Dream Sequence

Language level: Elementary; Pre-intermediate (A2)
Learner type: Young learners; Teens; Adults
Time: 50 minutes
Activity: Listening; Reading; Speaking
Topic: Dreams; School
Language: Prepositions
Materials: Video; Worksheet
Preparation, materials and equipment

1. For this activity, you will need a music video titled *Mad World* by Gary Jules. To access the video on YouTube, click on the following link:

   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4N3N1MlvVc4

2. You are going to describe the video in detail, to your students. To prepare for this:

   • Watch the video a number of times and pay close attention to details
   • Consider questions that you can ask your students
   • Consider potentially problematic or unknown vocabulary and consider ways to teach it as you go along
   • Make notes or prepare some sort of schematic representation of what you are going to say (see notebook below)

3. Make a copy of the *Mad World* lyrics (page 8) for each student.

   Decide how you are going to display the clip in class. Possibilities include:

   • Laptop or desktop (good for small groups)
   • Computer, projector + screen
   • iPhone or other mobile device (good for one-to-ones/intimate classes)

   Don’t forget the loudspeakers

   If you don't have Internet access in class, you could download or ‘capture’ the video from YouTube. Use www.savevid.com or a similar site. Note, however, that in doing so, you will be breaching YouTube's Terms of Use.
Lesson plan

1. Ask students if they believe that dreams have meanings

2. Tell students that you want to tell them about a dream you’ve had recently. Describe the video from beginning to end, pretending that it is your dream. Allow for interaction whenever possible.

Example script and questions

I want to tell you about this funny dream that I’ve been having recently. Now when I say ‘funny’ I don’t mean it makes me want to laugh. I mean funny in the other sense of the word.

Did you know that funny had two meanings? Yes, it also means ‘strange’.

In the dream, I’m standing on top of a building looking directly down at the street below. I hear a bell ring and then I hear children’s voices.

What sort of building do you think it is?

Anyway, as I said, I’m looking down at the street below. A crowd of people walk out of the main entrance and then I hear a piano melody. It’s quite beautiful but at the same time, quite sad. Unfortunately, I can’t recall the melody now.

Does that ever happen to you - a catchy tune comes into your head while you are dreaming. Sometimes you wake up and think you should record it somehow so that you will remember it in the morning. But you never do.

So this is where things get a little bit strange. On the pavement below, there is a face looking up at me. But it’s not a realistic face - it looks more like a child’s drawing and it’s moving. It seems to be speaking to me but I have no idea what it is saying. Its hair is blowing in the wind.

Now I can hear a man singing.

Continued on next page ...
The face turns into an animated matchstick man. Do you know what that is? Well this is a matchstick (or a match for short):

And this is a matchstick man:

Now the matchstick man turns into a house, or perhaps I should say, a child's drawing of a house. You can imagine what it looks like.

Anyway, very slowly, I turn to my left. I look along the street and then across the roof of the building that I am standing on.

*Can you guess what I see?*

I see the man who is singing. He is also looking down at the street - just like me. He is wearing a peaked cap and a dark blue jacket. He ignores me and keeps singing his slow song. The sky above us is autumn blue. In the distance I can see skyscrapers.

I look back down at the street and there is a new picture. This time it's a sailing boat on the sea. Then it turns into a car. Its wheels are going round. The car turns into a bird which turns into some sort of animal - its difficult to say what exactly what is. It might be a deer.

Now, slowly, I turn to my right and look across the right-hand side of the building.

*Can you guess who I see this time?*

This time I see the piano player. He is sitting at his piano on the roof of the building. He is sitting with his back to me.

*Do you believe that dreams have meanings?*
During the description:

- Try not to use your notes. Try to recite the dream sequence from memory
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Write new words and language on the board
- Encourage student interaction by asking questions
- Elicit words and ideas from students whenever possible
- Repeat sections of the description whenever necessary
- Drill any useful grammar structures / sentences
- Use gesture and body position to strengthen learners’ comprehension
- You may digress because of student interaction. Come back to the dream sequence with the question: *Anyway, where were we?*

3. Put students into pairs or small groups. Tell them that they are going to analyze your dream. Ask them to make a theory about what it means. Encourage them to make notes.

