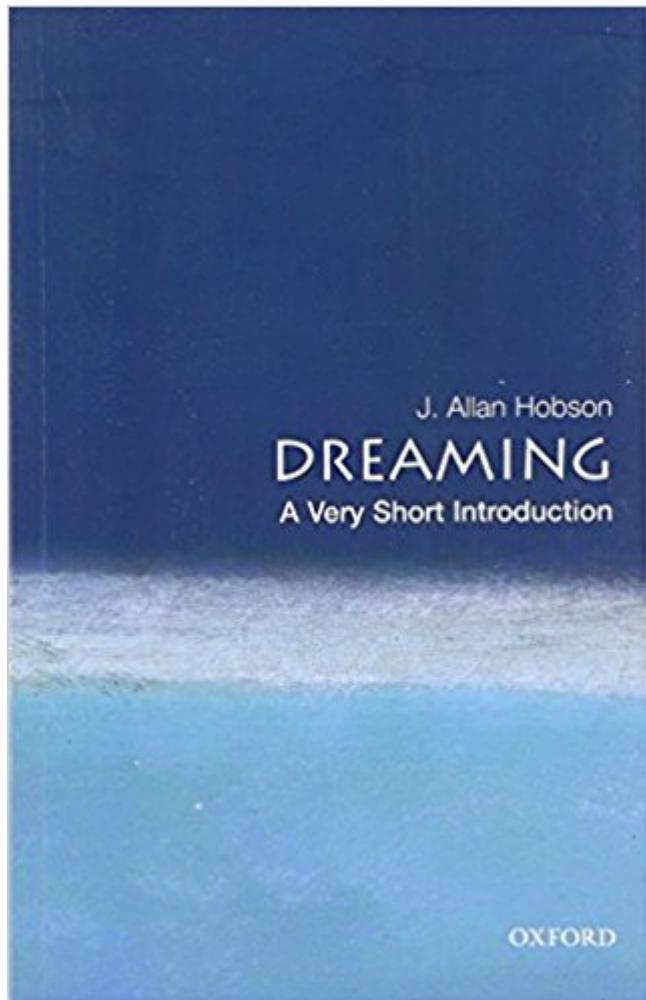


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# Dreaming: A Very Short Introduction



## Synopsis

What is dreaming, and what causes it? Why are dreams so strange and why are they so hard to remember? Replacing dream mystique with modern dream science, J. Allan Hobson provides a new and increasingly complete picture of how dreaming is created by the brain. Focusing on dreaming to explain the mechanisms of sleep, this book explores how the new science of dreaming is affecting theories in psychoanalysis, and how it is helping our understanding of the causes of mental illness. J. Allan Hobson investigates his own dreams to illustrate and explain some of the fascinating discoveries of modern sleep science, while challenging some of the traditionally accepted theories about the meaning of dreams. He reveals how dreaming maintains and develops the mind, why we go crazy in our dreams in order to avoid doing so when we are awake, and why sleep is not just good for health but essential for life.

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## Customer Reviews

‘Review from previous edition ’...engaging new book...’ ’Robert Matthews, The Sunday Telegraph’ A short introduction to the science of dreaming that examines succinctly questions about the function, activation and interpretation of dreams as well as investigating the relationships between dreaming, learning, memory and consciousness. And there are more than a few eye-openers as Hobson lays bare the secrets of a process that has both fascinated and mystified man for centuries.’ ’Northern Echo’ ’for the excitement of science at the frontiers of consciousness theory and research, Allan Hobson’s book is warmly recommended.’ ’Times Literary Supplement’ ’an enlightening book that will

provide much food for thought in anyone who reads it."Good Book Guide`a cool outline of modern knowledge about dreams"New Scientist

J. Allan Hobson is Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, Boston, Massachusetts. He was the recipient of the Distinguished Scientist Award of the Sleep Research Society in 1988. His major research interests are the neurophysiological basis of the mind and behaviour; sleep and dreaming; and the history of neurology and psychiatry, with his most recent work focusing on the cognitive features and benefits of sleep. He is the author or co-author of many books, including: *The Dreaming Brain* (1988), *Sleep* (1995), *Consciousness* (1999), *Dreaming as Delirium: How the brain goes out of its mind* (1999), *The Dream Drugstore* (2001), and *Out of its Mind: Psychiatry in Crisis* (2001).

