

# Scopes Trial

Lesson plans for primary sources at the Tennessee State Library & Archives

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**Grade Level:** High School

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## Introduction:

Without a doubt, the question, “where do humans come from?” was asked long before Charles Darwin published *Origin of Species* in 1859. Yet throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, the debate amongst members of the scientific and religious communities has continued to be a divisive and widely debated topic. The Scopes “Monkey” Trial is perhaps one of the critical events of this controversy and one of the landmark legal decisions of the twentieth century.

## Guiding Questions:

- Who were the major figures of the Scopes Trial?
- What were the main arguments on both sides of the Scopes Trial?
- What was the outcome and the legacy of the Scopes Trial?

## Learning Objectives:

- The students will write a letter to the editor of the Chattanooga Daily Times based on the article, *Plan Assault on State Law on Evolution*.
- The students will make predictions on the outcome of the ACLU wanting to test the anti-evolution legislation in Tennessee in 1925.
- The students will research and create mock interviews of participants in the Scopes Trial to be performed in front of the class.
- The students will tell the story of the Scopes Monkey Trial through the use of primary sources.
- The students will be assessed through an essay test consisting of the three guiding questions directly linked to the Tennessee standard US.38.

## Curriculum Standards:

**US.36** Describe the Scopes Trial of 1925, including: the major figures, the two sides of the controversy, the outcome, and legacy. (C, P, H, T)

### Common Core Grade 11-12 ELA Standards:

- Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

## Materials Needed:

- Access to TSLA website and [The Scopes 'Monkey' Trial Collection](#)
- Copies of the May 4, 1925, *Chattanooga Daily Times* article, *Plan Assault on State Law on Evolution* (found at the end of this lesson plan)
- Copies of the letters, photographs, and any necessary documents from the collection to be used in the timeline activity
- Access to the interviews with Sue K. Hicks on the TSLA website  
Copies or access to the background information on The Scopes 'Monkey' Trial

## Background:

[“The Scopes Trial”](#)      **Author:** George E. Webb

**Source Location:** [Tennessee Encyclopedia of History & Culture](#)

[“John Washington Butler”](#)      **Author:** George E. Webb

**Source Location:** [Tennessee Encyclopedia of History & Culture](#)

## Lesson Activities: Introductory Activity

With no introduction or background information, students will read the article in the May 4, 1925, *Chattanooga Daily Times*' article, *Plan Assault on State Law on Evolution*. Students will write a letter to the editor with their opinion on the newspaper article. Students will share these letters in small groups or in a large group discussion. The teacher should then ask students what they think will happen in Tennessee with the ACLU test case. Will a teacher be charged with a crime for teaching evolution? If yes, will he or she be found guilty? Before moving on to the Instruction and Class Activity, have the students read the introduction from the TSLA The Scopes 'Monkey' Trial collection.

## Lesson Activities Continued:

### Instruction and Class Activity:

Students must read the introduction to The Scopes 'Monkey' Trial collection on the TSLA website and the teacher must provide the background information concerning the Scopes Trial. The teacher should display the photograph, [Dayton Leaders in Robinson's Drugstore](#), and explain how the leaders of Dayton, Tennessee, wanted to bring attention to their small town so they "selected" John Scopes to violate the Butler Act. The teacher may choose one or both of the following class activities:

#### Activity 1

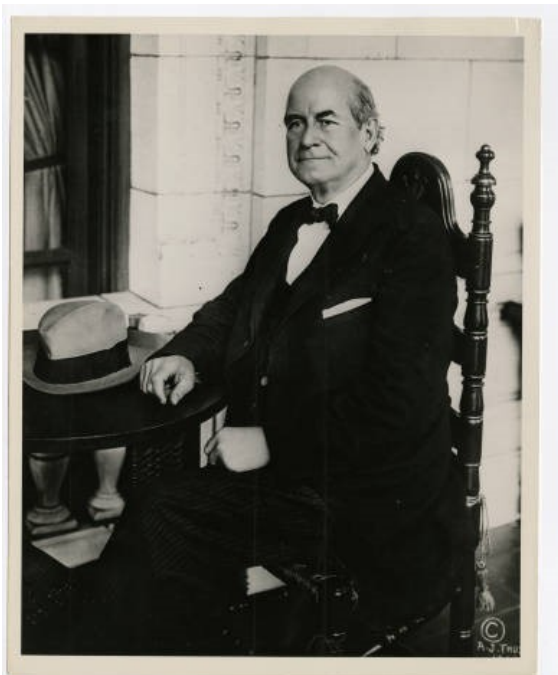
The students will listen to the interview clips A-D with Sue Hicks, a lawyer from Dayton, TN. The teacher should discuss the importance of interviews as a primary source but also mention that this interview was conducted fifty years after the Scopes Trial. Students should be allowed to ask questions and discuss the interviews after each one.

