

12 Famous Dreams of Creativity and Inventions

Mind Power News

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Throughout history, artists, inventors, writers and scientists have solved problems in their dreams. Brilliant Dreams has compiled a list of twelve famous discoveries and creativity in literature, science, music and even sports attributed to dreams.

1. Paul McCartney Finds "Yesterday" In a Dream

Paul McCartney is one of the most famous singer/ songwriters of all time. According to the Guinness Book of Records, his Beatles song "Yesterday" (1965) has the most cover versions of any song ever written and, according to record label BMI, was performed over seven million times in the 20th century.

The tune for "Yesterday" came to Paul McCartney in a dream...

The Beatles were in London in 1965 filming Help! and McCartney was staying in a small attic room of his family's house on Wimpole Street. One morning, in a dream he heard a classical string ensemble playing, and, as McCartney tells it:

"I woke up with a lovely tune in my head. I thought, 'That's great, I wonder what that is?' There was an upright piano next to me, to the right of the bed by the window. I got out of bed, sat at the piano, found G, found F sharp minor 7th -- and that leads you through then to B to E minor, and finally back to E. It all leads forward logically. I liked the melody a lot, but because I'd dreamed it, I couldn't believe I'd written it. I thought, 'No, I've never written anything like this before.' But I had the tune, which was the most magic thing!"

2. Mary Shelley's Frankenstein Inspired By a Dream

In the summer of 1816, nineteen-year-old Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin and her lover, the poet Percy Shelley (whom she married later that year), visited the poet Lord Byron at his villa beside Lake Geneva in Switzerland. Stormy weather frequently forced them indoors, where they and Byron's other guests sometimes read from a volume of ghost stories. One evening, Byron challenged his guests to each write one themselves.

Mary's story, inspired by a dream, became Frankenstein.

"When I placed my head upon my pillow, I did not sleep, nor could I be said to think... I saw -- with shut eyes, but acute mental vision -- I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half-vital motion. Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavor to mock the stupendous Creator of the world.

...I opened mine in terror. The idea so possessed my mind, that a thrill of fear ran through me, and I wished to exchange the ghastly image of my fancy for the realities around. ...I could not so easily get rid of my hideous phantom; still it haunted me. I must try to think of something else. I recurred to my ghost story -- my tiresome, unlucky ghost story! O! if I could only contrive one which would frighten my reader as I myself had been frightened that night!

Swift as light and as cheering was the idea that broke upon me. 'I have found it! What terrified me will terrify others; and I need only describe the spectre which had haunted me my midnight pillow.' On the morrow I announced that I had thought of a story. I began that day with the words, 'It was on a dreary night of November', making only a transcript of the grim terrors of my waking dream."

3. Dream Leads to Nobel Prize

Otto Loewi (1873-1961), a German born physiologist, won the Nobel Prize for medicine in 1936 for his work on the chemical transmission of nerve impulses. In 1903, Loewi had the idea that there might be a chemical transmission of the nervous impulse rather than an electrical one, which was the common held belief, but he was at a loss on how to prove it. He let the idea slip to the back of his mind until 17 years later he had the following dream. According to Loewi:

"The night before Easter Sunday of that year I awoke, turned on the light, and jotted down a few notes on a tiny slip of paper. Then I fell asleep again. It occurred to me at 6 o'clock in the morning that during the night I had written down something most important, but I was unable to decipher the scrawl. The next night, at 3 o'clock, the idea returned. It was the design of an experiment to determine whether or not the hypothesis of chemical transmission that I had uttered 17 years ago was correct. I got up

immediately, went to the laboratory, and performed a single experiment on a frog's heart according to the nocturnal design."

It took Loewi a decade to carry out a decisive series of tests to satisfy his critics, but ultimately the result of his initial dream induced experiment became the foundation for the theory of chemical transmission of the nervous impulse and led to a Nobel Prize!

Dr. Loewi noted: "Most so called 'intuitive' discoveries are such associations made in the subconscious."

