

DREAM INTERPRETATIONS: SCHOOLS

Someone once asked me to consider if fish know they are in water. “Only if they jump out; otherwise, there is no context,” I thought. I am inclined to believe the same about children and schools. The unique quality of, and messages contained within, dreams of schools are more relevant to those who are no longer there. It is only when schools become a memory or an option—have context—that Ishtar and our subconscious regard them as more than simply the culture within which we are educated.

For those for whom school is a memory or an option, dreams of schools become a fascinating insight into our perception of our life’s trajectory. Schools can be tormenting, rewarding, a prison sentence, an escape plan, a time to shine, a time to be humiliated, authoritarian, freedom and chaos of peer group culture, the place to achieve and improve, or a dismal reminder of failure. In a petri dish of uniforms and uniformity, standards and standardization, schools are a place where ideas abound, personality must be expressed covertly, and noise is to be assumed.

So, what does all this mean?

For most of us, going back to school, “being schooled,” evening classes, and further education are all decisions we make (or are forced to make) to advance beyond unsatisfactory circumstances. And while that sounds good, we also accept that there will be a price to pay. Be it humility, time, money, or confidence, returning to school is a kind of emotional business negotiation we have with ourselves, and dreams of school represent that negotiation.

Challenging careers or relationships, moving to a new area, and the prospect of a shift in responsibilities are just some of the many ways that force us to consider facing steep learning curves (and their associated cost) and address our relationship with authority.



And as we might expect by now, knowing when the dream occurs within the lunar cycle can add additional context to Ishtar's message.

DREAMS OF SCHOOLS ON THE NEW MOON

Key thought: Expand your circle of interests, *especially* if it is on a whim.

Just as dreams of school betray subconscious ideas of taking a backward step to make a forward stride, having them on the new moon adds an entrepreneurial spin to the message. Yet our subconscious is a mysterious component of our intelligence. By definition, its machinations are below the threshold of our awareness, but that does not mean it is, itself, unaware. While it does not speak directly to us, it sends notes.

After Steve Jobs was let go from Apple, he decided to study calligraphy. He did it not for conscious advancement but on a whim. At least, that's what he *thought*. Ishtar, of course, knew what was going on. When Jobs rejoined the company, he brought his interest in style, design, and calligraphy with him and Apple fonts and user interfaces tell the rest of the story.

Dreams of schools on the new moon are messages that there is further information to be learned that we need to be aware of. Whether we know its purpose or not, we should heed the message. We can never know how important the next thing we learn might become. We should seek ways to expand our circle of interests, *especially* if it is on a whim.



DREAMS OF SCHOOLS ON A WAXING CRESCENT MOON

Key thought: You could benefit from a dose of humility

The crescent moon is unique in that it is the only phase that reveals part of the moon in sunshine and the rest in “earthshine” (sunlight reflected off the earth.) The crescent moon is a vivid illumination of the beginning of its cycle and a subtle hint of what remains. And specifically, with a dream of schools on the waxing crescent, the dimly suggested “missing part” of the moon represents what we need to know to complete our mission.

It is said that when Einstein was developing his theories of relativity, he reached a point where he realized his algebra wasn't good enough for him to prove or express his ideas adequately. He saw the big picture (the crescent moon) but needed greater knowledge to complete the as-yet unilluminated part of his vision (the earthshine circle). So, Einstein paused developing his Relativity work, honed his algebra, and, when ready, changed humanity's understanding of the universe.

If pausing to sharpen skills to advance one's career is not beneath Einstein, it should not be beneath us either. This idea could pertain to many aspects of our lives, and “school” could mean any number of things. Being “schooled” could mean being put in one's place, suggesting we are perhaps overly arrogant or complacent. “Self-help” is another one. I know many friends who struggle with some emotional issue or another who regard it beneath them to seek professional help or even read a self-help book because they think they know it all already.



Dreams of schools on the waxing crescent are nudges from Ishtar for us to act like our own intellectual doctor who sees where we could benefit from a dose of humility.

DREAMS OF SCHOOLS ON A FIRST QUARTER MOON

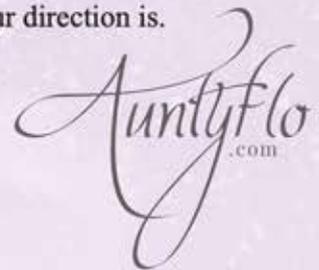
Key thought: Are you sure you are on the right road?

