



Creativity in Mind

Imagination, Creativity & Wellbeing

With teacher & author, Harrison F. Carter
www.creativityinmind.org

A Dream of Two Cities

By Harrison F. Carter

The sun was just beginning to rise over the city of Liverpool, in the North West of England - illuminating some tall beech trees and a red-bricked building that stood in the grounds of St Vincent's School for Visual Impairment. Inside the school, fast asleep in the residential unit, was a boy named Will. His alarm clock had just burst into life and was making an almost unbearable noise. 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 so, the memory of that night's dream flashed into the forefront of his mind. "Oh yeah - that was a strange dream..." he said to himself, quietly, ruffling his hair as though trying to shake the dream from his mind. "A shark and a crocodile dancing together?" he recollected, remembering the vision of this peculiar image from his dream. Thinking no more about it, he swung his legs out of bed and went to get some breakfast, pouring himself some cereal. As he did so, once again, the image of the shark and the crocodile circling each other reappeared in his mind. Will began to feel quite intrigued by this lingering image of the shark and the crocodile. "I'll have to tell my friends about my dream later," he said to Cathy, one of the school's care staff.

"You should," answered Cathy. "You've got your creative writing group later - I'm sure they'd be interested to hear all about it. Who knows - there might even be a story in it," she offered with a smile. Will nodded in agreement at Cathy's suggestion.

"I will," he said, making a mental note to do so, and then proceeded to finish his breakfast in quiet contemplation.

Later that day, in the school library, the members of the creative writing group 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 might come up with something first.

"I have - sort of..." volunteered Will, "...but it isn't going to make much sense."

“That’s okay, Will – inspiration for a story can come from anywhere,” offered Mr. Benbow. Will nodded and began to recount to the group the visions and memories of his dream.

“Well, in my dream last night, I was in a harbour - or a dock, maybe – or something by the sea, anyway. I remember being stood by a big boat, and on a notice board I saw an image of a crocodile and a shark, circling each other. I remember wondering to myself whether they were about to fight or dance.”

“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 a river... and I could tell that I was near a city centre - there were lots of tall buildings around me in the distance.” At this, Will began to speak more hurriedly and excitedly as the memories of his dream came back to him. “And I was walking along a promenade – passing by docks and warehouses - seeing different types of boats and hearing all kinds of nautical sounds. And, in particular, I remember being stood by a great big statue of a soldier.” The other group members all listened intently.

“This sounds like town to me,” suggested Tom. “Liverpool city centre.”

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

“And tall buildings and statues,” added Joseph.

“Absolutely,” joined Mr. Benbow. “Some good deductions there, guys – well done. It could well be Liverpool; it certainly has a lot of similarities, doesn’t it? Could you tell us anything else, Will? Like, how did the dream make you feel?”

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

“You know, I’m just thinking,” he began, “...how about we organise a trip to town? Head down to the river – have a wander around a couple of the docks - purely speculative. See if anything clicks with Will as something that he recognises from his dream. It might be like a treasure hunt of some kind – a bit of an adventure - following the clues of a dream. Could be fun - and maybe even the start of a new 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 first," suggested Jack. "Go by the Albert Dock - see if anything looks or sounds familiar?" The others all agreed, and, with that, set off to the river, passing by the old pump house and the Merseyside Maritime Museum.

"Actually, whilst we're here..." commenced Mr. Benbow, stopping the group for a moment, "...does anybody know much about the Merseyside Maritime Museum and the history of Liverpool as a port?" The group members all shook their heads and shrugged their shoulders.

"No, not a lot, really," said Joseph, the others all nodding along.

"Okay," said Mr. Benbow. "Well, seeing as we're here, how about I give you a little history tour of the city. Liverpool has a very long history and celebrated its 800th birthday in 2007..."

"So, this year it will be 812," said Tom, having done some quick arithmetic.

"That's right," smiled Mr. Benbow. "Well, back in the 1800s - as part of the Industrial Revolution - Liverpool grew to become a major port. It handled much of the country's cargo and freight - dealing with raw materials like coal and cotton. The city also became a major point of departure for emigration - with many English and Irish people migrating to North America. Another thing I'll mention at this point - and I'm sure you'll all know this story - but Liverpool was home to both the Cunard and White Star Line shipping companies, and was therefore the port of registry for one of the most famous of all ocean liners..."

