

## Exercise 3: Evolution vs. Creationism

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### Introduction

This week you will be watching a video from the PBS “Evolution” series entitled, “What about God?” By now, you should have also read an article by Stephen Jay Gould, a leading paleontologist, entitled, “Nonoverlapping Magisteria” from *Natural History* magazine. There has been a recent resurgence of conflict surrounding the issue of Evolution versus Creationism, which has resulted in legal battles in the State of Kansas school system. In fact, a bill is being considered by the Washington State Legislature right now that requires educators and texts to present evolution as “just a theory.” Some of you may have passionate views about the topic, and here, we give you a forum to discuss those views. Others of you may not have given these topics much thought, but you now have a chance to evaluate critically the two sides of this debate.

After the video, you will work in groups of four to address the questions on the next page. When you are finished answering the questions, each group will give a short presentation to the rest of the class on one of your answers (question to be decided by TA) and why you answered the way you did. It is fine if your group cannot reach a consensus. Summarize areas of disagreement for the rest of the class during your presentation. While group answers are okay, each person will turn in their own answer sheet at the end of the lab session.

Other readings/ materials on the subject:

Barbour, I. G. 2000. *When Science Meets Religion*. Harper-Collins, San Francisco, CA.

Jones, S. 1999. *Darwin’s Ghost*. Ballantine/ Random House, New York, NY.

Miller, K. R. 1999. *Finding Darwin’s God*. Cliff Street Books/ Harper-Collins, New York, NY.

Ruse, M. 2000. *The Evolution Wars: A Guide to the Debates*. Rutgers Univ. Press, New Brunswick, NJ.

Zimmer, C. 2001. *Evolution: The Triumph of an Idea*. Harper-Collins, New York, NY.

Web sites:

National Center for Science Education: <http://www.natcensci.ed.org/> (comprehensive and has many links to other sites)

<http://www.evcforum.net/> (site with links to both sides of the debate)

<http://www4.nas.edu/opus/evolve.nsf/web/homepage?OpenDocument>

<http://www.creationism.org/>

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Group members \_\_\_\_\_

1. You are an evolutionary biologist having a discussion with someone who believes in creationism. Frame your argument around three documented examples of evolution by natural selection.
2. Now you are the creationist in this discussion. Counter the biologist's argument.
3. Can religion and evolutionary science coexist? Why or why not?
4. A bill is before the Washington State Legislature that will require educators to have a disclaimer that says, "Evolution is just a theory" when they teach evolution. Would you agree with such a law? Why or why not?