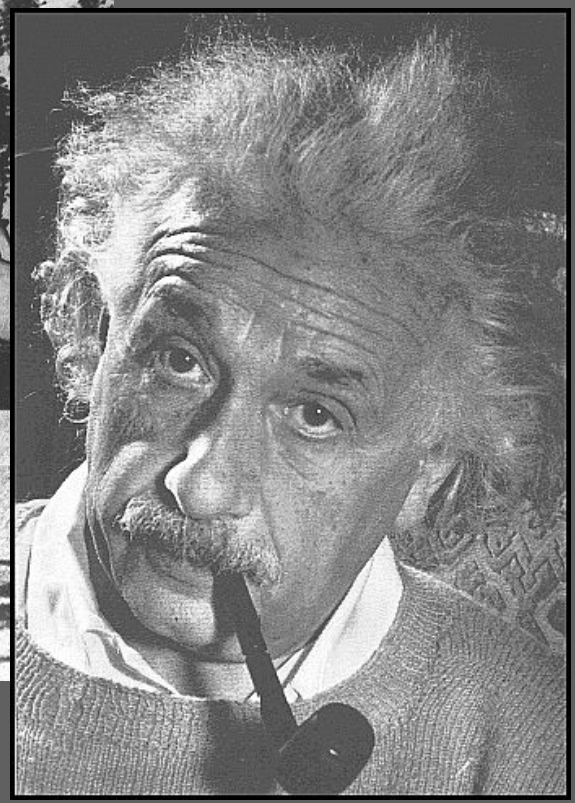
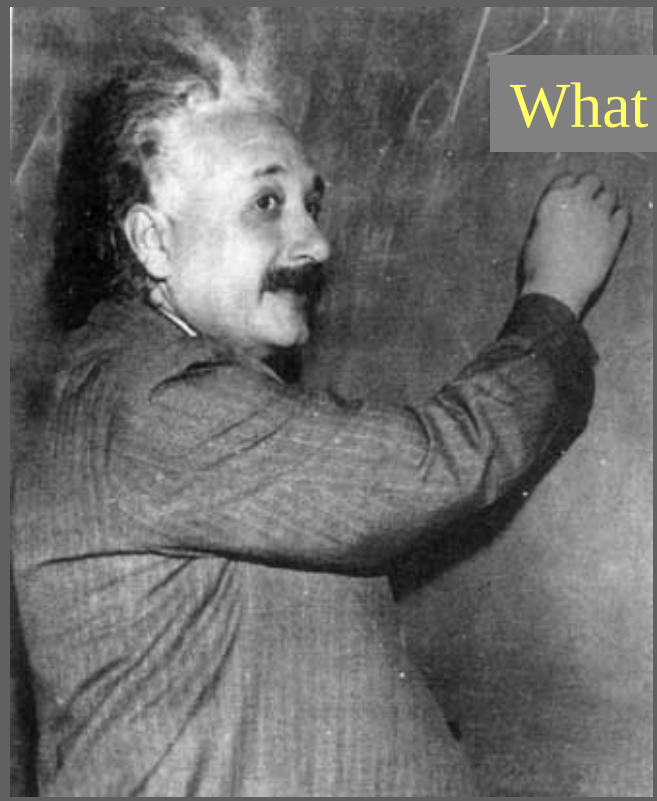
Einstein and the relativity of space and time

Steve Manly

Department of Physics and Astronomy

University of Rochester



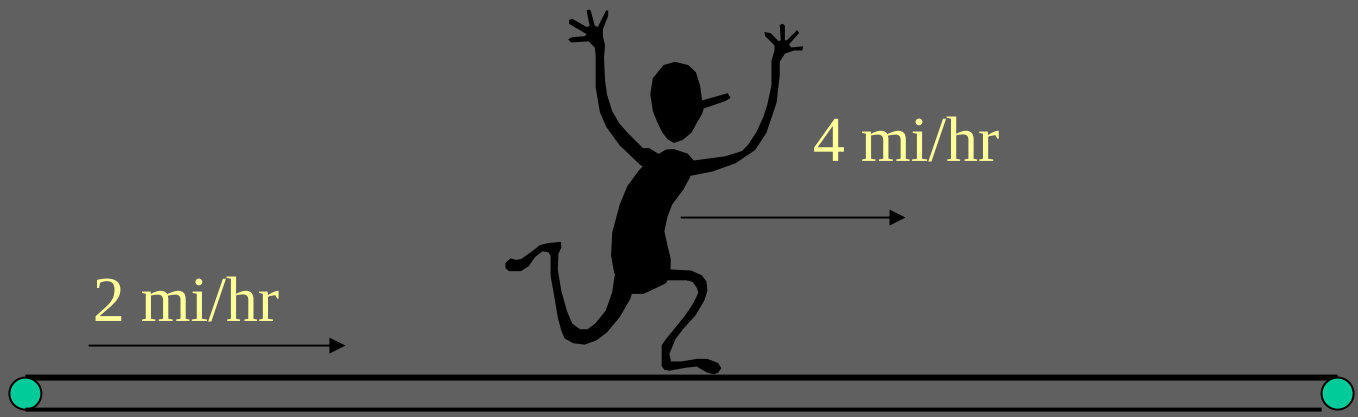


What is time??

Velocities add!!

It’s common sense!

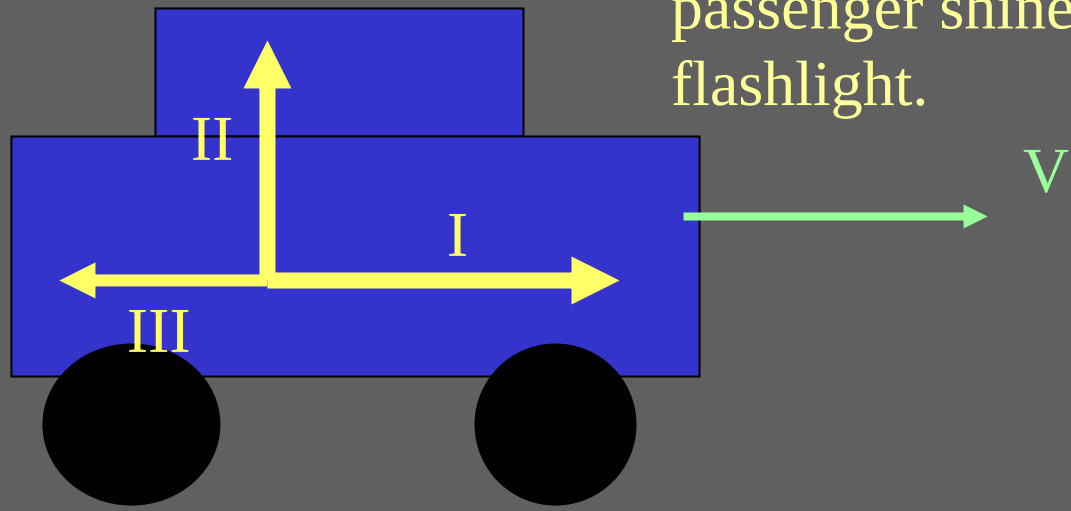
Speed with respect to you is 4 mi/hr



Speed with respect to you is 2 + 4 = 6 mi/hr

The speed of light is greater for beam I, beam II or beam III?