"Titanic!" stated Jack, proudly.

"Correct," said Mr. Benbow. "So, from just these few examples, I think you'll agree that Liverpool has a pretty important seafaring heritage - and the Merseyside Maritime Museum, that we're stood outside of here - was opened to recognise this international importance of Liverpool - as a gateway to the world."

"A gateway to the world..." echoed Will, staring off, as though dreaming of some distant land.

"Are you remembering something, Will?" asked Tom, noticing Will's silence.

"Yeah - I am. I was just thinking of the statue of the soldier that I saw in my dream - the one stood by the river..."

"Okay," said Mr. Benbow. "Carry on... can you describe what you see in your mind?"

"Yeah, I'll try," said Will, a look of concentration forming upon his face. "The statue was of a man who looked like the commander of an army, or something. He was more than a soldier; he was dressed in a smart military uniform, and had a sword. He seemed to be staring out to sea, and I remember thinking in my dream that he looked determined - as though he

was ready to take on a storm or an army. And next to the statue, there was a plaque, and I remember reading part of a message that went with the statue. It said something like, ‘...*in the sea, we are glorious*.’” The group members all fell silent, not knowing what to think or what to make of what they had just heard.

“Wow, Will,” said Mr. Benbow, speaking first. “That’s quite the memory you have there! Some real detail – impressive. So often, we can’t remember very much from our dreams, but yours really seems to have implanted itself in you.” Will smiled, pleased with himself. Mr. Benbow continued - “To try and make the most of what Will has told us, I think we should go and speak to somebody at the tourist information centre; see if they can think of a statue that might fit the description. I know that during the Second World War, Liverpool served as a base for the boats of the British Atlantic Fleet. Maybe there’s a statue somewhere as a tribute to that. Anyway, let’s go and see what we can find out.” With that, the group set off for the tourist information centre.

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

“The adventure is underway,” joined Tom.

A little while later, outside the tourist information centre, Mr. Benbow encouraged 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 closely 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 was quickly able to offer a couple of suggestions that she felt might meet the criteria that Will described. She clearly knew her city very well. “You could start with the statue of Captain ‘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’s a statue of Major General William Earle - outside St George’s Hall. I know that he wears a smart military uniform. He also looks very ‘determined’ – as you put it,” she smiled. “I hope that these might help,” she finished.

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

Mr. Benbow then guided the group down to the world-famous Liverpool waterfront, at the Pier Head – the home of the ‘Three Graces’. The Three Graces were comprised of three majestic buildings: the Royal Liver Building, the Cunard Building and the Port of Liverpool Building – and each was conceived and constructed as a visible symbol of Liverpool’s

international prestige - proud emblems of its commercial prowess. With alert and eager minds, the group members walked along the riverside and listened to Mr. Benbow as he shared a tale of the two Liver Bird statues that sat atop the Royal Liver Building in recognition of the city's maritime heritage. "It was said that one of the Liver birds was positioned to look out over the River Mersey, and this was to represent the wives that stayed at home who looked out to their sailor husbands at sea. The second Liver Bird was positioned to look out over the city, and this was said to represent the sailors out at sea, looking back over the city and their families." Will was the first to respond.

"I had no idea of the extent of the connection that Liverpool has to the seas," said Will, staring up to the statues of the Liver Birds on the Liver Building.

"Speaking of statues," added Joseph, "...I wonder where the statue we're looking for is?" he wondered, sweeping his long cane from side to side to check that the way was clear.

"Hey! Look at this," said Tom, all of a sudden - his own long cane having detected something on the ground. It was a series of raised concrete lines. "What are these?" he enquired.

"That's called 'directional paving'," advised Mr. Benbow. "It's a type of tactile paving that helps people with visual impairments to find their way to a particular place - it's for them to follow with their canes."

"Should we follow it then?" wondered Jack, sweeping his long cane over it, clearly curious about where it might lead.

