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# The Solid Form Of Language: An Essay On Writing And Meaning

*Robert Bringhurst*

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**The Solid Form Of Language: An Essay On Writing And Meaning** Robert Bringhurst

"Drop a word in the ocean of meaning and concentric ripples form. To define a single word means to try to catch those ripples. No one's hands are fast enough." With this concise and broadly informative essay, renowned poet, typographer and linguist Robert Bringhurst presents a brief history of writing and a new way of classifying and understanding the relationship between script and meaning.

Beginning with the original relationship between a language and its written script, Bringhurst takes us on a history of reading and writing that begins with the interpretation of animal tracks and fast-forwards up to the typographical abundance of more recent times. The first four sections of the essay describe the earliest creation of scripts, their movement across the globe and the typographic developments within and across languages.

In the fifth and final section of the essay, Bringhurst introduces his system of classifying scripts. Placing four established categories of written language – semographic, syllabic, alphabetic and prosodic – on a wheel adjacent to one another, he uses the location, size and shape of points on the wheel to show the degree to which individual world languages incorporate these aspects of recorded meaning. Bringhurst's system is based on an appreciation that indeed no one's hands are fast enough and that no single script adheres to or can be understood within the confines of a single method of transcription.

Readers will find this combination of anthropology, typography, literature, mathematics, music and linguistics surprisingly accessible and thought provoking. The text is accompanied by diagrams and typographic examples that make for an experiential study of the relationship between writing and meaning.

This book is a Smyth-sewn paperback with a letterpress printed jacket. The book was designed by Robert Bringhurst and Andrew Steeves, and printed on Zephyr Laid paper. The cover was hand-printed letterpress on St. Armand handmade paper.

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