Mass Media and the Scopes Trial

SWBAT: explain the role the media played in sensationalizing the Scopes Monkey Trial.

Homework:

Do Now: Agree or disagree: the media shapes who we are and what we become.
News and Mass Media

- Mass media flourished in the 1920s.
- Newspapers became more widespread, magazines more popular.
- Radio allows for the spread of news and ideas easier and faster to larger populations (even those who can’t read).
- Led to the creation of a national culture united by knowledge of news and events.
Questions:
What is being advertised?
What does the ad promise will happen if you use the product?
What tactics does the advertisement use to make you want to purchase the product?
Mass Media and Culture

Mass media allowed for a shift in people’s opinions, tastes, and values.

Told you what was cool to eat, drink, smoke, wear, and drive.

Led to a culture united by the products they used.
Event # 1: “The Crime of the Century”

Refers to the kidnapping and murder of famed aviator Charles A. Lindbergh's 20–month–old son in 1932.

The story contained two elements on which sensational news thrives – celebrity and crime – and set off a media frenzy from coast to coast.
The Crime and Trial

From the night of March 1 when Charles A. Lindbergh Jr. disappeared until convicted suspect Bruno Richard Hauptmann was executed in 1936, newspapers published banner headlines on the evolving tragedy.

The event was something that brought people together to talk, gossip, argue, discuss, and more.
Event 2: Scopes Monkey Trial

Christian fundamentalists in politics made it illegal for teachers to teach anything but Creationism in public schools.

Skeptical of scientific advancements, discoveries, and theories (esp. those that challenged church teachings).

What is creationism?
Mr. Scopes challenges the law

John Scopes, a high school science teacher, didn’t agree and believed strongly in Darwin’s theory of evolution.

What is evolution?

He knowingly broke the law and taught evolution instead of creationism.

Result? Arrested and put in jail.

The trial was deliberately staged in order to attract publicity to the small town of Dayton, Tennessee, where it was held.
The Publicity

More than 200 newspaper reporters from all parts of the country and two from London were in Dayton.

Twenty-two telegraphers sent out 165,000 words per day on the trial over thousands of miles of telegraph wires hung for the purpose.

More words were transmitted to Britain about the Scopes trial than for any previous American event.

Trained chimpanzees performed on the courthouse lawn.

Two movie cameramen had their film flown out daily in a small plane from a specially prepared airstrip.
The Trial

Lawyer 1: Defense
Scopes used one of the best defense attorneys in the country, Clarence Darrow.

Lawyer 2: Prosecution
Used against Scopes was three-time presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan.

Darrow wanted to call up a series of scientists and experts to prove evolution’s rightful place in the classroom.
Judge wouldn’t allow it
As a result, he calls Bryan to the stand.
The following is what took place...
Discussion

What was the purpose of bringing Bryan to the stand?
What does Darrow do to prove his point?
Do you think Darrow’s questioning was enough to get Scope free?
End Result

Scopes is found guilty and fined $100. Eventually, the Tennessee Supreme Court overruled the verdict, but the law against teaching evolution remained in effect.
Exit Question

Today, many fundamentalists are fighting for “intelligent design” to be taught alongside evolution in classrooms. What do you think intelligent design is? Should it be taught in classrooms like evolution?