

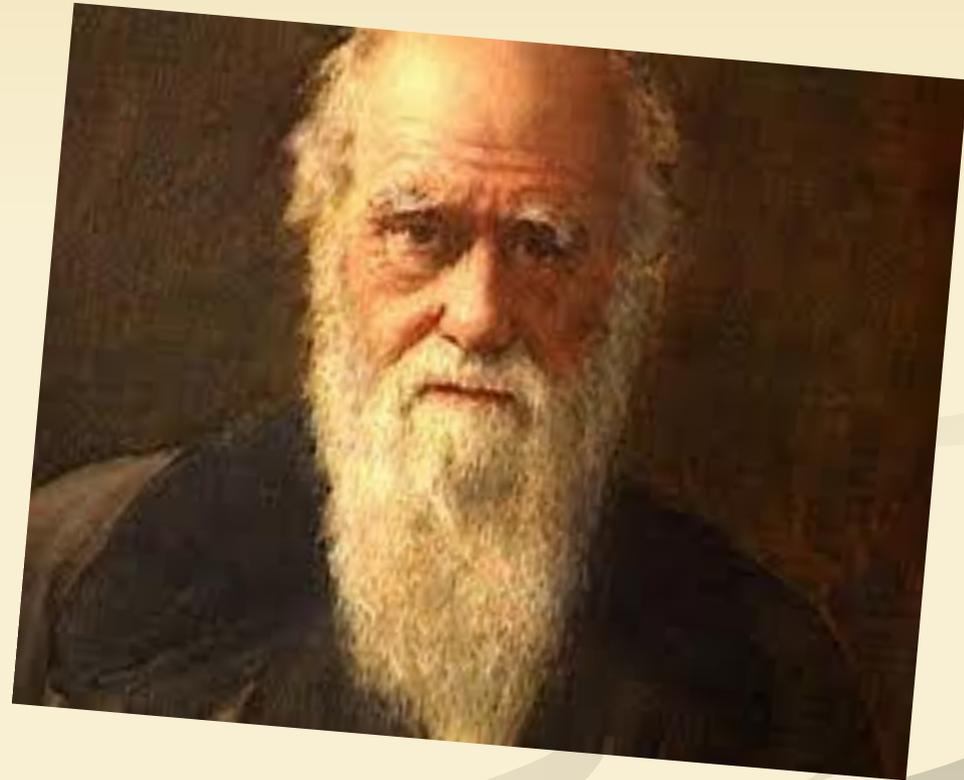
Charles Darwin

THE MAN BEHIND THE THEORY OF
EVOLUTION



Charles Darwin

You might think that Charles Darwin, one of the greatest scientists of all time, was a serious man who locked himself in his room and wrote scientific books. You might also think that he was an outstanding student. Yet the opposite is true. Read some amazing facts about his life.



Early life

Charles Robert Darwin
was born in
Shrewsbury on the 12th
of February, 1809. His
mother died when he
was eight, so he was
brought up by his
sisters and his father
Robert, who was a
doctor.



The seven – years
– old Charles
Darwin in 1816

Off to school

Charles went to school in Shrewsbury, but he hated it! He didn't pay attention in class, he copied from his fellow pupils and he forgot everything he had learned after a day or two. He preferred to spend his time collecting shells, rocks and insects.