4. Invite different pairs/groups to share their ideas.

5. Give out copies of *Mad World* (page 8). Tell students that there is a connection between the text and the dream. Ask them if they can guess what it is. Let students complete the glossary while they read the text.

Glossary

- If someone looks *familiar*, you have seen him or her before.
- If something is *funny*, it makes you want to laugh. But the adjective has a second meaning: In the text it means ‘strange’.
- If you *look (right) through* someone, you ignore that person.
- *Enlarging* = making bigger
- If you *drown* your *sorrows*, you get drunk in order to forget your problems.
- *Worn out* = exhausted / very tired.
- If you can’t *take* it, you can’t stand it.
6. Play the music video

7. Tell students that the song is open to interpretation. Ask them to apply their ideas from steps 3 and 4 (above) to a more holistic interpretation of the song. This could be done as a written assignment.

Variations

- You may not want to mislead your students by telling them that the dream is your own. In this case, start by saying that you are going to describe someone else’s dream. This will be confusing at first but students should eventually go with it. Later, part of the task can be to guess whose dream it is.
- A video camera would be perfect for this activity. Film your dream description during step 2. Late, transcribe your words and use the video in combination with the transcription for listening/language study activities.

Follow ups

- Following the dream description, draw students’ attention to the prepositions and prepositional phrases in your spoken text by dictating the sentences below. Note that the verb look is particularly dominant here.

  - I’m standing on top of a building looking directly down at the street below.
  - A crowd of people walk out of the main entrance.
  - I see a face looking up at me.
  - I turn to my left. I look along the street and then across the roof of the building that I am standing on.
  - The sky above us is autumn blue.
  - I look back down at the street.
  - The sailing boat on the sea turns into a car. Its wheels are going round.
  - I turn to my right and look across the right-hand side of the building.
  - This time I see the piano player. He is sitting at his piano on the roof of the building. He is sitting with his back to me.
• For homework, ask students to investigate the song further by looking for discussions on sites such as:

www.lyricinterpretations.com
www.songmeanings.net

• Ask students to prepare spoken descriptions of their own recurring dreams. Alternatively, ask them to use a dream sequence from a film. There are many of these on YouTube (type Dream Sequence into the search window). You may want to supply students with a list of connectors for this purpose:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>So then ...</th>
<th>After that ...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At this point ...</td>
<td>Anyway ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfortunately ...</td>
<td>The thing is that ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The next thing (I know) ...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Dream sequence from the film The science of Sleep directed by Michel Gondry, who also directed the Mad World video used in this activity.)
All around me are familiar faces
Worn out places, worn out faces
Bright and early for the daily races
Going nowhere, going nowhere

Their tears are filling up their glasses
No expression, no expression
Hide my head I want to drown my sorrow
No tomorrow, no tomorrow

And I find it kind of funny, I find it kind of sad
The dreams in which I’m dying are the best I’ve ever had
I find it hard to tell you, I find it hard to take
When people run in circles it’s a very, very
Mad world, mad world

Children waiting for the day they feel good
Happy birthday, happy birthday
And I feel the way that every child should
Sit and listen, sit and listen

Went to school and I was very nervous
No one knew me, no one knew me
Hello teacher tell me, what’s my lesson?
Look right through me, look right through me

And I find it kind of funny, I find it kind of sad
The dreams in which I’m dying are the best I’ve ever had
I find it hard to tell you, I find it hard to take
When people run in circles it’s a very, very
Mad world, mad world, enlarging your world

Glossary

• If someone looks ________________, you have seen him or her before.
• If something is ________________, it makes you want to laugh. But the adjective has a second meaning: In the text it means ‘strange’.
• If you ___________ ( ___________ ) ___________ someone, you ignore that person.
• _________________ = making bigger
• If you ___________ your _____________, you get drunk in order to forget your problems.
• ___________ ___________ = exhausted / very tired.
• If you can’t _______________ it, you can’t stand it.