



The Rule

A One-Act Play

By Daniel Schwabauer
& John Calvert

The Rule

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The CHARACTERS:

Nate Plummer, 10th grade Biology teacher. Nate is forty-ish and plain spoken. He looks uncomfortable wearing a tie. He holds a Masters degree in Biological sciences.

Patricia Crippin, Chairperson of the School Board. Although her bearing is school-marmish and severe, she is intelligent and politically clever. In her late fifties, she has served on the Board seemingly forever. She exerts a powerful influence in the local community and with the mayor.

Dr. Malcolm Trent, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at the State University. Dr. Trent also serves on the Board. He is a committed Darwinist, and cannot abide what he calls “Intelligent Design Creationism” any more than he can long speeches. He is blunt, sometimes even rude, but crafty.

Jack Stegner, a businessman in his late forties and the third (and final) Board member. Jack operates a growing chain of movie theaters. He ran for – and was elected to – the Board with no thought of origins controversies or science activism. Though he expresses sympathy for Nate’s position, he is more concerned with “good business.”

John Jeffries, a long-time attorney for the school board. John is a wise old lawyer who has been around the horn several times. He is a pragmatist.

Marcia Anderson, attorney for the ACLU. Represents Tiffany Small and – more importantly – the outside organizations that see the hearing as a small but potentially dangerous fire which must be extinguished quickly. Marcia is a devout atheist.

Tiffany Small, a student in Nate Plummer’s class. She should be seated in the audience throughout the play.

Students #1 and #2, also seated in the audience.

THE RULE

A hearing of the Suffolk County School Board, the present. The stage is divided into a conference room, upstage, which is separated from the hearing area downstage by a scrim. Upstage left stands a desk with a chair. Upstage center is a door. Next to that is a coat rack. Behind the conference table is a window. Upstage right is a door opening on the downstage area.

Downstage left, in the hearing area, is a long table with three chairs for the Board. Downstage center is Nate Plummer's table, piled with books, and chair. To the far right is a table and chair for Marcia Anderson. The arrangement should have the effect of visibly wedging Nate Plummer between the two forces (Trent and the ACLU) that are bent on his destruction.

The conference room should be lit to disappear into darkness during the hearing.

Scene 1

The lights come up on Patricia CRIPPIN, who is seated behind the desk in the conference room. She is typing busily on a laptop computer. She checks her watch, sighs unhappily, and continues typing.

Dr. Malcolm TRENT enters through the door, upstage center. He carries a briefcase and an umbrella.

TRENT
(cheerfully)

Patricia!

CRIPPIN
(looking up briefly from her computer – mildly)

Dr. Trent.

TRENT
(folding up the umbrella and hanging it from the coat rack.)

Been here long?

CRIPPIN
(Looking at her watch, grumpily)

Over an hour. And I have another meeting tonight after the hearing.

TRENT

(He sets the briefcase down on the table where he will be seated.)

That storm sure came out of nowhere. Did those reporters give you any trouble?

CRIPPIN

(More interested)

Reporters?

TRENT

The Daily News. Channel five is here, too.

(He points out the window.)

Didn't you see the TV truck?

CRIPPIN

(She gets up and looks out the window, then sighs irritably.)

Good grief.

TRENT

(pleased with himself)

I told them that Creationists stopped being news twenty years ago.

CRIPPIN

This is not what I need right now.

TRENT

What's wrong? You don't expect Plummer to put up a fight, do you?

CRIPPIN

I don't have time for media involvement.

TRENT

(Looking out the window with her)

Well, they're involved.

(He indicates the audience)

I stuck my head in the auditorium a minute ago. Looks like we got a pretty good turnout from the parents, too.

CRIPPIN

You don't have to sound so cheerful about it.

TRENT

The publicity could be useful. I haven't debated an intelligent design creationist in quite some time. You'd think after what happened in Kansas that they'd keep quiet. Besides, Plummer and I go way back.

CRIPPIN

It's not Plummer I'm worried about. It's the media.

TRENT
(reassuringly)

This will all blow over by Friday's game. This weekend we'll be arguing bad calls and missed field goals.

