

Ancient Cultures

Dreams as . . . "Boredom Busters"

People in ancient civilizations were fascinated by dreams. A Hittite text describes the dreams of the King Hattushili and his wife. This text dates back to the 12th Century B.C.!

Sumerians

Dreams as . . . "A Case for Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street"

(2,200 B.C.)

So too, the ancient Sumerians, who once lived in present-day Iraq, kept careful records of dream reports. The typical dream report contained details such as the following:

Information about the dreamer
The **circumstances** of the dream
The locality of the dream

The dream content
The **ending** of the dream
The dreamer's **reactions**
The **eventual outcome** of the prediction contained in the dream

The Greeks

Dreams as . . . "Greek Gods Play Doctor"

5th Century B.C. -
2nd Century A.D.

Over a period of seven centuries (from the 5th Century B.C. to the 2nd Century A.D.), the ancient Greeks built about three hundred shrines and temples to help the sick find healing through prayers, sacrifices, and dream messages from the gods. The supplicants slept in the shrines and hoped to awaken with a dream that would indicate the medicine or remedy they should take for their sickness.

Today, you can still visit Epidaurus, in an enchanting pastoral setting near the Aegean Sea. There, you can relive ancient dream history while exploring one of the dream incubation shrines that dates back to the 5th Century B.C.

Aristotle

(384 - 322 B.C.)

Dreams as . . . “If it looks alike, sounds alike, tastes alike, smells alike, or feels alike, then it is, in fact, alike.”

Plato’s student, Aristotle (384 - 322 B.C.), wrote about dreams saying, “The most skillful interpreter of dreams is he who has the faculty of observing resemblances.” These resemblances may involve similar shapes, colors, textures, actions, or the sounds of words.

The term “assonance”, refers to the similarity in the sounds of words, and occurs frequently in dreams (almost twice as often as other types of word play). For example, although a person named “Janice”, might not be dreamed about **directly**, many of the following words that sound like “Janice” might occur in the dream story, with fascinating frequency: Van - Can - Japan - Jam - Fan - Kiss - Miss - Hiss - Candice.

The Hebrews

Dreams as . . . “A Ladder To Heaven”

The Hebrews prayed for spiritual guidance from God, through dreams.

Dene Indians

Dreams as . . . “Yes Virginia, there really is a butterfly dreaming about you.”

The Dene people live throughout Alaska, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories. They believe that dreams are one of the media through which you get in touch with yourself, with the world around you, and also with the invisible world. They believe **all living things dream**, and can enter into the dreams of the caribou, the beaver, or the person.

Dene share the myth that Raven was a great shaman, a great dreamer; everything happened as he wished it. The belief is that the world is created via thoughts: you think and it happens. An image is not something in your mind; **an image is something that affects you physically**. One of the shaman’s powers is the power of communication with disease. They talk directly or through telepathy, to the spirit of the disease, asking why it is there. They also communicate with the animals they have dreamed about, to discover the cause of the disease.

The Iroquois

Dreams as . . . “Career Coach”

Dream guides are spirits that provide guidance, healing, or teaching during a dream and have been very important in Iroquois dream theory.

Vision Quests: Upon puberty, many Iroquois sought guidance regarding the role they would play in the community life of the tribe. After a period fasting and solitary retreat, the seeker would seek a vision, dream, or another sign from spiritual sources.

The Iroquois, who currently live in upstate New York, believe that human souls have desires that are made known through dreams—the “soul-wish-manifesting” dream. They believe that frustration of these desires can cause mental or physical illness.

During the 17th century, the Jesuit missionaries reported that an annual dream-sharing festival, the **Ononharoia**, was held when men and women rushed from cabin to cabin, acting out their dreams in charades and demanding that the dream be guessed and satisfied. Sexual desires were more often satisfied than violent, aggressive desires, which were more frequently acted out in pantomime.

