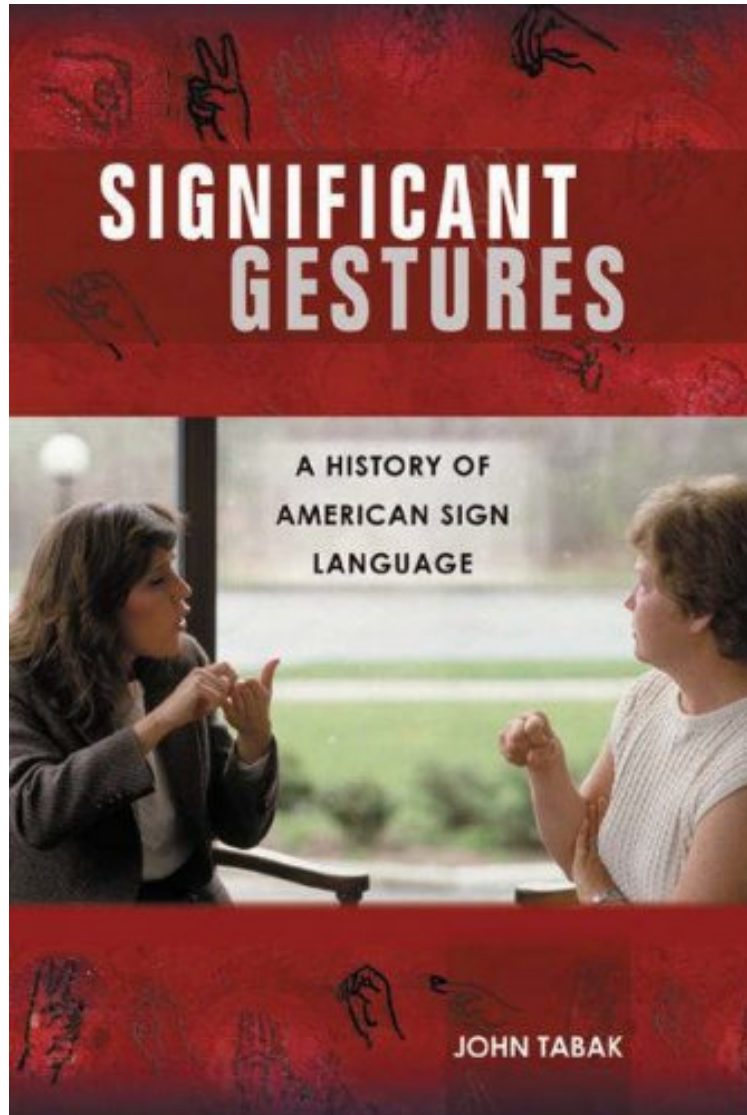


Significant Gestures: A History of American Sign Language

John Tabak

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#3162033 in Books John Tabak 2006-09-30Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.21 x .56 x 6.141, 1.14 #File Name: 0275989747240 pagesSignificant Gestures A History of American Sign Language | File size: 26.Mb

John Tabak : Significant Gestures: A History of American Sign Language before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Significant Gestures: A History of American Sign Language:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Brimming with forgotten historical tidbits fascinating insights about ASL, this book is a treat for any serious student of ASLBy Kathleen MacMillanThis fascinating book stands out for the unique way it approaches its subject. Though Tabak demonstrates a nuanced understanding of American Deaf Culture, his book focuses rather on the history of American Sign Language itself, informed by insights from the fields

of education, linguistics, and culture. A passionate supporter of ASL, Tabak examines the writings of Thomas H. Gallaudet and Laurent Clerc and finds evidence of a radical early understanding of the enormous importance of the natural language of signs, as it was then known an understanding that was lost during the dominance of oral education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Linguist William Stokoe's central tenet of his 1960 paper that ASL is an actual language, like any other - would not have been surprising to Gallaudet and Clerc. Tabak also examines the effects of segregation on African American Deaf children educated in the South, where lack of exposure to oralism (through a sort of benign neglect) led to a type of signing more like what Gallaudet and Clerc might have used than that of their white contemporaries. Tabak also examines the history of ASL as it pertains to Deaf-Blind individuals, and the linguistic accommodations that have evolved over time. Lastly, he examines modern trends impacting ASL, such as mainstreaming and cochlear implants. (This review originally appeared in the "Interpreters Resource Shelf" column in RID VIEWS July, 2007.)

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Comprehensive and Engaging History By William J. Romanos This book is excellent. It is very comprehensive and a fun read. I recommend it to anyone interested in language, sign language or history in general.

Tabak has created a fascinating exploration of a unique and uniquely beautiful North American language. The story begins in 18th century France in the first schools to use signed language as the language of instruction. Early in the 19th century a few individuals introduced a variant of this language into the United States and developed an educational system in which to use it. Out of these schools come members of a new American social class, the Deaf with a capital D who, united by a common signed language, create institutions through which they can participate in society on terms equal to those of other constituent groups. This strategy proved extremely controversial among all but the Deaf. The controversy lasted a century, during which time American Sign Language evolved along racial lines and in response to the pressures of those who sought to eliminate the use of American Sign Language. Today, new ideas in art, science, and education have supplanted much of the old opposition to American Sign Language and Deaf culture. New legislation and new technologies have also had profound effects on the lives of American Deaf. As a consequence, American Sign Language is evolving faster than ever before.

"For some time it seemed to be the beginning of a culture, a start on a language, but it was not until those who lived the culture and used the language gained recognition as self-reliant that both the Deaf culture and American Sign Language (ASL) were acknowledged as valid. Tabak, who has a personal and professional interest in ASL, describes the remarkable French cleric who taught an early form of sign language, then traces the forces of opposition, many of which insisted on oral speech rather than signing, and describes the growth of ASL into a recognized language. He also shows the side roads, including forays into race, and how modern concepts of modality started to work for ASL. He details the path of the deaf and blind within ASL and explains technologies that are (and are not) gaining ground in the Deaf and ASL communities." - Reference Research Book News

About the Author John Tabak is a professional writer.