4. Abraham Lincoln Dreamt of His Assassination

President Abraham Lincoln recounted the following dream to his wife just a few days prior to his assassination:

"About ten days ago, I retired very late. I had been up waiting for important dispatches from the front. I could not have been long in bed when I fell into a slumber, for I was weary. I soon began to dream.

There seemed to be a death-like stillness about me. Then I heard subdued sobs, as if a number of people were weeping. I thought I left my bed and wandered downstairs. There the silence was broken by the same pitiful sobbing, but the mourners were invisible. I went from room to room; no living person was in sight, but the same mournful sounds of distress met me as I passed along. It was light in all the rooms; every object was familiar to me; but where were all the people who were grieving as if their hearts would break?

I was puzzled and alarmed. What could be the meaning of all this? Determined to find the cause of a state of things so mysterious and so shocking, I kept on until I arrived at the East Room, which I entered. There I met with a sickening surprise. Before me was a catafalque, on which rested a corpse wrapped in funeral vestments. Around it were stationed soldiers who were acting as guards; and there was a throng of people, some gazing mournfully upon the corpse whose face was covered, others weeping pitifully.

'Who is dead in the White House?' I demanded of one of the soldiers "The President" was his answer; "he was killed by an assassin!" Then came a loud burst of grief from the crowd, which awoke me from my dream."

Lincoln ascribed powerful meanings to his dreams. One of his recurring dreams in particular he considered foretelling and a sign of major events soon to occur. He had this dream the night before his assassination. On the morning of that lamentable day, President Lincoln was discussing matters of the war with General Grant during a cabinet meeting and believed that big news from General Sherman on the front would soon arrive. When Grant asked why he thought so, Lincoln responded:

"I had a dream last night; and ever since this war began I have had the same dream just before every event of great national importance. It portends some important event that will happen very soon."

His friend and law partner, Ward Hill Lamon, noted that Byron's "The Dream" was one of Lincoln's favorite poems and he often heard him repeat the following lines:

Sleep hath its own world,
A boundary between the things misnamed
Death and existence: Sleep hath its own world,
And a wide realm of wild reality,
And dreams in their development have breath,
And tears, and tortures, and the touch of joy;
They leave a weight upon our waking thoughts,
They take a weight from off waking toils,
They do divide our being;

5. Kekulé - Dreams of Molecules & Benzene Structure

Friedrich August Kekulé von Stradonitz is a remarkable figure in the history of chemistry, specifically organic chemistry.

Twice Kekulé had dreams that led to major discoveries!

Kekulé discovered the tetravalent nature of carbon, the formation of chemical/ organic "Structure Theory", but he did not make this breakthrough by experimentation alone. He had a dream! As he described in a speech given at the Deutsche Chemische Gesellschaft (German Chemical Society):

Kekule Dreams and Discovery - Benzene Dream

"I fell into a reverie, and lo, the atoms were gamboling before my eyes! Whenever, hitherto, these diminutive beings had appeared to me, they had always been in motion; but up to that time, I had never been able to discern the nature of their motion. Now, however, I saw how, frequently, two smaller atoms united to form a pair; how a larger one embraced the two smaller ones; how still larger ones kept hold of three or even four of the smaller; whilst the whole kept whirling in a giddy dance. I saw how the larger ones formed a chain, dragging the smaller ones after them, but only at the ends of the chain. . . The cry of the conductor: "Clapham Road," awakened me from my dreaming; but I spent part of the night in putting on paper at least sketches of these dream forms. This was the origin of the Structural Theory."

Later, he had a dream that helped him discover that the Benzene molecule, unlike other known organic compounds, had a circular structure rather than a linear one... solving a problem that had been confounding chemists:

"...I was sitting writing on my textbook, but the work did not progress; my thoughts were elsewhere. I turned my chair to the fire and dozed. Again the atoms were gamboling before my eyes. This time the smaller groups kept modestly in the background. My mental eye, rendered more acute by the repeated visions of the kind, could now distinguish larger structures of manifold conformation; long rows sometimes more closely fitted together all twining and twisting in snake-like motion. But look! What was that? One of the snakes had seized hold of its own tail, and the form whirled mockingly before my eyes. As if by a flash of lightning I awoke; and this time also I spent the rest of the night in working out the consequences of the hypothesis."