Interview A: students look at the [Hunter Civic Biology textbook](#)

Interview B: students look at the photograph of [William Jennings Bryan arriving in Dayton](#)

Interview C: students view the photograph of [Clarence Darrow](#)

Interview D: students view the photograph of [William Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow](#)



The teacher will divide the class into pairs and assign each pair a person involved in the Scopes Trial to research. The list can include the following: John T. Scopes, William Jennings Bryan, Clarence Darrow, Governor Austin Peay, a citizen of Dayton in 1925, a Tennessee Supreme Court judge, Charles Darwin, Sunday School teacher, John W. Butler, Judge John T. Raulston, William Jennings Bryan Jr., an ACLU member, a local preacher, Joe Mendi (if he could speak), etc. The students will conduct research on the person assigned to them. The students must create 10 interview questions with the answers based on one primary source from TSLA and other research. The students will perform/conduct the interview in front of the class with one person being the interviewer and the other student being the person from the Scopes Trial. The interview will last two minutes, the primary source must be presented as evidence, and the pair must answer the 3 guiding questions in their interview/presentation. The class will then be given 1 minute to ask questions and the students must answer as they think that the person would in 1925.

## Lesson Activities Continued:

### Activity 2

The teacher will supply each student with a different primary source from TSLA's [The Scopes 'Monkey' Trial Collection](#) such as a photograph, letter, Bryan's death certificate, textbook, cartoon, etc. Each student is to re-search their source and then write a brief summary explaining the importance of their source to the Scopes Trial. As a whole class, the students are to put their sources in chronological order by lining up in the classroom or in a hallway if necessary. Beginning with the first source, students explain the importance of the source and continue until all sources have been described. By explaining the sources, the students will tell the story of the Scopes Monkey Trial through the use of primary sources.

After one or both of the activities have been completed, students will view the interview with Sue K. Hicks, parts [E](#), [F](#), and [G](#). Students will write down 2 possible effects (short term and/or long range) of the Scopes Trial. The students are then to turn to a neighbor and add another effect of the Scopes Trial to his or her list. Eventually, students should meet with all of their classmates and compile a list of the effects and be able to describe the legacy of the Scopes Trial.

### **Assessment:**

Students will complete an essay test/quiz in which they will answer the three guiding questions:

- (1) Who were the major figures of the Scopes Trial?
- (2) What were the main arguments on both sides of the Scopes Trial?
- (3) What was the outcome and the legacy of the Scopes Trial?

If students can successfully answer the three questions, then the students will have mastered Tennessee standard US.38.



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# PLAN ASSAULT ON STATE LAW ON EVOLUTION

Civil Liberties Union to File  
Test Case.

## DARWINIAN THEORY NOT TAUGHT IN CITY

Supt. Ziegler Says No Copy of  
Recent Act Received and Its  
Effect on Local Schools  
Not Yet Known.

If the much discussed law passed by the recent Tennessee legislature prohibiting the teaching of evolution in the public schools of this state was aimed especially at the Darwinian theory, there is little likelihood that the test case proposed by a northern organization will be staged here. Supt. Ziegler, of the city schools, declared yesterday that the "man from monkey" theory has no place in the curriculum of Chattanooga's public educational institutions.

The American Civil Liberties union, 100 Fifth avenue, New York, is agitating for a test case to determine

passed in Oregon, aimed at abolishing parochial schools.

