

teach  
yourself

# dream interpretation

goal

practical introduction

category

dreams

content

- understand the basic principles
- learn how to apply the theory
- get more from life

be where you want to be with **teach yourself**



teach  
yourself®

**teach<sup>®</sup>  
yourself**

**dream  
interpretation**  
leila bright

THE MCGRAW-HILL COMPANIES  
FOR DONATION ONLY  
NOT FOR RESALE  
**19ASA006**  
FOR DONATION ONLY  
NOT FOR RESALE

For over 60 years, more than  
40 million people have learnt over  
750 subjects the **teach yourself**  
way, with impressive results.

be where you want to be  
with **teach yourself**

For UK order enquiries: please contact Bookpoint Ltd, 130 Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4SB. Telephone: +44 (0) 1235 827720. Fax: +44 (0) 1235 400454. Lines are open 09.00–18.00, Monday to Saturday, with a 24-hour message answering service. Details about our titles and how to order are available at [www.teachyourself.co.uk](http://www.teachyourself.co.uk)

For USA order queries: please contact McGraw-Hill Customer Services, P.O. Box 545, Blacklick, OH 43004-0545, USA. Telephone: 1-800-722-4726. Fax: 1-614-755-5645.

For Canada order queries: please contact McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd, 300 Water St, Whitby, Ontario L1N 9B6, Canada. Telephone: 905 430 5000. Fax: 905 430 5020.

Long renowned as the authoritative source for self-guided learning – with more than 30 million copies sold worldwide – the Teach Yourself series includes over 300 titles in the fields of languages, crafts, hobbies, business, computing and education.

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data:* a catalogue entry for this title is available from The British Library.

*Library of Congress Catalog Card Number:* on file

First published in UK 1999 by Hodder Headline, 338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH.

First published in US 1999 by Contemporary Books, a division of the McGraw Hill Companies, 1 Prudential Plaza, 130 East Randolph Street, Chicago, Illinois 60601 USA.

The 'Teach Yourself' name is a registered trade mark of Hodder & Stoughton.

Copyright © 1999, 2003 Leila Bright

*In UK:* All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher or under licence from the Copyright Licensing Agency Limited. Further details of such licences (for reprographic reproduction) may be obtained from the Copyright Licensing Agency Limited, of 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 4LP.

*In US:* All rights reserved. Except as permitted under the United States Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of Contemporary Books.

Typeset by Transet Limited, Coventry, England.

Printed in Great Britain for Hodder & Stoughton Educational, a division of Hodder Headline Ltd, 338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH by Cox & Wyman Ltd, Reading, Berkshire.

Hodder Headline's policy is to use papers that are natural, renewable and recyclable products and made from wood grown in sustainable forests. The logging and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

Impression number      10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2  
Year                        2008 2007 2006 2005 2004

<b>07</b>	<b>wish-fulfilment dreams</b>	<b>57</b>
	what are wish-fulfilment dreams?	58
	case study	59
	harnessing the power of your wish-fulfilment dreams	61
<b>08</b>	<b>divination through dreams</b>	<b>63</b>
	what is divination through dreams?	64
	dreams and divination of the past	65
	harnessing the power of your dreams about the past	66
	dreams and divination of the present	67
	harnessing the power of your dreams about the present	69
	dreams and divination of the future	70
	harnessing the power of your dreams about the future	71
<b>09</b>	<b>nightmares</b>	<b>73</b>
	what are nightmares?	74
	case studies	75
	harnessing the power of your nightmares	77
<b>10</b>	<b>dream incubation</b>	<b>80</b>
	what is dream incubation?	81
	psychic suggestion, positive affirmation and visualization	83
<b>11</b>	<b>lucid and mutual dreams</b>	<b>87</b>
	what are lucid dreams?	88
	who can learn to have lucid dreams?	88
	techniques for promoting lucid dreaming	89
	what are mutual dreams?	91
	achieving planned, mutual dreams	92
<b>part two</b>	<b>the dreamer's dictionary</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>taking it further</b>		<b>171</b>

## Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all those who kindly allowed me to use their dreams. In all cases privacy has been preserved by changing names, and, in some instances, gender. Personal details have been disguised.

Thanks also to Jo Osborn, Helen Green, Linda Miles, Carolyn Taylor and Catherine Coe.