"Sure - why not," said Mr. Benbow. So, with that decision made, the group members proceeded to follow the line of travel offered by the directional paving. After a few hundred metres, Mr. Benbow called the group to a halt. "Gentlemen - how about this for some serendipity?" he said with an apparent smile. "Up ahead - if we just keep following this paving - it's going to take us right up to the statue we're looking for. How about that for a piece of chance!"

"Ha!" laughed Jack. "How about that indeed! That's funny - as though we are on the right path." With some laughter and excited smirks - and the thought of being on the right track in mind - the group members all picked up speed to get to the statue. Upon reaching it, they immediately began to explore it with their eyes and hands.

"Well, he's certainly looking out to sea," offered Joseph, identifying the direction of the gaze of the statue. "But there doesn't feel to be any sword," he noticed, "...and he feels to be wearing a casual jacket of some kind."

"Yeah, you're right," agreed Tom. "Doesn't match the description of your statue, Will."

"No, it seems not," said Will, thoughtfully, looking the statue up and down.

"But I still think it's interesting that he's staring out to sea - like Will remembered,"

added Jack.

“It is, Jack,” joined Mr. Benbow, “...and do remember; all of this has come from a dream. Will didn’t know that this statue was here. How unusual is all of this in itself?” The group paused a moment to absorb the point.

“It is strange, isn’t it? I don’t quite know what to make of it,” agreed Tom. “It’s certainly a strange coincidence, at the very least.”

“It sure is,” said Jack, looking eager to move on. “Let’s go and find the second statue. It might move our adventure on a bit further.”

With continued determination, the group headed back across town, to where the lady in the tourist information office said that the second statue would be situated. It was quite a walk to St George’s Hall, in the cultural quarter of the city - so with the time that they had to get there, Mr. Benbow shared with the group a little of what he knew about St George’s Hall. He explained that the hall was built by the Victorians, in 1854, and had been designed to be an outward expression of pride, confidence and ambition for the city of Liverpool. “Its design was intended to lift the human soul beyond itself,” shared Mr. Benbow. “It’s regarded as one of the finest examples of its kind in the world.”

“This city sure is full of reminders of just how important Liverpool must have been,” reflected Joseph. “Maybe that’s the point of your dream, Will... simply to give us the opportunity to get to know our city.”

“That’s a nice thought, Joseph,” said Mr. Benbow, pleased, glad that the group were enjoying all that they were discovering and learning. Shortly after, Will brought the group to a standstill.

“Hey! There’s the next statue...” announced Will, suddenly, pointing up ahead of them. And there it was indeed – the next statue. The group members picked up their walking pace again and gathered around the foot of the statue to check it out.

“Well, he’s certainly got a sword,” began Tom.

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

“And he looks important – and determined...” finished Joseph. The group members all looked to Will to await his response.

“But it’s not the statue from my dream,” replied Will, with a disappointed look upon his face. The others all looked at him, surprised and, for the first time, somewhat disheartened.

“I thought this was going to be the one,” said Tom, “...it matches your description perfectly.”

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

“Well, maybe your dream is a combination of these two statues?” suggested Jack. “It was only a dream, after all,” he added.

“I know,” agreed Will, reluctantly. “But even so... this doesn’t feel like the moment that I felt in my dream. My dream felt *hopeful*.”

“Good for you, Will,” said Mr. Benbow, admiring Will’s tenacity. “Good for you. Well, for me, that gives us our next direction. That’s what we’re going to do - we’ll just keep on following this little adventure until something about it does feel hopeful again. I like that, Will – the idea of *hope*. As an objective of this little expedition, that’s a *real* treasure worth pursuing. Come on, you bunch of trailblazers - let’s go.”

“Where?” asked Joseph, wondering what was going to happen next, now that both statues had been eliminated.

“Coffee and cake,” announced Mr. Benbow. “That should help with our search. Let’s head back to the statue of Captain Walker – hopes were high there, weren’t they? And we’ll call in at the café in the Museum of Liverpool.”

