

Interpretation of Dreams

October 26-30

Power Point on Consciousness

Students will understand the following:

1. Freud argued that our dreams contain clues to our hopes, fears, and fantasies.
2. Freud claimed that developments in our childhood affect the way we act and the kinds of dreams we have.

Materials

For this lesson, you will need:

- Photocopied excerpts from *The Interpretation of Dreams* by Sigmund Freud

Procedures

1. One interesting way for students to test Freud's theories about the origins of dreams is to conduct an experiment on a family member who is asleep. Students should ask a parent or sibling to participate as a volunteer.
2. Explain that the experiment requires the students to be present for part of the time their volunteers are asleep. Students should create a stimulus that does not wake up the volunteer but that may nevertheless be heard or felt by each sleeper. The point of the experiment is to determine if indeed the sleeper's dreams will include the stimulus. If they do, the experimenter can suggest that the sleeper heard or felt the stimulus while asleep—that is, while not conscious.
3. Discuss with the class the stimuli they may present to their sleeping relatives. If they need help, suggest a soft noise, a light being put on and then off, a touch. Stress that it is important that experimenters *not* tell their subjects what the stimulus will be.
4. While the volunteer is asleep, each student experimenter should present his or her stimulus to the volunteer, noting carefully the time of the presentation. The student previously will have directed the volunteer immediately upon waking to make as clear a record as possible of the dreams he or she had while asleep. It's important that volunteers record their dreams immediately upon waking so that their recollections are not dimmed.
5. Ask students to repeat the experiments on another

two nights. Students may vary the times at which they present the stimulus, recording the times. Or they may use a different stimulus each night.

6. When students have collected their volunteers' dream records, they should examine them carefully for evidence of the stimulus. Does a dream directly or indirectly refer to the stimulus? Is the stimulus somehow hidden in the dream?
7. If any of the volunteers have incorporated one or more stimuli into their dreams, ask students to comment about the nature of dreams. If none of the volunteers has incorporated one of the stimuli into a dream, ask students to comment on the success or failure of the experiment.
8. Lead a class discussion about the results of their experiments and their implications for Freud's dream theories.

Adaptations

Have students talk about dreams they are willing to share and not conduct the experimental part of the project.

Discussion Questions

1. Freud called dreams "the royal road to the unconscious." Discuss whether dreams can actually help us understand our hidden desires. Can you think of any other theories explaining why we dream? What other functions might dreams have?
2. Describe Freud's theories about the most appropriate ways to interpret dreams.
3. Freud is perhaps the most influential figure in the history of psychology. His work transformed the ways in which people viewed everything from insanity to neuroses to traumatic childhood experiences. He was also the first person to explore the idea of the "unconscious"—the idea that part of who we are is revealed in things like slips of the tongue, dreams, and "accidents"—which today we take for granted. How do you think our modern world has changed in response to Freud's ideas? What ideas or institutions are different today from what they were before Freud? Have any of his ideas been challenged? Do they still make sense today?
4. Freud believed that we all have "primitive selves" that we never really conquer—in fact, he believed

that these primitive selves were essential to our personalities. Do you agree? Why or why not? Can you think of any other explanations for the more "savage" sides of human behavior?

5. Freud's work on dreams was not universally well received when he published it, and people's opinions continue to be divided. Speculate about why so many of his ideas are controversial.
6. According to Freud, one cornerstone of psychoanalysis is remembering and understanding the events of our childhood. Discuss ways in which our earliest experiences can affect who we are today.

Evaluation

You can evaluate students on their participation in the experiment by using the following three-point rubric:

Three points: student provides evidence of having carried out the experiment on three nights (a relative's signature or detailed records can serve as evidence); student participates fully in the discussion by both reporting his or her findings and questioning other students' findings; student thoughtfully contributes to the discussion about the meaning of the results and the evaluation of the experiment

Two points: student provides evidence of having carried out the experiment on three nights (a relative's signature or detailed records can serve as evidence); student participates moderately in the discussion by either reporting his or her findings or by questioning other students' findings; student contributes in a minor way to the discussion about the meaning of the results and the evaluation of the experiment

One point: student provides no evidence of having carried out the experiment on three nights; student participates in a minor way in the discussion by questioning other students' findings; student contributes in a minor way to the discussion about the meaning of the results and the evaluation of the experiment

Extensions

Leadership: Just the Tip of the Iceberg?

Freud saw the human mind as an iceberg in that it was mostly hidden. Ask your students to draw an iceberg in water on a blank sheet of paper and to label the part above the water *the conscious* and the part below *the unconscious*. Next, have your students each select one current or historical leader. Ask students to research biographical information on their chosen leaders, stressing that they should look for incidents or developments that may have influenced the leaders' behaviors, characters, successes, and leadership styles. As students find important pieces of information, have them write the data on their iceberg papers as follows:

- Relationships or influences the leader was certainly aware of or displayed on a conscious level should be noted on the tip of the iceberg.
- Influences that the leader may not have thought about consciously when acting as a leader—such as his or her early childhood and parents—should be noted on the part of the iceberg below water.

Once students have completed their research, have them review their notes and analyze the personality of their leaders in psychoanalytic terms. That is, students might try to answer the question "How strong is each of the components of the leader's personality (id, ego, and superego)?" A possible answer might be "This leader has a strong superego so that even when he acts ethically, he still feels guilt about ethical decisions" or "This leader has a weak superego and many moral lapses."

The Story of Your Life

Freud thought that making sense of our past—especially, the events of our childhood—would help us to resolve present conflicts and open up more possibilities for ourselves in the future. Have your students write a short story about themselves. The story should show them in the past, the present, and the future. That is, they should include

- a scene from their early childhood,
- a scene about a conflict in their current lives, and
- a scene from their imagined future in which the conflict is resolved and elements of the first two scenes are also present.