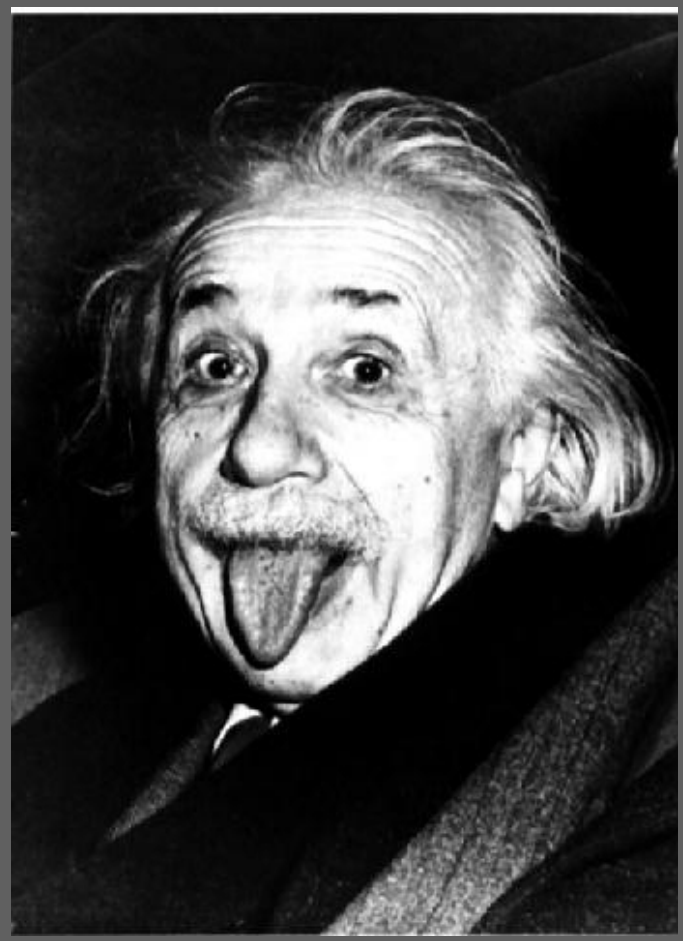
Car moves while passenger shines a flashlight.



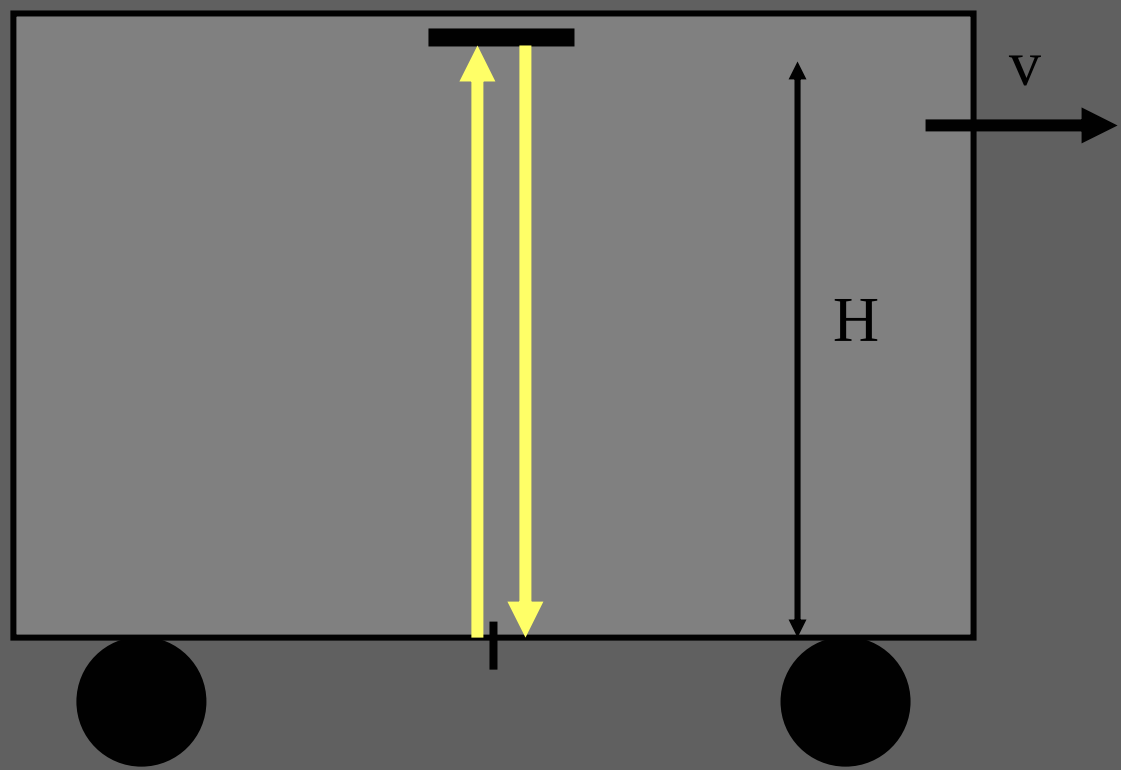
Experiment says the speed of light is the same in all directions!!

Weird, huh? What does it mean for the real world?

Enter our man Einstein!

