



Creativity in Mind **Imagination, Creativity & Wellbeing**

With teacher & author, Harrison F. Carter
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A Dream of Two Cities – by Harrison F. Carter

The sun was just beginning to rise in the North West of England, over the city of Liverpool, illuminating some tall beech trees and a red-bricked building that stood in the grounds of St Vincent's School for Visual Impairment. Inside, fast asleep in the school's residential unit, was a boy called Will. His alarm clock had just burst into life and was shrieking like a maniac. It was 6 o'clock in the morning and it was time to wake up. Will stretched his arms, yawned and bashed his alarm clock into silence. "Ridiculous noise..." he muttered, shaking his head, and as he did, the memory of that night's dream flashed into his mind. "Oh yeah... that was a strange dream..." he said to himself, quietly, ruffling his hair as though to shake the dream from it. "A shark and a crocodile dancing together?" he muttered, remembering an image. He swung his legs out of bed and went to get some breakfast, pouring himself some cereal, still intrigued by the image of the shark and the crocodile in his mind. "I'll have to tell my friends about my dream later," he said to Cathy, one of the care staff. "You should – you've got your creative writing group later – there might be a story in it," offered Cathy. Will nodded in agreement.

Later that day, in the creative writing group, the members of the club were all together. "Has anybody got any news or stories this week?" asked Mr. Benbow, the groups' teacher. The group members – Will, Jack, Joseph and Tom - all looked to each other to see who would come up with something first. "I have – sort of..." said Will, "...but it isn't going to make much sense."

"That's okay, Will – inspiration for a story can come from anywhere," said Mr. Benbow. Will nodded and began to recount the visions and memories of his dream. "Well, in my dream last night, I was in a harbour - or a dock – or something by the sea. Anyway, I was stood by a big boat, and on a notice board, I saw an image of a crocodile and a shark; circling each other, and I remember wondering to myself whether they were about to fight or dance or something..."

“Mmmm, that’s an interesting image,” said Mr. Benbow. “What do you think it might mean?”

“I have no idea. But there was more to it. The place seemed familiar, somehow. I remember there being a river, and I was in a city centre and there were lots of tall buildings.” Will began to speak hurriedly and excitedly as the images and memories of his dream came back to him. “And I was walking along the riverside, past docks and harbours... seeing lots of different types of boats and hearing different sounds. And I remember a great big statue of a soldier - or something... and a red bridge.” The group members all listened intently.

“That sounds like town to me...” suggested Tom.

“It does, doesn’t it...” agreed Jack, “...it could be Liverpool city centre and the River Mersey. There are lots of docks down there...”

“And tall buildings and statues,” added Joseph.

“Good work, guys,” said Mr. Benbow, “...it could well be Liverpool; it has a lot of similarities, doesn’t it? Could you tell us anything else, Will? How did the dream make you feel?”

“It wasn’t scary or anything - there wasn’t any danger - it was kind of a nice dream. I remember actually feeling hopeful – like good things were happening.” Mr. Benbow paused for a few seconds, thinking to himself.

“You know, I’m just thinking – how about we organise a trip to town?” he said. “Head down to the river – have a wander around a couple of the docks. See if anything clicks with Will as something he recognises from his dream. It would be like a treasure hunt of some kind – a bit of an adventure -following the clues of a dream. Could be fun and maybe the start of a good story...”

“Yeah!” cheered Tom. “I like the sound of this.”

“Me too!” agreed Will. “A treasure hunt...”

“Well, let’s get going,” said Mr. Benbow. “Grab your coats and canes and I’ll meet you at the front door.”

Thirty minutes later, the group were in Liverpool city centre, gathered outside the school minibus, discussing where to start their search. “How shall we do this?” asked Will.

“Why don’t we head down to the river – go past the Albert Dock - see if anything looks or sounds familiar?” said Jack. With that, the group set off to the river, passing the old pump house and Merseyside Maritime Museum.

“Whilst we’re here...” said Mr. Benbow, “...does anybody know much about the Merseyside Maritime Museum and the history of Liverpool as a port?” The group members shook their heads and shrugged their shoulders.

“No, not really,” said Joseph.

“Okay,” said Mr. Benbow. “Well, Liverpool has a very long history. I don’t know if you’ll remember the event – you might be too young - but Liverpool celebrated its 800th birthday in 2007...”

“So, this year it will be 812,” said Tom, having done some quick Maths.

