

DREAM RESEARCH

Read the text. For the following questions, in which part of the text (A–E) does the writer mention the following?

1. Psychologists have studied dreams since the 1800s. _____
2. The use of subjects being asked to describe their dreams on paper. _____
3. How we practise aspects of real life while sleeping. _____
4. Dreaming is often related to stressful situations. _____
5. That dreams are often difficult to recall. _____
6. The use of modern scientific equipment in dream studies. _____
7. There's a great deal we don't know about the subject. _____
8. How we can think about the scientific study of dreams in two ways. _____
9. That dreams will continue to interest us in the future. _____
10. That dream analysis is not a new subject. _____
11. The subject matter of many dreams is universal. _____

How do scientists study dreams?

A

How often do you dream? Every night? Once a month? Some people even claim that they never have dreams though this is probably untrue – it's just a case that they don't recall them. Of all our human experiences, dreams are probably among the most personal and mysterious. They're also one of the most ephemeral. Memories of our dreams are often incomplete. You may wake from sleep with images from a dream and even the emotions, only to lose those memories quickly, often within just a few minutes. Throughout human history, people have sought to analyze, interpret, and decode such dreams. Ancient cultures often regarded dreams as mystical, and their dream interpreters were relied upon to translate the meanings and messages of dreams.

B

During the 19th and 20th century, psychoanalysis looked more deeply into dream interpretation. Typically, they would make use of dream reports in which people waking up from a deep sleep would be asked to write down any of the dreams they recalled. These provided a fascinating insight into the patterns and themes of dreaming. This method of using dream reports as a basis for scientific investigation is still actively in use today. Dream

reports can be collected in sleep laboratories where sleepers are woken at specific intervals in order to retrieve dream information. Common themes include dreams of falling, being chased, of flying and of being unprepared for a test or exam. Interestingly, the same events occur in the minds of people of diverse cultures, backgrounds, and experiences.

C

One approach to dream investigation involves the study of dream itself. This might include looking at the actual content of the dream such as the themes, emotions, images and events that occur within dreams themselves. For many people this is the most interesting aspect. However, there is a second approach which is more interested in the activity of the brain and body while the dreaming occurs. This can be done by studying a person while sleeping and a great deal of the latest research combines elements of both approaches to explain our reasons for dreaming.

D

In recent decades, scientists are increasingly using technology which monitors the brain's activity. Brain imaging tools are used regularly to capture data about the neural activity associated with sleep and dreaming. Research using brain-imaging techniques has allowed scientists to explore a wide range of theories about the purpose and function of dreaming. Among others, scientists are actively investigating ideas that dreams are an extension of waking consciousness. In other words, dreams are a kind of rehearsal space for the mind to play out difficult waking-life situations.

E

Dreams are a compelling area of research for scientists and continue to fascinate us. There's no doubt that there is still so much to learn about how the brain and mind operate while we dream. There is also the unanswered question of why it seems to be such a necessary human function, not to mention some animals which also appear to dream. Finally, interpreting what we dream about is something that affects us on a daily basis. For all the scientific attention paid to dreaming, many of the most fundamental and important questions about dreaming remain unanswered. For scientists, dreams are – at least for now – an endlessly fascinating mystery.