

For Review

720WORDS RTO **4-6**min / **RA 7-8**min

When we speak of dreams, the first thing that tends to come to mind is the presence of unusual and fantastic events in them. In our dreams we encounter people who have been dead for years. We suddenly find ourselves in far-off lands. Animals speak to us,
5 and we ourselves possess powers that would strike us as completely impossible in waking life. If someone were to tell us that he had similar experiences when awake, we would doubt his sanity.

Let us begin by describing the most important characteristics
10 of dreams more precisely. The dreamer finds himself in surroundings that often change abruptly, although sometimes a change of scene occurs more gradually. Scenes and people from our past appear. Obviously the laws of space and time are suspended in dreams. Another important trait of dreams is their riveting
15 nature. Our attention is captured by certain events or objects, from which we cannot free it; we cannot choose to direct our thoughts to something else. The American sleep researcher Allan Rechtschaffen made the paradoxical but correct observation that dreams are lacking in imagination. When we dream, our mind
20 does not wander, as it does when we are awake. The dream's images fill the dream entirely, and no room remains for other reveries. This "single-mindedness" of dreams accounts for that peculiar feeling that dreams take place in a self-contained world of their own. Although other people appear in them, we feel
25 fundamentally alone and cannot communicate our experiences to

anyone else. We are entirely in the grip of the experience, unable to reflect on it or evaluate it. As a result we accept the most astonishing circumstances in dreams without surprise and never exclaim or protest, "But that's impossible!"

30 The following account of a dream, from an ancient Chinese text, illustrates strikingly the paradoxical closed world of dreams:

Once upon a time, I dreamt I was a butterfly, fluttering hither and thither, to all intents and purposes a butterfly. I was conscious only of following my fancies as a butterfly and was unconscious of
35 my individuality as a man. Suddenly I awaked, and there I lay, myself again. Now I do not know whether I was a man dreaming I was a butterfly., or whether I am now a butterfly dreaming I am a man.

Generally speaking, the world of dreams vanishes on
40 awakening, leaving a vague memory at the very most. We are often aware in the morning of having had a dream, but cannot remember what it was about. If we recall that one to two hours of every night are spent in REM sleep, when dreams frequently occur, then the extent to which memory of the dream disappears seems
45 quite remarkable. If we wake up just after dreaming about something and still have the images of this dream clearly in our minds, we find it difficult to describe those images, and our attempts to do so are seldom satisfactory. Even if we do succeed in giving an accurate account of what happened in our dream, it is

50 still usually impossible to recall to mind the peculiar atmosphere of the dream and to communicate it to another person. As the Swiss poet Carl Spitteler said, "Dreams cannot be told; they dissolve when the rational mind tries to grasp them in words."