“That’s right,” smiled Mr. Benbow. “Well, back in the 1800s, Liverpool grew to become a major port, as part of the Industrial Revolution. It handled much of the country’s cargo and freight – handling raw materials like coal and cotton. Now, from your history lessons, you might also remember that Liverpool was involved in the ‘slave trade’ – when the city’s merchants became involved in the awful trading of slaves – operating between Africa and North America. A terrible part of history, but the city also became a major point of departure for emigration – with many Irish and English people migrating to North America. And then, and I’m sure you’ll all know this story – but Liverpool was the home to both the Cunard and White Star Line shipping companies, and was the port of registry for the most famous of all ocean liners...”

“Titanic,” stated Jack, proudly.

“Correct,” said Mr. Benbow. “So, I think you’ll agree that the city has an important seafaring heritage, and the Merseyside Maritime Museum - that we’re stood outside of here - was opened to share the international importance of Liverpool as a gateway to the world.”

“A gateway to the world...” echoed Will, staring off, as though dreaming of a distant land.

“Are you remembering something, Will?” asked Tom.

“Yeah – I am. I’m thinking of a giant statue – of a soldier, stood by the river...”

“Okay,” said Mr. Benbow. “Can you describe what you see in your mind?”

“Yeah, I’ll try,” said Will, a look of concentration forming on his face. “The statue looks like the commander of an army – not a soldier. He’s dressed in a smart uniform and has a sword - and he’s staring out to sea. He looks determined – as though he’s ready to take on any storm or army. And there is a message that goes with the statue. It says ‘...*in the sea, we are glorious*’.” The group were silent for a moment, not knowing what to think or what to make of what they had just heard.

“Wow, Will,” said Mr. Benbow, “...that’s some real detail you have there – impressive memory.” Will smiled, pleased with himself. Mr. Benbow continued - “I think we should go and speak to somebody at tourist information and see if they can direct us to something that might fit your description. I do know that during the Second World War, Liverpool’s Albert Dock was requisitioned by the Admiralty and served as a base for the boats of the British Atlantic Fleet. Maybe there’s a statue somewhere as a tribute to that. Let’s go and find out.” With that, the group set off to the tourist information centre.

“It’s beginning!” said Jack, excitedly, patting his friend, Will, on the back

“The adventure is underway,” joined Tom.

Outside the tourist information centre, Mr. Benbow invited Will to take the lead in speaking to the member of staff there. Will took a deep breath, pushed open the door and went inside, followed close behind by the rest of the group. Will explained to the lady behind the desk what it was that they were looking for. The lady was kind enough to help and offered a couple of suggestions - some that she felt might meet the criteria that Will described.

“You could start with the statue of Captain Fredric ‘Johnny’ Walker at the Pier Head,” she suggested. “He was a British Royal Navy Officer and he looks out to sea – just like you said that your statue does. Then, there is a statue of Major General William Earle, outside St George’s Hall. I know that he is in a smart military uniform. He also looks very ‘determined’ – as you put it,” she smiled. “I hope that these might help,” she finished.

“That’s a real good help,” said Will, thanking the lady. “Let’s go and have a look,” he said, turning to his friends.

Mr. Benbow guided the group to the Pier Head, first of all, as this was nearby. The group walked up to the statue and explored it with their hands. “Well, he’s certainly looking out to sea,” offered Joseph. “But there’s no sword, and he feels to be wearing a casual jacket of some kind.”

“Yeah, you’re right,” agreed Tom. “Not your statue, Will.”

“No, it seems not,” said Will, thoughtfully.

“But I think it’s interesting that he’s staring out to sea,” added Jack.

“It is, Jack,” joined Mr. Benbow, “...and that all of this came from a dream, remember – Will didn’t even know this was here. How unusual is that?” The group paused and absorbed the point.

“It is a bit strange, isn’t it?” agreed Tom. “Certainly a strange coincidence at the very least.”

“Let’s go and find the second statue,” said Jack. “It might take this story further.”

With that, the group headed across town. It was quite a walk to St George’s Hall, so with the time that they had, Mr. Benbow shared with the group a little about what he knew about St George’s Hall. He explained that the hall was built by the Victorians in 1854 and was designed to be an outward expression of pride, confidence and ambition for the city of Liverpool. It was designed to lift the human soul beyond itself and is now regarded as one of the finest examples of a neo-classical building in the world.

“I had no idea that Liverpool was *such* an important city,” said Joseph. “Maybe that’s the point of your dream, Will... to get us to get to know our city.”

“That’s a nice thought,” said Mr. Benbow, glad that the group were enjoying what they were discovering and learning.

“Hey! There’s the next statue...” said Will, pointing up ahead of them. And there it was

indeed. The group members all gathered around it and checked it out.

“Well, he’s got a sword,” said Tom.