<b>introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>first thoughts on symbols</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>dream interpretation: the dreamer and other people</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>back to the Aboriginal</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>part one</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>01</b>	<b>dreams: a separate reality</b>
	<b>a brief history of dreams</b>
	the ancient Greeks
	Freud and the psychoanalytical approach
	Jung: the collective unconscious and archetypes
<b>02</b>	<b>the dream journal</b>
	your diary
	India's diary
<b>03</b>	<b>recurring dreams</b>
	what are recurring dreams?
	case study
	harnessing the power of your recurring dreams
<b>04</b>	<b>chase dreams</b>
	what are chase dreams?
	case study
	harnessing the power of your chase dreams
<b>05</b>	<b>anxiety dreams</b>
	what are anxiety dreams?
	case studies
	harnessing the power of your anxiety dreams
<b>06</b>	<b>sexual dreams</b>
	what are sexual dreams?
	case study
	harnessing the power of your sexual dreams

Before time began was the dreamtime, when the forces of creation were active through our great spirit ancestors. The spirit ancestors were not yet segregated into human or animal, they were pure consciousness. All the languages of the natural world, the languages of trees, of rocks, of celestial bodies, of wind, fire, shadow and seed, were listened to and understood by our ancestral spirit ancestors, who used their knowledge to shape the physical universe. They also shaped our social universe by forging the laws which govern human behaviour, in accordance with their experience and modes of being.

Reconstruction of Australian Aboriginal  
creation story

Each of us is a citizen of two worlds. In one the laws of space and time and the rational constraints on everyday thinking must be obeyed – objects cannot pass through other objects, the dead cannot walk hand-in-hand with us down the street, we cannot fly simply because we wish to, we cannot talk to elephants. In the other we can, for a short time, go safely insane. Anything can happen. Past, present and future can converge, so we may walk not only with the dead, but also with people we suppose to be our unborn children. Our bodies can grow to the size of buildings, or shrink to that of spiders. We can battle safely with lions, or be beaten up by babies.

One of these worlds is the waking world, the other is the world of dreams. Each world has advantages. The waking world has advantages of:

- predictability
- solidity
- continuity
- familiarity.

The world of dreams has the advantages of freedom. It offers:

- social freedom – we can mingle with the powerful and the dead
- religious freedom – we can approach the divine and the forbidden
- freedom from the physical laws which bind our waking selves – we can fly, shrink or become invisible
- freedom from time constraints – we can become children again, or grow old in a second, we can, perhaps, gain knowledge of the past and the future.

Despite the advantages of the world of dreams, sometimes, in some moods, we confine the attribute of reality to the waking world. At other times, in other moods, we are prepared to grant the world of dreams a kind of reality too. This book assumes that the second attitude is sound, that dreams are significant and grant us a window on to a type of reality at a tangent to waking reality. A reality where the conscious, with all its limits, yields to the subconscious which knows few laws.

But why should it be worth trying to understand dream reality? Because if dreams are windows onto the subconscious, both the dreamer's unique, individual subconscious and also aspects of his or her subconscious imprinted with cultural, social and ancestral patterns, then dreams can:

- serve as guides to the inner self and thus be used as tools for enhancing self-understanding, self-esteem and self-confidence
- provide insight into all our important relationships (not just sexual relationships)
- act as informal, unpaid career advisors
- promote mental, and possibly even physical, health
- facilitate creative problem solving in all areas of life.

This book will help you to benefit from these many different powers of dreams. It will show you how to:

- recall your dreams vividly
- distinguish significant from insignificant dreams
- work with visual symbols, understanding them as a type of flashlight illuminating your subconscious
- appreciate the role played by specific types of dream – prophetic, anxiety, sexual, for example
- learn to generate dreams to help solve specific problems
- harness the power of lucid and mutual dreams.

## First thoughts on symbols

Only a few pages into this book, we have already had cause to mention symbols – they will be important as we progress. So it is important to understand what a symbol is.

A symbol is something which represents something else. Sometimes the meaning of a symbol is fixed by convention or is, for some significant reason, generally accepted and understood within a society – white is a symbol of purity, the lion is a symbol of courage, the Cross is a symbol of Christianity, the thunderbolt is a symbol of Zeus, etc. The visual images we see in dreams are symbols, but their meaning is rarely, if ever, fixed, although meanings may be influenced by cultural or social patterns.