*(Jack STEGNER enters wearing a raincoat.
Under the coat he is holding a copy of the Wall Street Journal.)*

STEGNER
(taking off his rain coat)

Who ordered this weather?

TRENT
(tolerantly)

Jack, how are you?

STEGNER

Wet.

(He holds up the newspaper)

But The Wall Street Journal is dry, and that's what really matters. Am I late?

CRIPPIN
(looking at her watch again)

Surprisingly, No.

STEGNER

What's up with all the reporters? Are we talking budget cuts again?

TRENT

No, we're talking science curriculum. Don't you remember?

STEGNER
(puzzled)

Curriculum? At a school Board meeting?

CRIPPIN

Tonight is the Plummer hearing, Jack.

(She sees that this clue isn't helping. Stegner doesn't remember who Plummer is.)

The tenth grade Biology teacher.

(STEGNER shrugs, still baffled.)

The controversy at Huxley High over origins science?

(She holds up some papers.)

We got a letter from the ACLU? Hello?

STEGNER

The Intelligent Design thing?

TRENT
(correcting him)

The Creationist thing.

STEGNER

Oh, yeah. Got it. So is the ACLU gonna be here or what?

TRENT
(as though in answer)

You saw the TV truck outside?

STEGNER
(questioningly)

Yes...

TRENT

You think any self-respecting attorney could resist the publicity?

STEGNER

I didn't know there was such a thing as a self-respecting attorney.

TRENT

She's just doing her job.

STEGNER

(dryly)

That's what my proctologist says, too.

CRIPPIN

Can we keep the lawyer jokes to a minimum tonight, gentlemen?

STEGNER

(smilingly)

You know, I heard a good one the other day.

(Marcia ANDERSON enters briefly. She, too, carries a briefcase and an umbrella. STEGNER does not see ANDERSON enter and so continues with his joke.)

How did that go? Oh, yes. What do you call two lawyers flying through the air?

(There is a momentary pause as CRIPPIN and TRENT turn away, embarrassed.)

ANDERSON

(humorlessly)

Skeets!

(STEGNER turns around in surprise.)

Marcia Anderson. American Civil Liberties Union.

CRIPPIN

(offering her hand)

Patricia Crippin, Chair of the School Board. And this is Dr. Malcolm Trent, and ...

STEGNER
(folding his arms)

Jack Stegner.

ANDERSON

Am I in the right place?

CRIPPIN

Actually, the hearing will be held in the auditorium. Back down the hall, second door on your right. We'll be there in a few minutes.

ANDERSON

Thanks.

(ANDERSON exits)

CRIPPIN
(Again looking at her watch)

Before we go out there I want to get one thing very clear. We answer no questions from the public. And that includes the media.

TRENT
(rubbing his hands together eagerly)

So what's the game plan?

CRIPPIN
(Looking at her schedule)

After I inform Mr. Plummer of the exact nature of the hearing, you'll have your chance to question him.

STEGNER

And the ACLU lawyer?

CRIPPIN

Technically, she's here only as an observer. But I want her to briefly explain her letter. I also asked John Jeffries to sit in and listen. He can talk to us after the meeting. I don't want to turn this into a mini-trial.

TRENT

More importantly, It'll be nice to be able to clarify a few things for the public. In fact, this may be an excellent opportunity to educate people about the science involved. By the way, where are the other two Board members?

CRIPPIN

Pam called in sick and Nelson's in London till the end of the month. Looks like we have the duty. Gentlemen, are you ready?

STEGNER

I have one question...

CRIPPIN

Yes?

STEGNER

We haven't discussed what we're looking for from Mr. Plummer. I'd like to know what we're going to be voting on before I go into this thing.

TRENT

The issue, Jack, is what Mr. Plummer proposes to teach about evolution in his tenth grade Biology class.

CRIPPIN

He is accused of teaching creationism.

STEGNER
(*thoughtfully*)

That's sounds pretty bad.

TRENT

It's worse than bad. As a scientist, I consider it treasonous.

STEGNER

Treasonous? How can you commit treason against science?

TRENT

Creationists do it all the time.

STEGNER

Seems like we ought to hear what Plummer has to say before we decide he's a Creationist.

(They start to exit. Crippin puts her hand to the light switch.)