“And he’s dressed in a smart military uniform,” added Jack.

“And he looks important – and determined...” said Joseph.

“But it’s not the statue from my dream,” replied Will. The group members looked a bit surprised - and disappointed.

“I thought this would be it,” said Tom, “...it matches your description perfectly.”

“It’s close,” said Will, “... but not quite. He’s not holding the sword in the same way, and he’s not near the water... the statue I saw was.”

“Well, maybe your dream is a combination of these two statues,” suggested Jack. “It was only a dream, after all,” he added. “It’s not an exact science.”

“No, it’s not,” agreed Will reluctantly. “But this doesn’t feel like the outcome I felt in my dream. My dream felt hopeful.”

Good lad, Will,” said Mr. Benbow, admiring Will’s tenacity. “Well, we’ll just continue this little adventure until something does feel hopeful. I like that thought, Will – hope - that’s a real treasure worth pursuing. Let’s go.”

“Where?” asked Joseph, wondering what was next, now that both statues had been dismissed.

“Coffee and cake,” announced Mr. Benbow. “That should help with the search. We’ll head back to the statue of Captain Walker – hopes were high there, weren’t they - so let’s go to the café at the Museum of Liverpool Life.”

“Good idea,” said Tom, ...“I’m Hank Marvin.” Tom loved to use rhyming slang. So, with food and drink at the forefront of their minds, the group set off back across town, back to the river. As they approached the statue, Will noticed something and stopped for a moment

“It looks like the captain is looking at the museum,” said Will.

“It does,” agreed Mr. Benbow. “I wonder if that might mean something. Come on – let’s go inside.” Inside the museum, in the café, the group chose their cakes and drinks excitedly.

They gathered around a table and tucked in. Nobody spoke for a while – there wasn't a peep out of them, but for the sound of the enjoyment of cake.

“Mmmmm, that was awesome,” said Tom, finishing off a triple chocolate cookie.

“It certainly was delicious,” agreed Jack, sitting back contentedly.

“So, what next?” asked Will, licking his fingers to get every last bit of his cake.

“Well, you seemed to have enjoyed finding out a bit more about Liverpool, so how about we go and have a look around the museum – it's all about Liverpool life.”

“Sure,” said Will. “Sounds good, and who knows what else we might find out about.”

“Come on then,” said Joseph, “let's get moving.” With that, the group set off up a spiral staircase into the heart of the museum.

Up on the first floor of the museum, Mr. Benbow guided the group to something that had caught his attention. “Hey – look at this...” he said, pointing to a sign on the wall. “There's a ‘creative Liverpool’ section. You're a creative bunch - let's have a look in there.” The group wandered around the archive, exploring and examining the exhibits. There was lots of creative material about the Beatles and, in particular, John Lennon.

“Look at this,” said Will, his eyes lighting up at something. “These lyrics by John Lennon – they're from his *Imagine* song.” Will read the lyrics out loud - “*You may say that I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one.*” He paused a moment before continuing with what he wanted to say. “I feel like I'm a dreamer, so he's not the only one...”

Jack smiled - “And your dream brought us here,” he said. “Could all of this be connected?” he asked, looking at Mr. Benbow.

“Guys – come see this,” said Mr Benbow, distracted. “Look here - this plaque for Carl Jung. I don't know if you know much about him, but he was a famous psychiatrist and thinker from Switzerland. I think he died in the 1960s. Well, it says here that Carl Jung once had a dream about Liverpool, and he wrote about it in a book, called ‘*Memories, Dreams and Reflections*’. Listen - this is what he wrote - let me read it to you - “*I found myself in a dirty, sooty city. It was night, and winter, and dark, and raining. I was in Liverpool. With a*

number of Swiss, I walked through the dark streets. I had the feeling that we were coming up from the harbour, and that the real city was actually up above. In the centre was a round pool, and in the middle of it, a small island. While everything round about was obscured by rain, fog, smoke and dimly-lit darkness, the little island blazed with sunlight. On it, stood a single tree – a Magnolia – in a shower of reddish blossoms. It was as though the tree stood in the sunlight and was at the same time the source of the light. I can still see the greyish-yellow raincoats, glistening with the wetness of the rain. Everything was extremely unpleasant, black and opaque – as I felt then. But I had had a vision of unearthly beauty, and that was why I was able to live at all. Liverpool is the ‘pool of life.’”

Mr. Benbow turned to look at the group, who were all silent, and waiting. “Do you know what this could mean?” asked Mr. Benbow, quietly. “Your dream, Will, might not be of the city of Liverpool at all... it could be a dream of any other port city in the world.” The group all remained silent, but it was written across their faces that they understood. “We should head back to school,” said Mr. Benbow. “I’ve got an idea.”

