

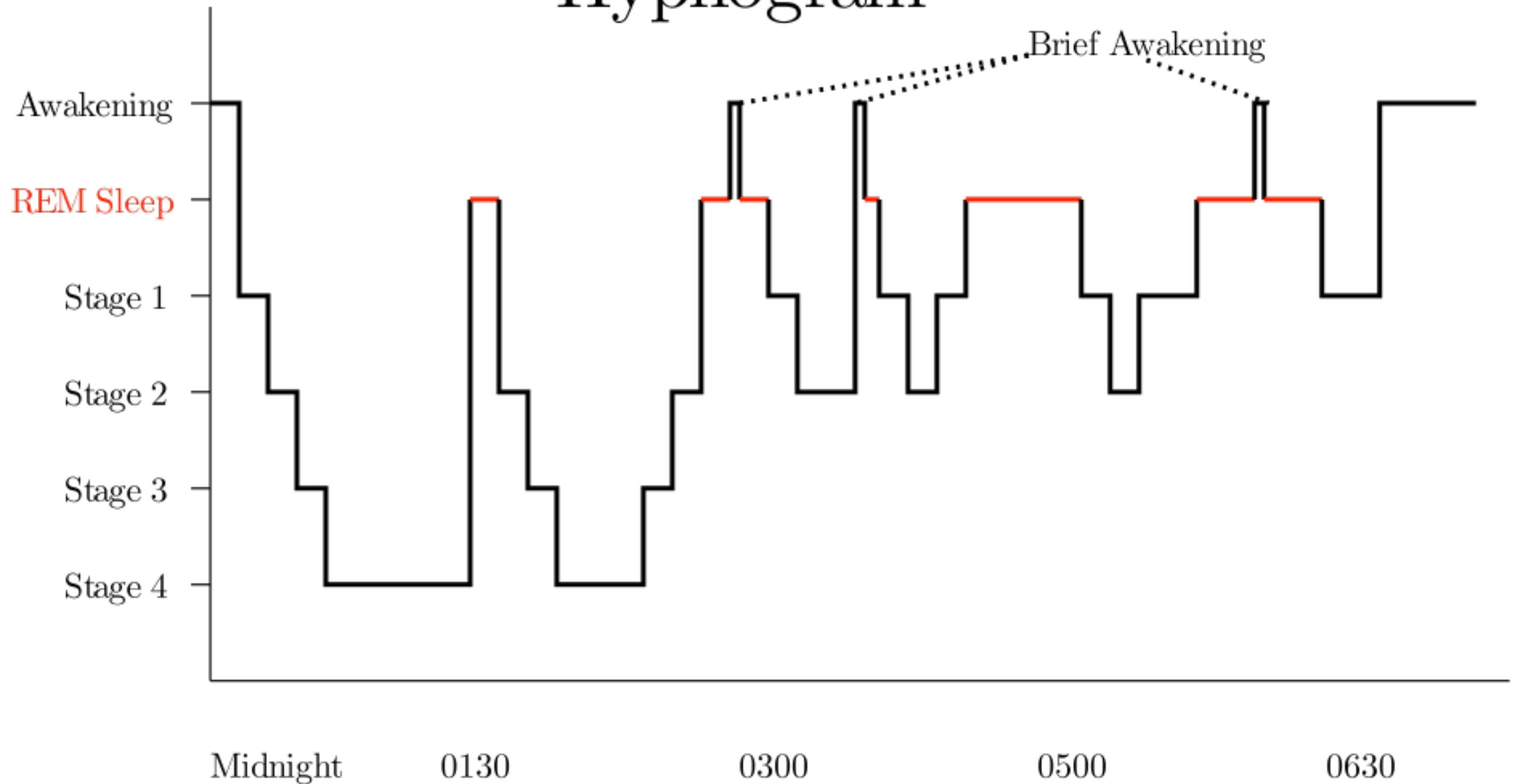
dream interpretation



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what is happening in the
brain when we dream?

