

Inherit the Wind by Jerome Lawrence & Robert E. Lee (Published in 1951)

Approved for use in English III

Summary of the Work:

The playwrights Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee add a unique spin of dramatic license to their theatrical piece based loosely on the Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925. The clash of legal titans Henry Drummond and Matthew Harrison Brady lives up to its billing of “the greatest courtroom drama of the century.” Set in fictional Hillsboro, Tennessee “The Buckle on the Bible Belt,” the drama examines the validity of the laws banning the teaching of the theory of evolution, as well as the examining the right to think.

Rationale:

Inherit the Wind explores the characters involved in a legal battle precipitated by a small town with a dwindling economy that wants to “put itself on the map.” As a dramatic representation of the 1925 Scopes trial, the play fits nicely into the American literature curriculum, as well as enriching students’ knowledge and understanding of the history of the case. Because the study of drama and characterization are included in the junior curriculum, this play works well to fulfill that requirement, in addition to exploring several of the overarching themes found in American literature.

Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays:

- * Dacey, Austin, and Derek Araujo. “Evolution in the Limelight.” *Skeptical Inquirer* 31.5 (Sept-Oct): 11(1). *General OneFile*. Gale.
- * Moore, Randy. “The Lingering Impact of *Inherit the Wind*.” *The American Biology Teacher* 64.4 (April 1999): 246(5). *General OneFile*. Gale.

* Print resources are available from the library media center and libraries in the district. Contact any library media specialist to view the scholarly sources.
* Scholarly reviews are also available online through Books in Print and Gale. Contact the library media specialist to obtain username and password information to access the subscription database of full-text reviews.

Readability

- Lexile Score: 850
- Readability Level: 8.2

Learning Resources Guidelines

- The play meets the Learning Resources Guidelines.

Standard Alignment: [\(link\)](#)

Approval:

Submitted to Committee:

Approved for Adoption:

Notes on the Text:

(The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)

This play lends itself well to being read aloud in the classroom, and provides a rich opportunity for discussion. Although the play deals with a somewhat controversial issue, it does not malign either side, and treats each view with dignity.

Connection to the Curriculum:

As the junior curriculum emphasizes American literature, including drama, this play fulfills that requirement well, and is of high interest to the students. It also ties in with the themes of alienation and isolation, and rebellion and protest, as outlined for study in during the junior year.

Additional Connections:

(AP, Honors, Essential/Applied, Dramas, Films, etc.)

There are at least two film versions of the play available for viewing. This adapted version of the famous Scopes trial also parallels the students’ study of American history and the legal system.