The snake seizing its own tail gave Kekulé the circular structure idea he needed to solve the Benzene problem!

Said an excited Kekulé to his colleagues, "Let us learn to dream!"

6. Madame C.J. Walker - From Dream to Millionaire

Madame C.J. Walker (1867-1919) is cited by the Guinness Book of Records as the first female American self-made millionaire. She was also the first member of her family born free.

Madame Walker founded and built a highly successful African-American cosmetic company that made her a millionaire many times over. Walker was suffering from a scalp infection that caused her to lose most of her hair in the 1890's. She began experimenting with patented medicines and hair-care products.

Then, she had a dream that solved her problems:

“He answered my prayer, for one night I had a dream, and in that dream a big, black man appeared to me and told me what to mix up in my hair. Some of the remedy was grown in Africa, but I sent for it, mixed it, put it on my scalp, and in a few weeks my hair was coming in faster than it had ever fallen out. I tried it on my friends; it helped them. I made up my mind to begin to sell it.”

Walker was an entrepreneur, philanthropist and social activist. She best sums up her rise from a childhood in the poor south to being the head of an international, multi-million dollar corporation in the following quote:

"I am a woman who came from the cotton fields of the South. From there I was promoted to the washtub. From there I was promoted to the cook kitchen. And from there I promoted myself into the business of manufacturing hair goods and preparations....I have built my own factory on my own ground."

7. The Sewing Machine

Elias Howe invented the sewing machine in 1845. He had the idea of a machine with a needle which would go through a piece of cloth but he couldn't figure out exactly how it would work. He first tried using a needle that was pointed at both ends, with an eye in the middle, but it was a failure. Then one night he dreamt he was taken prisoner by a group of natives. They were dancing around him with spears. As he saw them move around him, he noticed that their spears all had holes near their tips.

When he woke up he realized that the dream had brought the solution to his problem. By locating a hole at the tip of the needle, the thread could be caught after it went through cloth thus making his machine operable.

He changed his design to incorporate the dream idea and found it worked!

8. The Strange Dream of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

The novelist Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894) described dreams as occurring in "that small theater of the brain which we keep brightly lighted all night long."

Stevenson said of his now classic novel *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, it was "conceived, written, re-written, re-re-written, and printed inside ten weeks" in 1886. And was conceived in a dream as he describes:

"For two days I went about racking my brains for a plot of any sort; and on the second night I dreamed the scene at the window, and a scene afterward split in two, in which Hyde, pursued for some crime, took the powder and underwent the change in the presence of his pursuers."

Mrs. Stevenson has related picturesquely how one night Louis cried out horror-stricken, how she woke him up and he protested, "Why did you waken me? I was dreaming a fine boggy-tale!" She also related how he appeared the next morning excitedly exclaiming, "I have got my schilling-shocker -- I have got my schilling-shocker!"

Stevenson wrote extensively about how his passion for writing interacted with his remarkable dreams and said that, from an early age, his dreams were so vivid and moving that they were more entertaining to him personally than any literature. He learned early in his life that he could dream complete stories and that he could even go back to the same dreams on succeeding nights to give them a different ending. Later he trained himself to remember his dreams and to dream plots for his books.

9. Jack Nicklaus Finds a New Golf Swing in a Dream

Golfer Jack Nicklaus found a new way to hold his golf club in a dream, which he credits to improving his golf game. In 1964, Nicklaus was having a bad slump and routinely shooting in the high seventies. After suddenly regaining top scores he reported:

"Wednesday night I had a dream and it was about my golf swing. I was hitting them pretty good in the dream and all at once I realized I wasn't holding the club the way I've

actually been holding it lately. I've been having trouble collapsing my right arm taking the club head away from the ball, but I was doing it perfectly in my sleep. So when I came to the course yesterday morning I tried it the way I did in my dream and it worked. I shot a sixty-eight yesterday and a sixty-five today."