In Iroquois dream theory, a dream can also reveal the desires of supernatural beings. They believe themselves absolutely obliged to execute what their dreams dictate at the earliest possible moment. They also believe that a manifest dream might conceal rather than reveal the soul’s true wish. Thus, they seek the opinions of dream specialists so they can be certain of the dream’s meaning.

Islam

In Islam, there is a hierarchy of visionary perception—The simple prophet sees or hears an angel in a dream. The envoy sees the angel while awake and there are six of these: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad, who is the Seal of the Prophets, that is, his revelation closes the cycle of the six periods of prophecy.

Muhammad’s great dream of initiation into the mysteries of the cosmos, known as *Night Journey*, began when the angel Gabriel, appeared to him while he slept. (It is believed that Gabriel brings good dreams, whereas demons bring false ones.) Riding Elboraq, a half-human silver mare, Muhammad arrived in Jerusalem, the center of the world, where he conversed and prayed with Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Then he passed through the seven celestial spheres, each infused with its own color, to reach across the ocean of white light and, finally, to approach God.

Sigmund Freud
(1856-1939)

Dreams as . . . "Sexual Fulfillment. Oops! I mean, Wish-phallusment. Oops, I mean, I Wish I Wish Fulfillment. Oh dear. I mean, Oh darn."

Using dream images as a starting point, Freud would ask his patients to "free-associate" to whatever idea or feeling came to mind. For example, if a male patient were to free-associate from the dream image of a bull, the resulting associations **might** be as follows: bull - charge - bite - nibble - sandwich - lunch box - Mother - Father - absence. Freud might then suggest, or even pronounce, that these associations had sexual origins. For example, the word "absence" following the word "Father" might lead Freud to conclude that the patient's neurosis arose from a sexual rivalry with his father for the affections of his mother—the so-called, Oedipus Complex.

Carl Jung
(1875-1961)

Dreams as . . . "All facets of the personality (The Wise Child, the Crank Caller, the Dark Shadow, etc.) eventually are integrated into two facets of the personality (e.g. the Dark Shadow and the Crank Caller), which, in one lifetime, or ten, evolve into one unified whole *or* into a third "something mysterious." Since one individuated person is, in turn, a part of the collective unconscious, let us now access our collective unconscious and see weather we've all evolved into Happy, Wise Children, or, Something Better.

For five years, between 1907 and 1912, Carl Jung was both a friend and a loyal follower of Sigmund Freud's. They used to correspond regularly, however, as Jung began to develop his own unique approach to dream exploration, their paths began to separate.

Jung preferred to stay closer to the dream image through a technique which he termed "amplification." In addition to "amplifying" the image from the dreamer's subjective experiences, the image is also amplified through the lens of myths and humanity's experiences throughout the ages.

One of Jung's favorite questions to ask dreamers was, "Suppose I had no idea what the word "bull" meant, describe this object to me in such a way that I cannot fail to understand what sort of thing it is." Thus, by amplifying the image, the dreamer's focus would be returned to the original dream image of the bull. But sometimes "bull" is just bull.

Carl Jung

Exercise: Describe a bull to someone who apparently has no idea what the word "bull" means. Elaborate enough so that s/he clearly knows what sort of thing a bull is.

Carl Jung coined a term for what is essentially daydreaming about a dream image. He called it called "active imagination." In "active imagination," feelings, ideas, or images are held in the imagination. As these images evolve, the person might "interact" with them.

Exercise: To deepen dreamwork, begin by taking seven deep breaths while thinking about a beautiful nature scene. Just by closing your eyes, you can more easily enter a meditative state that is accompanied by alpha brain waves. This state is very conducive for meditating on dream images. For a minute or two, contemplate the image of a wasp on a pink peony . . . Let your imagination observe any **changes** that **evolve** as you contemplate this particular dream image.

The Unconscious Mind

The *Personal Unconscious* is shaped by our personal experiences.

The *Collective Unconscious* is our inheritance of humanity's collective experiences in the form of "archetypes." The "archetypes" are more like patterns than like specific images or symbols. The "Self Archetype" may reveal itself in dreams as a **mandala**, or as four of something.