Black and white: This is what we are told when things are clear, either black or white; no grey areas. Ironically, the first quarter moon, which is black and white, represents a *lack* of clarity, or rather, a lack of *certainty*. Like a glass half full or half empty, which is it? There are no grey areas on the first quarter moon; there is tension between emerging light and receding potential. And this tension is what makes dreams of schools of the first quarter so interesting.

As we travel through life, we amass knowledge, choose paths, commit to ideas, and become invested in or dependent on a certain momentum, income, or career. Going back to school—halting momentum to gain related (or unrelated) assets—is easier when we have no investment and increasingly challenging as we build upon our life's work.

Changing jobs, partners, personal style, or career gets increasingly disruptive, daunting, and frightening the more we invest in our journey up until that point. But think of it another way: If, while on a road trip, we realize we took the wrong turn a while back, would it matter when the mistake was made? The more we go in the wrong direction, the more important it is to correct our course as soon as possible... assuming we know what that direction is.

Dreams of school on the first quarter challenge us to decide on what our direction is.



If we are on the right track, great. If we are on the wrong track, we should course correct. The last thing we should do is continue in the wrong direction. The critical piece of information is knowing if we are on the right road.



DREAMS OF SCHOOLS ON A WAXING GIBBOUS

Key thought: Up-skill.

I have a stylist friend who is often asked about the secret to good style. Her advice is twofold: First, ensure that whatever you wear fits well and, second, accessorize. It doesn't matter how casual we are; the right accessory can change the narrative. Picture a man and a woman, each wearing well-fitting and well-worn jeans and a white T. What's the story here? Now put a Gucci belt and Louboutin heels on her and a Rolex on him. What's the story now?

Dreams of school on the waxing gibbous are messages from Ishtar that we should accessorize our intellectual skill set. We may feel complete, and things may be going well for us. But are they going as well as they could? These days, up-skilling—a corporate way of expressing the sharpening of a professional arrow in our quiver or adding a new sharp one—is not just a cute story or an entrepreneur's advantage; it's a corporate expectation, meaning; if we don't upskill, we actually fall behind.

And upskilling is not exclusive to corporate or professional work. We can take cooking lessons, read books on love languages, or start regular exercise. There is always time in our lives to upskill.



DREAMS OF SCHOOLS ON THE FULL MOON

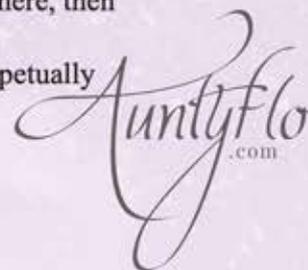
Key thought: Hit cruise control and celebrate all you have in your life.

The sweet spot is that moment when everything goes right. I am sure most of us have experienced it once or twice. From playing a perfect game of pool to a smooth and confident job interview, the perfect balance of friends at college, catching the green traffic lights to having the exact change, sometimes it's as if the stars align. It doesn't happen often, it can't be controlled, predicted, or repeated, so when it happens, it's joyful.

The reality is that this kind of alignment—this sweet spot—happens more often than we realize. There is a saying that goes, “Even a stopped clock is right twice a day.” It's true. The problem is the stopped clock is unaware of the times it is right. It's the same with us. If only we knew the times the stars were aligning. Let me rephrase that. If only we *listened to the messengers* who tell us when the time is right. Because more often than we would like to admit, we are given signs; we just don't listen.

Dreams of Schools on the new moon are messages from the universe that we should listen to.

Often in our high-stress days, we can get swept along by momentum, ruts, or the status quo, and we can miss the exit ramp that would have been better for us. It can be very difficult for our conscious self to know when we have the perfect balance of curiosity, knowledge, drive, and diversity in our life. Modern life encourages us to focus here, then focus there, constantly spinning plates so demanding that we find ourselves perpetually rushing to attend to them and never find peace.



Dreams of Schools on the full moon are messages to let us know we have hit the sweet spot, all the plates are spinning correctly, and our life is more balanced than we may be giving ourselves credit for. Now is an excellent time to hit cruise control and celebrate all we have in our lives.