Hypnogram



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sleep_Hypnogram.svg

- REM ("rapid eye movement") sleep is usually associated with dreaming (people awoken during this phase report dreaming 80% of the time)
- Related "mentation" can happen during NREM (non-REM sleep)*
- During REM sleep, the brain's chemistry is different, leading to consciousness with blocked sensory input, diminished short-term memory recall, inability to form memories, hyperassociative reasoning, lack of self-reflection, strong emotions, etc.

* see e.g. McNamara, Patrick, et al. "Rem And Nrem Sleep Mentation." International Review of Neurobiology, edited by Angela Clow and Patrick McNamara, vol. 92, Academic Press, 2010, pp. 69–86. ScienceDirect, doi:10.1016/S0074-7742(10)92004-7.

activation-synthesis theory: brain activation during REM sleep results in the synthesis of dream mentation

Hobson, J. Allan. "REM Sleep and Dreaming: Towards a Theory of Protoconsciousness." Nature Reviews Neuroscience, vol. 10, no. 11, Nov. 2009, pp. 803–13. EBSCOhost, doi: 10.1038/nrn2716.

confabulation: "the recitation of imaginary events to fill in gaps in memory" (DSM IV)

oneirocriticism

“a dream that is not interpreted is like a letter
that is not read”

–Rabbi Chisda

(quoted in Frieden, Ken. “Talmudic Dream Interpretation, Freudian Ambivalence, Deconstruction.” Religion, Dec. 1990, <https://surface.syr.edu/rel/38>.)

(reported) dream content



hermeneutic



meaning

(subconscious and/or
premonitory)

{ symbolism
tradition
convention
metaphor

If one gives him a chariot: . . . [x + 5]
 If one gives him a silver (coated) chariot:⁷⁹ he will
 obtain something which does not belong to him.
 If one gives him a wheel: he will have twins.
 If one gives him a wagon: he will obtain his desire.
 If one gives him some (other) part of a chariot: income
 will come [in].
 If one gives him the reins: his days will be lo[ng].
 [x + 10]
 If one gives him a leather shield:⁸⁰ he will get out of
 (his) distress.
 If one gives him a goad: this man will have no equal.
 If one gives him a door: he will grow old.
 If one gives him a bar: he will receive what his heart
 wish(es).
 If one gives him a bolt: the secret (lit.: word) will not
 leak out. [x + 15]
 If one gives him a stylus: he will ha[ve] a helper.
 If one gives him a reed PEŠ.GI:⁸¹ he will obtain his
 desires.
 If one [gi]ves h[im] a ree[d]: he will reach top-
 rank, (*Glossenkeil*): his days [will be].

Oppenheim, A. Leo. "The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East. With a Translation of an Assyrian Dream-Book." Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, vol. 46, no. 3, 1956, pp. 179–373. JSTOR, doi:10.2307/1005761.

Mice.

To dream of mice, foretells domestic troubles and the insincerity of friends. Business affairs will assume a discouraging tone.

To kill mice, denotes that you will conquer your enemies.

To let them escape you, is significant of doubtful struggles.

For a young woman to dream of mice, warns her of secret enemies, and that deception is being practised upon her. If she should see a mouse in her clothing, it is a sign of scandal in which she will figure.

Microscope.

To dream of a microscope, denotes you will experience failure or small returns in your enterprises.

Midwife.

To see a midwife in your dreams, signifies unfortunate sickness with a narrow escape from death.

For a young woman to dream of such a person, foretells that distress and calumny will attend her.

Mile-post.