Dream symbols acquire their meaning via associations within the dreamer's own subconscious mind. Unravelling those associations will reveal the underlying meaning of the symbols to and for the dreamer – that is, it will reveal the things represented. For example, suppose I dream I am being followed home by an enormous tabby cat, with huge yellow eyes. On waking, I most clearly remember those eyes. They remind me of a time I visited Africa and saw the yellow eyes of lions reflected in the headlights of my car as I drove at night – a frightening experience, but also awe-inspiring. Cats always remind me of one of my aunts, now dead, who had a house full of them. Perhaps the dream tabby represents an older woman who is offering me something which is potentially frightening, but also awe-inspiring and powerful. My subconscious mind is trying to bring this woman to the attention of my conscious mind, via the dream.

This sort of unravelling can be undertaken only by the dreamer, and the meanings revealed usually have relevance only for the dreamer. Much of this book will be about the interpretation of symbols – or determining what a particular symbol represents. For the moment it is enough to hang on to the thought that symbols are like windows, or flashlights, or two-way mirrors onto or into parts of ourselves usually hidden by other parts of ourselves.

## Dream interpretation: the dreamer and other people

To say that the significance of a dream comes from the interpretation the dreamer puts on it is not to say that you cannot have help interpreting your dreams. If you become captivated by the endless fascination of dreams, it might be



worth your while to join a group; this would enable you to undertake structured work in a supportive and encouraging atmosphere. If you are interested in this option, approach local complementary healing centres or look on the notice board in your local mind, body and spirit bookshop for addresses.

In clinical settings, practitioners of many of the talking therapies might feel inclined to spend a good deal of time discussing dream meaning with clients. Although, having said that, many psychiatrists are concerned mainly with evidence-based medicine and may not be overly interested in dreams, unless, for example, research shows either that a drug increases your likelihood of dreaming, or that drug withdrawal increases likelihood of dreaming – in either case the probable explanation is that the drug, or withdrawal, interferes with normal sleep patterns.

## **Back to the Aboriginal**

At the start of this book you read a reconstruction of an Australian Aboriginal creation story. This illustrates one culturally important interpretation of the widely recognized creative force of dreams. The passage is a reconstruction because these creation stories were not written down, rather they were incorporated in dance and oral stories, songs, poems and paintings.

The Australian Aboriginal people believe that the experience and modes of being of the great spirit ancestors during the dreamtime, when the physical and the social worlds were both created, resonate, to a tiny degree, in our own experience of dreaming. As we have already mentioned, during dreams space and time are unbounded. Oneself and other beings merge and separate kaleidoscopically. In our dreams the qualities and characteristics of inner consciousness are symbolized through human, animal and inanimate form. According to the Aboriginals this reflects the ancestral understanding of all the natural languages and the lack of distinct categories for the human and the animal.

It is thought that the heritage of the native people of Australia stretches back anything between 40,000 and 150,000 years; by any reckoning theirs is one of the oldest cultures we know. Even at the earliest phases of human history, perhaps particularly at the earliest phases of our history, the power and importance of dreams was recognized. It would seem arrogant to dismiss it today.

# part one

**dreams:**

**a separate reality**

Dreams ... are not meaningless, they are not absurd; they do not imply that one portion of our store of ideas is asleep while another portion is beginning to wake. On the contrary, they are physical phenomena of complete validity ... they can be inserted into the chain of intelligible waking mental acts; they are constructed by highly complicated activity of the mind.

Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*

# 01

## a brief history of dreams

**In this chapter you will learn:**

- about culturally diverse approaches to dream interpretation
- about ancient attitudes to dream interpretation
- about the study of dreams in the twentieth century.

As his spirit churned, at last one plan seemed best:  
He would send a murderous dream to Agamemnon.  
Calling out to the vision, Zeus winged it on:  
'Go, murderous Dream, to the fast Achaean ships  
and once you reach Agamemnon's shelter rouse him,  
order him word-for-word, exactly as I command ...'

Homer, *Iliad*, Book 2, translated by Robert Fagles

It is probably true to say that at all times, people of all cultures, everywhere, have been fascinated by dreams, even if such interest has been officially discouraged, for example by religious authorities. The work of anthropologists has shown that certain types of dream – the anxiety dream, the wish-fulfilment dream – are probably common to all humanity.