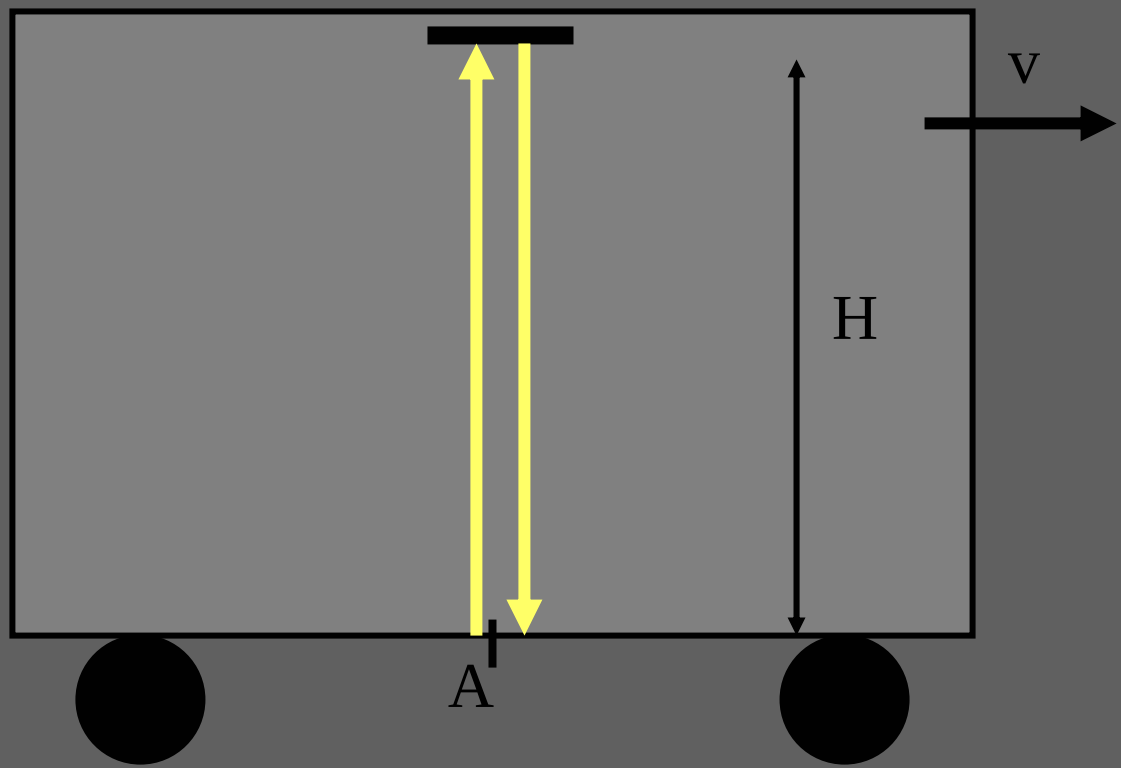


Einstein thought experiment:
Consider a beam of light that is emitted from the floor of a train that bounces off a mirror on the ceiling and returns to the point on the floor where it was emitted.

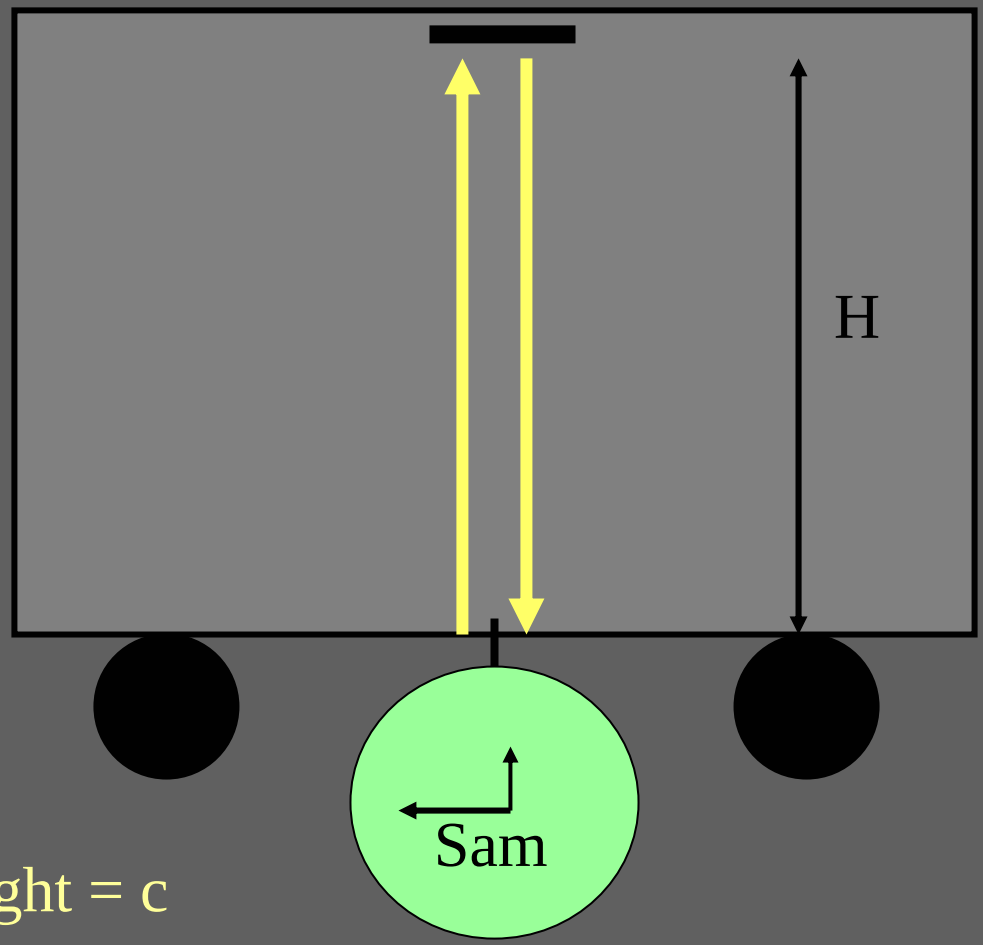


Fact: Light is emitted and detected at point A.

This fact must be true no matter who makes the measurement!!!!



