

READING CHALLENGE

Why We Dream

Every night your brain creates a world of its own — but why? Scientists are still trying to find out

Science & Nature | A2 Level | ~12 min read | 5 Quiz Questions

Level	A2 (Elementary)
Age Group	Teens (11–16)
Skill	Reading
Topic	Science & Nature
Duration	~15 minutes
Vocabulary	15 words with definitions
Quiz	5 multiple-choice questions

Article

Last night, you probably had a **dream**. Maybe you were flying over a city. Maybe you were late for school and you could not find your classroom. Maybe you were talking to someone you have not seen for a long time. When you woke up, the dream disappeared. But for a few seconds, it felt completely real. So what is happening inside your **brain** when you **sleep**? Why do we dream? Scientists have studied this question for many years. They still do not have a complete answer. But they have learned some very interesting things.

What Happens When You Sleep?

Sleep is not just one thing. It has different **stages**. When you first close your eyes, you fall into a light **sleep**. Your body relaxes. Your heart beats more slowly. After some time, you go into a deeper sleep. Your **brain** is still active, but in a different way. Then, after about 90 minutes, something interesting happens. Your eyes start to move quickly under your eyelids. Scientists call this stage **REM** sleep. REM stands for Rapid Eye Movement. This is the stage when most **dreaming** happens. Your brain becomes very active during REM sleep. It sends **signals** to different parts of your body. Your heart beats faster. Your breathing changes. But your arms and legs cannot move. This is to stop you from acting out your dreams!

How Much Do We Dream?

Most people **dream** every single night. But many people do not remember their dreams in the morning. Scientists say that the **average** person has three to five dreams every night. Some people have up to seven dreams in one night! Each dream usually lasts between five and twenty minutes. In a whole lifetime, a person spends about six years dreaming. That is a lot of time. Children dream more than adults. Babies spend about half of their **sleep** time in **REM** sleep. This means babies probably dream a lot. But of course, babies cannot tell us what they dream about.

Why Do We Dream? The Big Question

This is the question that **scientists** find most difficult. Nobody knows for sure why we **dream**. But there are several interesting theories. The first **theory** is about **memory**. Some scientists think that dreaming helps your **brain** organise memories. During the day, you learn many things. At night, your brain sorts through all this information. It decides what to keep and what to forget. Dreams may be a part of this process. The second theory is about **emotion**. Some scientists think that dreaming helps you deal with difficult feelings. When something scary or sad happens in real life, you often dream about it. Dreaming may help your brain process these emotions. It is like a kind of therapy while you **sleep**.

More Theories About Dreams

There is also a third **theory**. Some **scientists** think that **dreaming** is a way to practise for dangerous situations. In a dream, you can run away from danger, solve a problem, or face a fear. Your **brain** practises these things while you are safe in your bed. A fourth theory says that dreams have no special meaning at all. This theory says that during **REM sleep**, the brain just sends random **signals**. These signals create pictures and stories. But the stories do not mean anything important. They are just the brain being active. Most scientists today think the truth is somewhere in the middle. Dreams probably help with **memory** and **emotion**. But not every dream has a deep meaning.

The Most Common Dreams

Some **dreams** are very **common**. People all around the world have similar dreams. The most common dream is falling. You feel yourself falling from a high place and then you wake up suddenly. Another very common dream is flying. You feel light and free, moving through the air. Many people say this is a wonderful feeling. Other common dreams include: being late for something important, taking a test that you did not study for, being chased by someone or something, and losing your teeth. Nightmares — very scary dreams — are also common, especially in children. About 85% of adults say they have had a **nightmare** at least once. Children have nightmares more often than adults. This is normal and not something to worry about.

Can Dreams Help Us?

Some people say that **dreams** have helped them in real life. The **scientist** Dmitri Mendeleev said he saw the Periodic Table of Elements in a dream in 1869. Paul McCartney, the famous musician, said the melody for the song 'Yesterday' came to him in a dream. Of course, we cannot be sure if these stories are completely true. But many **creative** people say that their dreams give them new ideas. Your **brain** is still working hard while you **sleep**. It is making connections between ideas. It is not **conscious** of the normal rules of everyday life. So it can think in unusual and creative ways. The next time you wake up from an interesting dream, try to write it down before you forget. You never know — it might give you a great idea!

Vocabulary

These 15 words appear in the article. Learn them to help your reading.

Word	Definition
brain	the organ inside your head that controls your thoughts, feelings, and body
dream	images, sounds, and feelings that you experience in your mind while you are sleeping
sleep	the natural state of rest when your eyes are closed and your body is not active
memory	the ability to remember things, or something that you remember from the past
nightmare	a very scary or unpleasant dream that makes you feel frightened or upset
scientist	a person who studies nature, the human body, or the physical world
stage	one part of a process that happens in a particular order
emotion	a strong feeling such as happiness, fear, sadness, or excitement
common	happening often or existing in large numbers; not unusual or rare
average	the usual or normal amount — calculated by adding numbers and dividing by how many there are
theory	an idea that tries to explain why something happens, but is not yet completely proved
signal	a piece of information sent from one place to another, often as an electrical message
creative	able to produce new and interesting ideas, or connected with making new things
REM	short for Rapid Eye Movement — the stage of sleep when your eyes move fast and you dream most
conscious	awake and aware of what is happening around you and inside your mind

Comprehension Quiz

Choose the best answer (A, B, C or D) for each question.

1. What does 'REM' stand for?

- A. Really Exciting Moment
- B. Rapid Eye Movement
- C. Rest and Energy Mode
- D. Regular Eye Memory

2. How many dreams does the average person have each night?

- A. One or two
- B. Three to five
- C. Eight to ten
- D. About twenty

3. Why can't your arms and legs move during REM sleep?

- A. Because you are too tired from the day
- B. Because the bed is too comfortable
- C. Because your brain stops them to prevent you from acting out your dreams
- D. Because your body temperature drops very low

4. Which of these is described as the most common dream?

- A. Flying through the air
- B. Being late for something
- C. Falling from a high place
- D. Losing your teeth

5. What did Paul McCartney say he found in a dream?

- A. The words to a famous poem
- B. The melody for the song 'Yesterday'
- C. The idea for a new scientific theory

D. The design for a musical instrument

Answer Key

#	Answer	Correct Option
1	B	Rapid Eye Movement
2	B	Three to five
3	C	Because your brain stops them to prevent you from acting out your dreams
4	C	Falling from a high place
5	B	The melody for the song 'Yesterday'