

CHAPTER 15

HISTORYMAKERS Sigmund Freud *Investigator of the Unconscious*

Section 1

"I am actually not a man of science at all . . . I am nothing but a [conqueror] by temperament, an adventurer."—Sigmund Freud, to a friend

Whether a man of science or adventurer, Sigmund Freud was a revolutionary. He did not originate the idea of the unconscious mind, but he showed that people were influenced by inner drives. He pointed both trained professionals and ordinary people to examine the human mind to understand their behavior.

Born in 1856, Freud enjoyed material comfort but had to contend with his father's emotional distance. While Freud was young, the family moved to Vienna, Austria. He grew up facing the anti-Semitism of society there. However, the barriers placed in the path of Jewish academics may have made it easier for him to branch out into new areas. Despite these troubles, he remained in Vienna almost all his life.

Freud studied medicine and focused on the mind. In his 30s, he became friends with another doctor. That physician was using a technique similar to hypnosis to help a troubled woman talk about her past and thus find some release for her emotional problems. Freud began similar work. The two doctors published a book in which Freud first used the term *psychoanalysis* to describe his method.

In 1896, Freud reached a personal crisis brought on by his father's death. He felt strong emotions, which he realized had long been repressed. To understand these feelings, he studied his own dreams. In 1899, he published his first major work, *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Aware that he was breaking new ground, he dated the book 1900. He argued that dreams are used by the mind to attain desires that are not met in conscious life. In order to understand the unconscious mind, a person's dreams must be deciphered.

As Freud treated patients with severe emotional problems, he refined his theory. He believed that many of these patients had difficulties related to their sexuality. This aspect of his theory came under violent attack from others.

Freud also further developed his methods for treatment and psychoanalysis. He began using a technique called free association in which he asked people to say whatever came to their minds. He thought this would reveal important inner conflicts.

He also devised a new setting for analysis. He thought patients could develop a strong attachment to their doctor, which could interfere with treatment. To prevent this, he had the patient lie on a couch without looking directly at the analyst. That person sat to the side and played the role of an objective listener.

In the early 1900s, Freud gathered a circle of followers, but many of them eventually broke with him to develop their own theories. Freud's views, though, dominated psychology for many years. He wrote books that showed how the secrets of the mind were revealed in slips of the tongue, in lapses of memory, in jokes, and in cultural institutions. He gave lectures that popularized his ideas. One of the first was a 1909 speech in Worcester, Massachusetts, which brought his psychology to the United States.

In the 1920s, Freud sharpened his thinking about the dynamics of the mind by identifying three forces that shaped behavior. First, the "id" is the infant's desire for pleasure, which requires immediate satisfaction. Second, the "ego" eventually develops and is a restraining force that tries to adapt the impulses of the id to the needs of reality. The third force is the "superego." This is the mind's adoption of society's moral standards.

In 1938, Nazi Germany seized Austria, and the aged Freud and his family were put under house arrest. Many of his writings were burned. However, several influential people managed to win his release. After signing a document stating that he had been treated well by the Nazis, he added in his own handwriting, "I can most warmly recommend the Gestapo [Nazis] to anyone."

Questions

1. **Using Context Clues** What is meant by *anti-Semitism*?
2. **Making Inferences** Why do you think Freud put the date of 1900 on *The Interpretation of Dreams*?
3. **Using Sequential Order** Outline the development of Freud's career.