

# Inherit the wind by jerome lawrence and robert e. lee

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



Inherit the Wind “ Here in Hillsboro we are fighting the fight of the Faithful through-out the world! ” (53) Inherit the Wind is the epic legal drama, written by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee, of a controversial subject: creationism versus Darwinism. Hillsboro is extremely determined to defend creationism. Though fictional, Inherit the Wind is based on the Scopes Trial, which occurred in July of 1925 in Dayton, Tennessee.

The play was published in 1957, a period of time where people, especially those of Hillsboro, the small town in which the play is set, were only allowed to teach the theory of creationism; teaching evolution was against the law. The people of the town were extremely religious. To not believe in the bible or attend church would result in being shunned by Hillsboro. In Inherit the Wind, the attitude of Hillsboro subtly changes throughout the course of the trial of the young schoolteacher who purposely broke the law.

The town reflects the fiercely religious and biased views collectively shared by its people, such that it becomes an important character in itself. The changes in the town's attitude are small, evident by certain individuals within the town learning to open their minds and accept the theory of evolution. Before the trial of Bert Cates, the attitude of the town is reflected by its behavior towards Bert Cates, Henry Drummond, and Matthew Harrison Brady. Bert Cates is a schoolteacher who was imprisoned for teaching evolution to his class, something Hillsboro considers to be very wrong.

Rachel Brown is the daughter of the Reverend, and though she tries to defy her father and his views, even she sides with Hillsboro and does not understand “ why [he] can't be on the right side of things” (8). The “ right

side” is Hillsboro’s side; the only “right” answer is in the bible. Because Hillsboro is so close-minded, it refuses to accept any other theories or opinions. It wants Cates to be found guilty. It considers him a criminal for what he did; therefore, the bias against him is clear before the trial even begins.

In turn, Hillsboro is equally unhappy with the defense attorney, Henry Drummond. Drummond is a renowned lawyer who is described as “the most agile legal mind of the Twentieth Century” (22). He has the ability to win the case, something Hillsboro assumed would not to be done. Reverend Brown calls him the “Devil” (25) because “[one] looks into his face, and [wonders] why God made such a man” (25). Given this description, Hillsboro assumes it to be true and treats him as though he is evil. Hillsboro thinks Drummond does not believe in God because he has won cases where the defendants were clearly guilty.

Hillsboro knows that Drummond is an excellent lawyer, and with him defending Cates, the trial could have a remarkably different result from what Hillsboro was expecting. By calling him the “Devil”, Hillsboro is able to turn its people against Drummond. However, the attitude Hillsboro displays towards Matthew Harrison Brady is completely opposite. The famous lawyer is the lead prosecutor for the trial of Bert Cates. Hillsboro worships Brady; he is devoted to the bible, believing “all the answers to those questions are in the Bible” (34) and that evolution is nonsense.

Hillsboro is overjoyed, and rather star struck to have him in town. All of Hillsboro gathers to welcome Brady with a feast and frequently sings, “It is

good enough for Brady” (17). The difference with which Hillsboro treats Brady compared to Cates and Drummond is colossal. Everyone is completely taken in by his charm and presentation; each hang on every word he says. Before the trial begins, Brady already has Hillsboro on his side. With the negative attitude Hillsboro displays before the trial, how could Bert Cates stand a chance against their bias and closed minds?

Throughout the trial of Bert Cates, the behavior and bias Hillsboro had previously displayed, remains, and escalates, to the point where even Brady feels uncomfortable. The meaning of religion to Hillsboro is reflected by its people, shown by the answers and opinions given by the potential jurors. The members of the jury were selected by Drummond and Brady, both of whom had to agree upon the individual in order for them to serve as a juror. Brady does not care whether it is a fair trial; he only wants to win.

This could be almost guaranteed as the jurors are all members of Hillsboro and many seem to “believe in the Holy Word of God ... and Matthew Harrison Brady” (36). It is impossible to have a fair trial for Bert Cates when the jury members are all chosen from Hillsboro, thus it is clear they do not want Cates to stand a chance. A message from Reverend Brown to Hillsboro further illustrates this. At the end of the first day of the trial, the Judge announces “there will be a prayer-meeting tonight on the courthouse lawn, to pray for justice and guidance”(42), a message Reverend Brown asks him to relay.