To dream you see or pass a mile-post, foretells that you will be assailed by doubtful fears in business or love. To see one down, portends accidents are threatening to give disorder to your affairs.

protasis (if X...)
pró "before" + *teínō* "stretch")



apodosis (...then Y)
apó "because of" + *dósis* "gift"

(why do dream interpretations take the form that they do? why are they often so similar in both form and content?)

similarities in
oneirocriticisms

wordplay

- a. ...eating the flesh of a donkey ($\epsilon 3.t$): Good. (It means) he will become great ($s:\epsilon 3$) (r.2.21).⁴
- b. ...white bread ($h\bar{d}$) is given to him: Good. (It means) something at which his face will light up ($h\bar{d}$) (r.3.4).
- c. ...seeing his face ($hr = f$) as a panther: Good. (It means) acting as chief ($hry-tp$) (r.4.2).
- d. ...fetching vessels ($jn hnw$) out of the water: Good. (It means) finding life's increases in his house ($n h3w$) (r.4.17).
- e. ...seeing his penis stiffen ($nh\bar{t}$): Bad. (It means) the stiffening of his enemy ($nh\bar{t}$) (r.8.2).
- f. ...being given a harp ($bn.t$): Bad. (It means) something through which he fares ill (bjn) (r.8.4).
- g. ...removing ($j\bar{t}t$) his finger nails ($\bar{d}b3.w$): Bad. (It means) the work ($b3k$) of his hands will be removed ($j\bar{t}t$) (r.8.7).
- h. ...his teeth falling out below him ($hry = f$): Bad. (It means) one of his dependents ($hry.w = -f$) will die (r.8.12).
- i. ...Baring ($kf3$) his own back end ($ph.[wj]$): Bad. (It means) he will bear poverty in the end ($phwj$) (r.9.10).

Noegel, Scott B. "On Puns and Divination: Egyptian Dream Exegesis from a Comparative Perspective." *Through a Glass Darkly: Magic, Dreams and Prophecy in Ancient Egypt*, edited by Kasia Szpakowska, The Classical Press of Wales, 2006, pp. 95–119.

- a. If a man dreams he is eating a raven (*arbu*); he will have income (*irbu*).
- b. If (someone) has given him *miḥru*-wood; he shall have no rival (*māḥiru*).
- c. [If] one gives him the head (**SAG**) of a pick-axe; his head (**SAG.DU**) [will be cut off].
- d. If (in a dream) a person goes to Laban (*La-ba-an*); he will build a house (**DÛ-u[š]**, [i.e., *ibannuš*]).¹⁰
- e. If a man dreams that he is travelling to Idran (**ID-ra-an** = **Á-ra-an**); he will free himself from a crime (*aran*).¹¹
- f. If he seizes a fox (**KA₅.A** = *šēlibu*), he will seize a Lamassu (**AN.KAL**), but if he seizes a fox in his hand (**ŠU**), and it escapes, he will have seized a Lamassu, but it also will escape from his hand (**ŠU**).¹²
- g. If one gives him bird ‘oil’ (**Ì + GIŠ MUŠEN** [*iššuri*]); they will shout ‘Watch out! Watch out!’ (*i-šur i-šur KA-ú*).

Noegel, Scott B. “On Puns and Divination: Egyptian Dream Exegesis from a Comparative Perspective.” *Through a Glass Darkly: Magic, Dreams and Prophecy in Ancient Egypt*, edited by Kasia Szpakowska, The Classical Press of Wales, 2006, pp. 95–119.

The final assertion is especially relevant, since Freud himself relied heavily upon wordplay as one of his interpretive techniques. Lauer specifically alludes to a talmudic dream that mentions the city of Cappadocia. In tractate Berakhot, after hearing several unfavorable interpretations, a dreamer reports, "I dreamed they were telling me: Your father has left you money in Cappadocia" (Berakhot 56b). R. Ishmael first confirms that the dreamer has no money in that city, and that his father never went there. He then treats *kapadokia* as a bilingual signifier, and interprets on the basis of linguistic clues. *Kapa* means either "beam" in Aramaic or "twenty" in Greek. *Dokos* means "beam," and *deka* means "ten," both in Greek. R. Ishmael interprets: "*Kapa* means 'beam' and *deka* means 'ten.' Go and examine the beam [*kapa*] which is at the head of ten, for it is full of coins."⁵ Freud interprets numerous dreams in exactly this fashion. For example, he explains his dream of the nonsense-word *Autodidasker* by separating it into *Autor* (author), *Autodidakt* (autodidact), and *Lasker* (a proper name).

