



Read the Face

Face Reading for Success in Your Career, Relationships, and Health

By Eric Standop with Elisa Petrini

15-minute read

Synopsis

Read the Face (2021) is a beginner's guide to the millennia-old art and science of physiognomy, or face reading. It provides a brief history of the practice, outlines techniques and methods, and includes insightful case studies.

Who is it for?

- Anyone curious about physiognomy
- People eager to understand themselves and others better
- Couples interested in finding out about love compatibility

About the author

Eric Standop left his high-powered job 15 years ago when an encounter with a face reader in Cape Town challenged what he thought could be gleaned from the visage of another person. He set off on a journey around the globe to learn about face reading and its diagnostic techniques. Today, he's a speaker, advisor, and face-reading expert. He's also the founder of the Face Reading Academy.

What's in it for me? Learn the basics of face reading.

We read faces from the moment we're born; it's a skill that's essential to our survival. Within hours, we can identify our mothers. After a few months, we can often recognize someone's gender and emotions.

The author Eric Standop first encountered face reading on a beach in South Africa. The experience transformed him from skeptic to believer and led him to travel the world to understand this ancient art. He studied under masters in Denmark, Colombia, and Hong Kong and holds the title of *sifu*, which is an accomplished Chinese master reader.

These blinks give you a window into how face reading can help you find clarity in your career, relationships, and health.

In these blinks, you'll learn

- how Aristotle's ideas about physiognomy spread;
- what the four most common face shapes can tell you; and
- what your face says about your purpose, health, and love life.

Face reading has fallen in and out of favor across the millennia.

Face reading has existed for millennia across continents, cultures, and religions. It's been identified in the ancient hieroglyphics of Egypt and carvings of South America. And in Europe, it traces back to the fifth century BC.

Physiognomonics – often attributed to the Greek philosopher Aristotle – is the oldest surviving book on the practice. It features ideas from Aristotle's earlier work, *History of Animals*, which postulates a connection between personality traits and physical features. Thanks to Alexander the Great, these ideas spread across the Middle East and India with every conquest.

The key message here is: Face reading has fallen in and out of favor across the millennia.

In medieval Europe, face reading became associated with fortune-telling and fell from grace. During the Renaissance, Leonardo da Vinci rejected it as being “without scientific foundation.”

But, thankfully, the seventeenth-century English physician Sir Thomas Browne revived the practice in his works *Magia Naturalis* and *De Humana Physiognomia*. During the eighteenth century, Swiss theologian Johann Kaspar Lavater expanded on Browne's ideas. He produced a four-volume encyclopedia titled *Physiognomische*

Fragmente, which included input from contemporaries like Goethe.

In the nineteenth century, Charles Darwin theorized that humans and animals share universal facial expressions – like raised eyebrows to demarcate surprise. He also concluded that all humans share the same core expressions, including anger, fear, and disgust. These findings were published in his third work on evolution, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the Italian Cesare Lombroso was incorporating classical principles and Darwin's theories into his new field of science: criminology. Among his other dubious claims, he considered left-handedness to be a sure sign of villainy.

In the early twentieth century, new medical technologies gained popularity in the West, and physiognomy once more fell out of favor. But in Asia, it has remained a recognized discipline for thousands of years.

In fact, face reading can be traced back to the Chinese philosopher – and Confucius contemporary – Lao Tzu. Briefly banned during China's Cultural Revolution in the '60s and '70s, face reading has since been revived. Today, the Chinese practice of face reading is the holy grail for many face readers, including the author.

There are many face-reading methods, but the same basic principles always apply.

In his own practice, the author combines Chinese face reading methods, or *Mien Shiang*, with European and South American methods. But, regardless of the method, he always adheres to a few guiding principles.

First, face reading isn't fortune-telling. Although skilled readers can interpret the past, they only leverage it to understand the here and now.

Second, nothing should be considered “good” or “bad.” Everyone just has helpful or not-so-helpful traits influenced by their experiences.

Third, each side of the face represents two worlds. The right side – connected to the left brain – reflects consciousness, logic, and material objects. The left side, conversely, reflects the subconscious, dreams, and creativity.

Fourth, the eyes and mouth provide the most information. These features are highly dynamic and flexible because they have a direct link to the brain.

The key message here is: There are many face-reading methods, but the same basic principles always apply.