CRIPPIN

That's what this hearing is for, Jack.

STEGNER

I mean, I hate to interfere with a good teacher without knowing why.

(Lights out.)

Scene 2

Lights up on the Board, seated at their table with Crippin in the middle. NATE Plummer is seated at his table, fidgeting nervously with his tie. ANDERSON, also seated (downstage right) is reviewing his notes as Crippin speaks. A sign is placed behind them: "USD 691 Board of Education." The hearing has already begun.

CRIPPIN

and you understand that this is not a trial?

NATE

Yes.

CRIPPIN

But a formal hearing by the Board?

NATE

Yes.

CRIPPIN

Made up of myself -

(at the mention of their names, each nods)

Dr. Trent, Professor of Anthropology at State University, and Mr. Jack Stegner?

NATE

Yes.

CRIPPIN

And that we have convened this hearing in response to a claim that you're teaching religion.

NATE
(surprised)

Religion? I'm teaching biology – not religion.

CRIPPIN

Which brings us to the point. We have a letter from Ms. Anderson. She says you are teaching creation science in your biology class.

NATE

That's not true....

CRIPPIN

Good. However, we still intend to investigate this issue thoroughly. Do you have anything you want to say before we get started?

NATE

Yes.

(He stands)

When I was told that the Board was going to conduct this hearing, you said it would be a simple matter to clear my name. But so far there hasn't been anything simple about it. The school paper has openly accused me of teaching religious creationism, and I've gotten so many angry phone calls I stopped counting them. Now television reporters are asking me about my stance on Genesis. For the record, should my attorney be here?

STEGNER

Nate, your job is not at stake. What is at stake is the nature and content of the curriculum.

TRENT
(stiffly)

Look, Nate. I think I speak for all of us when I say we'd like nothing better than to get this thing over with. Investigate the facts, clear your record, and get you back to teaching science.

NATE
(hesitating)

... All right.

But what if ... What if I am being asked to teach something misleading? I have to teach this subject objectively. Is being honest going to get me in trouble?

CRIPPIN

Don't be absurd. The issue is religion vs. good science. I can't imagine any of us asking you to be dishonest.

Professor Trent –

TRENT
(standing, shuffling through the papers before him)

Yes.

CRIPPIN

You brought a summary of the facts?

TRENT
(Scratching his cheek, he raps the table top lightly with his knuckles – a nervous habit - and starts to pick up the paperwork. Then he thinks better of it and comes out from behind the table empty-handed.)

I never could think sitting down. *(To CRIPPIN)* You mind?

CRIPPIN

Make yourself comfortable.

TRENT
(To NATE. His manner is affable.)

How long have we known each other, Nate?

NATE

Roughly - *(thinking)* – twenty five years.

TRENT

As I recall, we met at Harvard the year I taught paleontology as a visiting professor.

NATE

Yes. I took one of your classes when I was working on my Masters. I learned a lot.

TRENT

How long have you been teaching?

NATE

Twenty two years. The last four at Huxley High.

TRENT

Have you had many complaints from students?

NATE
(shrugging)

The usual, I guess.

TRENT

Your overall record with the district is remarkably positive. Not the sort of background one would expect from a religious activist.

NATE

I am not a religious activist.

TRENT

That is our dilemma.

*(He crosses to the table and picks up a piece of paper.
He holds it up as though to say, "Exhibit A!")*

At least one of your students seems to think that you are.

*(He scans the paper in his hands, then takes his reading glasses out of his
shirt-pocket and puts them on. He reads)*

“On the first day of class Mr. Plummer said that some scientists think life is designed – like by a designer...

(he pauses for emphasis, so that the word hangs there in the silence)

...which seems to be his word for the God of the Bible.”

NATE
(in a self assured manner)

I guess I agree with the first part of that statement.

TRENT

But not with the second part?

NATE

The conclusion doesn't follow. I have never discussed the bible nor my religious beliefs in class.

TRENT
(Trying to draw him out, they speak at the same time.)

And just what are your religious beliefs, Dr. Plummer?

NATE

Nor have I ever taught anything regarding the Bible!

TRENT

But you admit that you have religious beliefs that could color your teaching method.

