



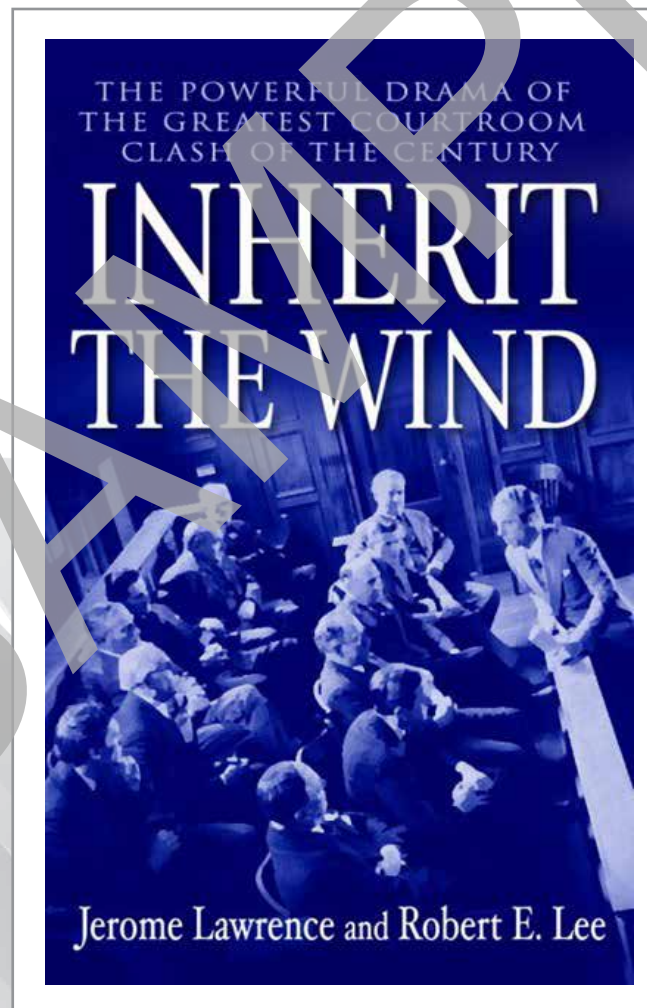
**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 9-12**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# Inherit the Wind

Jerome Lawrence



**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

# Inherit the Wind

Jerome Lawrence

## TEACHER GUIDE

**NOTE:**

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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## Skills and Strategies

### Thinking

Research, compare/contrast,  
evaluating, analysis,  
brainstorming, inference,  
predicting

### Writing

Personal writing, poetry,  
creative writing, short sequel

### Vocabulary

Target words, definitions,  
application

### Listening/Speaking

Discussion, role playing

### Literary Elements

Characterization, universality,  
simile, metaphor, allusion,  
symbolism

### Fine Arts

Art, music, drama

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## Information about the Play

**Genre:** realistic drama

**Setting:** a small town in the summer; not too long ago

**Date of first publication/performance:** 1955; first produced on Broadway at National Theatre (now Billy Rose Theatre) April 21, 1955

**Themes:** creationism vs. theory of evolution; individual freedom

**Conflict:** person vs. person; theory vs. theory; opinion of the majority vs. academic freedom

### Summary

Bertram Cates is accused of illegally teaching the theory of evolution in his high-school classroom. Two legal giants of the twentieth century have come to the small town to participate in the trial. Matthew Harrison Brady, a fundamentalist Christian who is well versed in the Bible and the law, speaks for the prosecution. Henry Drummond, a famous lawyer who strongly supports the right to teach the evolutionist theory, defends Cates. The courtroom drama unfolds as a bitter contest in which the two famous orators strive to destroy each other. Brady, although theoretically the winner, is humiliated, and the conflict ends with his death. Throughout the play, news reporter E.K. Hornbeck adds “fuel to the fire” with his caustic statements and his inflammatory reporting.

### Background Information

*Inherit the Wind* is based on the actual trial of John Thomas Scopes in the Rhea County Court House in Dayton, Tennessee, during July 1925. Known as the “Scopes Monkey Trial,” it pitted William Jennings Bryan for the prosecution against Clarence Darrow for the defense. Bryan, an unsuccessful three-time candidate for President of the United States and former Secretary of State under Woodrow Wilson, was famous for his oratorical skills. An avowed fundamentalist Christian, he believed in a literal interpretation of the Bible. Darrow, a famous criminal lawyer, advocated a teacher’s right to teach evolution.

