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? We evolved from single celled organisms then became apelike mammals (gorapes, hominoids) then homosapien.

2. (Contextualization) Why might people in Tennessee in 1925 have wanted to outlaw this textbook? The South seems to be more religious than the North and this book goes against God's Word.
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 25 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 Stratton 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 Stratton’s article in American Fundamentalist, “The Most Sinister Movement in the United States.” December 26, 1925. John Roach Stratton 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)

Crank and Frights 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cranks: oddballs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minstrels: white entertainers who wore black makeup and performed in variety shows</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Excerpt from a front page New York Times article, “Crank and Frights 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.
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?
   
   She is a housewife and education should be based on religious fundamentals.

2. (Contextualizing) What is Mrs. Sparks referring to when she says "these times of materialism"?
   
   All the wealth of the 20's buying stocks, cars, using credit.

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?
   
   "Gates of hell," "Destructive forces," "Defending"... is

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?
   
   Appealed to their freedom, opportunity for the youth.

2. (Close Reading) Why does Malone think science is so important?
   
   "Keeps open mind," "Scientific method".

3. (Contextualizing) What is Malone referring to when he says "civilization is not so proud of the work of the adults"?
   
   W.W.I., chemical warfare, and new guns such as machine guns.

Scopes Trial
Document C: Reverend Straton Article

1. (Close reading) What words does Straton use to show that he likes small towns?
   - New York, Chicago where religion is ignored.
   - "low still respected," "home life is still sweet"
   - "women still honored"

2. (Contextualizing) According to Straton, what are signs of corruption in New York and Chicago?
   - speak easy's, gangs, atheism, prohibition


1. (Sourcing) What was New York City like in the 1920s? Why might the New York Times look down on Dayton, Tennessee?
   - hick town, minstrels, red necks, backwards, hill billys

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?
   - No electricity, hill billys, backwards
**Context:** What was happening in the 1920s?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUPPORTED the Butler Act</th>
<th>OPPOSED the Butler Act</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• State of Tennessee</td>
<td>• John Scopes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fundamentalists</td>
<td>• American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• William Jennings Bryan (defended Tennessee)</td>
<td>• Clarence Darrow (defended John Scopes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Person or Source:**

**Reason for supporting Butler Act:**

**Quote:**

---

**Person or Source:**

**Reason for opposing Butler Act:**

**Quote:**

---

**Person or Source:**

**Reason for supporting Butler Act:**

**Quote:**

---

**Person or Source:**

**Reason for opposing Butler Act:**

**Quote:**

---

Scopes Trial
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? The author simply says that man came from lower terms in “Evolution of Man.”

2. (Contextualization) Why might people in Tennessee in 1925 have wanted to outlaw this textbook? People in Tennessee would outlaw this textbook due to religion. Religion was very big in the south. Evolution causes many to question religion and if you teach evolution in school, it defies the religious views parents teach their children at home. "A symbol of modernism in a conservative era."
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 Stratton 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 Stratton’s article in American Fundamentalist, “The Most Sinister Movement in the United States.” December 26, 1925. John Roach Stratton 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)

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

Source: Excerpt from a front page New York Times article, “Cerks 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.
Guiding Questions

1. (Sourcing) Who is Mrs. Sparks and why does she care about what is taught in schools? Mrs. Sparks is a citizen and mother and believes education should be about the fundamental religion.

2. (Contextualizing) What is Mrs. Sparks referring to when she says “these times of materialism”? Since it was the Roaring Twenties, there was tons of wealth and prosperity.

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? She says words such as “gates of hell” and “destructive forces” and most importantly “defend.”

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? He supported their freedom and opportunity for the students which why others supported him.

2. (Close Reading) Why does Malone think science is so important? He thinks it’s important because it keeps an open mind.

3. (Contextualizing) What is Malone referring to when he says “civilization is not so proud of the work of the adults”? He is referring to WWI, the gases, machine guns, worldwide deaths.
Document C: Reverend Straton Article

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

   The whole second paragraph describes the perfect small towns, "honor, respect, polite, sweet and sacred."

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

   Atheism, rising crime caused by prohibition, are signs of corruption.


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

   New York City was the opposite of Tennessee during the 1920s. People would look down on them because they were backwards and rednecks, no electricity, gaunt, tan, toil-worn, etc.

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?

   *same thing*
**Context: What was happening in the 1920s?**

**SUPPORTED the Butler Act**
- State of Tennessee
- Fundamentalists
- William Jennings Bryan (defended Tennessee)

**OPPOSED the Butler Act**
- John Scopes
- American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
- Clarence Darrow (defended John Scopes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person or Source:</th>
<th>Person or Source:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reason for supporting Butler Act:</td>
<td>Reason for opposing Butler Act:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quote:</td>
<td>Quote:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person or Source:</th>
<th>Person or Source:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reason for supporting Butler Act:</td>
<td>Reason for opposing Butler Act:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quote:</td>
<td>Quote:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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?
   - The textbook explains that man came from a lower class of animals then evolved into what we are today.

2. (Contextualization) Why might people in Tennessee in 1925 have wanted to outlaw this textbook?
   - They wanted to outlaw it because it went against the Butler Act created in 1925, a conservative era.
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 Stratton 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 Stratton’s article in American Fundamentalist, “The Most Sinister Movement in the United States.” December 26, 1925. John Roach Stratton 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.
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?

   She was a citizen/mother of Tennessee and she believed that education should be based on the fundamentals of religion.

2. (Contextualizing) What is Mrs. Sparks referring to when she says "these times of materialism"?

   Since there was so much wealth during the Roaring 20s, many people were buying more things.

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?

   She says "the gates of hell", "destructive forces", and "destroy our civilizations".

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?

   They probably applauded it because it supported freedom, patriotism, and the future of our children.

2. (Close Reading) Why does Malone think science is so important?

   He thinks it's important because it helps people keep an open mind and doesn't poison their knowledge.

3. (Contextualizing) What is Malone referring to when he says "civilization is not so proud of the work of the adults"?

   He is referring to WWI and the death and destruction it caused throughout the world.

Scopes Trial
Document C: Reverend Straton Article

1. (Close reading) What words does Straton use to show that he likes small towns?
   He uses words such as "honored", "proud", "respected", "sweet" and "society".

2. (Contextualizing) According to Straton, what are signs of corruption in New York and Chicago?
   The signs of corruption are the ignoring of religion and widespread crime caused by prohibition gangs.


1. (Sourcing) What was New York City like in the 1920s? Why might the New York Times look down on Dayton, Tennessee?
   New York City was more urban, modern, sophisticated, and at a higher standard. They looked down upon them because they were "hicks".

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?
   They describe them as uneducated hicks. They use words like "gaunt", "tan", "minstrels", and "strangely mixed".

Scopes Trial
**Context:** What was happening in the 1920s?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUPPORTED the Butler Act</th>
<th>OPPOSED the Butler Act</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- State of Tennessee</td>
<td>- John Scopes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Fundamentalists</td>
<td>- American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- William Jennings Bryan (defended Tennessee)</td>
<td>- Clarence Darrow (defended John Scopes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Person or Source:**

- *Jesse Sparks*

**Reason for supporting Butler Act:**

*America was being destroyed by concepts such as evolution*

**Quote:**

**Person or Source:**

**Reason for opposing Butler Act:**

**Quote:**

---

Scopes Trial