NATE

Everyone has religious beliefs. Even atheists. That doesn't mean I've been holding Bible studies in the lab.

(gesturing to the entire board)

It's you - the Board – who have asked me to teach a subject that impacts religion. Is it really necessary that I be an atheist to teach the theory that life originated from a primordial soup?

TRENT

Wait just a minute! Evolution is not atheistic.

NATE

I didn't say it was. I just said that the question, "Where do we come from?" hits religion right in the gut._

So who are your going to hire to teach it? Atheists, Christians, Jews, Buddhists, New Agers?

STEGNER

Obviously, we can't base hiring decisions on religious beliefs. I think even Marcia would agree with that. Trent is just asking whether your religion has influenced your teaching.

NATE

I can't imagine why it wouldn't.

TRENT

Aha!

NATE

Whatever your religion, if you take it seriously it's going to affect every area of your life. But that's not Malcolm's point. He's insinuating that if I am a Christian, then I am not qualified to teach a doctrine that negatively impacts Christianity.

TRENT

I am saying nothing of the kind. I have never implied that evolution is anti-Christian. The statement is absurd.

NATE

The idea that life arose by an unguided and purposeless process is logically inconsistent with a belief that life was designed for a purpose.

CRIPPIN

This Board does NOT have a religious litmus test for biology teachers. The issue is whether you are seeking to impose religion on others in a public school.

NATE

Ms. Crippin, I agree 100%. That is the question. It cuts to the heart of the school district's science curriculum. But is the school board itself seeking to impose a particular view that impacts religion? I certainly am not.

STEGNER
(surprised)

The School Board?

NATE

Yes. Anyone who teaches origins is going to have personal feelings and beliefs about it. My job as a teacher is to keep my personal beliefs out of it. To teach science – not religion and not atheism.

TRENT

(exploding furiously - his voice overpowers every other sound, hammers NATE to submission)

If you are not teaching religion, then why do your students think you are teaching religion? That's the impression they're getting. That doesn't sound like objectivity to me.
(Holding up the paper)

In their own words. And who knows how many said nothing out of fear for what you might do to them!

NATE

(He stares in silence for a moment as TRENT's anger dissipates. Then he says softly, incredulously)

Do to them, Malcolm?

TRENT

(He takes off his glasses and puts them back in his pocket.)

Nate.

NATE

(unbelieving, he sits)

What on earth could I do to them?

TRENT

(He slaps the paper down on the desk in front of CRIPPIN and speaks to the board)
Evidently, quite a lot.

STEGNER

(to TRENT)

How many complaints did we receive?

TRENT

It's not the number that matters. It's the ... significance of the allegations.

STEGNER

What, ten? five?

(silence, Trent looks away.)

Just one?

TRENT

This issue is very serious.

STEGNER

(looking for a compromise)

Maybe we ought to get to the heart of the matter. What exactly did you teach, Mr. Plummer?

NATE

(with conviction)

Well for starters I just taught them about the Rule.

STEGNER

(looking perplexed)

The Rule? What Rule?

NATE

The Rule is sort of like ... like an exception to the scientific method. It assumes that everything in the universe is explainable in terms of natural causes. Intelligent causes are not allowed. The technical term for the Rule is "Methodological Naturalism."

TRENT

(Exasperated)

Oh, for heaven's sake, Nate, that's not an exception to the scientific method. It's part of it.

NATE

(shrugging – he holds out a text book)

Oh, really? Our text book describes the scientific method pretty thoroughly. And yet it doesn't mention Naturalism

TRENT

(TRENT turns away from the book in disgust without looking in it.)

It's implied, Nate. Every scientist knows that.

NATE

The point of the scientific method is to get factual explanations instead of ones that are based on preconceptions. The Rule is a preconception. It answers a question before it is asked.

STEGNER

So how does this get us into a discussion of religion?

NATE

The Rule says that we can't consider even the possibility of a designer to explain the origin of life. That kind of assumption smashes the basic beliefs of all theistic religions.

STEGNER

So why talk about it at all? Why not just keep the Rule out of the discussion altogether?

