



Excerpt from newspaper coverage of the Scopes Trial:

“Mencken Likens Trial to a Religious Orgy, with Defendant a Beelzebub” by H.L. Mencken

.... To call a man a doubter in these parts is equal to accusing him of cannibalism. Even the *infidel* Scopes himself is not charged with any such *infamy*. What they say of him, at worst, is that he permitted himself to be used as a *cat's paw* by scoundrels eager to destroy the anti-evolution law for their own dark and hellish ends. There is, it appears, a conspiracy of scientists afoot. Their purpose is to break down religion, *propagate* immorality, and so reduce mankind to the level of the brutes. They are the sworn and sinister agents of *Beelzebub*, who yearns to conquer the world, and has his eye especially upon Tennessee. Scopes is thus an agent of Beelzebub once removed, but that is as far as any fair man goes in condemning him. He is young and yet full of *folly*. When the *secular* arm has done execution upon him, the pastors will tackle him and he will be saved.

The selection of a jury to try him, which went on all yesterday afternoon in the atmosphere of a **blast furnace**, showed to what extreme lengths the salvation of the local primates has been pushed. It was obvious after a few rounds that the jury would be unanimously hot for *Genesis*. The most that Mr. Darrow could hope for was to sneak in a few men bold enough to declare publicly that they would have to hear the evidence against Scopes before condemning him. The slightest sign of anything further brought forth a *peremptory challenge* from **the State**. Once a man was challenged without examination for simply admitting that he did not belong formally to any church.

Another time a **panel man** who confessed that he was prejudiced against evolution got a hearty round of applause from the crowd.

--originally published in the *Baltimore Evening Sun*, July 11, 1925

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- Review the vocabulary/ allusions below. Study them! You'll be tested on them.
 - Read the text. Make margin notes of what surprises you (!), annoys you (-), pleases you (+), or confuses you (?). Be prepared to summarize the content of the article.
 - What do the bolded words mean exactly? Write meanings in the margins.
 - On a separate sheet of loose leaf, answer the following questions in a clear, developed, and edited response:
 1. What does this writing tell you about Dayton, TN?
 2. What does this reveal about Mencken? How would you describe his style?

infidel (n) = a person of a religion other than one's own/ an atheist

infamy (n) = wickedness

cat's paw = a tool, someone "used" by another

propagate (v) = spread and promote/ breed

Beelzebub (n) = the Devil (Satan himself) or the devil next in command under Satan

folly (n) = foolishness

secular (n) = non-religious/describes attitudes that have no religious basis

Genesis (n) = first book of Bible where creation story is written

peremptory challenge = a formal objection to the seating of a juror that requires no showing of cause. The attorneys for each side in a trial have a limited number of these.