

GCSE HISTORY MEDICINE THROUGH TIME TASKS

Why was Simpson experimenting with chemical anaesthetics in 1847?

Source A shows a model of the famous evening of 4 November 1847, when Dr James Simpson, Professor of Surgery at Edinburgh University, and some of his assistants were experimenting with the effects of various chemicals.

The bottle of chloroform was knocked over and they all passed out, to be discovered by Simpson's wife. Soon Simpson was using chloroform to give pain-relief for women in childbirth.

TASK 1

Look at Sources A–D.

Arrange statements A–G in order of importance from 1–7 to explain why Simpson was experimenting with chemical anaesthetics in 1847.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

A. Pain had always been a major problem in surgery.

B. Science was important in the 19th century, especially the science of gases.

C. Popular lectures were given on scientific topics, especially gases. See Source B.

D. People experimented with gas. See Source C.

E. Equipment was developed to give ether or laughing gas (nitrous oxide) as anaesthetic. See Source D.

F. Ether produces coughing. Nitrous oxide (laughing gas) is only mildly anaesthetic.

G. A chronology of gas anaesthetics:

1795: Nitrous oxide recognised to dull pain.	1844: Nitrous oxide used by dentist in USA.
1842: Ether used by dentist in USA.	1846: Ether used in London in an operation to amputate a diseased thigh.

WELLCOME LIBRARY LEARNING RESOURCE

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GCSE HISTORY MEDICINE THROUGH TIME SOURCE MATERIALS 1 OF 2

Why was Simpson experimenting with chemical anaesthetics in 1847?

Source A.

Simpson and his colleagues after trying out chloroform. M0003394



Source B.

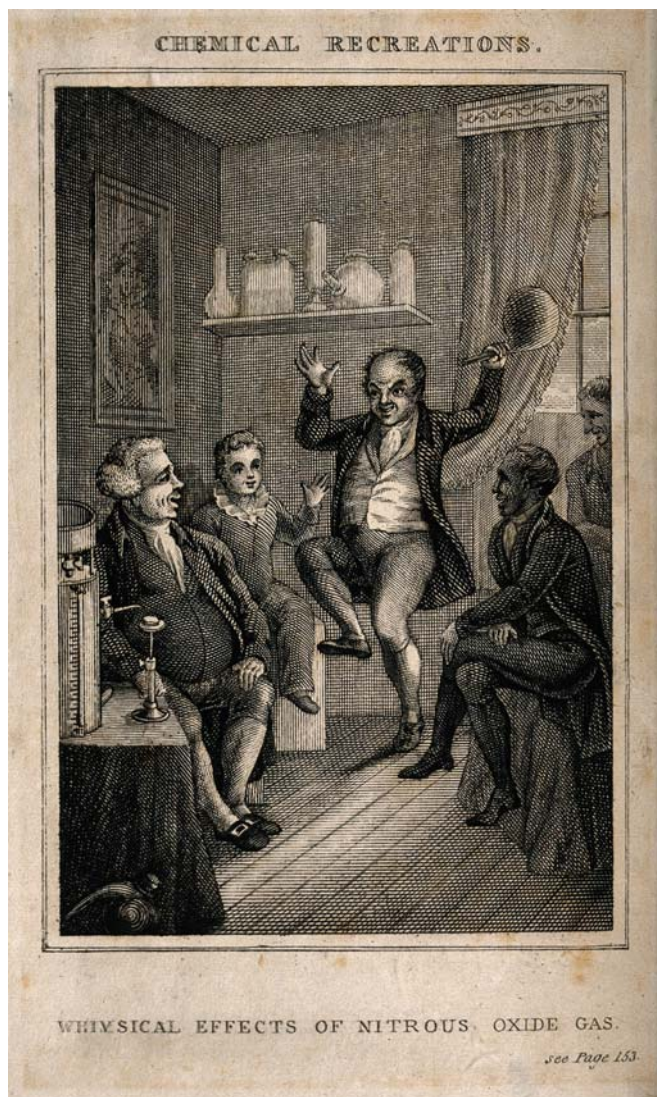
This cartoon by Gillray of 1795 shows the famous scientist Humphrey Davy giving a lecture on gases. L0008634



Why was Simpson experimenting with chemical anaesthetics in 1847?

Source C.

This picture shows the effects of laughing gas – nitrous oxide. This is a mild anaesthetic that can also produce giggling. V0016837



Source D.

19th-century equipment for giving ether or laughing gas (nitrous oxide) as anaesthetic. L0004090

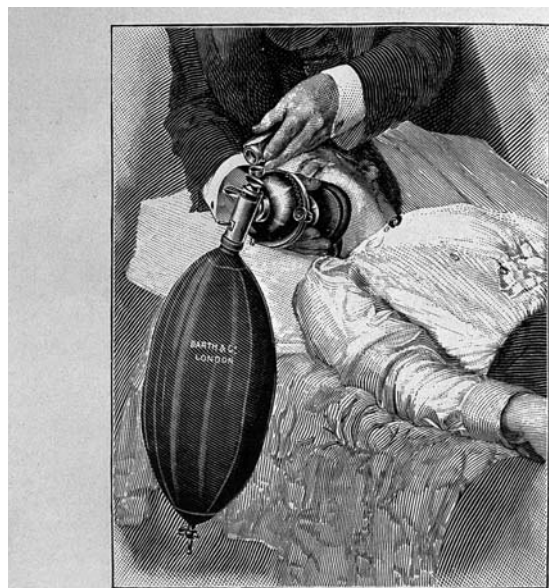


FIG. 73.—The Administration of Nitrous Oxide and Ether by means of the wide-bore modification of Clover's Ether Inhaler and Hewitt's Nitrous Oxide Stopcock.