

NOVA: James Randi

THE SECRETS OF THE PSYCHICS

The Amazing Randi

Teaching note: this presentation is nearly one full hour. For a 57-60 min class period, consider fast-forwarding through the introduction and sponsor information.

1. How many Americans claim to have had a psychic experience? Ratio: 3 out of 4
2. In 1986 James Randi was given the MacArthur Award. (This is commonly known as the “Genius Grant”: \$1M given to individuals who show great promise in their field. Recipients are decided by a committee, there is no application process.)
3. On the Tonight Show, James Randi was consulted prior to Uri Geller’s appearance. During his appearance, Uri Geller
 - A. confidently demonstrated his psychic abilities to a skeptical Johnny Carson
 - B. succeeded in some psychic feats and failed in others
 - C. confessed that he was a publicity-seeking charlatan
 - D. crashed and burned**
4. The Peter Popoff Ministry
 - A. was a four million dollar per year enterprise
 - B. purported to heal any kind of medical ailment through a method involving sharp blows
 - C. used a wireless transmitter to give Popoff personal information about participants
 - D. declared bankruptcy after Randi’s exposé
 - E. all of the above**
5. Students in Randi’s classroom demonstration generally regarded their astrological readings as
 - A. accurate**
 - B. inaccurate
6. What was the trick regarding the horoscopes?

They were all the same!
7. Psychologist and former palm-reader Ray Hyman found that he had the greatest success with clients when he
 - A. gave a straight-up reading in accordance with palm-reading guidelines
 - B. told clients the opposite of what he saw in their palms**
 - C. imagined that he lived in an earlier era
 - D. assumed his clients were skeptical of palm-reading and his abilities
8. The US military didn’t want to fall behind the Soviet Union in terms of psychic weapons. During the Cold War, there was fear in the Pentagon of a ?-gap.
 - A. alpha (α)
 - B. sigma ()
 - C. omega ()
 - D. psi (Ψ)**

9-10.THE IGNACHENKO EXPERIMENT

Russian psychic Ignachenko was given the assignment of changing the test subject's blood pressure (heart), brain waves (brain), or nothing (null) during each quarter of a one hour test session. Scientists who monitored the blood pressure and brain activity of the test subject would then report the changes they observed.

9. On the first row of the table below, indicate the randomly-chosen sequence of the psychic's assignment.

Phase I 1st 15 min	Phase II 2nd 15 min	Phase III 3rd 15 min	Phase IV last 15 min
Nothing	Heart	Brain	Brain
Heart	Brain	Brain	Nothing

10. On the second row of the above below, indicate the changes observed by the scientists.

11. What fundamental aspect of a true medical study had the brain institute scientists neglected in their previous (more "successful") experiments?

"Blinding" (to obtain objective results)

12. Many attempts were made to test the charged water. What was the conclusion?

It couldn't be tested.

13. From an array of photographs, the psychic sisters chose Ted Bundy. What is generally regarded as the single most important characteristic of this person?

He was a mass-murderer

14. Of all the characteristics of Ted Bundy identified by the psychic sisters, about how many were correct?

A. 100% B. 75% C. 50% **D. 33%** E. 25% F. 0%

15. How did the psychic sisters react?

[Something like: They retrofitted their answers--they tried to say they read the picture correctly.]

16. Who said "When you believe in things you don't understand then you suffer: superstition ain't the way"?

****NOT GRADED****

Wiki fun: "James Randi," "Uri Geller," "Peter Popoff."