The chief sources of inspiration for this new and unprecedented crop of gag laws on teaching are the Ku-Klux Klan, the fundamentalists and the professional patriotic societies. The Klan is back of the compulsory Bible reading and antiparochial school laws, the fundamentalists back of the antievolution bills and the professional patriots back of the antiradical and antipacifist measures.

The union is officered by a number of prominent people such as John Hayes Holmes, Duncan McDonald, Jeanette Rankin, former congressman from Montana; Helen Phelps Stokes, Roger N. Baldwin, Albert DeSilver and Lucille B. Milner.

## "BLOODY SUNDAY" AMONG NEGROES

Three Seriously Wounded as  
Knives Flash in Different  
Parts of City.

Bob Jackson, better known as "Ham-bone," an aged negro, was knocked in the head and seriously wounded late yesterday afternoon by Tom Davis, another negro, in an affray at the intersection of Ninth and King streets. He was taken to Erlanger hospital by Trimble's ambulance in a serious condition. Davis escaped before arrival of Patrolmen Newlin and Teague, who investigated the case. The aged negro claims that he does not know why Davis assaulted him and it is the opinion of officers that robbery was the motive.

Clarence Henderson, negro, residing at 2632 Sydney street, seriously cut late yesterday afternoon by a negro named Drake, who escaped shortly after a fight at the intersection of Twenty-fourth and Cornelia streets. Motorcycle Policeman Hartness investigated the matter and sent the negro to Erlanger hospital.

In an affray on Broad street, between Fourth and Fifth early last night, Pearl Perry, negress, received wounds from a knife in the hands of her husband, John Perry, that will probably result fatally. While trying to cut his wife, Perry stabbed himself in the left



The American Civil Liberties union, 100 Fifth avenue, New York, is agitating for a test case to determine whether the new law in this state will hold water, according to advices direct from the offices of the organization. Prof. Skinner, of Tufts college, chairman of the committee on academic freedom, is quoted as saying that distinguished lawyers have offered their services and all that remains is to secure a willing client.

Supt. Ziegler was asked if evolution is taught in any part of the local public educational system. "That depends on what is meant by evolution," he responded. "If you have reference to the Darwinian theory, which, I suppose, was aimed at in the law passed by the Tennessee legislature, it is not. It is recognized by all our teachers that this is a debatable theory and, as such, has no place in our curriculum. Of course, other phases of evolution are presented in all textbooks that deal with such matters—for instance, geologies teach that the world and many of its forms and resources were formed through many ages. Therefore, until official copies of the new Tennessee law on teaching evolution in the public schools are received, we do not know just what the intention is, or what, if any, effect it will have on our courses of study. Personally, I suppose that it was only the Darwinian theory that was intended to be eliminated from Tennessee public schools, as in its broader phases evolution is well accepted and is not considered irreconcilable with the teachings of the Bible."

The article furnished by the Civil Liberties union follows:

A legal test of the Tennessee law prohibiting the teaching of evolution in public schools and colleges is being sought by the American Civil Liberties union, a national free speech organization, according to Prof. Clarence R. Skinner, of Tufts college, chairman of the union's committee on academic freedom. Prof. Skinner states that, "the law strikes so serious a blow at scientific teaching that we cannot let the issue rest until it has been passed upon by the highest courts."

"We are looking for a Tennessee teacher who is willing to accept our services in testing this law in the courts," Prof. Skinner states. "Our lawyers think a friendly test can be arranged without costing a teacher his or her job. Dis-

band, John Perry, that will probably result fatally. While trying to cut his wife, Perry stabbed himself in the left leg and severed an artery. He was arrested shortly afterwards by Constable Pogue and committed to the county jail on a charge of felonious assault. The woman was taken to Erlanger hospital by Wann's ambulance. Perry was given medical attention at the jail.

