they have a hard time doing so? Confident people (or those who want to project an air of confidence) make a point of looking you in the eye. Others find it very uncomfortable. How does this reflect who they are – what they may be feeling – on the inside?

Is their body language open? Or do they sit/stand with their arms crossed? A person with closed body language is most likely not comfortable with what's going on.



A Particular People

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One of the key techniques I have found in doing cold readings is to try very hard to put myself into the mind of the person I am working with. *What is it LIKE to see the world through their eyes?*

The remarkable thing about readings is how quickly the subject will open up to you after just a few 'hits.' We all want to be SEEN and HEARD. We want to be noticed. We want to be important enough to be the object of someone's positive scrutiny. You may have started with someone who is uncomfortable with the process in the beginning, but within moments you will find a volunteer who is actively helping you to SEE and read them.

That's why it's important as soon as possible for you to quit researching about cold reading and get out and do it. You will learn not to blurt out absolute statements, but instead to circle carefully around them, watching your subject and their reactions for "yes" or "no" reactions.

All readings are very much like gently pulling back layer after layer.

There are many ways to "circle" around any piece of information that you KNOW about your subject. Practice them and you'll elevate your performance into the stratosphere.

Will you be wrong occasionally? Absolutely. Is it okay for your subject to be aware that you just notched a 'miss' instead of a 'hit?' Yup. Think always about what it would be like to be doing readings for real. To my mind, it is reasonable that you would draw wrong information occasionally. Some performers – myself included – believe that an occasional miss actually enhances your credibility. Why? Because if it were a magic trick or a manipulation it would be perfect all the time.

So let me suggest that you read this manuscript over carefully. Pick up a few of the books on the pages that follow and go out and start learning cold reading by performing it.

Again: as you grow in confidence make a point of adding more options to this effect so that it's no longer a one in three proposition...but now becomes a one in five or a one in eight divination.

Finally: keep in mind that doing a reading at this point is MUCH easier than going into the effect "cold." Relax. Enjoy. Learn from the process.

Adding an ability to do Cold Reading will revolutionize the way you perform mentalism.



A Particular People

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Try It...You'll Like It

The most interesting effects to me are ones of the "utility" variety...where a method, prop or technique is introduced but it has a number of different applications.

This is one of those effects. You can take it anywhere you want to.

It can become anything you want it to be.

More importantly: You can incorporate the Cold Reading techniques you learn from this exercise into ANY of the other effects you do. Consider 'circling' around the reveal of a name in a Center Tear...or using the same technique prior to completing a Drawing Duplication effect. The applications of the ways this technique can be applied by mentalists are literally staggering.

But it's not something where the words 'easy to do' will be stamped across the box.

Successfully applying the technique requires acting, re-acting and absolute conviction. In order to get it down, you need to practice. If you're using the 'slightly riskier' method you need to understand that people are complex...occasionally unpredictable creatures and there IS the possibility that you will be sweating before you're done.

But it is your show.

They will only know you were sweating it if you tell them.

In cold reading absolutes are rare. The things we say are the result of the informed application of many different factors that come together to create your 'best guess.' That is why Cold Reading scares so many performers. Let me suggest you step outside the box and see what happens.

I hope you enjoy this effect at least half as much as I have enjoyed bringing it to you.

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March 22, 2017



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Additional Resources

There are many fine books available on Cold Reading. I have read many of them...and the things they teach will open your eyes to a whole new world...where the words and choose really matter, as does the way you say them.

You will learn to be an avid student of people watching their body language and their facial cues for information on what they are really feeling and thinking.

The resources below are the finest I have read⁶.

The Full Facts Book of Cold Reading by Ian Rowland

There is no finer resource on the planet than this outstanding book. All of the work of cold reading, all of the techniques dating from the earliest practitioners to today's performers. This is the [text book](#) on Cold Reading.

Cold Reading: The Osterlind Approach by Richard Osterlind

Osterlind's book is a wonderful overview of the many facets of cold reading and is ideal for the mentalist who is just starting to learn it. He takes a no-frills-no-filler approach. In these information filled pages you will learn the basics and some of the more advanced techniques as well. You can find his book [here](#).

The Ultimate Guide to Cold Reading by B. Thomas

This is easily the most cold blooded go-for-the-throat book on the topic I've read anywhere. It's an eBook written under a pseudonym by a performer with many thousands of cold reads under his belt. It will teach you the basics and more. It's available [here](#).

The Real Work of Cold Reading by Bob Cassidy

The late great mentalism master wanted to correct some of the misinformation about cold reading and in [this book](#) there is nugget after nugget of powerful and usable information. If you can find a copy, also consider Cassidy's *Scorpio's Message*.

Dynamite Mentalism by George B. Anderson

So many of the modern masters cite this little book. There's an excellent reason for that: it's very good at teaching the *sense* of what to look for...what to think about...when you're doing a Cold Read. You can find it [here](#).

⁶ On the off chance you are the suspicious type, I want to tell you that, other than the last book in this section, I have no financial interest in recommending a resource or a prop. These really are my honest recommendations.



A Particular People

by David Thiel

Psychometry from A to Z by Richard Webster

Speaking of books that crop up again and again as the people actually DOING cold reading share their influences...this is very likely at the top of many lists. Webster has created a brilliant yet simple to use system you can apply to ANY reading situation...from the things you do on stage to the things you say when doing personal "readings" for strangers. You will never be stuck for 'something to say' once you have armed your mind with what this little book can teach you. It is [here](#).

Heads I Win, Tails You Lose by Jheff

Bob Cassidy called this "The closest thing to real mentalism." If you have been intrigued by the many possibilities posed by the classic Magician's Choice – what mentalists call 'Equivoque' – look [this](#) modern classic up. Jheff explores this classic method and many of the nuances of using this powerful method.

E'Voque by Docc Hilford

Hands down, [this](#) is one of the finest books ever on 'Equivoque.' It is the basis for an effect I do in every single stage show. Here Docc advances some outstanding ideas on how to use language to make a powerful method utterly seamless.

Naked Mentalism by Jon Thompson

Jon set out to create a book of mentalism that (in theory) could be performed naked. (Admittedly this is a better idea for some than others.) What he wound up creating was a treasure trove of technique and information for cold readers. Want to know what gemstone people will think of most often? How about what beverage they will most likely be thinking of? List after list is in this book and it's something I refer to often. Naked Mentalism is [here](#).

Nightmare Alley by William Lindsay Gresham

This is a book of fiction about the rise and fall of one of fictions most tragic characters as he claws his way up from working in a "mitt joint" on the carnival circuit to become one of the most successful mentalists of his time. It's a great book. Bob Cassidy told me he read it once a year. But it's more than a great book: it's a course in applied cold reading. And warm reading too. It is available everywhere...and even in audio formats.

Windows Into The Soul: Unlocking the Secrets of Body Language for Mentalists by David Thiel

It's my book. But I wrote it because there is no book in body language intended specifically for mentalists. This book details what to look for, the visual signs...how to read microexpressions and much more. It is available [here](#).