NATE

Because we're not being honest. Look, in science we're supposed to disclose the assumptions we're using. How can I discuss with my students "where they come from" and not tell them about a hidden philosophical assumption that life is not designed? That's indoctrination, not education.

STEGNER

Indoctrination – that's a pretty strong word.

NATE

If we were really using the scientific method, we'd look at the evidence before making up our minds. But when we don't tell the kids that there are really two explanations, not just one, they come away thinking evolution is the only possibility. That it's a fact

TRENT

Evolution is fact!

NATE

Evolution is a theory.

TRENT

How can you deny the obvious fact that things change over time?

NATE

Malcolm, you know Darwin didn't get famous by saying that things change over time! Darwinism says that all living things are descended from a common ancestor through natural selection and random variations. That's not a fact! It's a hypothesis. And it's apparently so fragile that it has to be protected from criticism by a hidden assumption.

That's all I told my students when I explained the Rule to them. If you'd like to see it, it's all right here on this tape (*holding up a video tape*).

TRENT

So. You've been teaching intelligent design! That is not science – that's religion!

STEGNER

I want to give you the benefit of the doubt, Nate, but a Designer sure sounds like God to me. Tell me why it's not religion.

NATE

Because it's not a belief system. It's an hypothesis derived from the evidence. It's not based on a religious text.

All biologists admit that living things look like they're designed. The Darwinists say this is just an illusion. But many scientists are starting to say, "Wait a minute! We use design detection in Archaeology. In cryptography. In criminology. The SETI program uses design detection to look for alien messages in radio and light waves from outer space. So why can't we apply the same principles to life?"

And the point is, that when you start to apply the same ideas to living things, they have "Design" written all over them.

TRENT

This is all very vague. What principles? What scientists? What evidence? There is no real evidence!

NATE

Would you like to borrow some of my books?

TRENT

Show me the peer reviewed articles, Nate! Show me backing for Intelligent Design Creationism in the science journals!

NATE

But that's just the point! The science publications aren't going to print articles that challenge Darwinism. They use the Rule more stridently than anyone else.

TRENT

How convenient! The journals are against you, eh? Some cosmic conspiracy to keep God out of Science. Even if it were true I wouldn't blame them. Just look at you! You obviously want to ram your Christian beliefs into the classroom. You and your kind do everything in your power to destroy good science.

NATE

By explaining the Rule? All I'm doing is being honest about a hidden assumption.

STEGNER
(impatiently)

Gentlemen, lets get back to the point. I've got another meeting to go to. What else did you tell your class?

NATE

Well I tried to anticipate some of their questions – if we didn't have the Rule, what evidence of design would they see? Also, - who is the designer? – stuff like that.

CRIPPIN
(Joining the questioning)

Maybe that's not diving into religion, Nate, but that sure sounds like you're getting one foot in the water.

NATE
(nodding)

Well, I agree. But only because that's part and parcel of what you've asked me to teach. If you don't want religious implications, take out the section on origins altogether. Here is what I actually told them *(holding up the video tape)* Do you want to hear it?

CRIPPIN
(Impatiently)

All right.

(putting tape in tape recorder, she pushes the button and the lights dim on the board. Nate turns and talks to the audience as though they are his class.)

NATE

As I told you earlier, there are certain things your textbook doesn't talk about. One of those things is an assumption I like to call the Rule. The Rule says that we're only permitted to accept certain kinds of explanations. Intelligent causes aren't allowed.

TIFFANY

Wait a minute. Why do you call it the "Rule?" And why isn't it in the text book?

NATE

Ah! The young lady wins two blue stars. Great questions.

The term comes from a book by Robert Wright, who called it the "unwritten rule" of science. And it isn't in the text book because once you point it out, it starts to lose its power. Kind of like watching a magician. When you know how he does it, it isn't fun anymore.

TIFFANY

But that doesn't make any sense to me. Why use the Rule at all?

NATE

Because if you don't, then you have to explain both theories. And then you end up with kids not believing what you want them to believe.

TIFFANY

But I thought we were supposed to be searching for facts?

NATE

True. I didn't say I agree with it. I'm just pointing it out.

TIFFANY

So ... what else doesn't the textbook tell us?

NATE

Well, it won't tell you that a lot of scientists are breaking the Rule. Some of them claim to see evidence that life may have been designed.