Sam is on the train



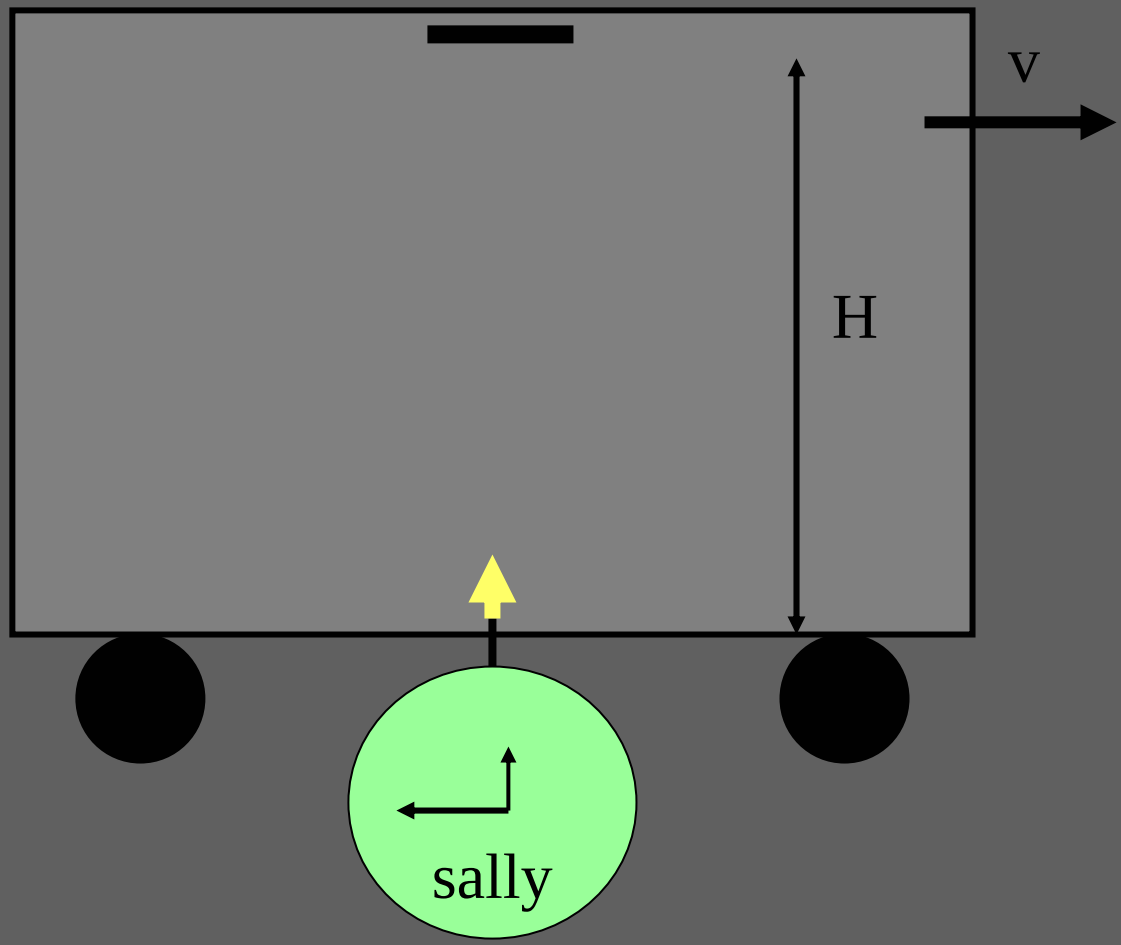
Velocity of light = c

c = distance/time

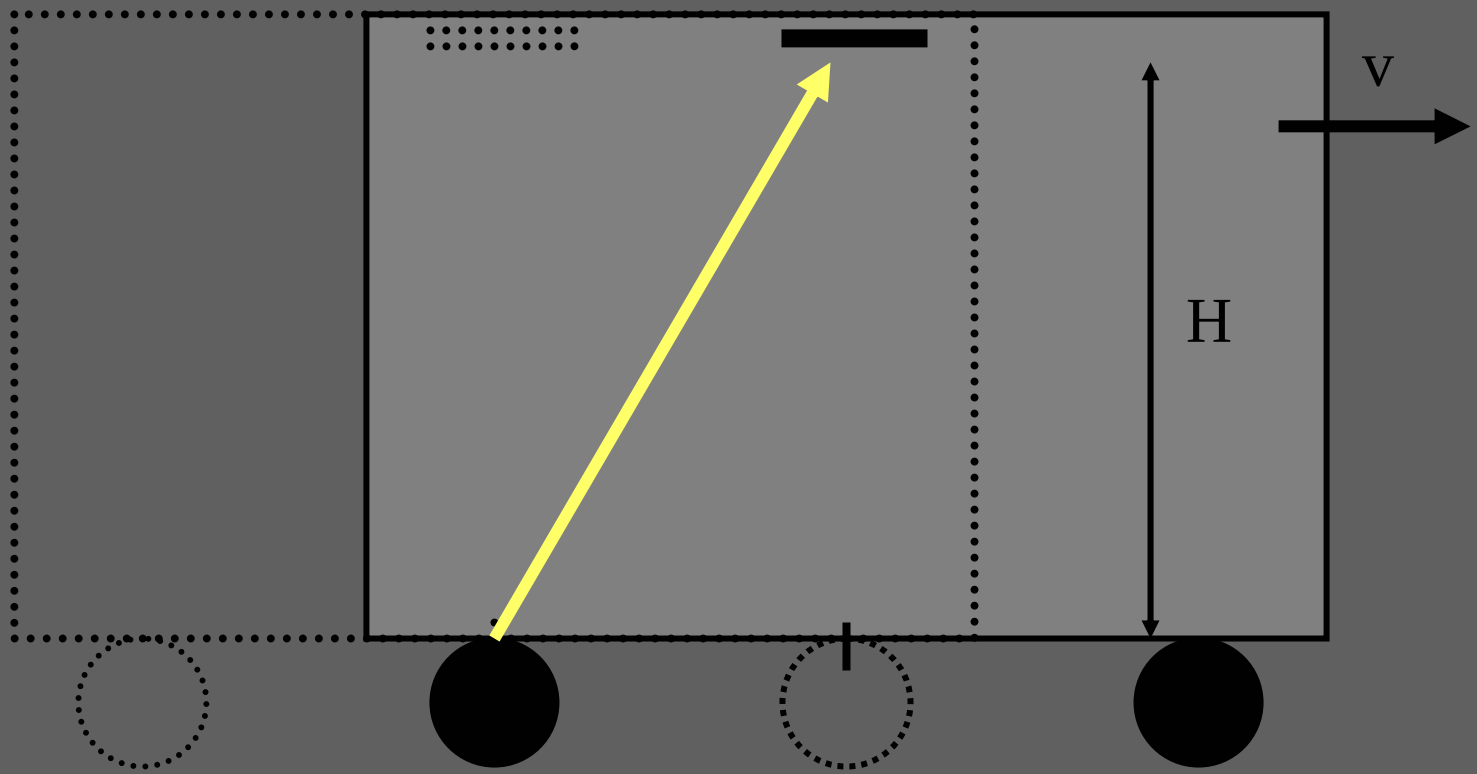
$c = 2H/T_{sam}$

$T_{sam} = 2H/c$