In some Chinese face reading methods, like the *Three Zones Method*, the face is divided into distinct zones that each indicate a different personality trait. In

the *Eight Regions Method*, regions above the mouth relate to life, ambition, career, prosperity, friendship, parents, health, power, and love. A further system – the *Palaces of Luck Method* – divides the face into 12 areas, or *palaces*; each corresponds to the houses of the Chinese zodiac. The palaces' locations and meanings depend on where the face reader studied.

The *Narrative Method* uses facial features as metaphors and connects them to tell a story. The chin, for example, may be referred to as the *South Mountain* and the forehead as the *North Mountain*. Other features provide a landscape of rivers that connect them.

Another reading system, the *Five Elements Method*, incorporates wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. These important elements of Chinese culture not only help organize the world, but also provide a way to understand it. Everything in life, whether mental, physical, or spiritual, is organized according to one of the elements. For example, personality traits such as passion and intensity are associated with fire, while idealism is associated with wood, honesty with earth, resourcefulness with water, and intuition with metal.

But the method the author draws on most is the *Face Shapes Method*, which we'll delve into in the next blink.

Every face shape has its own strengths and weaknesses.

Faces come in all shapes and sizes. Thousands of years ago, ten basic face shapes were observed and categorized. But, over the centuries, big shifts throughout history have changed the human character – and face.

In fact, the author estimates that roughly 30 percent of people still have a so-called “pure” face shape, 45 percent have two combined shapes, 15 percent have three, and 5 to 10 percent have four or more shapes.

There isn't any one face shape that's “better” or “worse” than the others – each possesses its own set of strengths and weaknesses.

The key message here is: Every face shape has its own strengths and weaknesses.

Although there are ten basic face shapes, four are particularly common.

Take the Jade Face, for example, with a wide forehead, rounded chin, full lips, delicate nose, and seductive gaze. These people have charismatic personalities. They generally keep a positive outlook and are good at making friends – as long as they don't feel minimized.

The King Face, on the other hand, is angular with a prominent chin, cheekbones, and forehead. People with this face type often have small eyes and a full lower lip. Typically, they are leaders who protect any person or

animal in their care. In general, they don't make good followers – but they can do well in business if they're following a “higher king.”

Then there's the Fire Face with a wide forehead and pointed chin. These passionate people want to love and be loved. They also have high self-expectations – mixed with a considerable dose of self-doubt.

Those with Tree Faces usually have a long, wide face and a U-shaped line from the corners of the mouth to the chin. They're reliable, independent, and love being surrounded by people. Unfortunately, they often have difficulty establishing emotional connections.

People with a combination of two face shapes can have a mixture of the characteristics associated with each. Those with three face shapes can be confused about who they are. At times, they may feel misunderstood – but they can also easily adapt to different situations. Those with four or more shapes are known as Masters of Masks. Although they're receptive to just about anyone, they generally have difficulty recognizing their true selves.

The basic shape of the face only tells part of the story, though. In the next blink, we'll look at how to interpret features like the eyes and mouth.

Your eyes and mouth reveal a lot about you.

Our eyes are the proverbial windows to our soul. We use them to communicate – and it's usually the eyes that first attract us to another person. Anatomically, the eyes have a direct connection to the brain via the optic nerves, so it's no wonder that face readers can glean so much from the eyes alone.

Take the sclera – the white part of the eye. If the sclera is visible below the iris, it could mean exhaustion or an overactive imagination. When it's visible above the iris, it's a sign of negative emotions, anger, or fear. And when the sclera is visible both above and below the iris, it could suggest hyperactivity or hypersensitivity.

The key message here is: Your eyes and mouth reveal a lot about you.

The pupils provide several avenues for information. For example, large pupils often indicate a sympathetic and open person, while small pupils indicate a worrier who has a hard time relaxing. Pupils that are two different sizes suggest severe pain; the larger pupil is on the painful side of the body.

Face readers also pay attention to the properties around the eyes. A narrow distance between the eyes stands for someone who's focused; protruding eyes could be a sign of a thyroid disorder; and deep-set eyes are usually associated with those reluctant to show their true emotions.

Another facial feature directly connected to the brain is the mouth. It's used for what the author calls "the three C's: creativity, communication, and kissing." Face readers inspect the mouth's size, proportions, lip shape, and corners.

