

Directions: Read the source below and watch the following video to understand what was happening in the 1920s. <http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/scopestrial/>

In 1925, Tennessee passed the following law, called the 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.

The Butler Act made it illegal to teach from textbooks like the one below.

Textbook – A Civic Biology, 1925

The Doctrine of Evolution.

We have now learned that animals may begin with very simple one-celled forms and end with a group which contains man himself. The great English scientist Charles Darwin explained the theory of evolution. This is the belief that simple forms of life on the earth slowly gave rise to more complex forms.

Man's Place in Nature.

We see that man must be placed with the vertebrate animals because of his vertebral column. We place man with the apelike mammals because of structural likeness. The group of mammals which includes the monkeys, apes, and man we call the primates.

Evolution of Man.

There once lived races of men who were much lower in their mental organization than present people. If we follow the early history of man, we find that at first he must have been little better than one of the lower animals. Gradually he must have learned to use weapons and kill his prey, first using rough stones for this purpose. Man then began to farm the fields, and to have permanent houses. Civilization began long ago, but even today the earth is not entirely civilized.

Source: Excerpt from widely-used biology textbook, A Civic Biology, written in 1914 by George W. Hunter, a biology teacher from New York City.

Questions:

1. (Close reading) How does this textbook explain where man came from?
2. (Contextualization) Why might people in Tennessee in 1925 have wanted to outlaw this textbook?

SCOPES TRIAL

Focus Question: How did the Scopes Trial represent the cultural and/or political controversies of the 1920s?

Directions: Using your understanding gained from the textbook reading, classroom video, and discussion complete the following.

- 1) Highlight and Annotate the set of four documents (5 points)
- 2) Answer the guiding questions to further your understanding (5 points)
- 3) Write a claim to answer the lesson focus question. (5 points)

Guiding Questions

Document A: Sparks Letter to the Editor

1. (Sourcing) Who is Mrs. Sparks and why does she care about what is taught in schools?
2. (Contextualizing) What is Mrs. Sparks referring to when she says “these times of materialism”?
3. (Close Reading) Find all of the words that suggest the presence of a great danger. Why might Mrs. Sparks believe that evolution is such a threat?

Document B: Malone’s Trial Speech

1. (Sourcing) The audience in the courthouse mostly supported Bryan and the Butler Act. Why do you think they applauded Malone’s speech?
2. (Close Reading) Why does Malone think science is so important?
3. (Contextualizing) What is Malone referring to when he says “civilization is not so proud of the work of the adults?”

Document C: Reverend Straton Article

1. (Close reading) What words does Straton use to show that he likes small towns?

2. (Contextualizing) According to Straton, what are signs of corruption in New York and Chicago?

Document D: New York Times Article

1. (Sourcing) What was New York City like in the 1920s? Why might the New York Times look down on Dayton, Tennessee?

2. (Close Reading) How does the New York Times describe the local Tennesseans? What words can you find that show that the New York Times thinks of these people and events as bizarre and interesting?

Focus Question: How did the Scopes Trial represent the cultural and/or political controversies of the 1920s?

Document A: Sparks Letter to the Editor (Modified)

Dear Editor:

When the bill against the teaching of evolution in public schools was passed, I could not see why more mothers were not thanking the lawmakers. They were protecting our children from one of the destructive forces which will destroy our civilization. I for one was grateful that they stood up for what was right. And grateful, too, that we have a Christian man for governor who will defend the Word of God against this so-called science.

The Bible tells us that the gates of Hell shall not win against the church. We know there will always be those who set an example for the cross of Christ. But in these times of materialism I thank God deep down in my heart for everyone whose voice is raised for humanity and the coming of God's kingdom.

Mrs. Jesse Sparks
Pope, Tennessee

Source: *Mrs. Jesse Sparks, letter to the editor, Nashville Tennessean, July 3, 1925. Mrs. Sparks was one of many citizens who wrote letters to Tennessee's newspapers in response to the Butler Act.*

Document B: Malone's Trial Speech (Modified)

The least that this generation can do, your Honor, is to give the next generation all the facts and theories that observation and learning have produced—give it to the children in the hope of heaven that they will make a better world than we have. We have just had a war with 20 million dead. Civilization is not so proud of the work of the adults.

For God's sake let the children have their minds kept open—close no doors to their knowledge. Make the distinction between religion and science. Let them have both. Let them both be taught. Let them both live.

We feel we stand with progress. We feel we stand with science. We feel we stand with intelligence. We feel we stand with freedom in America. We are not afraid. Where is the fear? We meet it! Where is the fear? We defy it!
(Loud applause. Bailiff raps for order)

Source: *Excerpt from Dudley Field Malone's speech on the fourth day of the Scopes trial, July 15, 1925. Dayton, Tennessee. Dudley Field Malone was a New York attorney who was on the defense team, defending John Scopes. He argued for the importance of teaching science.*

Document C: Reverend Straton Article (Modified)

The real issue at Dayton and everywhere today is this: “Whether the religion of the Bible shall be ruled out of the schools, while the religion of evolution, with its harmful results, shall be ruled into the schools by law.”

John Scopes’s lawyers left New York and Chicago, where real religion is ignored, where crime is most widespread, and they came to Tennessee to save a community where women are still honored, where men are still polite, where laws are still respected, where home life is still sweet, where the marriage vow is still sacred. Think of the nerve of it! and the enormous vanity of it!

Source: *Excerpt from Reverend John Roach Straton’s article in American Fundamentalist, “The Most Sinister Movement in the United States.” December 26, 1925. John Roach Straton was a minister who preached across the country against the sins of modern life. He was firmly opposed to the teaching of evolution.*

Document D: New York Times Article (Modified)

Cranks and Freaks Flock to Dayton:
Strange Theories are Preached and Sung
Visitors to Scopes Trial are Mostly Tennessean Mountaineers.

Tennessee came to Dayton today in overalls to attend the trial of John Scopes for the teaching of evolution. The Tennesseans came from mountain farms near Dayton, where work, usually begun at day light, had been deserted so that gaunt, tanned, toil-worn men and women and shy children might see William Jennings Bryan’s “duel to the death” with “enemies of the Bible.”

They stood in groups under the trees, listening to evangelists, moved by the occasion to speak for the “Word.” They listened to blind minstrels, who sang mountain hymns and promises of reward for the faithful, and to a string quartet of negroes. They walked up and down hot, dusty Market Street, with its buildings hung with banners, and lined with soda-water, sandwich, and book stalls, as for a carnival. Religion and business had become strangely mixed.

Vocabulary

Cranks: oddballs

minstrels: white entertainers who wore black makeup and performed in variety shows

Source: *Excerpt from a front page New York Times article, “Cranks and Freaks Flock to Dayton.” July 11, 1925. The New York Times editorials sided with the defense and criticized Dayton’s small-town mentality. Dayton’s population in 1925 was 1,800.*