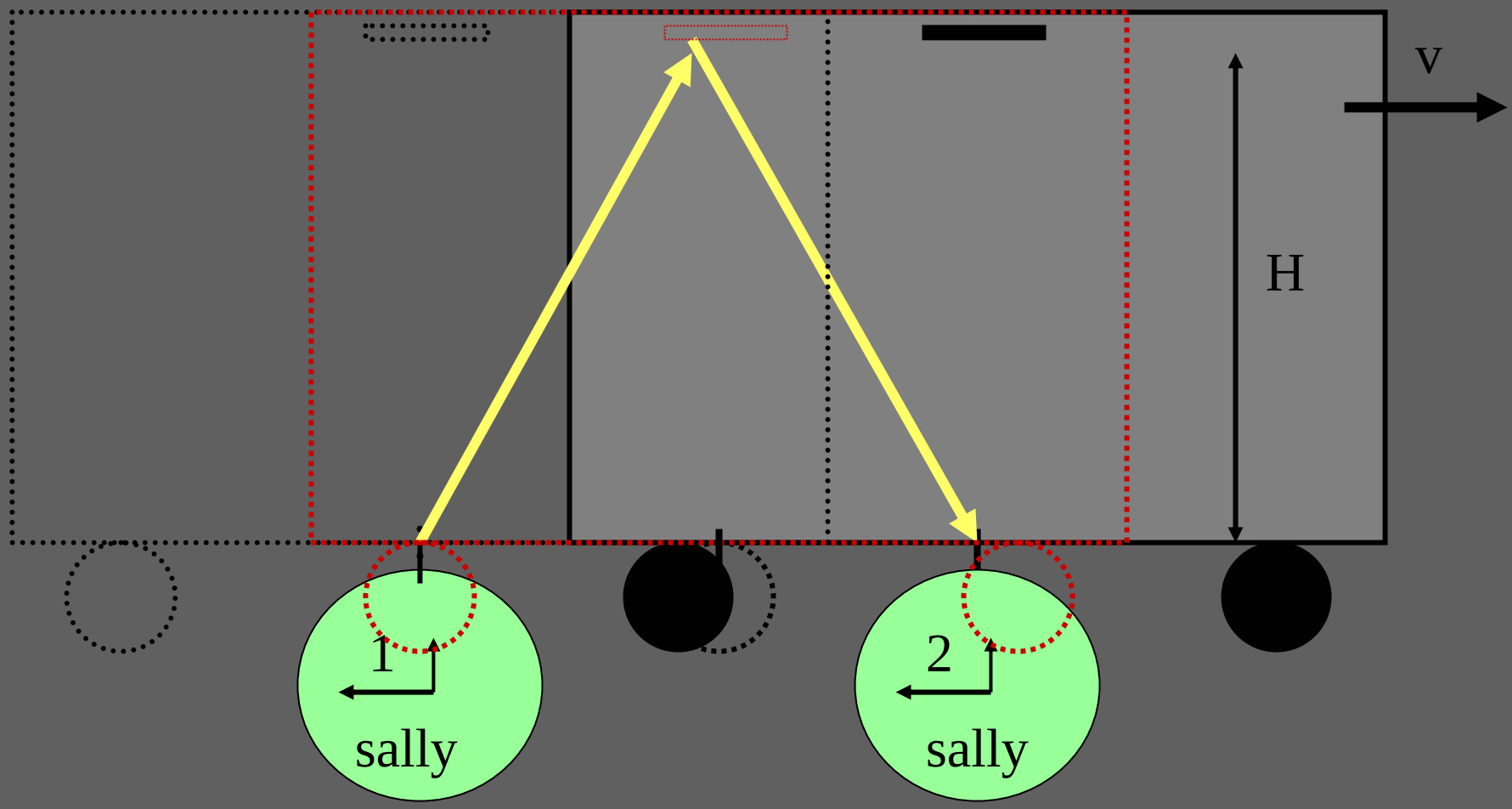
Sally watches the train pass and makes the same measurement.



Light is emitted


v
H

Sally is standing still, so it takes two clocks.

