

Title: A Comparison of the Play and Movie *Inherit the Wind*

Grade Ranges:

 K-4
 X 5-8
 9-12

Subject Tag:

Language Arts: Literature: American Literature

Language Arts: Literature: Drama

Synopsis:

The play *Inherit the Wind* by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee recounts the historic Scopes “Monkey” trial. The trial was of a science teacher in rural Tennessee arrested in 1925 for teaching evolution in the classroom. The play’s authors have changed the names of the main characters and have developed motives and plots based solely on fiction, while the main idea of the trial comes from fact.

Students will read and discuss the play *Inherit the Wind*. They will then choose their favorite major scene of the play and construct a diorama showing the scene as they perceive it. Finally, students will view the videotape of the play and compare and contrast their vision of the play (their dioramas) with the tape.

Keywords:

Inherit the Wind, plays, evolution, Scopes “Monkey” Trial, comparing literature to film, drama, dramatic license, historical fiction, scene, setting, visual interpretation, theater, diorama

Body:

1. Lead the class in a discussion the Scopes trial. For older students, you can assign preliminary research of the trial. For younger students, a teacher-led discussion may be more appropriate.
2. Read the authors’ introduction to the class. Then a discussion should focus on the authors’ explanation that the play was written based on fact but is historical fiction.
3. Students should then read Act One aloud in class, choosing parts to read. Follow Act One by a discussion to answer any questions. Depending on grade level and time constraints, students should continue to read the play as a class, do the reading for homework, or complete a combination of the two.
4. In reviewing the play, students should compile a list of the major scenes. Divide the class into small groups, and have each group create a diorama of the scene they choose from the list.
5. After completing and presenting their dioramas, have students view the videotape.

6. The conclusion of the lesson should include a class discussion and possibly an essay comparing and contrasting the students' dioramas to the videotape. If a scene from a diorama is not in the movie, students should discuss why the director did not include the scene and what the scene may have looked like if it were included.

Related Links:

Review of the movie *Inherit the Wind* from the Internet Movie Database

<http://us.imdb.com/Title?0053946>

This site contains a list of the actors and characters, a summary, and reviews of the original 1960 movie.

“Famous Trials in American History”

<http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/scopes/scopes.htm>

This site reviews the case “Tennessee vs. John Scopes,” the infamous “Monkey trial” of 1925 from a legal perspective.

Features:

- ___ Contains special education tips
- ___ Quick Activity (less than 30 minutes; story starter)
- ___ Requires Internet access for students to complete

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to discriminate between fact and fiction within a work of historical fiction.
2. Students will be able to comprehend the main points of the Scopes “Monkey” trial.
3. Students will be able to consider the play from the viewpoints of other students, the authors of the play and the director of the movie.

Standards:

NY: 1 — Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.
2 – students will read, write, listen, and speak for literary response and expression

NYC: E3c – The student prepares and delivers an individual presentation which projects a sense of individuality and personality in selecting and organizing content, and delivery.

E3d – The student makes informed judgments about television, radio, and film productions. **E5** – The student responds to non-fiction, fiction, poetry, and drama using interpretive, critical, and evaluative processes.

CT: 1 – Students will read and respond in individual, literal, critical and evaluative ways to literary, informational and persuasive texts. **2** – Students will use the language arts to

explore and respond to classical and contemporary texts from many cultures and literary periods.

NJ: 3.3 – All students will read a variety of materials and texts with comprehension and critical analysis. **3.5** – All students will view, understand, and use nontextual visual information.

Prerequisite Skills:

1. Students should have prior knowledge of the debate of teaching evolution in public schools.

Time Required:

approximately 5-7 hours, depending on whether the entire play is read aloud in class. This time also includes viewing the movie.

Technology and Materials Needed:

1. Shoeboxes for dioramas
2. Art supplies for creating dioramas
3. Copies of the movie and play
4. VCR for movie

Procedures:

Assessment Criteria:

1. The students should be assessed on their participation in reading aloud.
2. The students should be assessed on their dioramas.
3. The students should be assessed on their essay comparing the play to the movie.

Recommended Lesson Plan Review Date:

Review Comments:

This lesson plan includes no time-sensitive information, but the resource links should be checked to ensure that they are still active and accurate.