### Correlating Facts

**Creationism:** the belief that a Supreme Being created the earth and all its life, including man, through a series of divine acts, based on the Biblical account of creation in Genesis 1-2. There are variations of creationist beliefs but all creationists believe that God created each species on earth, that each one has remained relatively unchanged, and that no species has evolved from any other.

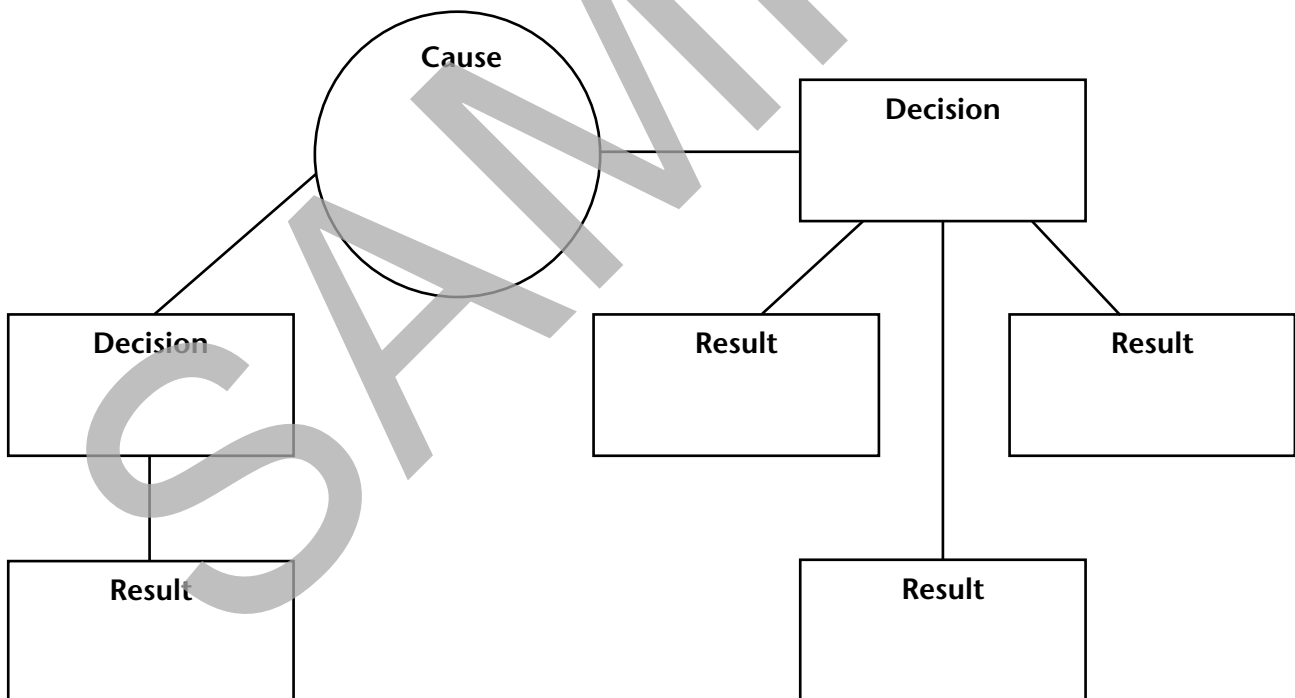
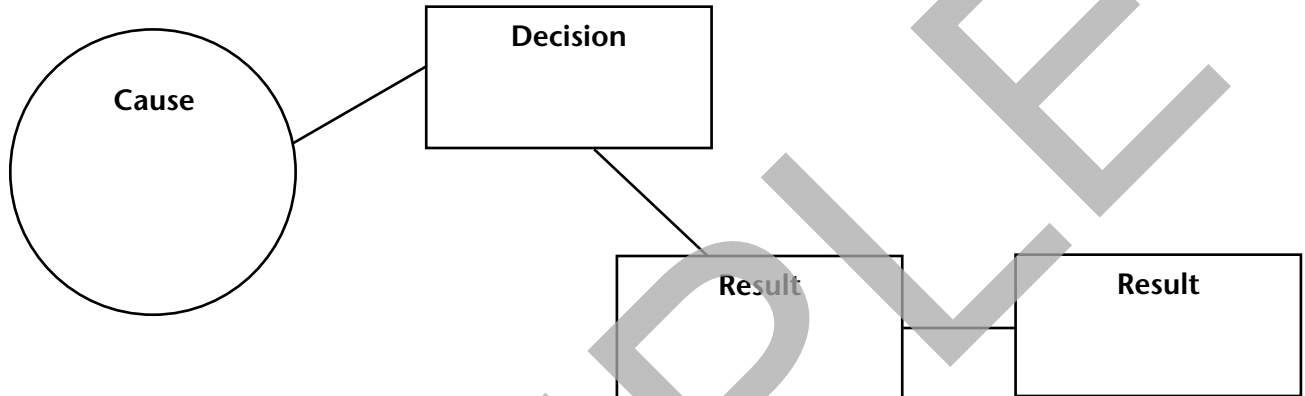
**Evolution:** the belief that living things change from generation to generation, producing descendants with new characteristics. Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species* presents the theory that all species evolved from a few common ancestors by means of natural selection.