They may present the scenes in the story in any order they choose. Students may then share their stories

with each other and write journal entries about what they learned from the exercise.

Suggested Readings

On Dreams

Sigmund Freud. W.W. Norton Company, Inc., 1980. This book is Freud's own briefer, simpler version of his theory of the dream. References, an index, and biographical information are included in this concise, easier to follow companion for students of *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

The Secret Language of Dreams

David Fontana. Duncan Baird Publishers, 1994. Beginning with a discussion of Freud's contributions to the world of dream interpretation, this exquisitely illustrated handbook offers readers a "pictorial workshop" for understanding dreams.

Links

[Freud: Conflict and Culture](#)

This exhibition from the Library of Congress examines Freud's life and his key ideas and their effect upon the twentieth century.

[Freud Museum of Vienna](#)

Chronology of Freud's Life, themes and films and audio clips available over the Internet from the Sigmund Freud Museum of Vienna.

[Freud Museum London](#)

Tour the Freud home in London and explore dream interpretation.

[The Interpretation of Dreams \(3rd edition\) by Sigmund Freud](#)

Electronic version of *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

[Freud: The Interpretation of Dreams--Table of Contents](#)

On this page, author Dr. Dewey presents Freud's "Interpretation of Dreams." The discussion of important sections can produce interesting debate in the classroom. Dr. Dewey's "Psych Web Home Page" is excellent.

Vocabulary

Click on any of the vocabulary words below to hear

them pronounced and used in a sentence.



consciousness

Definition:The upper level of mental life of which the person is aware, as contrasted with unconscious processes.

Context:By the end of the 19th century, consciousness began to be seen as a rational process.



ego

Definition:The one of the three divisions of the psyche in psychoanalytic theory that serves as the organized conscious mediator between the person and reality, especially by functioning in both the perception of and adaptation to reality.

Context:The ego is the rational self.



id

Definition:The one of the three divisions of the psyche in psychoanalytic theory that is completely unconscious and is the source of psychic energy derived from instinctual needs and drives.

Context:This animal self contains the core of the psyche that Freud called the id.



latent

Definition:Present and capable of becoming visible, obvious, or active.

Context:The real, hidden meaning of the dream is called the latent dream.



psychoanalysis

Definition:A method of analyzing psychic phenomena and treating emotional disorders that involves treatment sessions during which the patient is encouraged to talk freely about personal experiences and especially about early childhood and dreams.

Context:In Freud's hands, psychoanalysis allowed his patients to attempt to make sense of their pasts.



REM

Definition:A state of sleep that recurs cyclically several times during a normal period of sleep and that is characterized by increased neuronal activity of the forebrain and midbrain, by depressed muscle tone, and especially in humans by dreaming and rapid eye movements.

Context:Our most vivid dreams come during REM,

rapid-eye-movement sleep.



[superego](#)

Definition:The one of the three divisions of the psyche in psychoanalytic theory that is only partly conscious, represents internalization of parental conscience and the rules of society, and functions to reward and punish through a system of moral attitudes, conscience, and a sense of guilt.

Context:The superego represents societal pressures and tells us what is right and wrong.

Standards

This lesson plan may be used to address the academic standards listed below. These standards are drawn from Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education: 2nd Edition and have been provided courtesy of the [Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning](#) in Aurora, Colorado.

Grade level:9-12

Subject area:world history

Standard:

Understands the search for peace and stability throughout the world in the 1920s and 1930s.

Benchmarks:

Understands how the emergence of new art, literature, music, and scientific theories influenced society in the early 20th century (e.g., the impact of innovative movements in art, architecture, and literature, such as Cubism, Surrealism, Expressionism, Socialist Realism, and jazz; reflections of war in such movements as Dadaism and the literary works of Remarque, Spender, Brooke, and Hemingway; the major themes of writers of the "Lost Generation" in the post-World War I era; prominent musicians and composers of the first half of the century and the cultural impact of their music around the world; how Freud's psychoanalytic method and theories of the unconscious changed views of human motives and human nature).

Grade level:6-8

Subject area:life science

Standard:

Understands the genetic basis for the transfer of biological characteristics from one generation to the next.

Benchmarks:

Benchmark 6-8:

Knows that the characteristics of an organism can be described in terms of a combination of traits; some traits are inherited and others result from interactions with the environment.

Benchmark 6-8:

Knows that hereditary information is contained in genes (located in the chromosomes of each cell), each of which carries a single unit of information; an inherited trait of an individual can be determined by either one or many genes, and a single gene can influence more than one trait.

Benchmark 9-12:

Knows the chemical and structural properties of DNA and its role in specifying the characteristics of an organism.

Benchmark 9-12:

Knows ways in which genes may be altered and combined to create genetic variation within a species.

Benchmark 9-12:

Knows that genes are segments of DNA molecules, and that inserting, deleting, or substituting portions of the DNA can alter genes.

Grade level:9-12

Subject area:life science

Standard:

Knows about the diversity and unity that characterize life.

Benchmarks:

Knows how organisms are classified into a hierarchy of groups and subgroups based on similarities that reflect their evolutionary relationships (e.g., shared derived characteristics inherited from a common ancestor; degree of kinship estimated from the similarity of DNA sequences).

Grade level:6-8, 9-12

Subject area:technology

Standard:

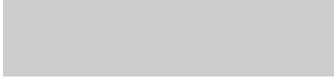
Understands the relationships among science, technology, society, and the individual.

Benchmarks:

Benchmark 6-8:

Knows that science cannot answer all questions and technology cannot solve all human problems or meet all human needs.

Benchmark 9-12:



Knows that science and technology are pursued for different purposes.