mystery science

Grades K-5
Mini-Lesson: “Why are so many people scared of bugs?”

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

VIDEO 1

[Video Call]

- Hi, Doug!
- Hi, Hunter!
- I have a question for you. Why are so many people scared of bugs?
- That's a great question.

Rather than me be the one to answer it though, I know the perfect person for this question. His name is Dr. Samuel Ramsey. He's a scientist who studies bugs. I know he's got some thoughts about this question. Dr. Ramsey, what do you think?

Why are some people afraid of bugs? That is a great question. Let's talk about bugs. Now today, when I say bug, I'm using it in the non-science sense of the word, as in things that some people call creepy crawlies, you know, the stuff with a whole bunch of legs. Have you ever seen a bug fly or crawl into a crowded place, like maybe your classroom? If you did, I bet you noticed a lot of different reactions. There were probably some people who were pretty freaked out. Some people were probably pretty calm about it. Some people may have gotten excited or even tried to catch it. How about you guys? How do you feel about bugs?

VIDEO 2

Well, I don't know how you feel about bugs, but believe it or not, when I was really little, around seven, I used to be terrified of them. I would have nightmares about bugs and make my dad come into my room and stomp on imaginary bugs before I could go to sleep. I was so scared that I didn't even want to go outside anymore. Now, most people aren't that scared around bugs, but a lot of people think that they're pretty creepy and crawly and pretty much stay as far away from them as they can. Why is that? Could it be that some people feel like bugs are a little dangerous? Think about the scary-looking spiders or creepy crawlies you've seen in the movies, or maybe you've seen stinging bugs, like scorpions, bees, or wasps in real life. It's easy to understand why some people might get a little nervous around them. These creatures can actually cause pain. But here's the thing—most bugs aren't dangerous at all. Consider this bug. Up close, it might look scary to some, and with a name like dragonfly, it sounds ferocious. Can they bite? Can they sting? But guess what? Dragonflies love to eat. They love eating bugs that you personally might find annoying, like mosquitoes and flies. They're amazing hunters. To catch their prey, they make a little trap with their legs and hold the bugs in place with their mouths. Oh, and just think about bees. Bees are one insect that probably cause people the most worry. Who wants to be stung by a bee? It might even be tempting to imagine a world where there are no bees. But if that really happened, it would be terrible. Bees are one of the most helpful bugs of all. They help flowers produce seeds and fruit. It's called pollination. So without bees, we wouldn't have many of the beautiful flowers that we love to look at, or the foods that we eat, like apples, peaches, strawberries, and melons. So, many bugs aren't really all that scary—they're helpful! It's no coincidence that a lot of superheroes like Spider-Man and

Ant-Man are named after bugs. In fact, some bugs have incredible skills that almost seem like superpowers. Check out this guy, it's called a Hercules beetle. These beetles can lift things that are 850 times heavier than their own body weight. That would be like you lifting 10 elephants stacked on top of each other. Oh, and this insect, this is one of my favorites. It's an atlas moth. They're masters of disguise. Don't these markings on the wings make them look just like like a Cobra? That helps scare animals away that might try to eat them. Consider this, you and me, we have only two eyes, but bugs have a lot more than that. Have you ever noticed how hard it is to catch a fly? That's because two of their five eyes are separated into thousands of tiny little sections, so they can never miss when something moves, even a little bit. And they can see all around them, even behind their heads. But here's something interesting that I noticed. Maybe part of why these creatures seem scary is because they're so different from us. Being different from us isn't a reason to be scared. I mean, I would guess that I look different from some of you and maybe you look different from some of your friends, but isn't it differences like this that make life so interesting? I mean, some bugs are so amazingly different that they've inspired artists to create a lot of aliens that we've seen in science fiction movies, in video games, and not just the scary ones. The incredible strangeness of bugs has inspired some really fun characters too, like Caterpie, a character from Pokemon. Doesn't it look just like this caterpillar in real life? I know that bugs still might look scary to some but learning more about them can make you less scared. At least, that's what happened to me. One summer, my parents dropped me off at the library and encouraged me to hang out in the bugs section. So that's what I did. I read every bug book I could find. And before that summer ended, I wasn't so afraid. I even remember riding in the car with my mom and saying to her, I want to be an entomologist when I grow up. That's

what you call a bug scientist. And here I am today. Thanks for listening. And for giving bugs a chance. I know they're a lot different from us, but that's what makes them so awesome.

That's all for this week's question. Thanks, Hunter for asking it. And thank you Dr. Ramsey for being our guest.