“Good idea,” enthused Tom, “... I’m Hank Marvin.” The others laughed, knowing how much Tom liked to use rhyming slang. So, with food and drink at the forefront of their minds, the group set off across town again, back to the river.

After another good walk, Mr. Benbow was pleased that the spirits of the group appeared to be picking up again, as they neared the Museum of Liverpool. Just as they approached the statue of Captain Walker, Will suddenly stopped in his tracks once again, clearly having noticed something. “I don’t know if this means anything,” he began, “...but it looks to me like the Captain is looking toward the museum.” The group members all stopped alongside him, to wait for clarification.

“It does,” agreed Mr. Benbow, a smile forming on his face. “That’s an intriguing perspective, Will – well spotted. Good lateral thinking – I like it.”

“Let’s go inside,” said Joseph. “See what happens.” Inside the museum, the group members all headed immediately to the café, making their way straight to the display of cakes. They each made their individual choices carefully – each ordering something different to the other. Then, with their cakes and drinks paid for, they all gathered around a table and tucked in. Nobody spoke for a while; there wasn’t a peep out of them - but for the occasional sound of the enjoyment of their cakes.

“Mmmmm, this is awesome,” said Tom, finishing off a triple chocolate cookie.

“It certainly was delicious,” agreed Jack, sitting back contentedly having finished his salted caramel muffin.

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

“Well, you all seemed to have enjoyed finding out about the history of Liverpool... how about we go and have a look around the museum? It’s all about Liverpool life.”

“Sounds good,” nodded Will, checking with the others to see if they were in agreement.

“Definitely,” added Jack. “We’re on board – and who knows what else we might find out.”

“Come on then,” said Joseph, “... let’s get moving.” With that, the group wandered off toward the impressive entrance forum and a grand spiral staircase that coiled upwards into the heart of the museum. The group members ascended the stairs and reached the first floor. Mr. Benbow, having noticed something, immediately guided them to what it was that had caught his attention. “Hey – come and check this out,” he said, standing next to a sign on the wall. “There’s a ‘Creative Liverpool’ section to the museum - let’s have a look in there.” The group proceeded to have a good wander around the archive, exploring and examining the exhibits. There were lots of creative materials about the Beatles and, in particular, about John Lennon, which caught Will’s attention.

“Look at this,” said Will, his eyes lighting up at something. “These lyrics by John Lennon – they’re from one of his songs - *Imagine*.” Will then began to read the lyrics out loud to the others, but resisted the temptation to sing - “*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, sometimes, so he’s not the only one.” Jack smiled:

“And it was your dream that brought us here,” he said. “Could all of this be connected?” hypothesised Jack, looking to Mr. Benbow.

“It’s a good question, Jack. It’s certainly got me thinking,” said Mr. Benbow. “It sure does seem that all of this appears to be connected – the way that one thing keeps leading to the next in some unanticipated but associated way. It almost seems to be steering us toward something that we seem to be destined to find.” Jack turned to Joseph, who was nearest to him.

“What does all this mean, do you think?” pondered Jack.

“I don’t really know, Jack, but I think he’s saying that we’ve just got to have some faith in the journey that we’re on,” replied Joseph. Just then, from across the room, Mr. Benbow alerted the group to something that he’d found amongst the exhibits.

“Hey, look here,” he said, leaning in for a closer look at something inside a glass cabinet. “This plaque – it’s about Carl Jung.”

“Who’s Carl Jung?” asked Tom.

“He was a famous psychiatrist and thinker from Switzerland,” said Mr. Benbow. “I think he died in the 1960s.”

“So what does the plaque say?” enquired Tom.

“Mmmmm,” said Mr. Benbow, quietly reading, and silent for what seemed like too long for the group’s curiosity to bear. “Well, this is another strange turn up for the books, gentlemen – listen up. It says here that Carl Jung never visited Liverpool, but that he once had a *dream* about the city, and he wrote about it in a book - called ‘*Memories, Dreams and Reflections*’ – how strange is that, given the nature of our own search?” Gathering the group members around more closely, Mr. Benbow continued excitedly. “Listen to this - this is what he wrote – he says, “*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, 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 it 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 I think this might mean?” asked Mr. Benbow, quietly. “Your dream, Will, might not be of the city of Liverpool at all... your dream could be of some other city in the world – a place that you’ve never been.” The group were silent - uncertain of what to say or how to feel - but it was written across their faces that they understood. “We should head back to school,” said Mr. Benbow. “I’ve got an idea.”