Dreaming is one of the most interesting and ill-understood activities of human existence. Many of us don't remember most of our dreams to the extent that a number of people don't think they even have dreams (while not completely conclusive, the scientific evidence suggests that all of us dream every night except people who live on RedBull and 2 hours / night until they tragically die young.) However, when we do remember a dream, it's often a vivid and profound experience. Some people dream lucidly (are aware they are inside a dream as it occurs), and a few people have lucid dreams on a regular basis. This has led people to draw all sorts of conclusions about dreams existing in a realm beyond the physical, and what not. While there remains a lot that we still don't know about dreams, a great deal of science has been advanced in recent decades enough to take dreamland out of the realm of spiritual mumbo-jumbo and even away from the weak (and largely wrong) science of Freud, and into the realm of legitimate science. This book summarizes much of that science in a concise package. The "A Very Short Introduction" (VSI) series from Oxford University Press offers this type of guide for many subjects. They're usually about 100 pages long, and give a quick and gritty rundown of the subject at hand. This book is organized into eleven chapters covering: What is dreaming? Why the Freudian approach (and earlier dream interpretation schemes) failed? How the brain is activated during sleep? What is happening at the level of neurochemistry? Why we dream? What can go wrong with dreams? (i.e. sleepwalking, night-terrors, etc.), How dreaming relates to delirium and mental illness? (i.e. it is, after all, a state of hallucination in which we take often bizarre imagery for granted.) There's a discussion of the new psychology of dreaming

which is based in neuroscience and not on an Austrian with a pipe suggesting that it all comes down to penises and vaginas. (Hobson isn't anti-Freud, though he does want to make clear that the psychology pioneer was quite wrong on this subject.) There is a discussion of how learning and memory can (and can't) be advanced through sleep. Hobson discusses the interaction of consciousness and dreams, e.g. lucid dreaming. And there is a discussion of interpretation of dreams that is rooted in more modern thought. An interesting feature of this guide is that the author uses his own dream diary entries as case studies to make points clear. That helps make this VSI guide a little less dry than they tend to be by their nature. I do enjoy the VSI series. I've read quite a few of them, and find they are a good way to study up on a subject with a minimal of effort or pain. I also enjoyed this volume specifically. It is certainly one of the most fascinating topics on which I've read a VSI, and the author doesn't disappoint in bringing interesting facts and anecdotes to the table. I'd recommend this book if you want to get up to speed on dreaming in a little over a hundred pages.

Illustrative, comprehensive, quirky and entertaining, and more than adequate prose. Detailed technical description of sleep science are balanced nicely with more basic but integral explanations about the nature of sleep and dreaming. The insights provided by sleep science extend beyond that narrower field to reveal much else about the mind. Highly recommended both for personal understanding and generally defogging the mirror of mythical mist.

This is one of the better books I've read on Dreaming. The details of the neurobiology of sleep was a wonderful surprise, and makes much more sense of dreaming. I've read a lot of books on dreaming, all of which were filled with psychological guesses, speculation, and they just never made sense to me. This book presents excellent arguments and studies for the biological aspects of sleep, and the logic that consciousness is a brain function. This book takes a look from a better perspective, IMHO, sticking to the biology of sleep, and the reality of what we are aware of and not during dreaming, and the lack of memory thereafter. Great book!

Very good book.

I found this book to be a great little introduction to the neuroscience of sleep! It was also very small and handy. I could easily carry it around and read it when convenient.

Covers the topics that I was interested in reading about. This book appears to be an original work by the author, although there may be other similar titles.

This book is misleading in its title because it is not at all a short introduction to dreaming. It is rather an introduction to the author's own theory of dreaming, for which there is considerable refuting evidence. The theory seeks to make dream content irrelevant and argues that it is the result of random signals. A description of this theory is interspersed with intermittent Freud-bashing. There is no appraisal of other theories or theorists, no attempt to consider the purpose of dream metaphor, and little modesty when it comes to sharing the questions still left unanswered by his theory. That is not to say that the theory (known as Activation-Synthesis) is not extremely interesting and useful. If you are looking for an overall introduction to dreaming, and expecting a balanced approach, you will be very disappointed. If you want a detailed insight into the Activation Synthesis Theory of dreaming in simple language, then this is a good book. If the book was titled and sold as that I would have given it 4 stars.

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