**Controversy:** During the early 1900s, some public schools in the United States began to teach evolution in science classes. Creationists proposed laws in the 1920s that would ban the teaching of evolution in the public schools. Several states passed such legislation. The American Civil Liberties Union opposed these laws, based on an interpretation of the constitutional principle of the separation of church and state. The debate between the two factions has been ongoing.

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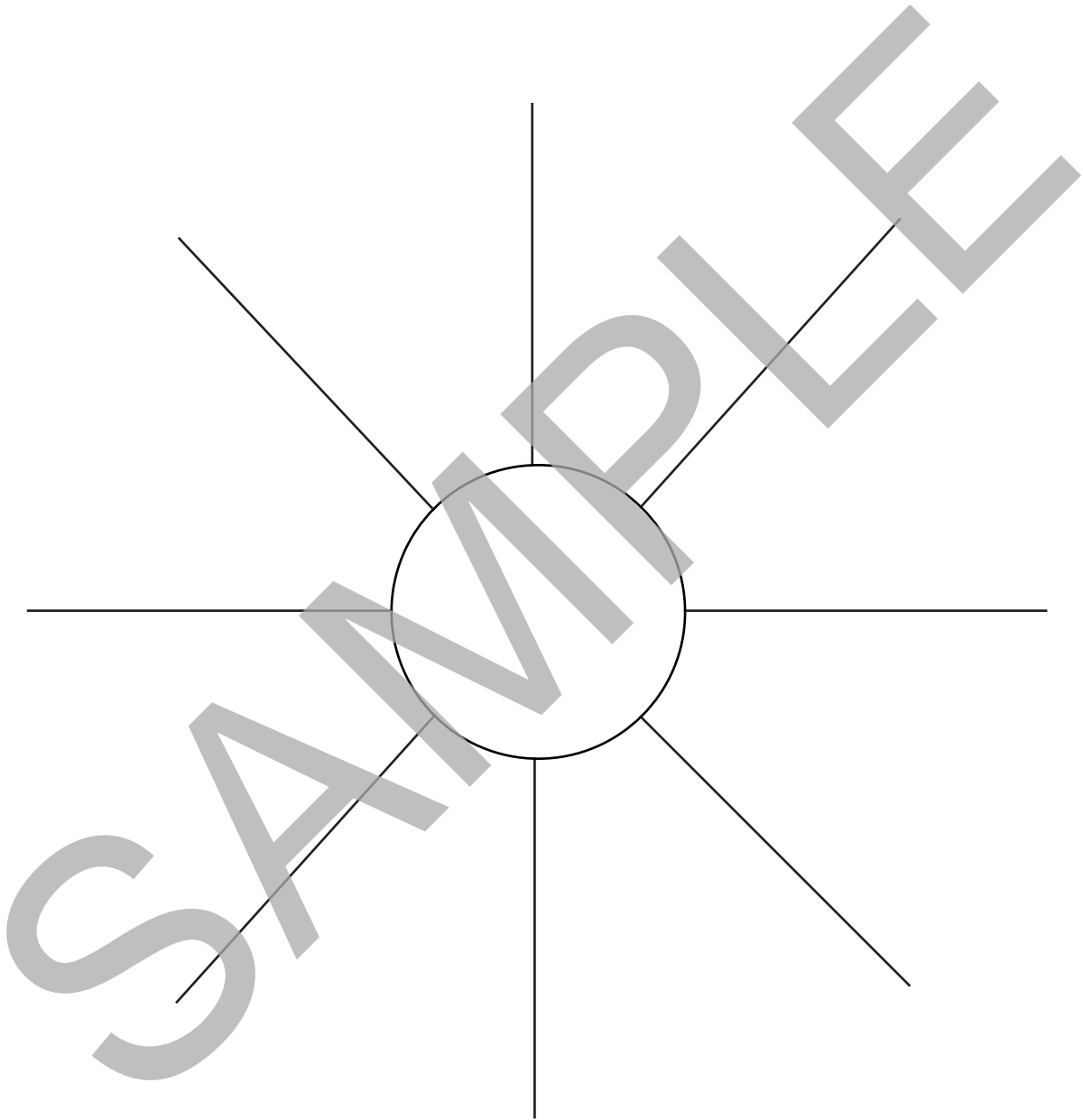
## Cause/Effect Chart