In fact, when we get to that section of the book we're going to look at what these Rule breakers are saying. You guys want to hear from the Rule breakers this year?

STUDENT NO. 1

Yeah! What are you going to show us?

NATE

You mean you want to know now?

STUDENT NO. 1

Why not? I may drop out before we get that far in the book.

NATE

You drop out and we're gonna have a long talk, son.

(sounds of other kids half-sarcastically: "ooooohhhh")

But okay. When we get to Chapter 14 we'll look at how life supposedly came from lifeless goop. The textbook only gives you that one explanation.

But we're going to look at all the evidence. We're going to see why some people think information theory, chemistry and statistics point to Design instead of Darwin. We're going to read articles by scientists who say that there are reliable ways of detecting design. We'll also talk about some of the criticisms of both evolutionary and design theory.

At the end of the year we'll have a debate. Students will be assigned randomly to defend one side or the other.

TIFFANY

(raising her hand)

All this talk about Design. That sounds like God. Who do these scientists say the designer is? Sounds like religion to me.

NATE

(chuckling)

Actually, that's a question they don't answer. The data doesn't provide a scientific answer. The best science can do is attribute any design to some kind of intelligence or mind. Lots of minds exist in nature. Birds have minds, dogs have minds. Some of you even have minds.

We aren't going to speculate about who the designer is. That's a question you have to take to your church, or synagogue, or philosophy teacher.

(Lights back up)

NATE
(turning back to the school board)

So. That's what caused all the fuss.

TRENT
(sneering)

And no wonder! What we just heard is not science! It's not even a working hypothesis! Design can't be tested! It can't make predictions! And I can fill this room with members of the Academy who will agree with me.

NATE

Malcolm, I thought you agreed with the Rule?

TRENT
(with a questioning look)

I do. What does that have to do with it?

NATE

Well, if you're not allowed to even consider it, how can you criticize it?

CRIPPIN
(exasperated with the dialogue)

Nate, lets keep the discussion focused. What about it? You yourself said that theories need to be tested. How do you test that something is designed?

NATE
(apologetically)

Same way an archeologist tests a claim that a rock has been fashioned into a hammer head by intelligence rather than erosion.

Origins science is a historical, not an experimental, science. That means neither side can test their predictions in the lab. We can't run experiments to show how life formed, what caused the Cambrian explosion or what shaped the rock.

So we have different methods of testing ideas. It's like ... Have you ever played clue?

CRIPPIN
(nodding)

Sure. That's where Mr. Green did it in the kitchen with a knife.

NATE
(*explaining*)

Right! Who did what, where? All historical questions. You find out who done it by ruling out Professor Plum, and Colonel Mustard, and all the rest.

Same way with historical sciences. You have to rule out the competing ideas.

Intelligent Design tries to rule out Darwinian evolution by first detecting Design, then ruling out law and chance as the competing explanation.

The trouble with the curriculum we have is that it rules out design without even considering the evidence. It's like playing clue with just one player.

I disagree with Malcolm. Design theorists do try to test their ideas. It's the Darwinists who shield their ideas from testing.

STEGNER
(*wondering*)

To be honest, Nate, I wonder what effect this will have on business. I'm told design theory will drive business out of the state. That people will think we're using schools to push creationism.

TRENT
(*agreeing*)

And you can't complain about the success science has had using the Rule. If we brought God into the lab we would still be looking for cures to all kinds of diseases. We'd be back in the dark ages using smoke signals for communication.

NATE

With all due respect, Malcolm, that's a really lame argument. Most research scientists will tell you that the Rule never comes up in the lab. No one cares about the Rule except when it comes to origins.

Besides, design theory is being applied by biochemists. They're using reverse engineering to figure out how cellular systems work -

TRENT
(*angry - interrupting*)

The designer is natural selection.

NATE
(*confident*)

Maybe. But maybe not. I say your conclusion is driven by an assumption rather than the evidence.

The question I have is, Why use the Rule at all? If evolution is true, what is there to be afraid of?

STEGNER
(looking at Trent)

Well, Malcolm? What about it?

TRENT
(looking out in space and not directly at anyone)

You just can't let the supernatural into science – it doesn't work.