The judge seems to see nothing wrong with doing so, demonstrated by his reaction to Drummond’s objections. Clearly the judge does not care about

the fairness of Cates' trial, as he openly announced a meeting to pray for a guilty verdict. There were no evolutionist meetings being held, as Drummond pointed out. The only option Hillsboro gives is to believe in the bible. The degree of the importance of religion to Hillsboro is revealed during the prayer meeting. Reverend Brown becomes very passionate and eventually deranged when telling Hillsboro how God supposedly created the world in seven days.

Hillsboro, in turn, reacts fervently, screaming and roaring " Hosannah! Bless the Lord who created us! " (57) And " Amen, amen! " (57). The Reverend goes on further to directly talk about Cates, asking Hillsboro " Do we call down hellfire on the man who has sinned against the Word" (59), which Hillsboro agrees with, encouraging the Reverend to continue in his rant, and ask God to have Cates' soul " writhe in anguish and damnation" (59). It is at this point in time that Brady realizes the extent Hillsboro is willing to take religion.

Hillsboro would have Cates sent to Hell and eternally damned because he chose to teach evolution. As much as Brady is a religious man, even he believes Hillsboro has gone too far. The trial of Bert Cates has illuminated how religious Hillsboro truly is and how the opinion of a few people can impact an entire town. After the trial of Bert Cates, there is a small, but nevertheless definite, shift in attitude of Hillsboro, demonstrated by the outcome of the trial and individual character changes.

Bert Cates is the first person in Hillsboro to dare oppose the law against evolution; this is the first step in bringing about the change. Although his

actions are technically wrong, Cates believes he did the right thing and refuses to stand down. Even the woman he loves, Rachel Brown, begs him to “tell ‘em it was all a joke” (7), and though he wavers, he sees the trial through to the end. Cates opens the door to a different side, one which most of Hillsboro has never even considered, at least not openly.

Though Hillsboro may not accept or like evolution, the town was forced to contemplate the idea of it because of the trial. Rachel Brown is the Reverend’s daughter, and throughout the play, struggles to stand up to her father; the conclusion of Cates’s trial allows her to find the courage to finally do so. Rachel is terrified to show her support of Cates for fear of her father. Reverend Brown answers Brady’s question “My daughter will be pleased to answer any questions about Bert Cates” (22).

Before the trial begins, Rachel refuses to stand up for herself or answer for herself. She begins to oppose her father, when she jumps on stage and implores her father “[not to] pray to destroy Bert!” (59), during the prayer meeting, something she could not have done at the beginning of the play. She has had creationism enforced upon her for her whole life, yet Cates’s trial opens her mind to evolution, when Drummond questions Brady on how the World could possibly have been created in Seven days. The trial also gives her the strength to stand up to her father.

A change in the attitude of one person can have a significant impact on the people around him, especially in a town as small as Hillsboro. Rachel cannot have been the only person in Hillsboro to doubt creationism after the trial; however, if she were, her new outlook would surely inspire those surrounding

her. The result of the trial plays a key role in the change of Hillsboro's attitude. Although the jury finds Cates guilty, his punishment is only a five hundred dollar fine. This case turned into something much bigger than just a small town case; the entire state was waiting with baited breath to hear the results.

Yet after all the fuss and trouble that was made about this case, to fine Cates only five hundred dollars is astounding, especially considering Hillsboro wanted to have Cates's soul " writhe in anguish and damnation" (59). The jury is made up of biased people who were completely close-minded to begin with, but Drummond is able to convince Hillsboro to slightly open its mind, which is an incredible accomplishment. Although Cates technically lost the trial, it should be considered a victory. In *Inherit the Wind*, the attitude of Hillsboro subtly changes throughout the course of the trial of the young schoolteacher who purposely broke the law.

The town reflects the fiercely religious and biased views collectively shared by its people, such that it becomes an important character in itself. The changes in the town's attitude are small, evident by certain individuals within the town. The people of Hillsboro are extraordinarily similar. They all think, feel, and act the same way. There are few individuals who stand out in the town, as most are from the same cookie-cutter mold. Because the people are so alike, they are able to blend into one character that represents all of them.

As a result, the town becomes a vital character to the story. Hillsboro is willing to send a schoolteacher to jail for voicing his opinions, because he

goes against what the town collectively believes to be “right”. Through the course of the play, we are given insight into how much religion can mean not only to one person, but an entire town, and the lengths a town is willing to go to prevent change. Setting this play in a different town, one without the same religious beliefs, would alter the story immensely; in fact, the entire trial may not have occurred.