The idea of the 1920s “New Woman” pleased some people and alarmed others. Popular magazines of the time dealt with the issue from different perspectives. Some called for a return to old-fashioned ways, but others welcomed the change as progress that would improve society.

Directions: Read the two excerpts below. Then, answer the questions that follow on a separate sheet of paper.

The “New” Woman

Woman now has very nearly the same political and educational advantages as man, but you cannot be much impressed by the use she has made of them. . . . [E]ducation seems to have persuaded some women to think that their highest aim in life is to produce a feeble imitation of [men]. . . . I have even heard it said in praise of the modern woman that she does not look upon marriage as her aim in life. . . . To me, this schoolgirlish contempt of natural emotions is just as bad as early Victorian prudery [excessive concern for proper behavior]. If a woman does not look forward to marriage as the central hope of her life it means either that she intends to pursue her love affairs anti-socially, or, worse still, that she does not mean to have any at all. . . .

—Sheila Kaye-Smith from “The New Woman”
Living Age Magazine, 1929

“Feminism” has become a term of [disrespect] to the modern young woman. . . . Yet she and her kind can hardly be [called] “old-fashioned” women. What are they, then? . . . These women if they launch upon marriage are keen to make a success of it. . . . But at the same time, they are moved by an inescapable inner compulsion to be individuals in their own right. . . . Furthermore, they are convinced that they will be better wives and mothers for the breadth they gain from functioning outside the home. . . . [T]hey are highly conscious creatures who feel obliged to [make use of] their own resources to the very depths, despite the fact that they are under no delusions [misunderstandings] as to the present inferior status of their sex in most fields of endeavor.

—Dorothy Dunbar Bromley from “Feminist—New Style”
Harper’s Magazine, 1927

Questions to Think About

1. According to Sheila Kaye-Smith, what does it mean when women do not see marriage as the primary goal of their lives?

2. According to Dorothy Dunbar Bromley, what is the attitude of the “New Woman” towards marriage?

3. Detect Bias Which of the two writers’ attitudes seems closer to the traditional Victorian outlook about women? What indicates this to you?
Directions: Read the following biography. Then, answer the questions that follow.

**John Scopes (1900–1970)**

John Scopes was a bright, clean-cut teacher and football coach, well liked by his students at Rhea County High School in Dayton, Tennessee. When Scopes was a youngster, his parents had insisted that all of their children read literature and philosophy, and they often quizzed the children on this material. Not surprisingly, Scopes grew up to be intellectually curious and committed to academic freedom, the idea that teachers should not be restricted from teaching specific subjects or information.

Shortly after the 24-year-old Scopes began teaching general science, Tennessee passed the Butler Act, making it a crime to teach evolution in public schools. Some prominent members of the Dayton community asked Scopes whether he taught evolution in his biology class and whether he would be willing to fight the new law. Although Scopes said that he didn’t remember teaching the theory of evolution, he did believe in it, so he agreed to be a defendant. Yet Scopes would soon regret his decision, and only his father’s insistence that the trial was an opportunity to serve the country kept Scopes involved.

When Scopes was found guilty, he said these words to the judge: “Your honor, I feel that I have been convicted of violating an unjust statute [law]. I will continue in the future, as I have the past, to oppose this law in any way I can.”

Yet Scopes gave up teaching after the trial, and instead studied geology and eventually moved to Venezuela, where he worked as a petroleum engineer. However, Scopes could not escape his past. In 1960 he returned to Dayton for a premiere of *Inherit the Wind*, a film about the famous trial. Today, the Scopes “Monkey Trial” is considered an early proving ground for the conflict of modernism and fundamentalism, a debate that is still being carried on around the world.

**Questions to Think About**

1. What groups or individuals prompted the actions that resulted in the “Monkey Trial”?
2. Why did Scopes agree to be a defendant, even though he couldn’t remember teaching evolution?
3. Draw Inferences What does the passage tell you about the type of person that John Scopes was?
4. Link Past and Present Would you go on trial to defend your beliefs as Scopes did, even though your beliefs were unpopular or controversial? Explain.