CRIPPIN
(sighing)

Teaching just one theory of origins is definitely a lot easier.

NATE

Sure it's easier! But is that our objective? Do we want to indoctrinate kids in Naturalism or do we want to encourage them to use their minds?

TRENT

I can tell you right now that we will be run out of the state if we listen to him. Remember what the Governor and the Presidents of the all the universities did in Kansas? They rebelled. If you want to see your image in cartoons on editorial pages just go right ahead with this ridiculous idea.

STEGNER
(looking for a compromise)

Why don't we do this – why not just have Nate explain the Rule to the kids and then just continue to use it the way the science community does now?

CRIPPIN
(enthusiastically)

Sounds good to me. All in favor?

TRENT
(exasperated - interrupting)

That's not necessary. It's already a given. Everyone knows that science does not give

consideration to the supernatural. If you start talking about the Rule there will be no end to it. Next thing you know you'll be talking God and Bibles and Adam and Eve.

NATE

Come on, Malcolm! How you can honestly address biological origins without explaining the Rule?

STEGNER

What about this? What if you explain what the Rule is, then tell the kids that there is evidence for Design, but don't show it to them? That's honest.

NATE

(smiling)

Somehow I don't think Kids are going to be content with that.

(turning back to the class with the lights dimming on the board)

I have just explained the Rule to you and have let you know that I have evidence of design – evidence that contradicts the Rule.

STUDENT NO.1

Okay. What evidence?

NATE

I can't show it to you.

STUDENT NO.1

How come?

NATE

They won't let me.

STUDENT NO.1

That makes no sense.

NATE

It's a violation of the Rule. They say it would be unscientific for me to show it to you.

STUDENT NO.1

That sounds unscientific. Talk about weird! That is really weird!

NATE
(turning back to the Board)

You see? I don't think we have any choice - we have to disclose the Rule. And we look like fools if we don't also tell them what the Rule is hiding.

TRENT

Nate, I resent this. Science isn't hiding anything!

NATE

No, but some over-zealous Darwinists are! I say we have to explain evolution honestly. And the principal criticism of evolution is that natural selection may not be adequate to account for the enormous complexity that we see in the cell.

TRENT

Blasphemy!

NATE
(shocked)

Blasphemy?

TRENT
(quietly fuming)

You are not fit to teach.

NATE

Why? Because I won't tell my students that something no one has ever seen must be accepted blindly as verifiable knowledge? Or else they are not rational? What is the difference between what you want me to force-feed them and some blind religious faith?

TRENT

You are not fit to teach because you are not teaching science. You are teaching myth. Life originated in a primordial soup as a result of the chance combination of atoms into amino acids and proteins.

NATE

Because I will not tell them that the vast information in DNA can only be due to some happy accident?

TRENT

The Miller-Urey experiment clearly demonstrated that an electrical discharge in the form of lightning could have released the energy necessary to produce all of the ingredients of the first living organism.

NATE

Because I will not tell them that - (*searching for the right words*) – that only one explanation is acceptable to real scientists?

TRENT

*(ignoring NATE – now he is talking
to the others, the Board, the audience, even Marcia Andersen.)*

And once this happened, the chance recombinations of the various peptide bonds in the first primitive deoxyribonucleic acid enabled Natural Selection to fashion a great diversity of living organisms from a single common ancestor, which is something no reasonable scientist disputes.

NATE

Life is a result of random processes? Without question?

TRENT

(continuing his speech)

Random processes, yes, that fashioned the plants, the fish, the reptiles, the insects, the mammals, the crustaceans -

NATE

Purposeless forces ... Mindless and impersonal?

TRENT

(with the quiet fervor of a visionary)

Yes, yes, yes! The inexorable and unfeeling power of evolutionary forces unleashed by the creativity of random processes selected naturally.

NATE

Chance – by itself - produces complex information?

TRENT

(softly now, almost kindly)

You know it does, Nate. Over vast amounts of time, the laws of chance dictate that anything is possible. Anything and everything. Even life. Even human life.

NATE

Even God?