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DREAMS OF SCHOOLS ON A WANING GIBBOUS MOON

Key thought: Distance yourself from covert hostility

There is an interesting idea in psychology called “covert hostility.” The idea is that we can sometimes be subjected to hostility that is overt—that we recognize. We can also be subjected to hostility that is *covert*—that we cannot see. It’s a bit like “gaslighting” in that it is hard to navigate.

Covert hostility can be *so masked* we may not even be aware of it. My favorite example of covert hostility is when someone mocks us and immediately adds that they were “only joking.” Not only have we been mocked and laughed at, but if we object, we open ourselves up to being accused of not having a sense of humor, all while the abuser retains their plausible deniability. Hold that thought.

There are many ways schools can benefit us. However, I cannot think of a single person I know that did not have difficulties at school. From bullying to abuse of authority, silly rules ardently enforced to humiliating punishments and practices, the school environment can scar us. And for many of us, we may never want to return.

Unfortunately, leaving the school environment does not mean that these bullying traits disappear from humanity: They do not. What it does mean, however, is that the traits must become hidden. The adult world does not tolerate overt hostility, so power plays, insecurities, and angry egos go underground.

Dreams of schools on the waning gibbous suggest that we may be feeling some



anxiety that is hard to identify. Subtle and plausibly deniable shade is being cast on us in the form of covert hostility. It may be in our relationship, office environment, or friendship group. Now is a good time to take a moment to examine all our relationships and ask ourselves, “Is there something about this person that makes me feel uneasy?”

The problem with covert hostility is that it is hard to stop. It's just a short walk from narcissism, and there is nothing we can do to get the other person to quit the behavior. All we can do is raise the issue and ask for it to stop. If it persists, the next step would be to distance ourselves from the abuser.

DREAMS OF SCHOOLS ON A THIRD QUARTER MOON

Key thought: What are you prepared to give up in order to achieve your goals?

When we dream of schools, we can conjure many forms of frustration. One powerful and common school dream is that we find ourselves naked and unprepared for critical tests. The levels of powerlessness and anxiety that we initially are exposed to and later repress are unlike any other common experience. Yet, how would we fare if we could not play well, read, study, or do any of the other life skills school is designed to teach?

It is fair to say that schools are less interested in teaching us what is best for us as individuals and more interested in preparing us to be contributing members of a bigger agenda. But this is the world we live in, and, as adults, we have a choice; does the benefit of growth outweigh the costs?

Dreams of schools on the third quarter pertain to the weighing of options. For any advancement in life—any area of growth, self-improvement, or education—there will be a cost. It is easy for us to state what we want or dream of; to be in better shape, earn more money, go on nice vacations, etc. The subsequent question, however, is harder to answer. “What are we prepared to give up to attain that goal?”

We may say we want to be in better shape but are we willing to go to the gym four times a week before work to achieve that goal? We may say we want to earn more money but are we prepared to get a second job in the evening and give up our social and family time to



earn it? We may wish we had a degree so we could apply for different work, but are we prepared to study that hard for that long to graduate?

What are we prepared to give up in order to achieve our goals?

DREAMS OF SCHOOLS ON A WANING CRESCENT

Key thought: Recognizing the end of one experience is essential if you are to allow the next one to begin.

Nothing lasts forever. We may sometimes recognize that a particular moment is of high value, which is good. It's important to acknowledge them. It is also essential to accept that the moment will eventually pass.

Jobs end, windfalls are spent, honeymoon periods are finite, and we age. We spend our youth not caring for the gifts of youth and, instead, wish for the permissions and privileges afforded the adult world. Then we spend the rest of our lives shaking our heads at how the gifts of youth are wasted on the young.

Experiences are transient; life is ephemeral. There is a time to absorb and learn, a time to be productive and robust, and a time to reflect and teach. And there is a time to let go. And these are not only phases in *life* but also in our *days*, *work*, and *relationships*.

One of the most important life skills is knowing when to let go. This can be expressed in many ways, perhaps the most succinct being, "Learn to say no." But other expressions are good for us to be aware of, such as; learning to say goodbye; thanks but no thanks; it's time; I'm not happy.

Recognizing the end of one experience is essential if we are to allow the next one to begin.