The Animus/Anima
The Hero
The Persona
The Trickster

The Divine Child
The Great Mother
The Shadow
The Wise Old Woman/Man

"I want to know for what a man is preparing himself. That is what I read out of his dreams." —Jung

Exercise: What are you preparing yourself for? List three key goals.

Fritz Perls

(1893-1970)

Dreams as . . . “If you dream it, you own it! You will become whole only if you act conflicting dream elements out with full emotional honesty, RIGHT HERE & RIGHT NOW!”

Perls, who developed a holistic or gestalt approach to dreams, criticized any attempt to understand dreams intellectually, for example, through free association, symbol interpretation, or questions. Perls believed that dreams were manifestations of **conflicts** between various layers of the personality. In order to free the frozen energy sustaining the conflicts, Perls had members of his dream groups act out the various parts of the dream in an emotional way, in the here and now. He believed this emotional experiencing of the conflicts would allow the person to integrate the layers of the personality into a more harmonious whole.

A lot of Perls' approach to dreams involves a dramatic acting out of Jung's theories and techniques. For example, Perls' "Two Chair Technique" is a dramatic acting out of Jung's suggestion that the dreamer should hold two opposing feelings, ideas, or images in the imagination until a third reality emerges. E.g., the images, CAT-MOUSE, may lead to the insight that the dreamer is both a victim and a predator, in respect to herself or another person.

Secondly, owning all parts of the dream by acting each out, is similar to owning the shadow, the animus, the anima—all parts of the dream.

Exercise — The Two-Chair Technique: Place two chairs facing one another. Sit in Chair A and experience being the dream cat in every way. Speak and act as the cat might to the mouse. Then, sit in Chair B. Experience the feelings and thoughts and even the body of the mouse and speak to the cat. Alternate chairs until you feel a new emotional experience has evolved from your experience of the dream conflict or opposites.

Alfred Adler

(1870-1937)

Dreams as . . . “Social Adjustment Indicators”

Life-style Analysis

Early Recollections (ERs) and Dreams show your problem-solving style, goals, and social feeling.

Exercise: In my dream, what is my problem-solving style?

In my dream, what are my goals?

In my dream, how do I show social feeling?

DREAM EXERCISE — Using An Adlerian Approach

Reference: Adlerian Dream Theory and Howard B. Kaplan's
 "A Method for the Interpretation of Early Recollections and Dreams"

The dreamer's expectations are _____

What the dreamer accomplishes _____

The dreamer confronts problems/challenges in this way _____

The dreamer's feelings _____

The feelings upon awakening _____

The listener's feelings in response to the dream _____

What the dream motivates the dreamer to do, think, and feel _____

How the dreamer interacts with other people in the dream _____

How other people interact with the dreamer _____

What the dream suggests about the dreamer's social interests _____

What goal(s) is (are) implied? _____

"Fill-in-the-Missing-Word" Dream Partner Exercise

Partners A and B both complete this exercise for A's dream. Partner B imagines s/he is A.

In my dream, I cope with the situation of _____
statement of the problem

by _____ and by arousing in myself the feeling
this behavior - use verbs

of _____, so that I am ultimately able to, or can help myself

to _____
statement of a goal—the purpose of the dream

2) How I responded to these phenomena _____

What this shows me about the way I view myself _____

What this shows me about the way I view the world _____

3) How I was affected emotionally by the dream phenomena _____

What this shows me about the way I view myself _____

What this shows me about the way I view the world _____

Additional Insights

Upon awakening, how I am affected emotionally by my dream phenomena

How I am now affected emotionally by my dream phenomena?

How someone who listens to my dream is affected emotionally by my dream phenomena?

**Gayle
Delaney**

Dreams as . . . “Earth Language Classes for Visiting Martians”

Dr. Gayle Delaney, a modern dream explorer, and well-known author of the book, *Breakthrough Dreaming*, amplifies a dream image by asking a probing question—with pizzazz! For example, she might prompt a dreamer who has had a dream featuring a cat as follows: [Pretend I’m from another planet](#), and that I’ve never heard of the word “cat” before. Now, tell me, what is a cat? What’s it like?