**Directions:** Make a flow chart to show decisions a character made, the decisions he or she could have made, and the result(s) of each. (Use your imagination to speculate on the results of decisions the character could have made.)



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## Attribute Web



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## Act Two, Scene I, pp. 59-67

*Teaching suggestion: Arrange the classroom seating to resemble a courtroom before reading the final two acts.*

At the prayer meeting the evening of the first trial day, Rev. Brown incites the people against Cates with a fervent speech about creation. He implores God to strike down Cates and anyone who supports him.

### Vocabulary

impassioned (60)  
zeal (66)

biased (60)

fervent (61)

crescendo (65)

### Discussion Questions

1. Discuss Brady's response to reporter's question about Drummond. (*He insists he holds no personal animosity toward Drummond and alludes to Drummond's support for Brady in the 1908 Presidential campaign. He says that Drummond challenges the faith, so he must oppose him. p. 60*)
2. Analyze the bias that is evident in this scene. Ask students whether the bias to this point in the play is for or against Cates. (*Answers will vary. Note that Brady accuses Hornbeck of biased reporting. Although the bias is focused primarily against Cates, students should become aware of the subtle bias against the creationist factions, e.g., the unbending, dogmatic portrayal of Brown, the pompous portrayal of Brady, and the uneducated appearance of the townspeople. pp. 60-63*)
3. Analyze Brown's use and misuse of the Bible. Note the effectiveness of the figurative language and personification, its effect on the crowd, and Brady's response. (*Brown portrays the Bible as beating wings and howling, flashing wind. He quotes scriptures but adds his own interpretation by using phrases that are not found in the scriptural text, and by personifying light and firmament as having the ability to speak. He concludes by calling on God to curse Cates as a man who denies the Bible. His fervor and intensity supercede rational thought and have a powerful influence on the crowd. Brady cautions him not to become overzealous and admonishes the people to forgive each other. pp. 63-67*)
4. Analyze Drummond's final statement to Brady in this scene and its effect on Brady. (*Brady questions why he and Drummond have moved away from each other, and Drummond responds that perhaps it is Brady who has moved away by standing still. Drummond's words have a sharp impact on Brady. p. 67*)

### Supplementary Activities

1. Read the scripture Brady quotes (Proverbs 11:29), "He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind" and compare with his reference to emptiness. Have students write a metaphor or simile poem about emptiness. Pattern—Line 1: noun; Lines 2-4: write something about the subject; each line should say something different and give an idea of what the subject is like; Line 5: a metaphor or simile that begins with the title.
2. Literary devices: **Metaphors**—prayer meeting: motion picture, radio, tent show (p. 62); Bible: Wings of the Word (p. 62). **Personification**—Light and Firmament, "Am I good, Lord?" (p. 63)