

Darwinism on trial in American state (Sun 8 May, 2005)

WARM-UPS

CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics you are interested in, which do not look interesting and which look really boring:

Kansas / scientists / Darwinism / Theory of Evolution / the Christian-right / God / Genesis / Adam and Eve / apes / the age of Earth

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

CHARLES DARWIN: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with Charles Darwin. Share your words with your partner / group and talk about them.

HOW WE GOT HERE: What is your thinking on how we are who we are? Do you subscribe to Darwinism or a religious explanation that we were specially created? Talk to your partner / group about this. Summarize your conclusions. Change partners and present these conclusions. Is there widespread agreement or differences in thinking?

2-MINUTE EVOLUTION DEBATES: Face each other in pairs and engage in these fun 2-minute debates. Students A take the first argument, students B the second. Change partners regularly for more conversation:

- a. God made us. vs. We descended from apes.
- b. God created the energy that started the first life form. vs. Science did that.
- c. Adam and Eve is just a story. vs. It's a true story.
- d. God created everything in seven days. vs. That's just a story.
- e. The Earth is 5,000 years old. vs. It's billions of years old.
- f. Human beings are the greatest creation. vs. All creatures are equally great.
- g. It's healthy that evolution be questioned. vs. It's a waste of time.
- h. There is no God. vs. There is.

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PRE-READING

WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... of the words 'origin' and 'life'.

TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. Charles Darwin has been arrested and is on trial in the USA. T / F
- b. A battle is on in Kansas over how to teach the origins of life. T / F
- c. Scientists believe the Theory of Evolution is beyond scientific doubt. T / F
- d. Creationists argue we evolved from apes. T / F
- e. Many teachers forgot to set their alarm clocks. T / F
- f. A US teaching association says creationism is based on science. T / F
- g. Scientists say the Kansas school system may become a laughingstock. T / F
- h. Two deciding committee members think Earth is less than 5,000 years old. T / F

SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | | |
|----|-----------|------------------|
| a. | under way | terminology |
| b. | origins | basis |
| c. | adamant | in process |
| d. | jargon | proclaims |
| e. | propounds | whim |
| f. | ringing | preposterousness |
| g. | fad | beginnings |
| h. | grounding | sounding |
| i. | folly | derided |
| j. | ridiculed | resolute |

PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | | |
|----|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| a. | a court-like battle | the religious right |
| b. | In one | created |
| c. | beyond scientific | grounding |
| d. | molecular | corner are scientists and teachers |
| e. | we were specially | folly |
| f. | dismiss | is under way |
| g. | a fad of | dark ages |
| h. | no scientific | the new theory |
| i. | pure | doubt |
| j. | back to the | level |

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READING:

ODD WORD OUT: Circle the word, in each group of three in italics, that does not fit.

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BNE: In the American state of Kansas, a court-like battle is under way over how the *origins / origin / originality* of life should taught in schools. In one corner are scientists and teachers who are *in two minds / adamant / insistent* that Darwinism and the Theory of Evolution is beyond scientific doubt. In opposition is a group of Christian-right thinkers who believe creationism, or in their *terminology / thesaurus / jargon* “intelligent design”, explains how we got here. Intelligent design *proclaims / propounds / propels* the role of an intelligent designer - God - in creating us as human beings. The creationists argue all life did not have a common origin, that life did not start at a molecular level and that we did not *descend / evolve / climb* from apes. Creationist John Sanford, from Cornell University said: “My explanation, humbly offered, is that we were specially created.”

This has alarm bells *sounding / alerting / ringing* for many educators who dismiss the new theory as a *fad / fancy / fanatic* of the religious right. Scientists say educational standards would decline if the creationists *get / evolve / have* their way. The National Academy of Sciences and the National Science Teachers’ Association reject intelligent design for having no scientific grounding and for being a religious invention. Many scientists are *boycotting / snubbing / brainwashing* the hearings, which they see as pure *nonsense / folly / common sense*. They say Kansas will be ridiculed for sending its students back to the dark ages of scientific thinking. Two of the ten committee members that will decide this issue believe the Earth may be younger than 5,000 years old.

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DISCUSSION

- a. Did you like this article?
- b. What did you think after reading the article?
- c. Were you surprised by anything you read in the article?
- d. How do you think we got here?
- e. Do you believe in the story of creation?
- f. Do you believe in the story of Adam and Eve?
- g. Can you explain Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution?
- h. Do you believe in the "survival of the fittest" theory?
- i. What do you think of the idea that we were put on the Earth in our present form?
- j. Are we the greatest creations on the Earth?
- k. How old is the Earth?
- l. Is it OK to teach a Christian theory of the origins of life in schools?
- m. Is it OK to offer an alternative to Darwin's theory?
- n. Do you think school standards would decline if the creationists got their way?
- o. What were you taught about our origins in school?
- p. If we did not descend from apes, how come they look like us?
- q. Do you believe we were "specially created"?
- r. Why do you think we would have been specially created?
- s. Don't you think that if we were "specially created" we would be perfect?
- t. Will we look the same in ten million years' time?
- u. Will we still be here ten thousand years from now?
- v. Did you like this discussion?
- w. Teacher / Student additional questions.

HOMEWORK

- 1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.
- 2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find information on Charles Darwin. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.
- 3. IMPERFECT:** Write an essay on the imperfections of human beings. Present the basic points of your essay to the class in your next lesson.
- 4. LETTER TO KANSAS:** Write a letter to either the evolutionists or the creationists telling them your views on this issue. Use this letter as the basis for your arguments in a debate on the matter in your next class.

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TEXT

ODD WORD OUT: Either of the two words in italics would fit in the article.

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