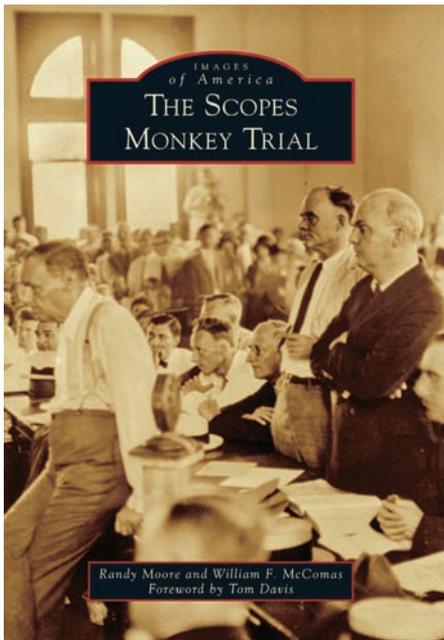


teachers, and could possibly lead to better, teacher-directed learning. He concludes that school science is in a dysfunctional state and that change is needed. He maintains that what is taught “has to be determined by those who are accomplished in the subject, not by scientifically illiterate educationalists.”



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## EVOLUTION

***The Scopes Monkey Trial.*** By Randy Moore and William F. McComas. 2016. Arcadia Publishing. (ISBN 9781467116480). 128 pages. Paperback. \$21.99.

If you visit your local bookstore, you are sure to find, in a section marked “Local Interest,” a handful of sepia-toned paperbacks in Arcadia Publishing’s Images of America series. Typically assembled by knowledgeable local historians, these are lavishly illustrated microhistories of various areas, towns, and city neighborhoods across the United States. But they are usually of limited interest: if you’re not from or in, say, Ashtabula, Ohio, then you’re not going to be fascinated by the corresponding volume.

*The Scopes Monkey Trial*, however, is quite different. Certainly it is likely to be a permanent

staple on the shelves of bookstores in Dayton, Tennessee, where John Thomas Scopes was tried in 1925 for violating the state’s Butler Act. Anyone with more than a passing interest in the people and places of the Scopes trial will want to own a copy. But because the trial is emblematic—for better or for worse—of the creationism/evolution controversy, the book’s appeal is broader.

Both Randy Moore and William F. McComas have long been involved in efforts to defend and improve the teaching of evolution, and the book is dedicated to Scopes “and the many science teachers who have followed his courageous example.” (A brief list of subsequent court cases, ending with *Kitzmiller v. Dover*, is provided on p. 117.) But they are not out to settle old scores with the foes of evolution or Scopes’s prosecutors here: their approach throughout is that of objective—if fascinated—chroniclers.

At the center of the book are eight chapters tracing the events relevant to the trial, from the passage of the Butler Act and the decision to prosecute Scopes through the drama of the trial itself to the anticlimax of the appeal—and beyond, to the 1960 screening in Dayton of *Inherit the Wind* and the 1967 repeal of the Butler Act. Each of these chapters begins with a brief narrative of events, and then continues with a panoply of relevant photographs and images, equipped with detailed captions.

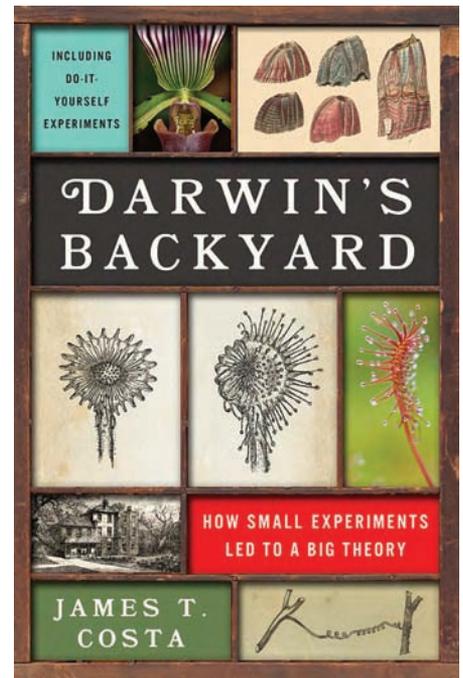
Overall, *The Scopes Monkey Trial* is a delight. The only book comparable to it is *The Scopes Trial: A Photographic History* (University of Tennessee Press, 2000), with an introduction by Edward Caudill, captions by Edward J. Larson (justly famous for his Pulitzer Prize–winning 1997 book about the trial, *Summer for the Gods*), and an afterword by Jesse Fox Mayschark. It would be difficult to choose between the two, but there’s no reason that you can’t find room for both!



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***Darwin’s Backyard: How Small Experiments Led to a Big Theory.*** By James Costas. 2017. W.W. Norton. (ISBN 978-0393239898). 496 pages. Hardback. \$27.95.

When we mention Darwin in classes, what generally comes to students’ minds is imagery of finches, shells, and tortoises in the tropics or perhaps simply the word “evolution.” *Darwin’s Backyard* takes understanding Darwin and evolution to the next level, building upon general knowledge



of Darwin’s life and contribution to evolutionary theory by exploring in depth the scientific thinking and explorations in which he engaged in his search for answers. For any reader interested in the story behind the theorizing, this book is essential.

For each of the ten chapters in this book, there is a focused story surrounding the life and mind of Charles Darwin, as expected, covering everything from the early years before the voyage of the *HMS Beagle* to his more intimate home studies of seeds, worms, and other elements with which many are not as familiar. What sets this volume apart from a general history is the inclusion of Darwin’s own backyard experiments in each chapter, experiments that can (and should) easily be replicated at home or in the classroom. These experiments are accessible and affordable, with most requiring little more than dirt, a patch of ground, trees, and other things that are in abundance or relatively easy to come by on a tight budget. At the same time, they open the reader to experience and witness first-hand the same events about which they have just read, putting the reader wholly in the shoes of Darwin as well as the scientific process.

In the interest of disclosure, I have two sons, ages 15 and 5, who were most taken with the experiments we completed as of this writing. “Going to Seed” (Chapter 1: Origins of an Experimentizer) worked out particularly well with the different seed types we had available in Georgia in Spring, and in my view, it was a great marriage of typical childhood behaviors (i.e., playing with helicopter seeds and dandelion