

Episode 1: James V. McConnell 5 Minute History Lesson

Teacher's Guide

The Cumming Center's 5 Minute History Lessons (5MHL) are a series of short films about interesting people and stories from the psychology's history. The 5MHL's use archival documents, photographs, sound recordings, and films housed in the Archives of the History of American Psychology to tell the stories of individual psychologists and psychological research.

The 5MHL Scavenger Hunt activities are meant to be used by instructors to provide a broad understanding of a variety of topics. Scavenger hunts can be done in class (face-to-face or virtual) or assigned as homework projects.

Instructors can determine the depth of the project and should allow 30-45 minutes. The scavenger hunts can simply be completed by students, or they can serve as a jumping off point for more in-depth class discussions. Suggested discussion points are included.

Instructions and answer sheets are found for *Episode 1: James V. McConnell* on the following pages.



Episode 1: James V. McConnell 5 Minute History Lesson

Level: high school students, undergraduate college students

Time: 30-45 minutes

Objectives: By the end of this activity students will:

1. have a general understanding of psychologist James V. McConnell and his work with memory transfer in planaria
2. have a basic understanding of how archival materials can be used to tell a story

BEFORE the 5 Minute History Lesson (5MHL) [5 minutes]

Ask your students if they are familiar with James V. McConnell. Ask your students if they are familiar with memory transfer research. Make note of their responses for later discussion.

DURING the 5 Minute History Lesson [15-25 minutes]

Link: <https://youtu.be/3caGs3A2Ios>

Students should watch the James V. McConnell 5MHL without taking notes. Students should watch the 5MHL a second time and simultaneously complete the scavenger hunt.

AFTER the 5 Minute History Lesson [15 minutes]

Initiate a discussion using the following questions or ask your students to answer them in short answer form:

KNOW What is something you learned from the video that you didn't know previously? Why does this stand out to you as interesting?

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DO/APPLY a SKILL Consider McConnell's memory transfer research with planaria. Why do you think this research gained him notoriety?

FEEL/UNDERSTAND The results of McConnell's memory transfer research could not be fully replicated by other scientists. Use this opportunity to discuss replication in psychological research.

1: Describe the research James V. McConnell conducted that gained him notoriety.

Answer: McConnell conditioned flatworms to respond to stimuli. He then ground up those flatworms and fed them to other flatworms that had not been conditioned. His findings showed the cannibal flatworms responded more quickly to the stimuli than the non-cannibal flatworms. He believed that the memories of the original flatworms had been transferred to the worms that had eaten them and that this was evidence for a chemical basis for memory.

2: Were the results from his most well-known studies replicated by other scientists?

Answer: No. The results were never fully replicated.

3: What were the titles of the two journals McConnell established and why were they unique?

Answer: 1. Worm Runner's Digest. 2. Journal of Biological Psychology. Unique: They were printed together, and a subscriber received both journals as one.

4: What was the title of James V. McConnell's textbook?

Answer: Understanding Human Behavior

5. What happened to McConnell in November of 1985?

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Answer: He received a bomb in the mail and was a victim of Ted Kaczynski (the Unabomber)



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