

Understanding Dreams

What they are and how to interpret them



Nerys Dee

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**Understanding Dreams: What
they are and how to interpret them**

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Dee N.

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Understanding Dreams is a classic guide that has sold over half a million copies. This accessible edition shows how learning to interpret your dreams is a key to understanding your deepest self. Dreams can serve as a vital link with the inner self – bringing us great insight and helping us find solutions to our daily problems and worries. Understanding Dreams identifies common dream themes, gives a psychological explanation for them and looks at famous dreams throughout history. Includes: • How to keep a dream diary • A dictionary of dream signs and symbols • How to interpret your dreams • How to use your dreams as a source of insight and guidance

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Introduction

When we understand our dreams, we begin to understand ourselves. Since we, and we alone, create our dreams for individual, personal reasons, the best, indeed the only, person to unravel the messages they convey is oneself. Throughout the ages there have been many approaches to dreams – mythological, religious, scientific and analytical. These all offer explanations which tend to encourage us to look outside ourselves for meanings and answers, instead of inside, where we single-handedly create our own dreams.

These outer-approaches to dreams and their meanings are invaluable for comparing our dreams with those of others and for discovering traditional and social significances relating to certain objects and symbols we find in them. Dream dictionaries are the ultimate expression of external dream interpretation, but many of the signs and symbols we use are unique and have personal meanings only. These vary, depending on individual experiences, beliefs, inherited cultural traditions and present-day society. An example of this is the sun as a symbol. In western tradition it is a sign of life, energy and renewed hope. Metaphorically, those upon whom ‘the sun shines’ are said to be fortunate in the extreme. If, on the other hand, you live or originate from hotter climates, this same sun may well be seen as a menace and a threat to existence. Similarly, if, as a child, you were badly sunburned in any land, traditional meanings would soon be overshadowed by personal memories of pain and suffering.

We need, therefore, to complement outer interpretation with inner understanding, thus making a blend of intellect and intuition, head and heart. All problems can be looked at in two distinctly different ways – practically or emotionally. Usually, when we are awake and thinking consciously, we view problems and situations from the practical, literal point of view, but when we are asleep and dreaming, these same problems and situations are seen from an intuitive and symbolic standpoint. This is looking at life from the inside, not from the outside. When we can do this, we are able to blend the two together, thus receiving the best of both worlds.

In dreams, inspirations are born, original ideas develop, acceptance is learned and solutions are found. How often have we gone to sleep tormented by a worry, to find on waking, that things are not quite as bad as they were yesterday? This is because we have ‘slept on it’ and allowed our hearts, which remain mostly silent during the day in the presence of our intellect, to speak to us throughout the night.

Understanding what we are saying to ourselves in a dream is very important; once we know they are potential sources of wisdom offering guidance in ways totally different from those found in the waking, outer world, there is no reason why we cannot usefully accept their bounty, as others have done in the past. For example, many inventors have discovered their unique creations through dreaming, just as some composers have first heard their own masterpieces in their sleep. Authors, too, have observed scenes and plots in a dream-state which, when set to words, have proved bestsellers.

The ancients knew all about this inner source and its keeper, and made conscious efforts to contact it. To help themselves in facing life’s problems, they used to ‘incubate a dream’. This simply means requesting the right dream at the right time. To do this they would retire to special temples and request help from the priestesses, priests, goddesses, gods, and sometimes from God Himself. Now, because most people regard their dreams as the incoherent ramblings of a worried mind, they rarely experience important dreams, and when they do, it is more by luck than judgement. Once we accept that dreams are inner sources of help, however, they, or that aspect of ourselves which produces them, respond immediately. Today there are no such temples but this does not mean that the age of creative dreaming belongs to the past. Far from it. Now, we can become our own priest or priestess and call upon our own forces, in our own inner temple.



the dream diary

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We dream every night but are not always able to remember them. Even so, the events encountered during sleep leave an unconscious message which colours our feelings towards daytime activities and problems. However, unless we are really interested in our nocturnal experiences, the chances are that they will fade from our memory soon after waking. If, on the other hand, we accept that they can sort out fact from fiction and offer us solutions to problems that we cannot solve during the day, then our dreams will respond with ever increasing enthusiasm.

To work with our dreams, which really means working with a lesser-known aspect of ourselves, we do need to remember them, and the best way to do this is to keep a Dream Diary. The fact that we intend to do this seems to remind our unconscious in some way, and even those who believe they 'never dream' find that, on waking, they soon remember at least one dream. There are no rules related to keeping a Dream Diary, but it helps if you follow a few practical, simple guidelines.

