



The Scopes Monkey Trial: The History of 20th Century America's Most Famous Court Case

Charles River Editors

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*Includes pictures *Includes accounts of the trial and excerpts from it *Includes online resources and a bibliography for further reading *Includes a table of contents “I never had any idea my bill would make a fuss. I just thought it would become a law, and that everybody would abide by it and that we wouldn't hear any more of evolution in Tennessee.” – John Washington Butler In the early 20th century, Darwin's theory of evolution was still a relative novelty, but it had spurred some Americans to react by preventing it from being taught in schools, including in Tennessee, which passed the Butler Act to prohibit teaching the theory in a state-funded school. This set the stage for proponents of the theory to challenge the law by having a teacher bring up Darwin's theory in a classroom, which is how a little known substitute teacher named John Scopes had his name attached to one of the most famous cases in American history. Although it is best known as the Scopes Trial or Scopes Monkey Trial even 90 years later, the case was intentionally created as a test case, and from the beginning it was meant to draw attention not just to the issue but to the small town of Dayton, Tennessee itself. In that, it succeeded, not simply because the case was important but because it brought William Jennings Bryan, one of America's most famous politicians, to participate. Bryan would square off against renowned lawyer Clarence Darrow, who would represent Scopes in the proceedings. While the case was technically challenging a law and proceeded like a normal trial, including an appeal to Tennessee's Supreme Court, the Scopes Monkey Trial was essentially a national debate on theology, science, and each one's place in the classroom. The trial is best known not necessarily for the results but for the rhetorical arguments that were made on each side, and for the manner in which Darrow and Bryan squared off. In perhaps the most famous scene of the entire affair, Darrow actually cross-examined Bryan himself. Naturally, the case was politically charged on all sides, and even the judge was conspicuously biased against Scopes' defense, but Scopes successfully appealed the fine at the Tennessee Supreme Court. Still, the issue remained heated even after, especially when Bryan died shortly after the trial. The Scopes Monkey Trial: The History of 20th Century America's Most Famous Court Case analyzes the background and proceedings of the case. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about the Scopes Monkey Trial like never before.

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