

Using Your Dreams

can help you solve problems in your writing and your career

While writing a screenplay, I grew increasingly puzzled over how to end it. Then a dream provided the answer. I dreamt of an etching that hung on my wall. In the black and white drawing, five women were entwined by their work and play. The next morning, I jotted down this scene:

INT. JENNIFER'S LIVING ROOM

Jennifer's wedding presents fill every available space. Moving boxes line the walls. Jennifer, in her nightgown, goes to one marked "Salvation Army." She opens it, removes a typewriter, and puts it on the table. She returns to the box and takes out an etching of five women playing, writing, and painting together. She studies the picture. Jennifer slumps in a chair and stares at her presents.

Several scenes later, at the altar, Jennifer, who midway through the movie had decided to give up her flourishing career as a television news reporter to marry Mr. Wrong, stuns her friends when she announces she is calling off her marriage. She promises to return to news reporting with a renewed social conscience and to find strength in herself.

Fortunately for Jennifer, her creator had a nocturnal message that saved the heroine of this movie, *Real Dreams*, from a terrible mistake. For the writer, at the time disillusioned with her own career, this dream affirmed her work and launched her writing in a new direction.

Finding New Directions

Dreams can guide the directions, content, and business of your writing and your work. They can literally help you write articles, books, and films.

Here are some other examples:

- An aspiring documentary filmmaker had a dream in which a dog was chasing her. She thought the dog represented society's attitudes toward

JOYCE LYNN

her. Then she realized that the animal symbolized her own fears and that she possessed the ability to confront them. Within three months, she edited rough film footage that had sat on a shelf for months and arranged two sold-out screenings of her film.

Dreams are an incredibly effective tool for achieving your writing goals. They allow you to look within yourself rather than to outside "authorities."

- A writer was planning a talking-heads television program of health experts when a voice in a dream said, "You're doing this all wrong," and dictated a revised script in symbolic form.
- An artist dreamt she and other women artists were called to bear witness against the Gulf War. She had thought artists were helpless to elicit social change. The dream led her to create a series of visual communications about war and peace and helped her make sense of a troubled world for herself and others.
- A dream told a writer to check every "Sequoia" in the phone book. This tip led her to a director for her film demonstration tape.

Harnessing the Power of Dreams

Getting inspiration from dreams doesn't happen automatically. It does take some effort on your part. How can you draw on this inner wisdom?

•First, record your dreams.

Preferably, use a journal. Some dreamers even find it advantageous to

keep a tape recorder by the bed and to transcribe their dreams at a later time.

Making a record of your dreams gives you a written reference and stimulates more dreams.

• Second, take time to understand the dream's meaning.

Dreams remind me of the short stories I liked to analyze in high school. For other writers, the word plays, the verbal visual images, and the story-like quality of dreams offer a particular challenge.

One helpful book for understanding dreams is the *Dream Dictionary* by Tony Crisp (Dell Books, 1990).

• Third, incorporate the dream into your work and life.

See whether your dream may guide you in a specific and possibly new or renewed direction or if it offers you a perspective on what to say, how to say it, or how to promote it.

Sometimes the dream's value is immediately clear, sometimes its gift will reveal itself as part of the creative process.

Dreams have guiding and transformative powers. They allow you to look within yourself rather than to outside "authorities" for the answers. Dreams empower you. They are an incredibly effective tool for achieving your writing goals.

Joyce Lynn is a journalist whose articles have appeared in numerous national publications. She uses dreams in the business as well as the content of her writing and in every aspect of her life. She offers individual consultations, presentations, and workshops for those who want to use the natural resource of dreams in their writing and work.

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