The best book you will ever read about dreams is the one you write yourself. It is, of course, none other than your own Dream Diary, so begin this today.

the diary **the commitment**

Make a special effort to purchase a suitable notebook and pen specifically for the purpose of recording your dreams. This practical commitment is the first step towards understanding your inner self; it is also ritualistic in alerting your unconscious to the fact that you acknowledge that which it has to offer.

Once you have your diary and pen, place them by your bedside and make sure that they remain in the same place. Should they not be there on waking, you may well have lost a most valuable dream by the time you have found them.

the number, time and date

It is important that you number each dream. You will then be able to see how many you have each night and how many over a period of time. You will find this varies considerably, a variation which you may be able to associate with the time of year, personal problems, positivity, negativity or other personal factors.

If the exact time you have a dream is known (this coincides with waking time) write it down as well. This encourages serial dreaming. For example, should you awake at 2am and write down a dream, you can then, with a little practice, return to that dream, should you wish to.

The date of each dream is most important, too. On looking back, you will find many were prophetic yet, at the time of the dream, such foresight was not recognised. Dating also reveals sequences and serial dreams as well as anniversaries which show the dreaming mind to be a fantastic calendar and cosmic clock in addition to its many other amazing characteristics.

speed

Since dreams fade quickly from memory it is essential that they are captured as soon as possible. This means writing them down immediately on waking. Any delay means loss of valuable material. Reaching for your pen on opening your eyes soon becomes a habit and within a few days you will have conditioned yourself to do this. So, on waking, write down as quickly as possible as much as you can. You can always fill in details afterwards, so if it is a particularly long dream, write down the theme first of all. If you cannot remember anything whatsoever of your night's events, write down instead your mood. This will give you a clue concerning its theme and message. In fact, the waking mood sets the trend for the day. If it is happy, then the day will at least begin on a positive note. If, on the other hand, the initial mood is gloomy, we feel we have 'got out of the wrong side of the bed', as the saying goes, and things may well go wrong from the start.

recording your dreams **atmosphere, mood and feeling**

The most important aspect of a dream is its atmosphere or mood, in other words 'the feel of a dream'. This not only colours our day but, when the dream is remembered, it gives a clue concerning its message. A residual haunting, gloomy, romantic or frightening feeling, for example, sets the scene before which the rest of the dream action takes place, so try to think of this as a backcloth for your dream stage.

themes

The theme of a dream reveals the object and subject under observation, so look for this next. It may be a journey, a quest or seeking, waiting for someone or something, or it may be about a fear or hope for the future. There are literal themes as well as metaphorical and symbolic themes, so look for these too. Discovering this tells you the reason for the dream – it also helps to give it a title.

characters, objects, signs and symbols

Next, note the characters seen in your dream. Some will be known to you but others will not. Unknown characters may be acting as stand-ins, that is they represent someone else, or symbolise certain principles in life. A policeman, for example, stands for authority, law and order, just as your mother in your dream may not be drawing attention to herself, but instead represents motherliness and other feminine qualities within you.

‘Characters’ include creatures and monsters. Again, some of these you will recognise, such as pigs, cows, cats and dogs. Others could be mere shapeless things which chase you. When investigating the message behind these, their metaphorical meanings are important. For example, we often refer to others as pigs, cows, cats and dogs-in-the-manger, and the menacing shape is often no more than our own shadow-self who is urging us not to run away from an obvious truth.

When looking for objects in your dreams note any cars, trains, houses, cups, trees, etc. Each of these will have a special meaning in the language of dreams. Among these you may find unrecognisable objects ranging from strange mechanical devices to unusual food, representing latent inventiveness and desires for a fuller, more exotic life.

Signs and symbols will, on occasions, also be found in your dreams. Signs act as signposts indicating which direction you should take in life, whereas symbols offer glimpses of both the inner, personal world and the collective, outer dimension. In these lie apparent answers to the mysteries of life.

movement and travel

Few dreams depict still-life scenes. Most have action in one form or another. Travelling, for example, denotes your way through life – your destinational path. The way you do this in a dream reveals a great deal about the effort you are putting into your life, whether you are ‘taking a ride’ at the expense of someone else, or in control of your own driving force. Walking and running tells you self-generated effort will help you to achieve your aim, whereas travelling on a crowded bus or train warns that you are being carried along with the rest of humanity and it is time to ‘get off the bandwagon’ and stand more on your own feet.