Frieden, Ken. "Talmudic Dream Interpretation, Freudian Ambivalence, Deconstruction." Religion, Dec. 1990, <https://surface.syr.edu/rel/38>.

"Kabbalism is interested not only in reading the world as the end-product of God's work, but in (re)producing the mechanisms of creation to unlock new meaning. Thus for the Kabbalist 'the world-process is essentially a linguistic one, based on the unlimited combinations of letters' to form new spiritual environments..."

–Gershom Gerhard Scholem, quoted in Trettien, Whitney Anne. Computers, Cut-Ups and Combinatory Volveles: An Archaeology of Text-Generating Mechanisms. MIT, 2009, <http://whitneyannetrettien.com/thesis/>.

metaphor and
association

pharaoh's dream

In his dream, Pharaoh is standing on the river bank, when seven fat cows come out of the river, followed by seven lean cows that eat the seven fat ones and still remain lean.

Then Pharaoh dreams again. This time he sees seven and then seven withered ears growing after them. The withered ears devour the good ears. Joseph interprets the two dreams as a single dream. The seven fat cows and full ears are good years and the seven lean cows and withered ears are famine years that follow the good years. The famine years "devour" what the good years produce.

Quoted in Lakoff, George. "How Metaphor Structures Dreams: The Theory of Conceptual Metaphor Applied to Dream Analysis." *Dreaming*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1993, pp. 77–98.

Freud: dream content is wish fulfillment

- Condensation
- Displacement
- Visualization
- Symbolism

"You entirely disregard the apparent connections between the elements in the manifest dream and collect the ideas that occur to you in connection with each separate element of the dream by *free association* according to the psychoanalytic rule of procedure. From this material you arrive at the latent dream-thoughts, just as you arrived at the patient's hidden complexes from his associations to his symptoms and memories... The true meaning of the dream, which has now replaced the manifest content, is always clearly intelligible." [Freud, Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis (1909); Lecture Three]

