

= The Monkey Suit =

" The Monkey Suit " is the twenty @-@ first episode of the seventeenth season of the American animated sitcom The Simpsons . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on May 14 , 2006 . In the episode , Ned Flanders is shocked after seeing a new display at the museum about evolution . Together with Reverend Lovejoy , he spreads the religious belief of creationism in Springfield , and at a later town meeting , teaching evolution is made illegal . As a result , Lisa decides to hold secret classes for people interested in evolution . However , she is quickly arrested and a trial against her is initiated .

J. Stewart Burns wrote " The Monkey Suit " , for which he received inspiration from the 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial . The episode features a few references to this legal case , as well as several references to popular culture . Many analysts have commented on the episode 's treatment of the creation ? evolution controversy , a dispute about the origin of humanity between those who support a creationist view based upon their religious beliefs , versus those who accept evolution , as supported by scientific evidence .

Critics have given the episode generally positive reviews , praising it for its satire of the creation ? evolution debate . " The Monkey Suit " has won an award from the Independent Investigations Group (IIG) for being " one of those rare shows in the media that encourage science , critical thinking , and ridicule those shows that peddle pseudoscience and superstition . " In 2007 , a scene from the episode was highlighted in the scientific journal Nature .

= = Plot = =

On the last day of summer vacation , Lisa brings the family to the museum to see a weaving exhibit as her summer activity , but they quickly discover that it has been canceled and replaced by a " History of Weapons " exhibit . Faced with an incredibly long line , Homer notices Ned Flanders and his children at the front of the line and cuts in front of them . Others start taking advantage of Ned 's kindness as well , until the Flanders family is stuck at the end . At the end of the day , they are still waiting , and are denied entry , as it is closing time for the weapons exhibit . They therefore decide to check out the evolution exhibit next door . Ned is horrified to hear that humans evolved from apes and that the creation account in the Genesis is characterized as a myth . Covering his children 's eyes , he drags them out of the exhibit .

Ned meets up with the church council to suggest promotion of creationism . The next day , he and Reverend Lovejoy blackmail Principal Skinner into introducing creationism in the school . Lisa is perturbed by this , and at a town meeting asks everyone to make a choice between creationism and Darwinism , as there is only one truth . The townspeople vote for creationism , much to her chagrin , and the act of teaching or learning Darwinism and evolution is made illegal . Lisa therefore decides to start holding secret classes for people interested in evolution . However , just as the first lesson is about to begin , she is arrested by Chief Wiggum . She asks why she 's being arrested when there are far worse crimes out there , and embarrassed he tells her they only have enough manpower to enforce the last three laws passed , even stating that it 's the worst law system there is . Lisa is brought to trial , which is dubbed Lisa Simpson v. God . Representing her is Clarice Drummond , a despised American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) lawyer , while on God 's (i.e. , Ned 's) side is Wallace Brady , a beloved , overweight , southern lawyer . The trial does not go smoothly for Lisa , as Professor Frink (called by Clarice) gives ambiguous answers regarding God 's existence , while a creationist scientist says that evolution cannot be real , as there is no proof of a " missing link " (depicted in a picture as a savage hominid , holding a rock over his head) .

With Lisa now facing a long jail sentence , Marge decides to help her out . She starts reading Charles Darwin 's The Origin of Species and becomes addicted to it . When the trial resumes , Marge tells Lisa that she now knows a way that she can help her . While Ned is being cross @-@ examined by Clarice , Marge gives Homer a cold beer . Homer , ecstatic at getting a beer , tries to open it unsuccessfully . The more he tries , the more primitive he gets , hooting and banging the bottle on the bench , disrupting the trial . Finally , Ned loses his cool and refers to Homer as a " big

monkey @-@ faced gorilla . " Clarice then asks Ned to compare the picture of the " missing link " and Homer shaking the beer over his head , and asks if he truthfully believes Homer cannot be related to apes . Ned cannot and concedes victory to Lisa . Lisa kindly tells Ned that she fully respects religious beliefs , but she just does not think it is proper for the church to dominate the school , the same way that Mr. Flanders and Reverend Lovejoy do not want scientists taking over the church . Ned agrees and offers to take Lisa and his kids out for ice cream .

= = Production = =

" The Monkey Suit " was written by J. Stewart Burns and directed by Raymond S. Persi as part of the seventeenth season of The Simpsons (2005 ? 2006) . Burns received inspiration for the episode from the Scopes Monkey Trial , a 1925 legal case in which high school science teacher John Scopes was accused of violating Tennessee 's Butler Act which made teaching evolution unlawful . Clarice Drummond , the ACLU lawyer who represents Lisa , is a reference to the ACLU lawyer Clarence Darrow who defended Scopes , while Wallace Brady is a reference to William Jennings Bryan , an attorney in the Scopes Monkey Trial . American actor Larry Hagman guest starred in the episode as Wallace Brady , while American actress Melanie Griffith played herself as the narrator of an audio tour at the museum . Burns did research for " The Monkey Suit " by reading Richard Dawkins ' book The Selfish Gene and watching Inherit the Wind (a film based on the Scopes Monkey Trial) . He also visited a natural history museum .