Exercise: Describe what a cat is like. What are the three main characteristics of a cat? What are the cat’s functions, if any? What do you dislike about cats? What do you like about them? What characteristic do you share with cats?

The Dream Interview: Fooled you! These seemingly disinterested “cat” questions are secretly revealing! Now, this is the last question, I promise. Do any of your “cat” answers remind you of a situation in *your* waking life? Another person? Or! A part of yourself—perhaps an attitude or a feeling?

**Montague
Ullman**

Dreams as . . . “In a democracy, it’s anyone’s guess what the heck your dream means. So, project away! But! The *dreamer* has the last say.”

Pretend that the Dreamer’s dream images, plot, etc. are actually saying something about YOU and your life. The Dreamer gets to listen to you rattle on about your life—all the while thinking about how your ramblings just MIGHT apply to her/his own life. How does this work? Be bold. Go right ahead and tell us all about *yourself*, *your* life, etc. etc. beginning with the words “[If this were my dream . . .](#)”

**Robert
Bosnak**

Dreams as . . . “While I listen to your dream, I experience a whole range of feelings in my body. Then, I help you become aware of the sensations you are feeling as you focus on your dream images. After creating a place of safety, I whisk opposite dream images together to create opposite feelings in your body. In an instant, a third “something” flashes through you! The ‘BIG AHA’ resonates and ripples throughout your body-soul! Then, it’s back to the office.”

Listen to the dream with your awareness focused on any sensations felt in your body. . . Establish a safe place in the dream imagery. Then, create tension between two opposites until a third “something” emerges.

**Anne Sayre
Wiseman**

Dreams as . . . “Stories that reveal truth, generate solutions, and help healing. Begin by drawing a dreaded dream to show clearly whatever you dreamed that makes you feel destined to nibble your nails to the bone. Then, draw a change that makes you feel safe and in control enough to spend hours holding imaginary conversations with speckled snakes, headless horses, or bugs. Next, y’all find a peaceful solution that pleases the bugs, headless horses, and writhing snakes. Oh! Then, you take seven deep breaths and heal. For closure, post your dream drawings on the frig and say your daughter drew them after she watched *The Lion King*.”

Author of an amazing book “Nightmare Help” for adults and children.

**Patricia
Garfield**

Dreams as . . . “Tell me what I need to know. Show me where I need to go—IF it’s a heavenly place.” (Dream incubation question—variation)

Summarized ten, key “Universal Dream Themes.” Author of many well-researched books such as “Creative Dreaming” and “Your Child’s Dreams.”

**Karen
Boileau**

Dreams as . . . “Creative wonders and the voice of Spirit. Dream nightmares are frustrated Dreams Whisperers that stomp in with megaphones to tell you, ‘Change something besides your underwear!’”

Exercise A: 1. Meditate on a dream image: Rhythmically repeat “What is the meaning of my dream image?” Then breathe deeply three times while focusing on relaxing music (without lyrics). Repeat the sequence for about three minutes . . . Take a five-minute break.

2. Inhale and ask “How does my dream image help me grow in my waking life?” Exhale and focus only on the breath. Repeat for seven cycles.

3. Draw the dream image. Then, write beginning with the words, “How I now understand my dream...”

Exercise B: Play a game of “Catch” while calling out your associations to a dream image.

The ASD

Dreams as . . . “Sacred Gifts to Be Shared With Honor, Grace, and a Wee Pint of Brandy”

The International Association for the Study of Dreams (IASD):
www.ASDreams.org

Dreamwork

- [Top Ten Dreamwork Techniques](#) — “Your Guide to Happiness, Wisdom, and Purpose”
- [What Did You Dream Last Night?](#) — “Ask A Puzzling Question Tonight . . . Discover Your Dreaming Mind’s Answers Tomorrow”
- [Artists Dreaming Joy](#) — A workbook that helps artists express a multitude of joys