I chose to analyze the dream sequences of *The Simpsons* using the methods of Freudian Dream Theory. The seasons of *The Simpsons* that I watched featured a lot of dream sequences, especially compared to the other series in which dreams were tagged in our data set. I was also struck by the ways the dream sequences were being used. Often in tv shows, dream sequences show distress or desires, but usually these are made obvious by the dream, and not obscured in any way. The dreams in *The Simpsons* weren't always easy to decipher as indicating one, straightforward thing. In order to get a better sense of what these dreams were doing, I decided to try applying Freud's methods and see to what-- if any-- extent this theory fit.

My methods were as follows. I took a copy of our combined spreadsheet, and deleted everything that wasn't tagged "Dreams." Then I deleted anything that wasn't a sleep-dream. Then I watched every clip and made a spreadsheet to add a 1 or a 0 for each Freudian term I was using to analyze. I only looked at whether or not the concept was present in the dream, and not how many times the concept was present per dream. I didn't use all of Freud's categories, but I picked the ones that are demonstrative of his general theory and that I'd noticed here and there while watching before I started the dream project. I reread most of *The Interpretation of Dreams* and used a few quotes to highlight the concepts, but mostly I gave definitions in my own words, for the sake of accessibility and clarity.

Using Scalar, I created a webpage for the project, and made a page for each term, character, dream summary, dream analysis, and explanation of the project and my conclusions. My goals for the website were to explain Freudian concepts using only Simpsons examples, and to use my analysis to make a convincing argument that these concepts actually were present in *The Simpsons'* dream sequences. I feel that both of those goals were met pretty well, and are exemplified by the links between the examples and analysis pages. I also hoped to use the data I

collected in my analysis to answer my research questions: Why are these dream sequences so well explained by Freudian Theory? What does The Simpsons seek to show or explain with these dreams? And why is it more effective to give this information through a dream rather than another means? What, if anything, can The Simpsons' tell us about the relationship between Freud and pop culture?

After analyzing, making graphs, and trying to search through The Simpsons' script archives, I felt I had some answers. I expected to find that the dreams would show more insight into the characters, and maybe explain their motives and feelings. The graphs that show character's behavior changes in relation to dreams show that this might be true to some extent, and there were trends among characters that revealed preoccupations they had that weren't necessarily immediately accessible from their waking life alone. For example, Lisa dreams often about celebrities and cares about fame and prestige. It's clear from the show that she's an ambitious character. She and Bart also wish that Homer were a better father; it's a strong theme in a lot of episodes. The dreams though, showed that she usually dreams of male authority figures giving her praise, and that Homer is frequently mentioned or alluded to within these dreams. This shows a relationship between these two features of the episode that surprised me.

One of the most surprising things, though, was that several dreams didn't quite make sense as dreams that the characters were having within the regular world of *The Simpsons.* The interpretation fell apart unless one assumed that the dream existed outside of the characters, but was still showing the viewer something about the plot and the minds of the characters. For example, cut-offs right before the credits rolled extended some of the dream distortion that was present in the dream, except this distprtion now extended to the viewer, rather than to the character. Similarly, there was an instance where both Homer and Lisa had a dream about the

same thing, independently of each other, in the same episode. An analysis of this only works if one assumes that the dreams work together in order to compare the two characters. The dream then becomes the viewer's way of understanding something about the characters. What's interesting is that in these dreams that broke the fourth wall still had high levels of dream distortion and repression. Now however, the line between the repressed content of a given character and of something directed at the viewer was harder to distinguish.

I tried to search for mentions of Freud in *The Simpsons* archives and scripts, and was disappointed by my meager findings. There were only a few, spread out far between series and episode. All in all, there were only 3 by name, and so I only included one on my project. There was also one appearance of Freud as himself in the opening couch gag, and in Season 12 Episode 12, Lisa psychoanalyzes Homer. I thought that there would be more mentions of Freud, and so my conclusions are a little different than those I presented.

The Simpsons is both using and reflecting upon the relationship between pyschology and pop culture. The show relies on a certain level of dream interpretation in order to make sense of the plot, and also maintains in several episodes that dreams have rules and can reveal things about the mind, and makes a few, casual references to Freud. In this way, it relies on a certain level of pop-psychology being immediately accessible to the viewer. At the same time, the episodes distort information in ways that break the boundaries between character and viewer and indicate that the characters are experiencing the dreams differently than we are. This complicates our understanding of the way that pop-psychology functions in our society. In *The Simpsons*, it works as both a ready-made convention for story-telling, and an explanation for human behavior, and it isn't always clear how to distinguish between the two.