

SETTING THE STAGE.....

Many cognitive psychologists regard memory as one of the most basic cognitive processes. We rely on memory whenever we think back to a personal event—when we remember, for example, our first day of school, our 10th birthday, or a trip to Disneyland. Memory is also obviously involved when we remember information about historical events such as the 9/11 attacks and the mass shootings of young schoolchildren and teachers in Newtown, Connecticut. All these cases illustrate **retrieval**, the calling to mind of previously stored information. The processes by which we do so are the focus of this chapter and the next two chapters.

In one way or another, memory enters into almost every cognitive activity. Clearly, activities such as taking an exam and remembering the name of your third-grade teacher require memory. But other activities, such as balancing a checkbook and comprehending a sentence, also involve some aspect of memory. While doing the calculations necessary to balance a checkbook, we need to keep some numbers in mind at least for a moment. Similarly, when we hear or read a sentence, we need to keep the beginning of the sentence in mind while we process its middle and end. We use memory so frequently that, as with other cognitive processes, we tend to take it for granted.