In contemporary, Westernized culture interest in dreams tends to focus on the psychoanalytic, an approach we shall consider later in this chapter. Before doing so, we shall look briefly at some of the many and varied ancient Greek ideas about dreams. It is roughly true that Jerusalem, Greece and Rome were the three wellsprings of Western culture. The Bible is full of references to dreams, but we shall not consider these here because of their religious implications. All manner of seers and dream interpreters operated in ancient Rome, but it is ancient Greek thinking about dream interpretation which perhaps resonates more sympathetically with Western ways of thinking and which bears the most interesting comparisons with modern approaches.

## The ancient Greeks

There are many difficulties when discussing attitudes to dreams in any culture other than one's own. Members of two distinct cultures might interpret the same type of experience, and dream, differently. Or there may be dream structures which depend on highly specific, culturally transmitted patterns of belief, which are not accessible to people who do not belong to the relevant culture. Despite these difficulties, it is still possible to learn from some of the ancient Greek descriptions of dreams which have come down to us relatively intact.

We speak of *having* a dream. The Greeks spoke of *seeing* a dream, of dreams *visiting* the dreamer, or *standing over* him or her. This way of speaking is most appropriate to a type of dream

in which the dreamer is the passive recipient of some sort of objective vision. Such dreams are frequently described by the famous Greek poet, Homer, who composed two lengthy poems called the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

In these poems dreams often take the form of a visit paid to a sleeping person by a single dream figure – this can be a god, a ghost, or other type of messenger. These dream figures exist independently of the dreamer. They often leave and enter the bedroom via the keyhole, and deliver their messages from the head of the bed. The dream figure often points out to the dreamer that he or she is asleep, the dreamer does not suppose him or herself to be anywhere but in bed, and is almost completely passive, seeing a figure and hearing a voice. Sometimes the dream figure proves his or her objectivity by leaving something behind on departing.

The murderous Dream sent by Zeus, the king of the Greek gods, to Agamemnon, the Greek commander in battle, fits this broad pattern. By sending Agamemnon the Dream and inciting him to battle, Zeus intended to humiliate the Greeks in revenge for a slight the hero Achilles had sustained at the hands of Agamemnon.

This type of messenger dream does not correspond well to modern reports of dream experience. But Homer also describes, or assumes, other types of dream with which we are all familiar. In the *Odyssey* he describes Penelope's dream of the eagle and the geese; this is a wish-fulfilment dream, interpreted symbolically. Penelope was the faithful wife of the hero Odysseus who had gone to war to fight for the Greeks. The war lasted ten years, and Odysseus took a further ten years to get home. During all that time, faithful Penelope waited patiently for the return of her husband, resisting the advances of suitors who flocked to seek her hand. See Chapter 07 for a full discussion of her dream of the eagle and the geese.

Both messenger and symbolic dreams were regarded by the Greeks as *significant*. If there is no distinction between significant and insignificant dreams, the art of dream interpretation cannot flourish. In a Greek classification, transmitted to us by various writers, significant dreams are divided into three types:

- the **symbolic dream** which dresses up events in metaphors and is a sort of riddle unintelligible without interpretation. In the ancient world practitioners of the art of interpreting such

- dreams could make a good living. As today, dreambooks, giving tables of correspondences for symbols, were common.
- **the vision** – a straightforward pre-enactment of a future event. This is one type of *mantic* dream. ‘Mantic’ means *of divination*. (It is from the Greek word for *prophet*.) The Greek philosopher Plato had an interesting theory about mantic dreams. In his book *Timaeus* he proposed that they originate from the insight of the rational soul, but are perceived by the irrational soul as images reflected on the smooth surface of the liver. This is why they have a symbolic character. (*Rational* and *irrational soul* were technical terms in Plato.) See Chapter 08 for a discussion of modern attitudes to divination through dreams.
  - **the oracle** – a dream figure reveals, without symbolism, what will or will not happen, or what should or should not be done. The dream figure could be a god, a parent, a priest, a ghost, a living friend, etc.

Oracle dreams were often regarded as sent by the gods. Sometimes god-sent dreams were thought to be seen only by favoured dreamers, for example members of the royal family. At other times, god-sent dreams were thought to be available to all. They frequently prescribed some sort of religious act which has left concrete evidence for us, for example in the form of inscriptions stating that their author made some sort of dedication *in accordance with a dream, or having seen a dream, etc.*

God-sent dreams were eagerly sought and there were many techniques for promoting them – some were described in the dreambooks. Techniques for promoting god-sent dreams included: sleeping in a holy place, or in contact with a sacred object, fasting, self-mutilation, isolation, prayer, etc. In Chapter 10 we shall look at some contemporary techniques for promoting desired (not necessarily god-sent) dreams.

