Act I Scene 1

1. What do the minor characters in this scene inform the audience about?

2. What do we learn about Rachel in this scene?

3. What does Hornbeck mean when he says the following lines? “The unplumbed and plumbing-less depths! Ahhh, Hillsboro – Heavenly Hillsboro. The buckle on the Bible Belt.”

4. What is the meaning of the exchange between Hornbeck, the monkey, the organ grinder and Melinda on pages 14-15?

5. What kind of picture of Brady is presented in scene 1? Give 3-5 examples.

6. What is the role of Sarah Brady in scene 1?

7. What do you suppose was discussed by MHB and Rachel when he leads her away from the others?

8. Why is Brady pleased that Drummond is his opponent? What does this response show us about Brady?

9. What does Hornbeck mean when he says he is “both Poles and the Equator, with no temperate zones between”?

Act I Scene 2

1. Why does Drummond accept Bannister as a juror?

2. How do the playwrights achieve humor in this scene?

3. What is the colonel (pronounced “ker-nel”) issue? How is it resolved?

4. What is Brady’s accusation to Drummond about the Endicott case?

5. Explain the following line: “You murder a wife, it isn’t nearly as bad as murdering an old wives’ tale.”

6. According to Drummond, what do you lose when you lose your power to laugh?

7. What does Drummond care about? What does Rachel care about?
8. Give an example of “finding yourself standing up when everyone else is sitting down.” (Your example doesn’t have to be from the play.)

9. On what condition will Drummond quit? What is Bert’s decision?

10. What is Rachel’s position? Why?

11. Define “pariah.” Give two examples of pariahs from the play.

12. What does it take a very smart person to say? Explain what Drummond means.

Act II Scene 1

1. How does Reverend Brown get the crowd riled up at the prayer meeting?

2. What is your opinion of Reverend Brown in this scene? Support with details.

3. What is Brady’s reaction to these curses?

4. What do we learn about Brady in this scene? Support with evidence.

5. Interpret Proverbs 11:29: “He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind.” What do you think it means? (Make a guess if you don’t know.)

Act II Scene 2

1. What pun does Brady make while questioning Howard? Why does he do this?

2. What important point is Drummond trying to make in his cross-examination of Howard?

3. What does Drummond mean in his speech about right and wrong and truth?

4. Why did Cates quit going to church?

5. Why does Drummond want to question men like Dr. Keller and Walter Aaronson?

6. Why does Brady object?

7. What surprise witness does Drummond call to testify? What is this man’s expertise?

8. How does Brady want to explain away natural law?

9. What does Drummond mean when he says, “An idea is a greater monument than a cathedral”?
10. What price do we pay for knowledge or progress? Can you think of a contemporary example?

11. How old is the earth according to Bishop Usher?

12. How does Drummond “trip up” Brady?

13. How does Brady know he is right?

14. Which man, Brady or Drummond, do the spectators favor by this time in the trial? How do you account for this?

15. How would you describe Brady at the end of the scene?

Act III

1. What is the reason for including the Golden Dancer episode? What could Golden Dancer be a metaphor for?

2. What new medium makes the trial public?

3. What is the jury’s decision?

4. What is a pyrrhic victory? Who has a pyrrhic victory in this play? Explain with evidence.

5. What is Cates’ punishment?

6. What is the difference between fine and bond? Look it up if you don’t know.

7. What has Brady lost? Why?

8. What is Rachel’s metaphor for an idea? What does she mean?

9. Why is Drummond upset with Hornbeck?

10. To whom does the quote “Inherit the wind...” now apply? Support with evidence.

11. What does Drummond carry out as he leaves? What might he be trying to communicate by doing this action?

12. What is your opinion of Rachel at the end of the play? What might she represent?

Compiled by Elizabeth Arnstein; some study guide questions taken from Center for Learning Materials