

Q. Difference between manifest content and latent content

Freud believed that the content of dreams is related to wish fulfillment and suggested that dreams have two types of content: manifest content and latent content. The manifest content is the actual literal subject matter of the dream while the latent content is the underlying meaning of these symbols.

Manifest content is the part of the dream that you remember. It is the storyline of your dream. It is the literal interpretation of the dream. The content has no hidden meaning. Manifest content includes the people you see, the words you hear and the things you do in the dream. It disguises the latent content of the dreams, according to Freud.

If you had a dream that you were in a high school classroom years after you graduated, everything you see and understand in the dream is the manifest content. Manifest content includes the desk you sat in, the other students you saw, and the words the teacher spoke to you.

The **latent content** is the hidden part of the dream. Latent content is symbolic. It is the part of the dream people infer. They often cannot remember the details. This is the part of the dream that Freud believed was most important.

Freud believed that latent content was disguised because the meaning could be traumatic or disturbing. Latent content may reveal the desires somebody has that they do not yet know or want to face.

If you take the example of being in a high school classroom years after you have graduated, you already know the manifest content. The latent content is the meaning behind the dream. For example, you might feel as if you are insecure about your experience at work, or perhaps you feel as if you have lost status.

Freud believed that latent content is the part of the dream that reveals its true meaning. Freud claimed that people with conflict in their lives might bury their issues. Latent content reveals those issues. He also suggested that if people uncover the meaning of their dreams, they can uncover memories and issues that are too painful to address otherwise.

To Freud and other psychoanalysts, the latent content of a dream mattered much more than the literal, manifest content. Freud believed that the mind was like an iceberg. Only a very small part of the iceberg is visible above the water—this visible part represents the conscious mind. Unseen under the surface of the water lies the enormous bulk of the iceberg, which represents the unconscious mind. Dreams, therefore, are one way of glimpsing what is hidden from awareness in the unconscious mind.

For example, imagine that you have a dream that you are naked in public. The actual storyline of the dream is the manifest content, but Freud would suggest that there is more to the dream than its literal meaning. He might interpret the dream to mean that you fear exposure, that you feel insecure, or that you fear other people will notice your shortcomings. This hidden meaning represents the latent content of the dream.

Dream interpretation has grown in popularity since Freud's time. While many popular theories of dreaming suggest that our dreams are largely a reflection of the hopes, fears, and experiences of our waking lives, dream interpreters continue to suggest that the latent content of dreams often holds symbolic meaning.