# Sigmund Freud Dream Interpretation

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In the early part of the 19th century dream interpretation had fallen out of fashion and almost no one practiced this art seriously. In the early part of the century dreams were thought to have no meaning at all and to be simply the result of a heavy meal before bedtime, noises heard in the night, and other trivial causes.

By the latter part of the 19th century however, Sigmund Freud would revolutionize the world of dreams and dream interpretation with his radical new ideas incorporating dreams and deep seated childhood fears.

Born in 1865, Sigmund Freud revolutionized the world of psychiatry and dream interpretation with his seminal work “The Interpretation of Dreams”. Freud started to analyze the dreams of his patients and he used this dream analysis to diagnose and treat their psychiatric ills.

Freud also studied dreams as a way to understand certain aspects of the personality especially those aspects that lead to psychological problems and disorders. Freud believed that nothing that human beings did happened by chance and that every action, no matter how small or seemingly trivial, was at some level motivated by the unconscious mind.

Of course in order for a civilized, modern society to function certain primal needs and desires must be repressed and Freud’s theory was that these repressed urges and desires were released by the unconscious during dream sleep.

Doctor Freud saw dreams as a direct connection to the unconscious mind and he studied that connection through the interpretation of symbolic objects found in dreams. The theory

was that with the conscious mind acts as a guard on the unconscious preventing certain repressed feelings from coming to the surface. During sleep however, this conscious guard is absent and the subconscious mind is free to run wild and express its most hidden desires.

Freud was especially interested in the sexual content of dreams and he often saw ordinary objects in dreams as representations of sexual desire. To Freud every long, slender item encountered in a dream, from a knife to a flagpole, was a phallic image while any receptacle such as a bowl or vase represented the female genitalia.

Freud believed in five stages of personality and he saw dreams as manifestations of desired stemming from each of these five stages. To Freud personality formation consisted of:

Stage One – Oral/Dependency
Freud's theory was that any needs not satisfied during the oral/dependency stage would cause the person to go through life trying to meet them. Thus, to Freud habits such as overeating, drinking to much and smoking were all oral fixations. People suffering from these oral fixations often dreamed about their unmet needs and desires.

Stage Two – Anal/Potty Training
Freud held that improper potty training could traumatize a child and cause him or her to become anal retentive, rigid and controlling. Such traumatized children often develop obsessive compulsive disorders as well. Recurring dreams of being out of control, such as dreams of falling were common in such people.

Stage Three – Phallic
According to Freud the personality is completely developed by the time stage three rolls around. The third stage of personality is identified with the Oedipus and Electra complexes. The Oedipus complex represents the love a male child feels toward the mother, coupled with fear and jealousy

of the male parent. The Electra complex is the female version of Oedipus in which the female child feels anger toward the mother and develops “penis envy.”

Stage Four – Latency
Unlike the other stages the latency period is a time of relative calm. During this stage, the aggression and sexual urges are less intense and little psycho-sexual conflict is exhibited.

Stage Five – Genital
This is the period of sexual maturity and the creation and enhancement of life. The stage of sexual maturity is where reproduction, intellectual activity and artistic pursuits take place.

Freud believed that wish fulfillment was the source of dreams and that dreamers used dreams as a way to satisfy the fixations they had developed during childhood. In addition, issues like power and control frequently manifested themselves in dreams. The central part of Freud’s dream theory was that thoughts and desires repressed during the day were free to run wild during the dream stage.

Since Freud’s death many have criticized him for seeing sexual motivation behind every dream object. Many have pointed out that Freud was born into the sexually repressed Victorian era and his preoccupation with sexual matters could have been as much a product of the times in which he lived as a valid scientific theory. Even so, many of Freud’s dream interpretations have proven valid and are still used by psychologists and dream researchers today.