A large mouth indicates that someone is an extrovert; conversely, a small mouth suggests an introvert. Full lips are often a sign of someone who is open about feelings and experiences – and who expects the same in return. People with thin lips are more private, revealing very little about themselves. And downturned mouth corners denote a gloomy or pessimistic nature, while upturned corners suggest a more cheerful, carefree attitude.

But features on the *face* aren't the only things face readers pay attention to. They also look at what they consider to be the "second face" – the hands.

Your hands – or "second face" – provide insight into your personality.

Did you know that each hand contains 27 bones and 33 muscles? This composition makes them very expressive and sensitive. Face readers don't read palms like fortune-tellers do – but they *do* use the hand's shape and movement to glean a lot about personality.

Originating in India, *chirology* – that is, the study of hands – was temporarily banned by the Catholic church because it was seen as a pagan practice. Apart from that brief period, though, it has been considered a serious science.

The key message here is: Your hands – or "second face" – provide insight into your personality.

There are four recognized basic hand shapes: Earth, Air, Fire, and Water. This system was devised by Empedocles, a Greek philosopher; although similar in concept, it's not related to the Chinese elements mentioned earlier.

Earth hands are wide and square. Lines are well-defined. The fingers are thick and as long as the palm or shorter. People with Earth hands are generally hard workers, well organized, and determined.

Air hands also have a square palm, but they often have deep lines and fingers that are long and thin. This hand shape indicates a dynamic and vibrant person who can easily become bored. Such people are usually more logical than emotional.

Fire hands are rectangular with tangled lines and short fingers. Warm-hearted extroverts, those with fire hands are often passionate, popular, tolerant, and honest.

Water hands exhibit oval palms with orderly lines and long fingers that are rounded or curved. People with water hands are music, art, and nature lovers who are

sensitive and curious. They can also be susceptible to mood swings.

A celebrity dentist who was experiencing a lot of stress once consulted the author in Bangkok. A scan of his face revealed that he had neither a talent for working with his hands, nor a gift for healing. He had a Moon Face – round and full, this face type is often associated with entertainers. His hands were Air hands – typical of people interested in knowledge rather than people.

To boost the dentist's mood and counter his boredom and stress, the author advised him to take up an activity involving mathematics – perhaps an investment club. In the next blink, we'll dive deeper into what your face can say about your life purpose.

Your face can indicate your life purpose and innate talents.

The author believes that everyone is on Earth to fulfill a life purpose. And your face's shape and features can hint at what your personality is most suited for. Perhaps you need a structured environment to thrive, or you just need clear goals to vanquish life's challenges.

Using face reading to determine someone's life purpose is challenging. It requires pinpointing abstract components of a personality, determining how to use innate gifts, and taking into account obstructions that could get in the way. In short, it entails seeing how to maximize a person's potential.

Along with a life purpose, we also have *talents* that can guide us in the pursuit of pleasure and accomplishment. People who succeed at using their talents to fulfill their life purpose are often the happiest.

The key message here is: Your face can indicate your life purpose and innate talents.

What's an example of a talent? Well, effective communication is one – which is represented in wide, full-lipped mouths. People with this talent are often good at inspiring others. They might also thrive in careers like journalism or public relations, where a knack for words can go a long way.

A grid of lines on the forehead suggests a talent for numbers. But that doesn't necessarily translate into mathematical genius; it can also include methodical or structured tendencies.

To illustrate the impact of a life-purpose reading, let's turn to one of the author's sessions with a successful French butcher. This 60-something-year-old was severely depressed despite having a wife he adored, a beautiful home, and two sons who were part of his business.

The butcher had Earth hands – those of a craftsman – and he used his gift of working with his hands in his profession. His face showed signs of a creative person,

which explained how he'd concocted his famous sausage recipe.

But his eyes revealed a problem. His long eyelashes, large eyes, and big pupils signified compassion and imagination. Although he was a butcher, he'd never gotten comfortable killing animals. But this was only causing part of his depression. His gourmet sausages, delicious as they were, merely gave him a passing pleasure; they were gone once eaten. He needed an outlet to create something both beautiful and enduring.

Later, while vacationing in Sicily, the butcher tried the potter's wheel in a ceramics shop. He instinctively knew what to do. Within a year, he'd handed his business to his sons and opened a pottery studio. He'd finally found something to make his heart sing.

