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Witness for the Defense: The Accused, the Eyewitness and the Expert Who Puts Memory on Trial

By Elizabeth Loftus, Katherine Ketcham



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"The study of memory had become my specialty, my passion. In the next few years I wrote dozens of papers about how memory works and how it fails, but unlike most researchers studying memory, my work kept reaching out into the real world. To what extent, I wondered, could a person's memory be shaped by suggestion? When people witness a serious automobile accident, how accurate is their recollection of the facts? If a witness is questioned by a police officer, will the manner of questioning alter the representation of the memory? Can memories be supplemented with additional, false information?"

The "passion" Loftus describes in the lines above led her to a teaching career at the University of Washington and, perhaps more importantly, into hundreds of courtrooms as an expert witness on the fallibility of eyewitness accounts. As she has explained in numerous trials, and as she convincingly argues in this absorbing book, eyewitness accounts can be and often are so distorted that they no longer resemble the truth.



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Editorial Review

Review

"*Witness for the Defense* is an important book." ?*The New York Times*

"An intriguing and disturbing work in which forensic psychologist Loftus, a specialist on memory, examines the fallibility of eyewitness testimony in criminal cases . . . A fascinating examination of human memory, with troubling implications for the American criminal-justice system." ?*Kirkus Reviews*

"Highly recommended for the general public and scholars interested in whether justice is served in the criminal justice system." ?*Library Journal*

From the Back Cover

Witness for the Defense is a collection of true stories based on Dr. Elizabeth Loftus's personal experiences as an expert witness. It is our goal to use these real-life courtroom dramas as a vehicle for conveying information about psychology in general and memory in particular.

About the Author

Elizabeth Loftus is a professor of psychology and adjunct professor of law at the University of Washington in Seattle. For more than 20 years, she has conducted extensive research in the areas of human memory, eyewitness testimony and courtroom procedure. Loftus has served as an expert witness and consultant in hundreds of cases, including the McMartin PreSchool Molestation case, the Hillside Strangler case, the Michael Jackson case, the trial of Oliver North, and the trial of the Menendez brothers and has also worked on numerous cases involving allegations of "repressed memories." She has published over 250 journal articles and 18 books, including *Eyewitness Testimony*, which won the American Psychological Association's National Media Award in 1980, and most recently, *The Myth of Repressed Memory*. In 1983, she was invited to present her work to the Royal Society of London. Loftus has served as president of the Western Psychological Association in 1984 and has fulfilled leadership roles in numerous other organizations such as the American Psychological Association, Society of Experimental Psychologists, American Psychological Society, and Psychonomic Society.

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