TRENT

(He stares at NATE for a moment as though with sudden revelation. When he speaks again, he takes great pains to speak gently and with genuine pity. He seems to understand now that Nate is suffering from the delusions of a temporary fever.)

What's wrong with you, Nate? You were such a good teacher. Now you bring up God?

NATE

You said anything was possible. I just wondered if you meant it.

TRENT

Do you hear this?

(Turning and looking from Anderson, to Crippin, to Stegner)

Will we continue to let this man poison the minds of his students, and the public, with this religious nonsense? I request that we dismiss this hearing and reconvene in a closed setting.

NATE

Poison their minds? With evidence?

STEGNER

Surely his students are mature enough to weigh these arguments for themselves.

TRENT

But we do not want them weighing these arguments for themselves!

(There is a pause as they all stare at him. He is oblivious to the possibility that what he has just said may be offensive.)

Patricia, if we don't stop this now, who knows what his students will end up believing...

CRIPPIN

(uncomfortably - looking for Marcia Anderson)

Ms. Anderson. You wrote the letter. What do you have to say about all this?

ANDERSON
(*matter of factly*)

Bottom line, whether he admits it or not, this man wants to teach creationism in a public school class room. You can expect to see a complaint if this goes any farther.

STEGNER
(*wondering*)

Ms. Anderson, do you have a problem with teaching only a naturalistic worldview about our origins?

ANDERSON

That's called science. Nothing wrong with doing science in a science class.

STEGNER

I think we should take this up with the School Board's attorney. I move that we adjourn.

CRIPPIN

I agree. I think we know what the situation is. We need some time to think about what to do.

TRENT

Motion is seconded.

CRIPPIN
(*counting votes*)

All in favor

(*looking around*)

Motion, carried. Meeting is adjourned. Mr. Plummer, thank you for your time. We will be in touch.

Scene 3

(John Jeffries, is in the office of Ms. Crippin two days later)

CRIPPIN
(*behind desk*)

John, this is the most difficult thing I have ever had to deal with. I spent all day yesterday talking with newspapers from all over the world. CNN called. The head of the biology department at State University called. The last time I looked I had 350 unread emails that filled my box in the

last 24 hours. I just wish it would go away.

JEFFRIES

You're a celebrity!

CRIPPIN

I don't need that kind of publicity. All I said was I thought Nate had some good points. Now they are calling me a fundamentalist wacko – an Ayatollah! I'm getting phone calls and letters from science organizations, museums...

JEFFRIES

(jokingly)

But think of all the pay you're getting! Besides – this is just a stepping stone to higher office.

CRIPPIN

(pointing to her head with her hand as if a gun)

Remind me to do this if I ever contemplate this reward again. Anyway, what should we do?

JEFFRIES

I think you have to disclose the Rule. You can't fire Nate because he wants to explain Methodological Naturalism to his students.

As a practical matter you may need to go further. Telling about Methodological Naturalism is like opening up Pandora's Box. It's like buying a house where the seller says "Hey! We've got problems with the foundation, but I'm not telling you about them."

You may get sued, but that is not a certainty. I think you will win. I don't think ID is "creation science" as construed by the courts. Marcia's cases deal with teaching that seeks to validate the genesis account. Nate is not proposing to do that.

CRIPPIN

(holding her head in her hands)

Oh how wonderful! But I avoid the suit if we tell Plummer to just teach one theory – stick with the existing textbook. That's the easiest way.

JEFFRIES

I am not so sure. I know an attorney who is just waiting to take you on if you censor the discussion of design. He'll claim you're indoctrinating the kids in Naturalistic beliefs. Either way we have problems. In the long run, neutrality is what the doctor - and the Constitution - calls for.

(lights fading)

Scene 4

(Crippin's office, Crippin and Nate)

CRIPPIN

(Matter of factly)

The Board has talked about this. Nate, we would like you to develop two sets of curriculum.

One set will explain the Rule. The other will explain the key evidence that it censors.

I don't want to implement anything until we know what you propose to say and we have had our lawyer review it.

NATE

(big sigh and grin)

Ms Crippin. Tell the Board – Thanks. They should be proud of themselves. What they are doing takes a lot of guts.

CRIPPIN

Don't get too excited. We haven't let you loose yet!

(curtain)

END