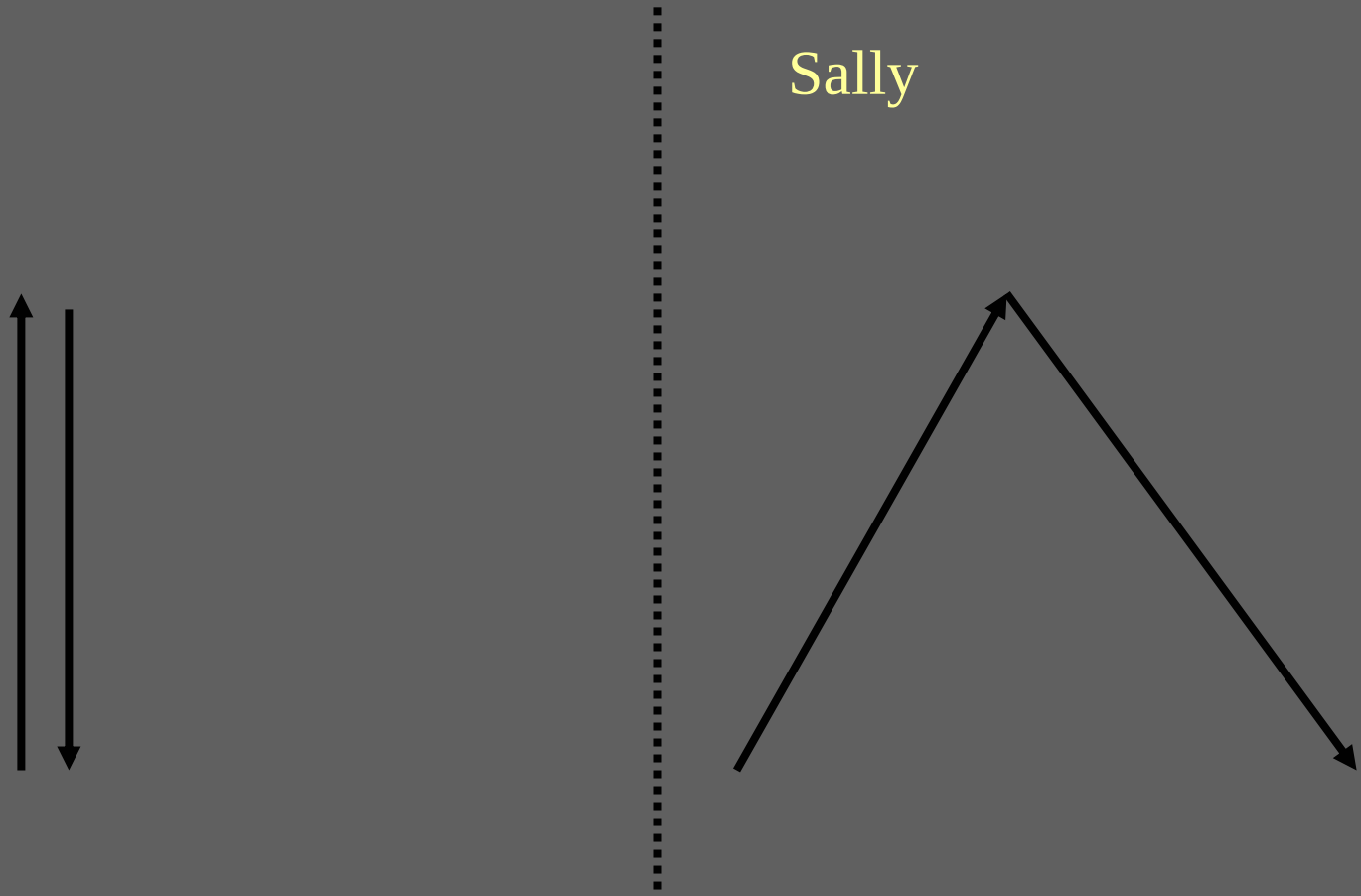


Light is emitted

Light returns

Sam

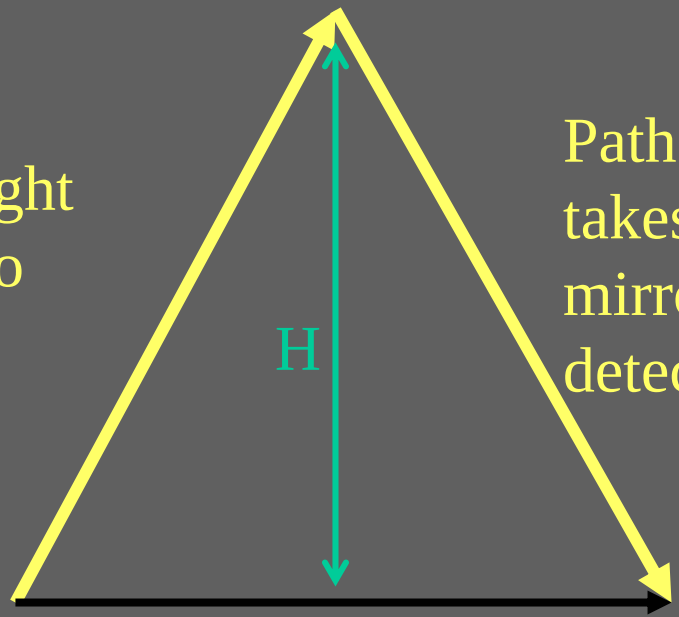
Sally



Sally sees the light traveling further. If light travels at a constant speed, the same "event" must seem to take longer to Sally than Sam!

Time is relative … not absolute!!

From Sally's point of view



Path light takes to mirror

Path light takes from mirror to detector

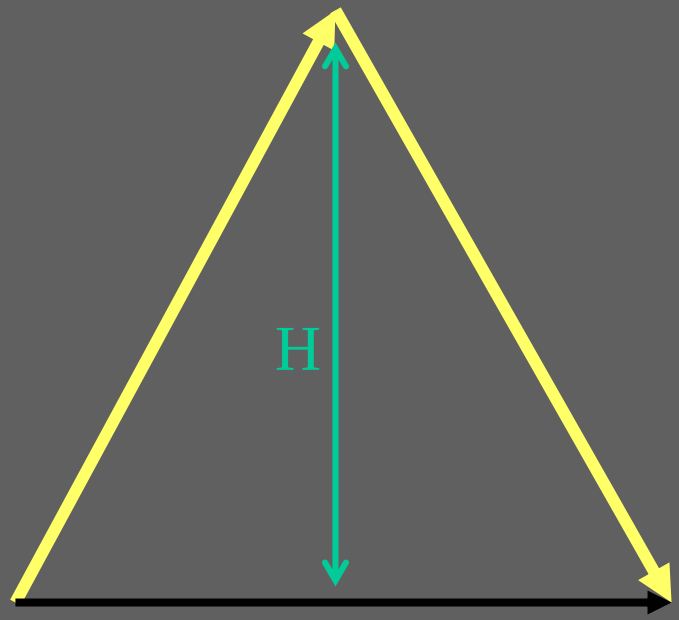
Distance train travels while light is traveling

$= VT_{sally}$

$$D = \sqrt{H^2 + (\frac{1}{2} v T_{sally})^2}$$

Makes use of Pythagorian theorem

From Sally's point of view



$c = \text{distance/time} = 2D/T_{sally}$

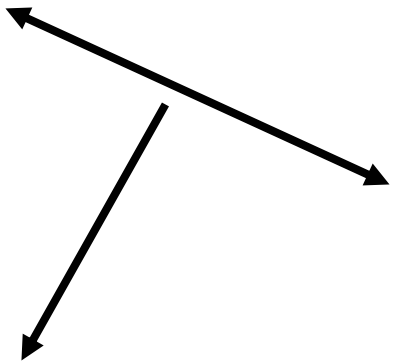
$T_{sally} = 2D/c$

Sam (on train)

Sally (on ground)

$2H/T_{sam} = c$

$c = 2D/T_{sally}$



$$c = \frac{2}{T_{sally}}\sqrt{H^2 + (\frac{1}{2}\mathrm{v}T_{sally})^2}$$

$$\frac{2H}{T_{sam}} = \frac{2}{T_{sally}}\sqrt{H^2 + \left(\frac{1}{2}\mathrm{v}T_{sally}\right)^2}$$

$$\left(\frac{2H}{T_{sam}}\right)^2 = \left(\frac{2H}{T_{sally}}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{2}{T_{sally}}\right)^2\left(\frac{1}{2}\mathrm{v}T_{sally}\right)^2$$

$$\left(\frac{2H}{T_{sam}}\right)^2 = \left(\frac{2H}{T_{sally}}\right)^2 + \mathrm{v}^2$$

$$\left(\frac{1}{T_{sam}}\right)^2 = \left(\frac{1}{T_{sally}}\right)^2 + \frac{\mathrm{v}^2}{(2H)^2}$$

Recall $2H/T_{sam} = c$ or $2H = cT_{sam}$

$$\left(\frac{1}{T_{sam}}\right)^2 = \left(\frac{1}{T_{sally}}\right)^2 + \frac{\mathrm{v}^2}{(cT_{sam})^2}$$

$$c^2 = \frac{c^2 T_{sam}^2}{T_{sally}^2} + \mathrm{v}^2 \quad \rightarrow \quad T_{sally} = \left[\frac{1}{\sqrt{1-\left(\frac{\mathrm{v}}{c}\right)^2}}\right] T_{sam}$$

Sam (on train)

Sally (on ground)

$2H/T_{sam} = c$

$c = 2D/T_{sally}$

$$c = \frac{2}{T_{sally}}\sqrt{H^2 + (\frac{1}{2}\mathrm{v}T_{sally})^2}$$

A bit of algebra.

$$T_{sally} = \left[\frac{1}{\sqrt{1-\left(\frac{\mathrm{v}}{c}\right)^2}}\right] T_{sam}$$

This number is >1.

