

The Scopes Trial: 1 Day Lesson

This lesson plan activity is designed to help teachers and students better utilize the primary sources in the Center for Popular Music's *My Homeland: A Research Guide to Songs about Tennessee* collection. <http://popmusic.mtsu.edu/Homeland/index.html>

Grade:

Level 9-12

Subjects:

U.S. History and Music

Emergence of Modern America, 1890-1930

Estimated Time Required:

1 (50-60) class period

Standards:

Common Core Standards Addressed

- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas for Literacy in History/Social Studies
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9. Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

-OR-

Standard 9.0 Historical and Cultural Relationships

Students will understand music in relation to history and culture.

Course Level Expectations (CLEs)

The student will

9.1 Explore the reciprocal relationship between music and the influences of history and culture.

Checks for Understanding

9.1 Outline the influence of society (e.g., education, health, religion, dress, family dynamics, disasters) on music within a given style period.

Outline the influence of music on society (e.g., education, health, religion, dress, family dynamics, disasters) within a given style period.

Report on the influence of society (e.g., education, health, religion, dress, family dynamics, disasters) on music within a given style period.

Report on the influence of music on society (e.g., education, health, religion, dress, family dynamics, disasters) within a given style period.

Outline the influence of politics (e.g., government, wars, control of money and power, significant people) on music within a given style period.

Outline the influence of music on politics (e.g., government, wars, control of money and power, significant people) within a given style period.

Report on the influence of politics (e.g., government, wars, control of money and power, significant people) on music within a given style period.

Report on the influence of music on politics (e.g., government, wars, control of money and power, significant people) within a given style period.

Student Performance Indicators (SPIs)

The student is able to

9.1.1 Identify the historical and cultural influences on music.

9.1.2 Identify the reciprocal relationship between music and the influences of history and culture.

9.1.3 Interpret and present the effects of the relationships between music and the influences of history and culture.

Introduction:

Throughout American history, popular music has reflected the mood and opinions of the times. Students will analyze the historical context that framed and stirred public interest in the Scopes Trial. They will also learn that the Scopes Trial was not a simple debate between evolutionists and creationists; instead, it reflected the larger social and cultural tensions of the 1920s. Students will understand both why the trial occurred and why it was and still is one of the most famous trials in American history. In this activity, students will read four sheet music lyrics and several documents about the Scopes Trial in 1925 to answer a series of questions and prepare to write a brief writing prompt.

Learning Goals:

- Students will identify multiple perspectives on the religion-science debate.
- Students will read primary documents and use evidence to develop historical arguments.
- Students will build and write more complex stories of the Scopes Trial other than the one that frames it as merely a debate between evolutionists and creationists.

Materials:

- Organizer/document chart
<http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/pdf/ScopesOrg5day.pdf>
- Butler Act
<http://www.tennessee.gov/tsla/exhibits/scopes/images/Butler%20Act.pdf>
- Movie on Scopes Trial
<http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/scopestrial/>
- “Sparks” document
<http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/scopestrial/1/sources/39/>
- “Teachers” document
<http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/scopestrial/1/sources/41/>
- “Malone” document
<http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/scopestrial/1/sources/44/>
- “Straton” document
<http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/scopestrial/1/sources/42/>
- “NY Times” document
<http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/scopestrial/1/sources/45/>
- “Defender” document
<http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/scopestrial/1/sources/43/>
- “Dallas News Cartoon” document
<http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/scopestrial/1/sources/46/>
- “Larson—Summer for the Gods” document
<http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/scopestrial/1/sources/47/>
- 4 sheet music lyrics – choose from the following on the *My Homeland: A Research Guide to Songs About Tennessee* <http://popmusic.mtsu.edu/Homeland/index.html>

Pro-evolution:

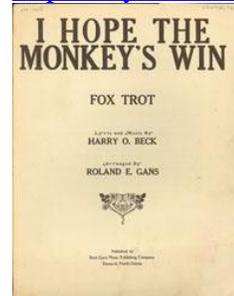
“Evolution”

<http://tinyurl.com/d3ve3s3>



“I Hope the Monkey’s Win”

<http://tinyurl.com/bqe8zd5>



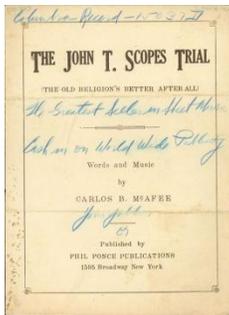
Anti-evolution (pick two of four):

“The John T. Scopes Trial
(The Old Religion was Better After All)”

