

Who was Charles Darwin?

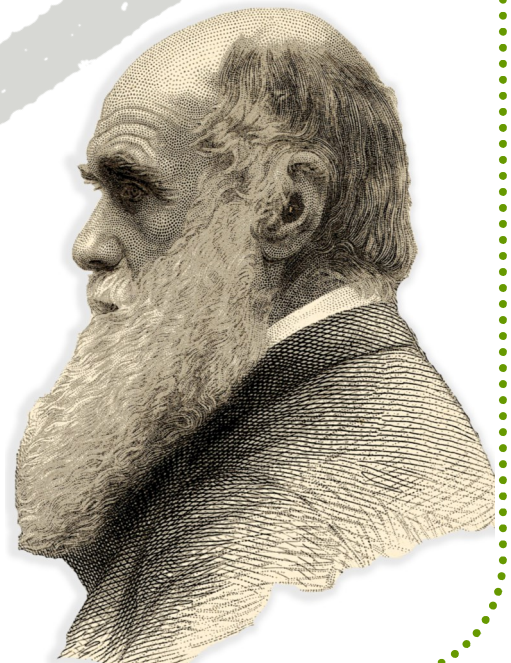
Charles Darwin

Charles Darwin was one of the most famous scientists of the nineteenth century. He spent five years travelling around the world as ship's naturalist on *HMS Beagle*. During his journey Darwin made many observations of plants and animals. He used his observations to develop his theory of evolution by natural selection - the work he is remembered for to this day. It took Darwin nearly twenty years to prepare his theory for publication. The scientific world first heard of his ideas when a joint paper by Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace was read at a meeting of the Linnean Society of London in 1858.

After returning from the Voyage of the Beagle, Darwin carried out research from his home at Down House, Kent. He studied worms, barnacles and carnivorous plants to name but a few. During his life he wrote many books and scientific papers, including his most famous works '*On the Origin of Species*' and '*The Descent of Man*.' Darwin was well respected by other prominent scientists of the day. Because of his important contributions to natural history, his peers petitioned for Darwin to be buried in Westminster Abbey after his death. The request was granted, and you can visit his grave to this day.

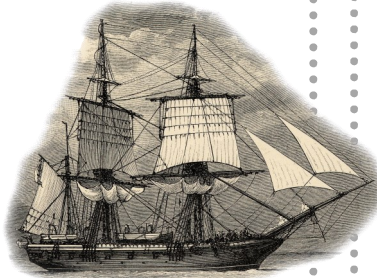
Charles Darwin: FAST FACTS

- Name:** Charles Robert Darwin
- Born:** 12 February 1809 at The Mount, Shrewsbury
- Died:** 19 April 1882 at his home 'Down House' in Kent. He is buried in Westminster Abbey, close to John Herschel and Isaac Newton.
- Education:** University of Edinburgh (1825-1827), studied Medicine. Dropped out because he didn't like the subject, then attended University of Cambridge (1827-1831) studying for a Bachelor of Arts degree.
- Married:** Emma Wedgwood in 1839
- Children:** William Erasmus, Anne Elizabeth, Mary Eleanor, Henrietta Emma, George Howard, Elizabeth, Francis, Leonard, Horace and Charles Warin
- Jobs:** Ship's naturalist on *HMS Beagle*,
Secretary of the Geological Society
- Hobbies:** Reading novels and scientific books
- Clubs:** Elected fellow of the Royal Society (1839)
Elected fellow of the Linnean Society (1854)
- Awards:** Royal Medal (1853)
Wollaston Medal (1859)
Copley Medal (1864)



The Voyage on the HMS Beagle

When he was **22** years old, Darwin embarked on a great adventure as naturalist on board a ship called the *HMS Beagle*. He visited many different countries including South America, Tahiti, New Zealand and Australia. Darwin was away from home for four years, nine months and five days!



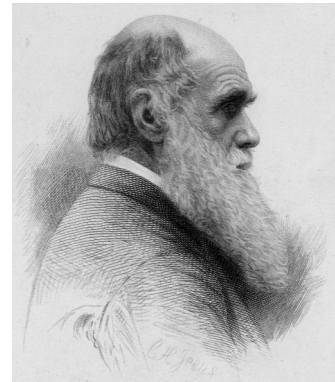
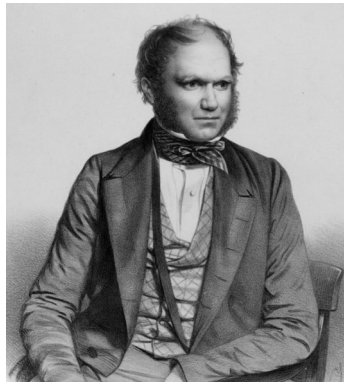
The *HMS Beagle*

Science at Home

After he returned from his voyage on the *Beagle*, Darwin went to live in Kent, at a place called Down House. It was here that he did a lot of his work, spending hours in his garden doing experiments to test his theories. Which just goes to show that you don't need a fancy lab to do great science!

What was Darwin like?

Which one of these pictures do you think is of Darwin?



Actually, they are all portraits of Darwin made at different times of his life. Many people think of Darwin as an old man with a long beard because that is what he looked like when he was most famous, but he had been interested in science since he was a young man.

Darwin's Theory of Evolution

Darwin is famous because of his theory of evolution. He worked out how living creatures change over time, developing into new species in the process of evolution. Darwin published this theory in his book which was called *On the Origin of Species*.



A giant tortoise

In Westminster Abbey

Because he was so well respected during his life, when Darwin died the Dean of Westminster Abbey did not hesitate to allow him to be buried there. He is buried close to other highly respected scientists including Sir Isaac Newton who discovered the truth about gravity.