Bus stops and railway stations are resting places but one does not want to stay there too long. Such a discovery is a sign pointing out that you must make up your mind where you are going in life. Missing a train or bus is a common occurrence in a dream too, clearly warning you not to miss an opportunity when it turns up.

colours and conversations

Most dreams are in colour but, like a dream itself, this fades leaving only the impression in black and white. If colour does not play a significant part, that is, if it does not have a specific message to impart, it is not registered. Dreams, among other things, are economical. Sometimes the colour of a dream is linked with its atmosphere, mood or feeling. An over-all grey scene relates to a grey or dull situation. Sunshine, on the other hand, offers a message of hope on the horizon. Individual colours in your dream should be noted because the seven colours of the rainbow – red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet – each have a special dream-meaning, similar to that of waking awareness.

Conversations in your dream can themselves be colourfully symbolic and may include puns, sentences which at first appear to be nonsense, rhymes, keywords, numbers and apparently meaningless letters. Many words have double meanings so conversations may be in code, but since it is the dreamer who concocts them, the clue to their solution is also somewhere, within the dreamer.

red

relates to physical energy: in its positive form it offers an improvement in health; in its negative form it suggests antagonism – the proverbial red rag to a bull.

orange

is a friendly colour associated with social activity and cheerfulness. Depending on the circumstances this colour is either telling you to cheer up, or pointing out that you need to.

yellow

is the colour of sunshine and relates to intellectual matters. It is a clear colour, so seeing this in your dream tells you to think with your head – your intellect – to solve a problem.

green

means peace and relaxation. You either need more of this or you can expect it in the future, if this colour predominates.

blue

is the colour for protection. This, ties in with the blue sky which protects the earth from harmful radiation. Seeing blue in a dream may, therefore, indicate that you need to protect yourself in some way or, conversely, you are feeling 'blue'.

indigo

symbolises intuitive and instinctive qualities so this colour encourages you to allow your heart, the seat of inner feeling, to rule for a while.

violet

the colour nearest to heaven, symbolises spiritual aspirations and religious beliefs.

previous associations

Events from the previous day often reappear in dreams as an action replay. A television programme from the night before may be used by your dreaming mind to convey a personal situation, or some past experience might be conjured up to draw attention to a particular problem, hope or aim that needs special understanding, so look for the link between past happenings and the present dream. These will reflect certain likenesses providing valuable information which, when piecing together all the component parts noted in your Dream Diary, goes to make up the dream as a whole.

Having recorded all the different aspects relating to a dream you will have transformed the scene and action into words, which serves as a permanent reminder. Later in the day, if not immediately convenient, write out your dream in detail. Do not, however, delay for too long, as time will tend to rob you of valuable details and evidence.

a page from your diary

dream 1	day and date:	Wednesday, 6th june 1990
	time:	between 6.00am and 7.30am
	number:	37
	feeling/atmosphere:	perplexing
	theme:	lost in unknown territory
	movement/travel:	driving car
	objects, signs etc:	car, roads, trees, map
	colours/conversations:	dark – no colours, no conversation
	previous association:	none recalled

the dream – ‘lost’

I was driving a car, not mine, down twisting lanes, and did not seem to know where it was leading. It was getting dark and no one was around to ask if I was on the right road. The map was open but I did not look at it. On waking I felt quite frightened. This feeling stayed with me most of the day. It was difficult to relate to a personal fear.

remembering dreams

Some dreams are so real they make strong impressions which make them hard to forget. Others, however, are fleeting while yet others vanish without a trace. One way to remember them is positively to programme yourself before going to sleep. By appealing to the power of your creative imagination you can link a dream with your memory. This aspect of your unconscious is always ready to receive suggestions so all you have to do is to visualise and talk to yourself in a determined way.

Once you feel ready to go to sleep, turn your attention to dreams. Think of previous ones if you can. Then, relax by breathing in to the count of three, and breathing out to the count of ten. Repeat this twice more, then breathe normally. Without moving, imagine you have just woken up in the morning and as you do, you reach for the pen and write down a dream. Bring your attention back to the present and become aware of feeling comfortable and warm. Finally, before dropping off to sleep, speak to yourself, saying 'In the morning I shall remember my dreams.'

The best book you will ever read on dreams is the one you write yourself. This is, of course, your Dream Diary.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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