semantic priming

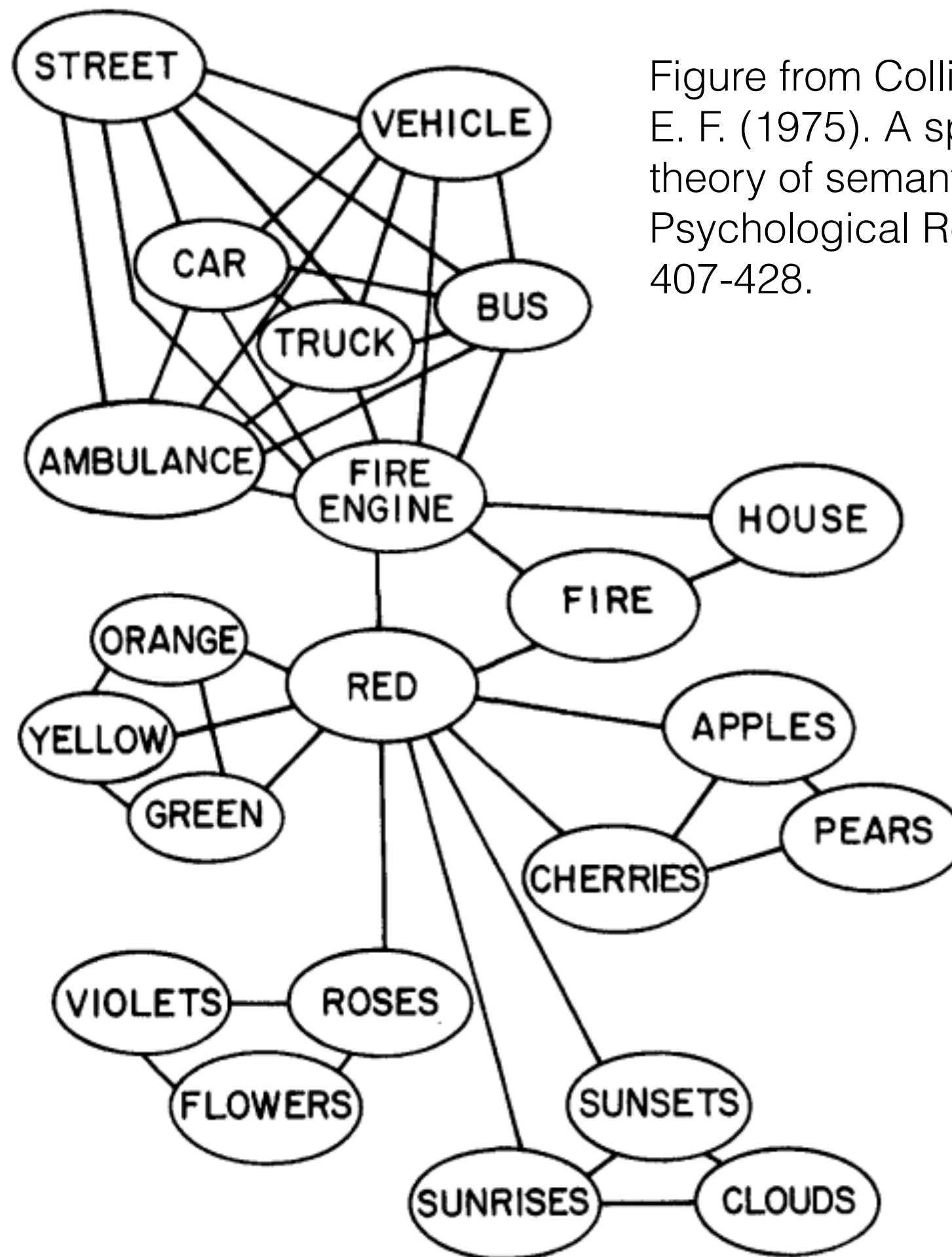


Figure from Collins, A. M., & Loftus, E. F. (1975). A spreading-activation theory of semantic processing. *Psychological Review*, 82(6), 407-428.

[]: h[is] days [will be long/short].
 If his urine [expands(?)] in front of (his) penis and
 [] the wall: [he will not have] sons. [x + 5]
 If his urine ex[pands] in front of (his) penis and
 [] the wall, the street: he will h[ave] sons.
 If his urine expa[nds] in front of (his) penis and
 f[ills(?) all] the streets: his property will be
 robb[ed] and given to the city []. [x + 10]
 If his urine expands in front of (his) penis [and] he
 does obeisance in front of his urine: he will beget a
 son and he (i.e., the son) will be king. [x + 15]

Oppenheim, A. Leo. "The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East. With a Translation of an Assyrian Dream-Book." Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, vol. 46, no. 3, 1956, pp. 179–373. JSTOR, doi:10.2307/1005761.

To see a mouse-trap in dreams, signifies your need to be careful of character, as wary persons have designs upon you.

To see it full of mice, you will likely fall into the hands of enemies.

To set a trap, you will artfully devise means to overcome your opponents.

dream-internal
associations

TABLE 4
Object Transformations

Object 1	Object 2	Correct scores	% Correct
Bag	Burlap sac	6	100*
Bed	1/2 size bed	6	100*
Boston home	Georgia home	6	100*
Building	Building	6	100*
Car	Bike	6	100*
Cash machine	Intense combat video game	6	100*
Pool	Beach	6	100*
Car	Car wheels and frame	5	83*
City bus	School bus	5	83*
Flowers	Figures	5	83*
Statue of a lamb	Lion (really a bed)	5	83*
Total		62	94*

Note. Transformations involved the sudden and discontinuous change of Object 1 into Object 2. Correct scores is the number of judges (out of six) who correctly matched the initial and transformed objects.

* $p < .0001$.

Rittenhouse, Cynthia D., et al. "Constraint on the Transformation of Characters, Objects, and Settings in Dream Reports." *Consciousness and Cognition*, vol. 3, no. 1, Mar. 1994, pp. 100–13. CrossRef, doi:10.1006/ccog.1994.1007.

post-REM creativity