In later Greece, sleeping in a holy place – incubation – was especially widely used to provoke:

- dreams containing information gleaned from the dead about the future; these were a second type of mantic dream
- dreams connected with health, healing and medical clairvoyance.

Medical incubation flourished as part of the cult of Asclepius. Asclepius was a magical healer who became transformed into a

god. He had a temple at Epidaurus, which was as famous in ancient Greece as a place of pilgrimage for the sick as Lourdes is today, and his symbol, or representative, was a holy snake. The sick would sleep in the precincts of the holy temple at Epidaurus and hope the god would visit them in their dreams, offering instantaneous cures, or suggestions for treatment. In the morning those who had been favoured with divine visitation told the others of their experiences. Evidence about some of these dreams has come down to us in the Epidaurian Temple Record. It tells of suggested treatments including: swallowing snake poison; smearing the eyes with the blood of a white cock; river-bathing in mid-winter; running barefoot in frost; demands for self-mutilation, etc. Recorded cures include successful treatment of sore throats, constipation, blindness, sore toes, etc.

A different approach to health and dreaming was taken by Greek doctors who developed a scientific, not a magical, approach to healing. One medical treatise – *On Regimen* – discusses the relationship of dreams to the physiological state of the dreamer and explores dreams which express in symbolic form illness, or potential illness. The author attributes such dreams to medical clairvoyance exercised by the soul when, during sleep, it is able to survey the body without distraction. Even the philosopher Aristotle, who was in general sceptical about dreams, accepted that they can convey foreknowledge of the dreamer's state of health. Like many moderns, he thought this was explained by the penetration to consciousness of symptoms ignored during waking hours. We will meet dreams which express, or seem to express, medical clairvoyance in Chapter 08. Many of the symbols listed in the dreamer's dictionary in Part Two represent the human body, see especially *earth, river, tree, earthquake, the dead*.

It is possible to give only a quick survey of Greek thinking about dreams. *The Greeks and the Irrational* by E. R. Dodds provides much fuller information and would be an excellent starting place for anyone who would like to explore this subject in greater depth. Much of the information given here comes from that book.

Having glanced at the Greeks, it is now time to turn to the moderns. As we mentioned, psychoanalytic thinking tends to predominate discussion of dream interpretation. The thought of two men – Freud and Jung – is particularly significant.



## Freud and the psychoanalytical approach

Today, if we have our own wise men, skilled in the interpretation of dreams, this is in no small measure thanks to the work of Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is a combination of:

- theory about the nature of the human psyche
- therapy for mind-based problems
- a lens through which we can understand society.

Freud trained as a doctor and his scientific training was of central importance to the development of his interests and his thought. He spent most of his life in Vienna, but in 1885 he worked at a clinic in Paris where he encountered patients labelled as *hysterics*, whose doctors introduced him to the notion that psychological disorders might have their source in the mind, rather than the brain. After his return to Vienna he opened a practice in neuropsychology. One of his colleagues had previously used a kind of talking cure to help a woman, who came to be known as Anna O, for a variety of hysterical symptoms. The method allowed Anna to lapse into a trance-like state in which she could talk about the early onset and history of her symptoms. Many years later Freud would take the idea of this so-called talking cure and develop it into his famous method of free association. In a clinical setting, free association encourages the patient to express any thoughts that come to mind – thoughts linked by personalized, meaningful associations which may have obscure origins. The technique aims at retrieving from the subconscious material which is normally hidden, forgotten, or repressed by the conscious mind. To Freud, blockages to the process of free association – hesitating, pausing, stumbling over words, etc. – showed both the importance of the material which the patient was struggling to bring to consciousness, and the power of the psychic forces acting against its conscious recognition. Freud called such blockages *resistance*. Freud came to the conclusion that the most powerful forces acting towards resistance were sexual in nature, and he further linked the development of mental problems to the conflict between a sexual urge and the psychic forces acting to repress it.

Up to this point, Freud's work had focused on female patients and female sexuality. Freud realized that to be widely applicable psychoanalysis would have to examine the male psyche too. To