Thirty minutes later, the group were back in the school library, ready to find out what the next course of action was going to be. “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 – the bit that said, ‘*in the sea we are glorious*’.” Will logged on to the computer immediately and began to carry out the search. The Internet brought up hundreds of images associated with Will’s search criteria, and, as he scrolled down through the pages of photographs, a lot of them appeared to hold no meaning. However, after a few more moments of scrolling, Will paused, and looked at the screen a little closer. Then,

he used the mouse to click on an image to make it full-screen, and sat back in his chair, in an apparent state of near-disbelief.

“That’s it,” he said, simply and certainly. “That’s the statue I saw; the exact one. Every single thing about it.” The group members quickly all wheeled their chairs to gather around Will and the computer screen.

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

“That’s incredible, Will!” said Tom. “You’ve dreamt of something that you’ve never known!”

“Click on the link to the website, Will,” said Jack. “Let’s see where this place is.” Will clicked on the link and the webpage 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!” smiled Mr. Benbow. “It’s amazing, Will.” The group all sat in silence for a while, their collective gaze switching between the face of Will and the image of the statue that was on the computer screen.

“What does this mean?” asked Will, baffled that his dream had manifested into something that really existed – something that he had never known - in a place that he had never heard of.

“I don’t know,” said Mr. Benbow honestly. “It’s extraordinary. I know what I’d like it to mean, if that might be any use to you? It could have some symbolic meaning; like the emphasis on water in your dream. Water quite often seems to be associated with dreams – and with both cities, Liverpool and Surabaya, both being by the sea, maybe that is part of the connection that has been made. That your dream has connected these two cities, just as the waters of the Earth connect these two cities.” The group all sat in a moment of quiet reflection.

“Connected by the waters of the Earth,” echoed Will. “I like that thought.”

“Can we read about Surabaya?” asked Tom.

“I think that’s a good idea, Tom,” said Mr. Benbow. “Why don’t you all log on to your computers and see what you can find out.”

After an hour or so of research, the group members all 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 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."

"Nice, Will - good, well done. That is a similarity."

"I also wanted to find out about the shark and the crocodile," continued Will.

"Oh yeah," cheered Tom. "I forgot about that - that was actually the start of all of this."

"It was," said Will, pausing for thought - reflecting back to the morning and realising all that occurred in the space of a day. It had certainly been a lot to comprehend. He quickly collected his thoughts and resumed in sharing what else he had found out about Surabaya. "It turns out that Surabaya is Indonesia's second-largest city, and with regard to that image I saw of the shark and the crocodile circling each other - legend told of a *titanic* battle between 'Sura' - the great white shark, and 'Baya' - the crocodile. The two of them clashed in a river and fought for supremacy - and the place where they clashed became known as 'Surabaya' - the city of the shark and the crocodile. I also found that the image of them fighting 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 mayor, who they call 'Mother Risma'. Apparently, she has transformed Surabaya from being a dirty old industrial port into a city that now wins environmental awards as an eco-city."

"Wow," said Mr. Benbow, impressed at what 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 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. I was also thinking about how we learnt of Carl Jung's dream. He had dreamt of a place that he had never seen - it somehow came from his subconscious - his imagination. Imagination isn't something that is dependent upon sight - it's about the ability to envision - to dream - to have insight. What I'm saying is that we don't have to be able to 'see' things to be visionary - it's not restricted by visual impairment... we all have the ability to be insightful. It's a level opportunity for all." The group nodded 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 imagine something about Surabaya - and produce a creative description of it - either a poem, a story or a short piece of writing. Then, from that, we'll send your work to the children in a school in Surabaya to develop and set up a social and

cultural exchange. And just like how the waters of the Earth connect our two cities, so too can collaboration and our desire to make the world a better place – like the struggle of the shark and the crocodile - to bravely face challenge together.”