Diagnostic face-reading techniques take years of study and practice to master.

Face reading has been used to diagnose illnesses throughout the centuries. In the West, it started with Hippocrates. Known as the "Father of Medicine," he was the first in his field to treat illnesses as biological ailments instead of spiritual influences.

Meanwhile, the Ayurvedic practice of face mapping has been used in India for 5,000 years – and in China, face reading forms a pillar of traditional Chinese medicine.

In any case, the author advises against self-diagnosis; instead, find a qualified health professional who specializes in both conventional and alternative medicine. After all, mastering diagnostic face reading is extremely complex. It takes years of practice to be able to correctly interpret the face's nuanced features.

The key message here is: Diagnostic face-reading techniques take years of study and practice to master.

The face can tell a remarkable story about someone's physical and mental health. For example, when the author studied under his first master in Germany, he learned that his green eyes were actually blue; they just appeared green because he had too much acid in his body. After cutting out coffee, alcohol, sugar, and fried foods – and incorporating routine detoxes – his eyes now shine blue.

While studying under the same master, the author encountered a skeptic at a health fair. The man's chin was covered in blood vessels, and he had a red, horizontal wrinkle between his chin and lower lip. All of this indicated inflammation of the lower part of the body, particularly the colon. The skeptic challenged the author to diagnose what was ailing him. In the face of a laughing crowd, the author had to announce that the man had bleeding hemorrhoids – which turned out to be correct.

And here's a final example. A 30-something Dutch woman was experiencing backaches, which had gone undiagnosed despite extensive medical screening. But the author found the classic signs of back pain on her face – lines across the bridge of the nose. He also noticed a horizontal line between her upper lip and nose, accompanied by drooping jowls and a pale, ashy complexion. He was certain that she had a calcium deficiency and, possibly, early onset osteoporosis. A bone density test confirmed the diagnosis, and the young woman recovered her mobility with the right treatment and exercise.

But the face doesn't just reveal health clues that modern technology may miss. In the final blink, we'll explore what it can say about love.

The way you interact with your partner reveals a lot about your relationship.

Think about your first love – was it their chin, ear size, or forehead wrinkle that stole your heart? Probably not! Those features may mean something to a face reader, but for you, it was probably the eyes and lips that sealed the deal – even if only on a subconscious level.

Of course, once you get beyond the physical aspects, finding the right partner requires compatibility in character. In other words, it's important to understand each other's values and be on the same page.

That's where a joint face reading comes in handy. It provides an opportunity to go beyond a couple's facial features and study the pair's mirrored movements, how they interact with each other, and how affectionate they are.

The key message here is: The way you interact with your partner reveals a lot about your relationship.

The author once worked with a New York couple that consisted of a Dragon-Faced wife and a Tree-Faced husband. The wife's Dragon Face meant she had a strong personality due to a mixture of King, Jade, and Fire qualities. The husband had a typical Tree Face; he was more subdued. Their 20-year relationship was fizzling because they'd lost interest in each other.

After observing their interactions, the author could see that their decision to break up wasn't "heart-driven." They seemed great together. In fact, he didn't believe either would ever find a more perfect fit.

But what about their lack of intimacy? The author could see through their actions that they still had a sensual connection. He assured them that it would be possible to rekindle their desires – it would just take a bit of strategy.

The wife, as a Dragon, was a natural problem solver, while her husband, the Tree, was more inflexible and passive. The fix? She should initiate because he was

simply less likely to come up with new ideas to keep things interesting. However, he *would* respond if she “shook his branches.”

The couple left the appointment hand in hand; the weight had been lifted from their shoulders. By reading the landscape on their faces, the author – like many face readers – helped find healing connections hiding in plain sight.

Final summary

The key message in these blinks is that:

Your face provides clues about your physical and mental health. By using a variety of traditional face-reading methods from around the globe, a face reader can glean useful information to help guide your decisions around career, health, and love.

And here’s some actionable advice:

Think about how you’re perceived by others.

We all read faces every day – which, of course, means that our faces are being read too. We also pick up clues from one another’s body language. Think about the impression you want to make. And now consider how you’re most likely being perceived. To sway other people’s views, you could be more conscious about your style, for example. What do you want your clothes to say about you? What about your hairstyle, your walk, or how you behave around others? All of these elements, and more, affect the way others see you – consciously or otherwise.