It becomes larger as

v approaches c.

Think about it!

Sam and Sally measure the time interval for the same event.

The ONLY difference between Sam and Sally is that one is moving with respect to the other.

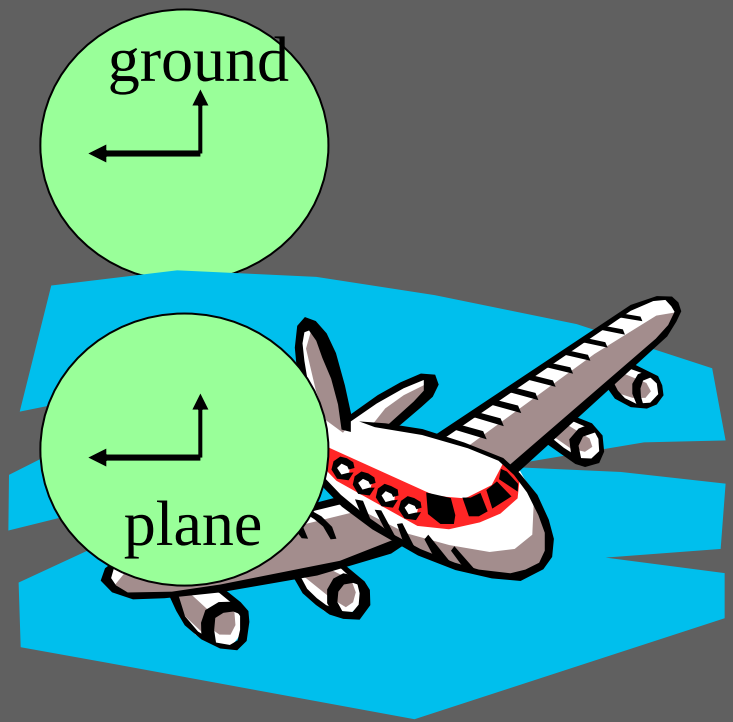
Yet, $T_{sally} > T_{sam}$

The same event takes a different amount of time depending on your “reference frame”!!

Time is not absolute! It is relative!

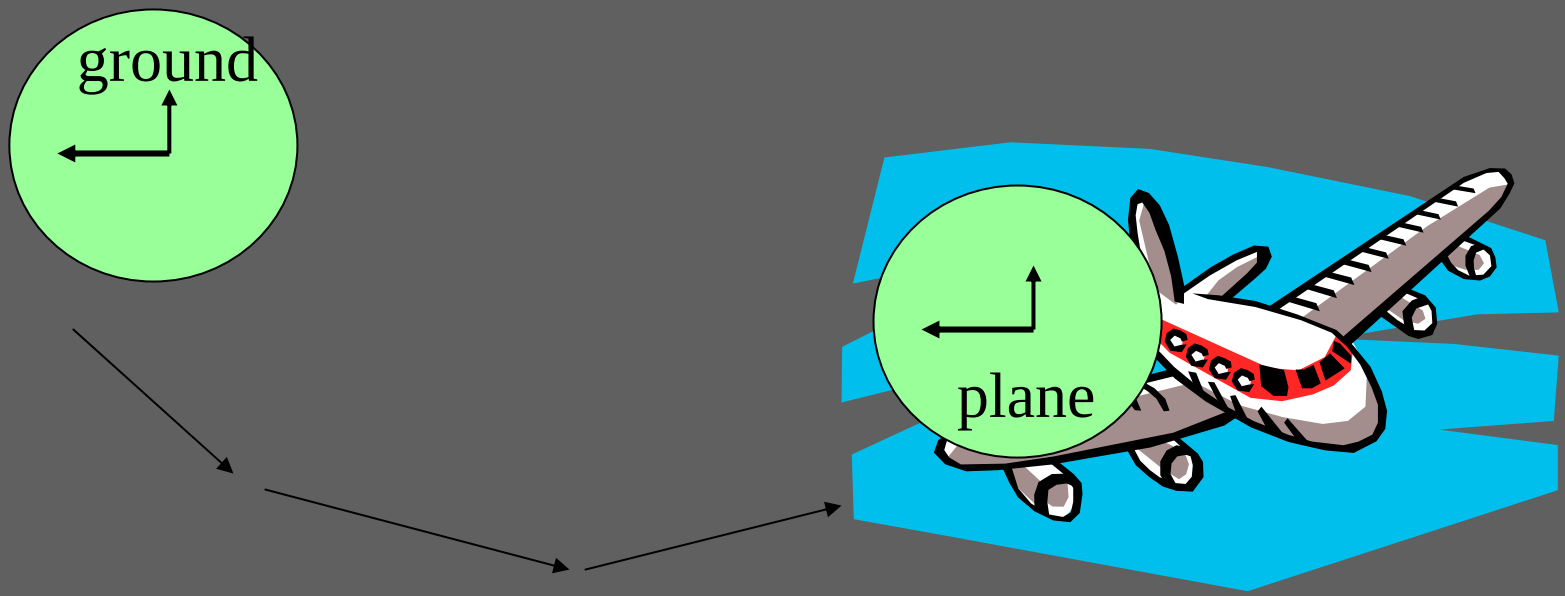
Can this be true??

Experiment says YES!