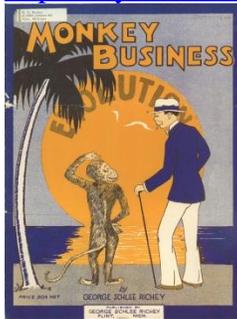
<http://tinyurl.com/c2y9fny>

“Evolution Blues”

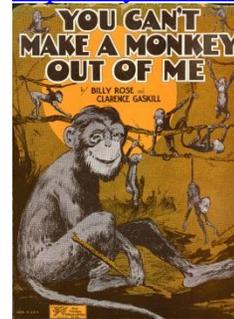
<http://tinyurl.com/czzdo46>



“Monkey Business”
<http://tinyurl.com/d37kfzj>



“You Can’t Make a Monkey of Me”
<http://tinyurl.com/bmq7vp5>



Lesson Procedure:

DAY ONE (approximately 50 minutes)

Step 1: 10 minutes: Introduction

Write the following on the board:

1925 Butler Act:

It shall be unlawful for any teacher...to teach any theory that denies the story of the Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals.

Explain that the Butler Act was passed by the Tennessee Legislature in 1925.

Ask students:

- What “theory” is this law forbidding?

Ask students to brainstorm reasons why many people in Tennessee might have supported the Butler Act.

Have several students share their responses.

Step 2: 10 minutes: Show movie and discuss

Have students write down answers in response to the question during the movie:

- What else was happening in America in the 1920s?

Show Scopes movie.

Discuss as a class:

- How do you think some people in Tennessee felt about the changes that were happening in America in the 1920s?
- How does the Butler Act address some of their concerns?
- What is the relationship between the larger context of the 1920s and the Butler Act?
- Why might many people in Tennessee have supported the Butler Act in 1925?

Step 3: 15 minutes: Read and analyze documents and sheet music

Pass out documents and sheet music.

Students read silently and fill out the organizer/document chart while reading.

Step 4: 15 minutes: Discussion

Discuss as a class:

- Who supported the Butler Act? Why did they support it?
- Who opposed the Butler Act? Why did they oppose it?
- What are the possible reasons, other than their belief in creationism, that Tennesseans might have supported the Butler Act?
- What evidence do you have for your reasons? Give an example from the documents.
- Why is it important to think about historical context?

Step 5: Assessment

Have the students illustrate their position on the debate over the Butler Act and Evolution by creating a poster, collage, mixed-media piece, or other visual representation. As the title banner or bottom panel of their work, have them select one of the statements below from the commentary. Remind them that their message may not equate with the statement they choose, that their position is conveyed through the entirety of their visual.

-“A true religion has nothing to fear from a true science...On the other hand, a true science has nothing to fear at the hands of a true religion.”

Rev. Frederick C. Grant, 1928

-“Warns of Science Displacing Religion”

“Finds Evolution Supports Religion”

Headlines, *The New York Times*, July 11, 1927; June 11, 1928

-“A clash of doctrines is not a disaster—it is an opportunity...”

Alfred North Whitehead, 1925

-“Can we be both scientific and religious? To ask this question is much like asking, ‘Can we be both mathematical and musical?’”

Sir John Arthur Thomson, 1927

-*Religion is not hostile to learning; Christianity has been the greatest patron learning has ever had.*”

William Jennings Bryan, 1925

-“You,” said I,
“May have your science if you choose,
But on my faith I must rely,
For naught is left if that I lose.”

Edgar A. Guest, “Science and Faith,” 1925

-“*[Religion and science] meet distinct human needs, and in the rounding out of human life they supplement rather than displace or oppose each other.*”

Joint Statement upon the Relations of Science and Religion, 1923

-“*It is a pity that science and religion should fight!*”

John Crowe Ransom, 1930

Bibliography:

Excerpt from a front page *New York Times* article, “Crank and Freaks Flock to Dayton.” July 11, 1925.

Excerpt from *Chicago Defender* editorial, “If Monkeys Could Speak.” May 23, 1925.

Excerpt from Dudley Field Malone’s speech on the fourth day of the Scopes trial, July 15, 1925. Dayton, Tennessee.

Excerpt from historian Edward Larson’s book, *Summer for the Gods*, 1997.

Excerpt from resolution adopted by the American Federation of Teachers on July 18, 1925.

Excerpt from Reverend John Roach Straton’s article in *American Fundamentalist*, “The Most Sinister Movement in the United States,” December 26, 1925.

John Knott, “Playing for all it’s worth,” *Dallas News* (July 8, 1925).

Mrs. Jesse Sparks, letter to the editor, *Nashville Tennessean*, July 3, 1925

Tennessee General Assembly, *Butler Act*. HB 185. 64th assembly. March 21, 1925.

Credits:

Written by Michelle Gauthier

Sheet music images from the collections of the Center for Popular Music, Middle Tennessee State University