The opening of the episode , in which Bart rushes to do everything he planned on doing during summer vacation , was originally written and animated for the season fourteen episode " I 'm Spelling as Fast as I Can " (2003) but was cut . This episode came in short , and to fill in time , the sequence was added . Burns has said commented the episode " ended up being incredibly short because when you do an episode where there 's really just one good side of an argument [creation vs. evolution] , you don 't fill out as much time as you need to . " The opening sequence features a large number of allusions to popular culture , including references to The Natural (1984 film) , Happy Days (television sitcom) , and Men in Black (1997 film) .

= = Themes = =

" The Monkey Suit " is an episode that tackles the creation ? evolution controversy , and according to Theresa Sanders in her book Approaching Eden : Adam and Eve in Popular Culture , " skewered antievolution legislation . " The authors of the book Chronology of the Evolution @-@ Creationism Controversy commented that the episode " caricatures creationism as an intellectual joke . " Burns has cited the episode as " a nice example of The Simpsons really taking one clear side " . However , as pointed out by Sanders , it " should be pointed out that though the Simpsons episode clearly sides with Darwin , evolutionists come in for criticism as well . When Ned and his sons go into the museum 's Hall of Man , one of the exhibits they see in support of evolution is a collection of dinosaur bones with the title ' Indisputable Fossil Records . ' The cartoon 's inclusion of the sign can be interpreted as mocking the pretension that science knows all and may not be questioned . " Sanders cited another scene as an example of this ; at the trial , Drummond asks Professor Frink if " this theory of evolution necessarily mean that there is no God ? " , to which he replies , " No , of course not . It just says that God is an impotent nothing from nowhere with less power than the undersecretary of Agriculture . " Sanders wrote that " His arrogance is clear , and equally clear is the show 's satirical presentation of science 's hubris . "

Ted Gournelos analyzed " The Monkey Suit " in his 2009 book Popular Culture and the Future of Politics : Cultural Studies and the Tao of South Park , writing : " More than anything , the episode is used to critique the demonization of evolutionary theory by religious propaganda , by an instructional video used in the school (that shows a drunken Charles Darwin passionately kissing Satan) as well as by the prosecuting attorney . This allows for a somewhat leftist discussion of the issue , but ultimately is unable to address the rise of Christian fundamentalism in the United States [...] " . Gournelos noted that the episode focuses on the old Scopes Monkey Trial and does not address

contemporary creation ? evolution debates , adding : " Interestingly , The Simpsons continues to place creationism at a higher popular plain than evolution , as the jury and trial audience are obviously biased towards the creationists (who , unlike in contemporary cases , are the prosecutors rather than the plaintiffs) . " Gournelos concluded that the episode " pokes gentle fun at media rhetoric and the questioning of evolutionary theory [...] , but is unable or unwilling to address the rise of intelligent design or contemporary court battles (in Pennsylvania [see Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District] , Kansas [see Kansas evolution hearings] , and elsewhere) that might encourage debate in its audience . "

= = Release = =

The episode originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on May 14 , 2006 . During this broadcast , it was seen by approximately 8 @. @ 41 millions viewers , finishing forty @-@ sixth in the ratings for the week of May 8 ? 14 , 2006 . Since airing , the episode has received generally positive reviews from critics . In a retrospective that was published on the twentieth anniversary of The Simpsons in 2010 , writers for BBC News selected " The Monkey Suit " as one of the show 's " 10 classic episodes " , one they said demonstrated that " the writers still have fire in their bellies . " TV Squad critic Adam Finley wrote that " Last night 's episode had some good moments , but it did feel like they were treading upon somewhat familiar ground and not saying anything especially new , " referring to the fact the issue of science and religion has been dealt with before on the show , " most notably in the ' Lisa the Skeptic ' episode in which the supposed skeleton of a dead angel is found . " In 2007 , " The Monkey Suit " won an award from the Independent Investigations Group (IIG) for being " one of those rare shows in the media that encourage science , critical thinking , and ridicule those shows that peddle pseudoscience and superstition . " J. Stewart Burns , the writer of the episode , was present at the awards ceremony to accept the award .

While reviewing the seventeenth season of The Simpsons , Jesse Hassenger of PopMatters noted that he thought the show had declined in quality compared to its earlier years , and added that the stronger episodes in the later seasons are that ones that " satirize topical issues " , giving " The Monkey Suit " as an example . Similarly , Fort Worth Star @-@ Telegram staff writer Robert Philpot commented that " Even in its weak seasons , this show has always been good for at least one belly laugh per episode . Not this year [season seventeen] . Aside from an installment that took on the evolution -vs.-creationism edge and a couple of other bits , the satirical edge has really dulled , making the announcement that it will have at least two more seasons a cause for concern rather than celebration . " In the July 26 , 2007 issue of Nature , the scientific journal 's editorial staff listed among " The Top Ten science moments in The Simpsons " the scene from the episode in which " Flanders is flabbergasted that the science museum 's exhibit on the origins of man both highlights evolution and makes light of creationism ? and , to top it all , has a unisex bathroom . "