

Charles Darwin

Charles Robert Darwin was a famous scientist who was interested in nature. He was best known for his work on the theory of **evolution** and his idea of natural selection.

Early Life

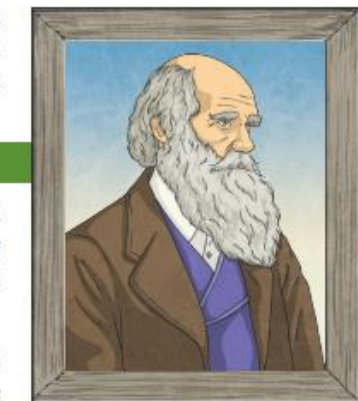
Charles was born on the 12th of February 1809 in Shrewsbury, Shropshire. His father was a doctor and his mother was the daughter of a famous pottery maker.

Following in the footsteps of his father, Charles began studying to become a doctor at the University of Edinburgh. However, he had a change of heart and moved to Cambridge to train for a career within the church. He was especially interested in natural history and he was offered the chance to travel the world as a guest **naturalist** on board the HMS Beagle.



The Galápagos Islands

Charles began to realise that the Galápagos Islands' birds were once the same species and, after spending millions of years apart, they had begun to change over time to suit the environment that they lived in. The animals that were better suited to their surroundings lived long enough to have babies and these babies inherited the same useful **traits**. He called this process 'evolution by natural selection'. Charles noticed examples of natural selection throughout the world.



HMS Beagle

In February 1832, Charles set off on his famous five-year journey. His job during the voyage was to collect information about the different animals, plants and **geology** of the countries he visited. Charles visited many countries with differing landscapes that were home to a wide variety of animal and plant species. The HMS Beagle travelled to the remote Galápagos Islands in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.



Charles Darwin

'On the Origin of Species'

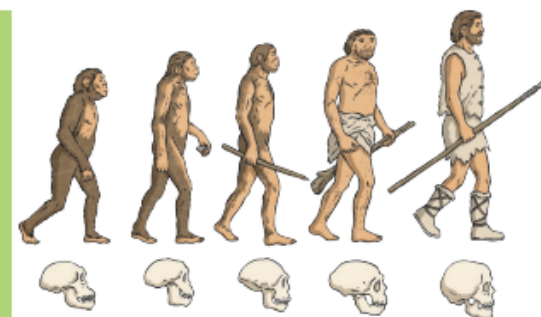
In 1859, after putting together all of his research, Charles published his book 'On the Origin of Species by Natural Selection'. It became an international bestseller.

Charles was also one of the first people to suggest that humans may have evolved from another species that lived over 6 million years ago. Scientists now mostly agree that humans share a common **ancestor** with apes, such as chimpanzees and gorillas. Charles's ideas were different and ground-breaking. He was keen to present his findings but was nervous about how people would react.

The idea that species evolve though time did not match the Christian belief that God created all living things at once.

Did You Know...?

Modern scientific studies have proven that Charles's theory of evolution was correct. Even though over 100 years have passed, many people still read Charles's books and discuss his ideas.



Glossary

ancestor: An early type of animal or plant from which a later, usually different, type has evolved.

evolution: The idea that all living things are descended from creatures which have slowly changed over millions of years.

geology: The study of the earth and how it has changed over time.

naturalist: An expert in natural history.

trait: A quality that makes one living thing different from another.