10. Mathematical Genius & Dreamer- Srinivasa Ramanujan

Srinivasa Ramanujan (1887-1920) was one of India's greatest mathematical geniuses. He made substantial contributions to analytical theory of numbers and worked on elliptical functions, continued fractions, and infinite series. In 1914, he was invited in to Cambridge University by the English mathematician GH Hardy who recognized his unconventional genius. He worked there for five years producing startling results and proved over 3,000 theorems in his lifetime.

According to Ramanujan, inspiration and insight for his work many times came to him in his dreams...

A Hindu goddess, named Namakkal, would appear and present mathematical formulae which he would verify after waking. Such dreams often repeated themselves and the connection with the dream world as a source for his work was constant throughout his life.

Ramanujan describes one of his dreams of mathematical discovery:

"While asleep I had an unusual experience. There was a red screen formed by flowing blood as it were. I was observing it. Suddenly a hand began to write on the screen. I became all attention. That hand wrote a number of results in elliptic integrals. They stuck to my mind. As soon as I woke up, I committed them to writing..."

11. Dreams and The King of Horror

Novelist Stephen King describes how dreams affect his writings in an interview with UK reporter Stan Nicholls:

Nicholls: "If the inspiration for Misery didn't come from a real-life incident, where did it come from?"

King: "Like the ideas for some of my other novels, that came to me in a dream. In fact, it happened when I was on Concord, flying over here, to Brown's. I fell asleep on the plane, and dreamt about a woman who held a writer prisoner and killed him, skinned him, fed the remains to her pig and bound his novel in human skin. His skin, the writer's skin. I said to myself, 'I have to write this story.' Of course, the plot changed quite a bit in the telling. But I wrote the first forty or fifty pages right on the landing here, between the ground floor and the first floor of the hotel."

"Another time, when I got road-blocked in my novel *It*, I had a dream about leeches inside discarded refrigerators. I immediately woke up and thought, 'That is where this is supposed to go.' Dreams are just another part of life. To me, it's like seeing something on the street you can use in your fiction. You take it and plug it right in. Writers are scavengers by nature."

During an interview with Naomi Epel for her book *Writers Dreaming*, King described his use of dreams this way:

"I've always used dreams the way you'd use mirrors to look at something you couldn't see head-on, the way that you use a mirror to look at your hair in the back. To me that's what dreams are supposed to do. I think that dreams are a way that people's minds illustrate the nature of their problems. Or maybe even illustrate the answers to their problems in symbolic language."

[Anne Rice, another leading horror writer, also noted she uses dreams -- both fortuitous ones and those more intentionally provided for her books.]

12. Subliminal Clues From Fossil Perceived In Dream

Louis Agassiz (1807-1883) was a Swiss born naturalist, zoologist, geologist, and teacher who emigrated to the US in 1846. He trained and influenced a generation of American zoologists and paleontologists and is one of the founding fathers of the modern American scientific tradition

While Agassiz was working on his vast work "*Poissons Fossiles*" a list of all known fossil fish, he came across a specimen in a stone slab which he was, at first, unable to figure out. He hesitated to classify it and extract it since an incorrect approach could ruin the

specimen. At that time, Agassiz reports having a dream three nights in a row in which he saw the fish in perfect original condition. The first two nights -- being unprepared -- he did not record his image.

By the third night he was ready with pen and paper, and when the fish appeared again in the dream he drew it in the dark, still half asleep. The next day he looked at his drawing which had remarkably different features from the ones he had been working out, hastened to his laboratory and extracting the fossil realized it corresponded exactly to his dream.

Agassiz' creative dream of the fossilized fish may have been induced by having perceived unconsciously a clue in the stone slab which he had ignored while awake.

His dream may have emphasized and drawn his attention to stimuli he had perceived subliminally while he was awake!

What Discoveries are Locked Away in YOUR Dreams?

These 12 Famous Dreams are just a small sample of those that have been recorded. There are hundreds of examples of famous creativity, ideas and discoveries that have been induced or materialized from dreams and the dreaming subconscious. Untold numbers of great writers, poets, musicians, scientists, philosophers and entrepreneurs have had such amazing dreams throughout history.