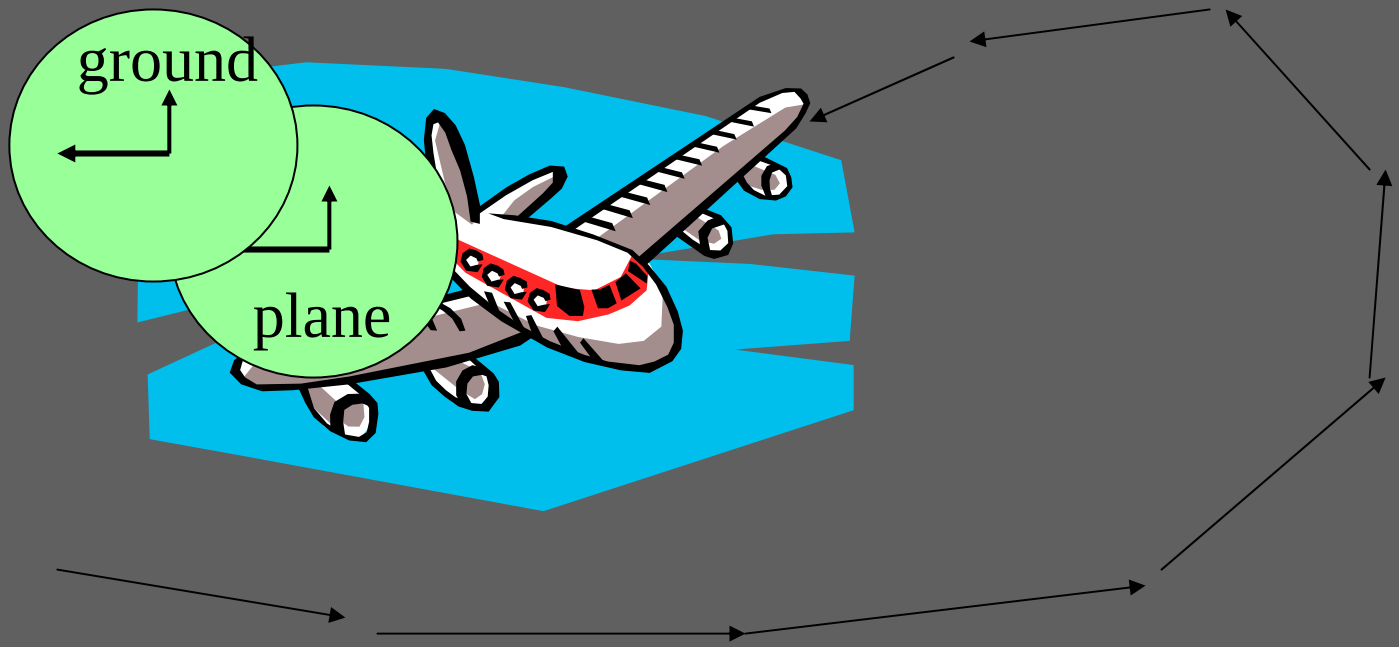


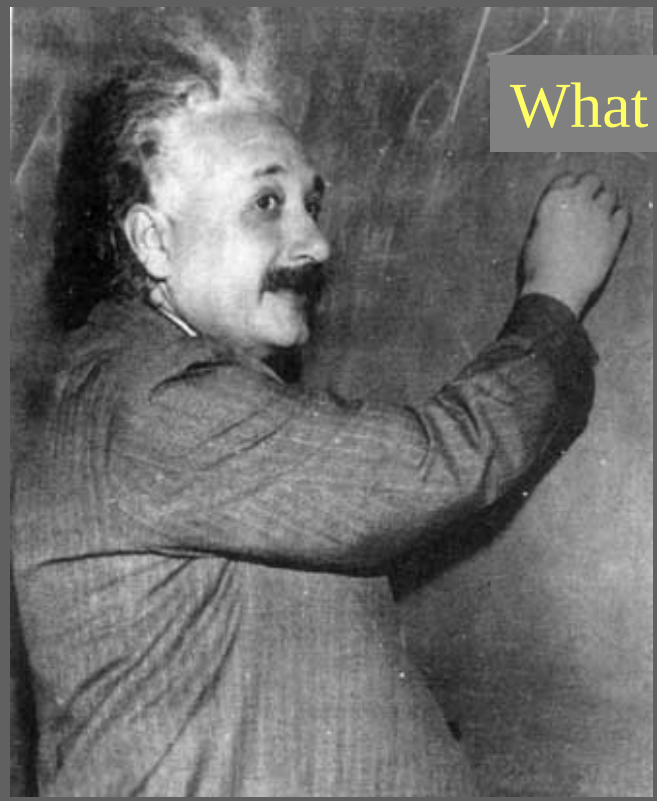
Can this be true??

Experiment says YES!

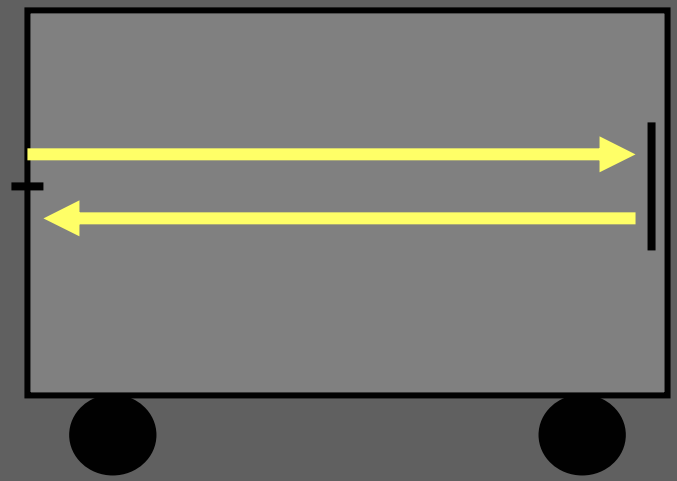


Less time elapsed on the clocks carried on the airplane

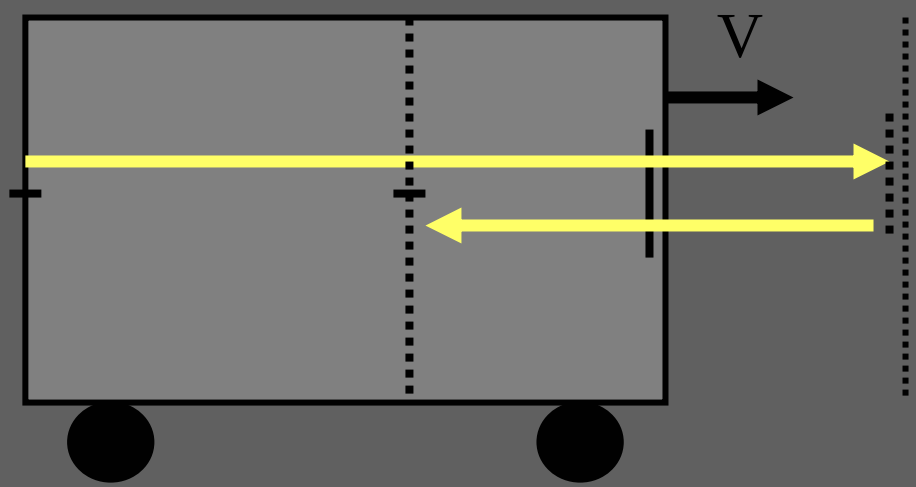




What is length??

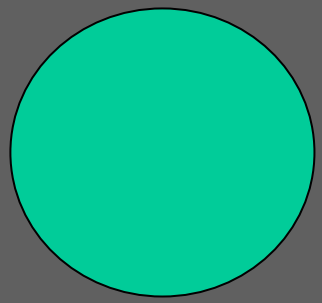


Measure the length of a boxcar where you are on the car.



Measure the length of a boxcar moving by you.

Length is relative, too!



V=0