

## **The Scopes Trial: 3 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:**

3 (50-60) class periods

### **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 Butler Act.
- 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.
- Students will develop presentation and collaboration skills.

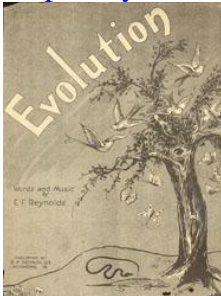
### **Materials:**

- Organizer/document chart  
<http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/pdf/ScopesOrg3day.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/0/inquiry/intro/resources/39/>
- “Teachers” document  
<http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/scopestrial/0/inquiry/intro/resources/40/>
- “Defender” document  
<http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/scopestrial/0/inquiry/main/resources/43/>
- “Straton” document  
<http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/scopestrial/0/inquiry/main/resources/42/>
- “Malone” document  
<http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/scopestrial/0/inquiry/main/resources/44/>
- Chapters 1-3 of *Summer for the Gods: the Scopes trial and America’s continuing debate over science and religion* by Edward J. Larson
- 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:

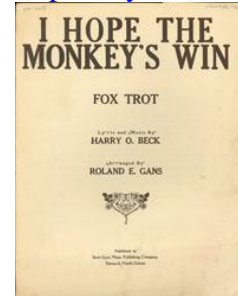
“Evolution”

<http://tinyurl.com/d3ve3s3>



“I Hope the Monkey’s Win”

<http://tinyurl.com/bqe8zd5>



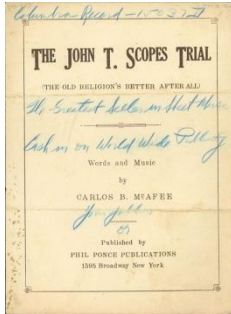
Anti-evolution (pick two of four):

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

<http://tinyurl.com/c2y9fny>

“Evolution Blues”

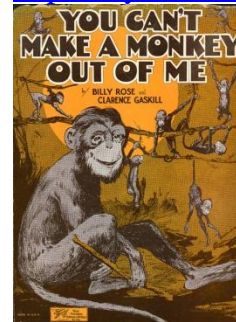
<http://tinyurl.com/czzdo46>



“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: Show movie and introduce Butler Act*

Show movie.

Tell students that in 1925, a teacher was arrested for teaching evolution in Tennessee.

Explain that students will now work with sheet music and other primary sources to shed light on the question being investigated.

Explain to students that over the next three days, they will try to determine whether Americans supported the Butler Act.

Write question on the board:

- Did Americans support the Butler Act?

#### *Step 2: 20 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 3: 20 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.

***Homework***

Students read chapters 1-3 of *Summer of the Gods*. Fill in more evidence in the organizer/document chart.

**DAY TWO (approximately 50 minutes)**

***Step 1: 12 minutes: Review Homework***

Have the class split 50/50 to defend one of following two assertions:

- YES, Americans supported the Butler Act (Group 1: prosecution).
- NO, Americans did not support the Butler Act (Group 2: defense).

Then, ask students on both sides to get together to review the documents, make a case, and finalize the evidence to support their argument.

***Step 2: 8 minutes: Pro-evolution/prosecution states their case***

Students for the prosecution (Group 1) present their argument for why they believe Americans supported the Butler Act. Rest of students listen and take notes.

***Step 3: Defense Rebuttal: 3 minutes***

***Step 4: Prosecution Rebuttal: 3 minutes***

***Step 5: 8 minutes: Anti-evolution/defense states their case***

Students for the defense (Group 2) present their argument for why they believe Americans did NOT support the Butler Act. Students in Group 1 listen and take notes on their graphic organizer.

***Step 6: Prosecution Rebuttal: 3 minutes***

***Step 7: Defense Rebuttal: 3 minutes***

***Step 8: Prosecution Closing Argument: 5 minutes***

***Step 9: Defense Closing Argument: 5 minutes***

## **DAY THREE (approximately 50 minutes)**

### ***Step 1: 5 minutes: Review activity***

Explain to students that both groups will now work together and attempt to achieve consensus on the question.

### ***Step 2: 20 minutes: Consensus***

In groups, students work to formulate a consensus statement in response to the question: Did Americans support the Butler Act?

If unable to reach consensus, students clarify their differences. Each student records the consensus response on their graphic organizer.

### ***Step 3: 15 minutes: Discussion (whole class)***

Groups share consensus responses with the class.

Ask students to share their thoughts and feelings on this activity:

- How did this activity help you learn about the Scopes Trial?
- How reliable are these sources for revealing who supported or opposed the Butler Act?
- What other types of evidence would you need in order to determine if Americans supported the Butler Act?

### ***Step 4: 10 minutes: Explain and begin homework***

Write a 1-paragraph response to each of the following questions. Use evidence from the documents in this activity to support your arguments.

According to these documents:

- Why is it important to think about historical context?
- In what way did the historical context of the 1920s affect the battle over the Butler Act?
- How was the Scopes Trial more than just a simple debate between evolution and creationism?

## **Bibliography:**

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 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.

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

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

**Credits:**

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