

## **A Review of Inherit the Wind**

The Scopes Trial, also known as the “monkey” trial, shouldn't be relevant today. Sadly, it is important that we learn about it, because it has been repeated very recently in the Dover School Board Trials. As they say, those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. I'd rather not repeat this rather insane trial, so it is important to learn about it. What was really on trial at the Scopes Trial was freedom of speech and that, I think, is something that is at the very heart of the American constitution. But anyway, on with the review.

In a small town in Tennessee, a schoolteacher has broken the law. He has read a chapter of the school science book to his students that he was never supposed to read. He has been sent to jail and shunned by the community. What was in the chapter, you may ask? You probably already know. It was on Charles Darwin and his *Origin of the Species*. It violated a law in Tennessee, which made it unlawful: *"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."*

One of the big shots of the Young Earth Creationist movement, William Jennings Bryan (called by a different name in the play), was going to be the lawyer for the prosecution. A self-proclaimed atheist and lawyer named Clarence Darrow was the defense for John Scopes, the schoolteacher. Something funny: When Bryan had been invited by Sue Hicks to become an associate of the prosecution, Bryan had readily accepted, despite the fact he had not tried a case in thirty-six years! Clarence Darrow, on the other hand, was still practicing law.

I won't spoil the play for you, although I will say that Darrow managed to get Bryan to back himself into a corner a few times. At one point, Bryan got so flustered he yelled “I don't think about things that I don't think about!” to which Darrow responded “Do you think about things you do think about?” From there on, Bryan made mistake after mistake and pretty much had his reputation as an expert on the bible smashed. I won't spoil the ending, but it was very moving as well. I really enjoyed *Inherit the Wind*, and I feel that it gave watchers a good grounding in the history of the Scopes Trial.