## BRAINERD LEAGUE IN SESSION TONIGHT

Among several important matters to be brought to the attention of members of the Brainerd league at their regular meeting at 8 o'clock tonight in the Sunnyside school will be a report of the streets and roads committee. This committee will announce its work in regard to renaming of the streets in Brainerd community in compliance with postal regulations. With renaming of several of the streets, so that none will conflict with those in the city of Chattanooga, a delivery system of mail will be inaugurated. This system, which gives the community two deliveries daily, was granted the section due to efforts on part of the league.

A report is also expected from the transportation committee, which has in charge the installing of a bus line. It is expected that the date which the bus line will be installed will be announced as well as a report on the fare that is to be charged.

Announcement was also made that arrangements have been completed by the entertainment and publicity committee, of which Julius Cohn is chairman, for members of the league to broadcast a program over radio station WDOD next Wednesday night. A short talk by E. R. Howard on the advantages of the community and a musical program are among the features planned for the radio entertainment.

Members of the beautification committee are also to report on their plans for beautifying the approach to the tunnel. E. A. Merriam, who is chairman of that committee, has in charge plans for planting shrubs, evergreens and other plants on the desolate hill at the approach of the underpass so as to make it attractive. Members of the garden club, which is composed of more than

"We are looking for a Tennessee teacher who is willing to accept our services in testing this law in the courts," Prof. Skinner states. "Our lawyers think a friendly test can be arranged without costing a teacher his or her job. Distinguished counsel have volunteered their services. All we need now is a willing client. By this test we hope to render a real service to freedom of teaching throughout the country, for we do not believe the law will be sustained."

The Civil Liberties union is also making efforts against other recent "restrictions" on teaching. Freedom of teaching, according to a survey by the union's committee on academic freedom, has been more interfered with by law in the past six months than at any time in American history. These laws prohibit the teaching of evolution, require compulsory reading of the Bible and forbid the employment of radical or pacifist teachers.

Congress passed one such law as a rider to the 1925 appropriation bill for the District of Columbia, forbidding any educational director to permit "the teaching of partisan politics, disrespect of the Holy Bible, or that ours is an inferior form of government." Pennsylvania, Ohio, Delaware, West Virginia and Kentucky also have laws requiring the daily reading of the Bible in public schools "without comment," while similar bills have been introduced in the legislatures of Virginia, Texas, New Jersey and Washington.

The first state law prohibiting the teaching of evolution in public schools and colleges was passed in Tennessee in March. Resolutions of state boards forbidding the teaching of evolution were previously adopted in North Carolina and Florida.

Missouri state colleges are forbidden to employ any person "who teaches, or advocates in public or private that the citizens of this state should not protect the government of the United States from aggression by other nations." In the recent Ohio legislature a resolution authorizing an investigation of members of the faculties of three state universities, with the object of ousting "radicals and atheists," was killed by the senate committee to which it was referred.

Efforts to get court action on all these restrictive laws will be made through our attorneys. The constitutional guarantee of separation of church and state, it is believed, offers a ground for contesting the laws requiring Bible reading. The United States supreme court already has before it one restrictive school law

for planting shrubs, evergreens and other plants on the desolate hill at the approach of the underpass so as to make it attractive. Members of the garden club, which is composed of more than fifty ladies, have been very active during the past week and a report on their work will be made.

The parks and playground committee is among a list of others that will make announcement of their plans for the future at tonight's meet.

## MAY SEEK PROBE OF RISK COMPANIES

It was learned yesterday that a movement is on foot to have the state insurance department investigate the methods of certain of the smaller companies operating in this city, with special reference to those who make a specialty of insuring colored citizens against sickness and death. Basis of complaint is said to be the slowness of the companies in paying death benefits, thus working great hardships on the families of the victims.

A case in point was cited where deaths had occurred in one negro family, one on Feb. 24 and another on March 26 and beneficiary having not been paid, notwithstanding it is provided in the policies that payment shall be immediate. The family in question being poor, was compelled to get white friends to furnish the money for funeral expenses, and these philanthropic citizens are still without their money.

Tennessee laws are unusually strict concerning operation of insurance companies and those not carrying out their provisions are subject to heavy penalties.

## PLAN TO ENTERTAIN FLORIDA REALTORS

More than 300 realtors from Florida will be guests of the local organization in Chattanooga on June 22. It was