A little while later, the group were back in the school library, ready to begin the next course of action. “Right,” said Mr. Benbow, “Will – log on to the computer and get on the Internet. Then, when you’re ready type in the word ‘statue’ and that line that you remembered about the statue *...in the sea we are glorious.*” Will logged on immediately and carried out the search. The Internet then brought up hundreds of images associated with Will’s search criteria. A lot of them appeared to hold no meaning, as he used the mouse to scroll down the pages of photographs. But after a few moments, he paused, and looked at the screen a little closer. Then he clicked on the image to make it full-screen, and sat back in his chair.

“This is it,” he said, simply and certainly. “That’s the statue I saw. The exact one. Everything about it.” The group all wheeled their chairs to gather around Will and the computer.

“Wow,” said Joseph, looking to each of his friends in an excited state of uncertainty.

“That’s amazing, Will,” said Tom. “You’ve dreamt of a place that you’ve never known. Click on the link to the website, Will, and let’s see where this place is.” Will clicked on the link and the page opened before them.

“Surabaya,” said Will, with a smile. “In Indonesia.”

“Indonesia,” echoed Jack, looking astonished. “How on Earth have you dreamt this, Will?”

“I do not know,” said Will, in genuine disbelief. “I do not know.”

“You’re like our very own Carl Jung, Will,” smiled Mr. Benbow. “I can’t make any sense of it, but a couple of things about this might hold some symbolic meaning. Like

water, for example – water is often associated with dreams – and with both cities, Liverpool and Surabaya, both being by the sea... I can’t help but feel that that is the connection that has been made. Your dream has connected two cities, just as the oceans of the Earth connect those two cities.” The group all sat in a moment of quiet reflection.

“Can we read about Surabaya?” asked Tom.

“I think that’s a good idea,” said Mr. Benbow. “All log on to your computers and see what you can find out.”

After an hour or so of research, the group came together around the table again. “So, what do you know, folks?” asked Mr. Benbow. “Tell me what you’ve found out.”

“Well,” began Will, “...there seem to be a lot of similarities between Liverpool and Surabaya – especially around their ports and maritime connections. Surabaya’s port has grown considerably in recent years, like Liverpool’s - and it’s a major gateway to other parts of Indonesia - which reminded me of Liverpool being a gateway to the world.”

“Very good – that is a definite similarity. What else did you find out?”

“Well, I wanted to find out about the shark and the crocodile,” continued Will.

“Oh yeah,” cheered Tom. “I forgot about that – that was the start of all of this.”

“It was,” said Will. “It turns out Surabaya is Indonesia’s second-largest city, and legend told of a *titanic* battle between ‘Sura’ - the great white shark, and ‘Baya’ - the crocodile. The two creatures clashed in a river and fought for supremacy. The place where they clashed

became known as “Surabaya” - the city of the shark and the crocodile. And the image has a meaning too – it means, “bravely facing danger.”

“And that ties in with something that I’ve found out,” said Jack. “I read that Surabaya has a new hero - its mayor, who they call ‘Mother Risma’. Apparently, she has transformed Surabaya from a dirty industrial port into a city that has won an environmental award as an eco-city.”

“Wow,” said Mr. Benbow, impressed at all that he was hearing. He looked at the group members and said, “Well, I think we’ve got our next creative writing project.”

“What’s it going to be?” asked Tom eagerly.

“It’s going to be a project about making connections. About forging global relationships to promote learning, understanding and co-operation; about having common objectives to make the world a better place for everyone. So, I was thinking about how we learnt of Carl Jung’s dream. He dreamt of a place that he had never seen – it was the result of his imagination. Imagination isn’t dependent upon sight – it’s about the ability to envision – to dream – to attain insight. We don’t have to ‘see’ things to be visionary – imagination is not limited by visual impairment. We all have the ability to be insightful. It’s a level and equal opportunity for all.” The group nodded enthusiastically in agreement.

“I like that,” said Jack with a smile.

“Me too,” said Will.

“So what shall we do next?” asked Joseph.

“Well, to start, I’d like you to each try and imagine Surabaya - to produce a creative description of it – either as a poem or as a short piece of writing. Then, from that, the idea will be to send your writing to children in a school in Surabaya to develop an exchange. So, just like how the waters of the Earth connect our two cities, so too can collaboration and a desire to make the world a better place – like the struggle of the shark and the crocodile - and bravely face challenge.”

...TO BE CONTINUED.

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