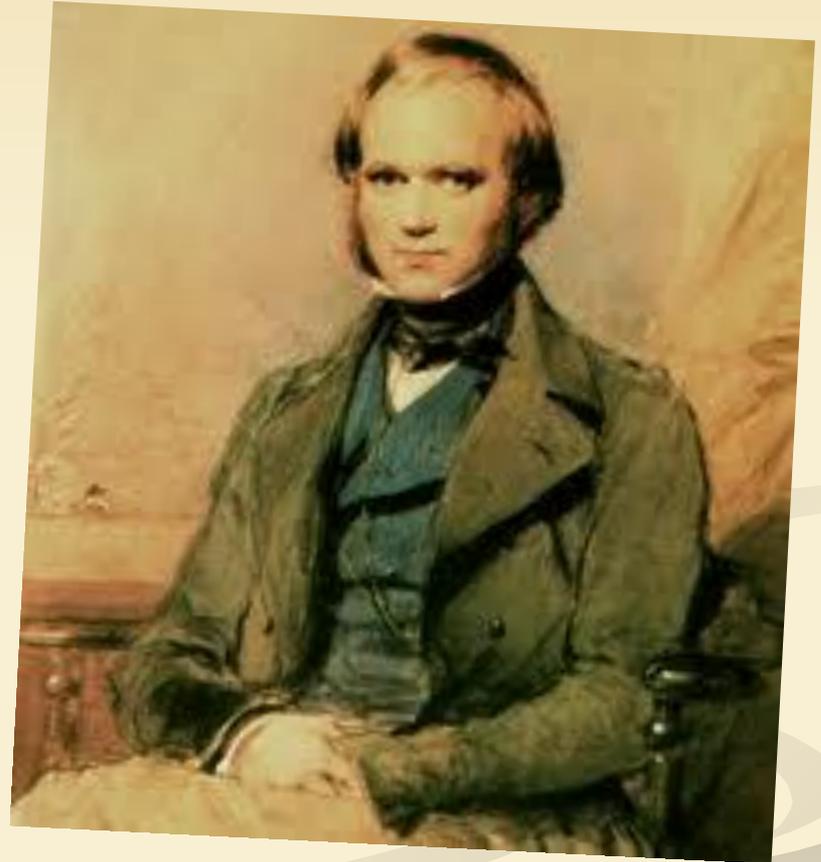


Robert Darwin. Charles's father

Awful Student

When he was 16, Charles went to Edinburgh University to study medicine. His father wanted him to become a doctor, but Charles didn't like medicine. He found the lectures dull, the subject boring and he hated the operations he had to watch – he was sick at the sight of blood.

So, at the age of 19, Charles went to Cambridge University to study religion. He didn't spend much time on books, preferring to pass his time hunting and collecting beetles.



The young Charles Darwin

To Distant Lands

Finally, something happened to Charles that he didn't hate. A friend invited him on a scientific expedition on his ship called the Beagle. Charles really wanted to go, but he wasn't sure that his father would approve it. And he was quite right. Charles went to see his Uncle Jos, and Jos not only agreed with him, he travelled back with Charles to talk his father about the idea. And so, without any clear idea about what he wanted to do with his life Charles went on a scientific expedition



The Beagle

Exciting Life

The voyage began on 27th of December, 1831. It was a 5-year expedition to exciting unknown places. Although Charles wasn't actually a scientist and he was terribly seasick, he had a wonderful time on his voyage. He had a great chance to study lots of plants and animals.

When the Beagle arrived at the Cape Verde Islands, Charles set foot in a tropical forest for the first time. And he was amazed by the huge variety of animals and plants. He started to collect like crazy – butterflies, spiders, beetles, shells – he loved everything, even ants.

Charles also found the fossils of a rodent the size of an elephant and a horse – like creature.



The Galapagos Island

Food for Thought

In 1835, the Beagle landed at the Galapagos Islands where Charles saw giant tortoises and other interesting creatures. Charles found that each of the island had its own variety of tortoise and finch. The animals on different islands were a little bit different.

It seemed very strange to Charles. According to the accepted view at the time, all animal species were created by God forever. So God must have designed slightly different animals for each island...

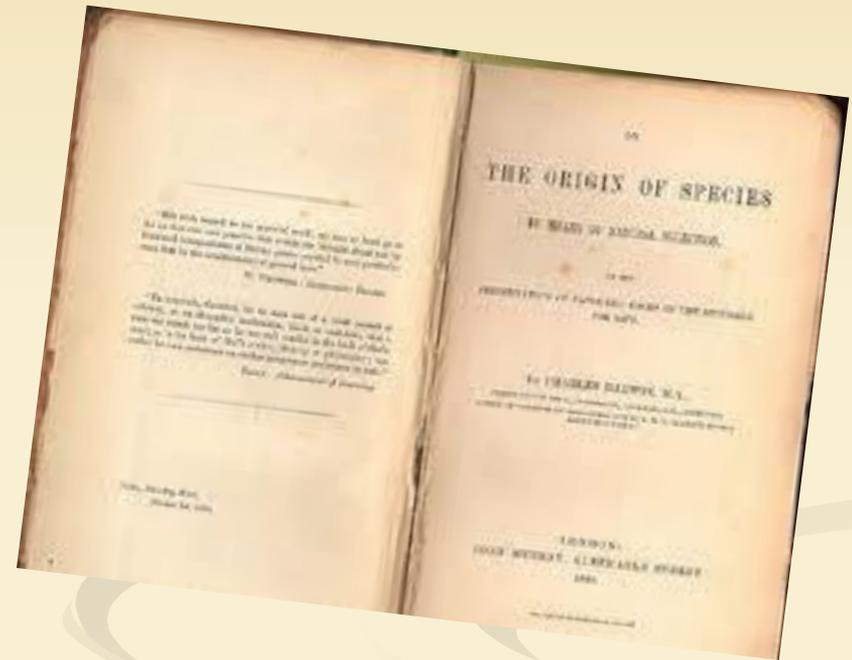


The Galapagos giant tortoise

A Journey of the Mind

Returning from his five-year Beagle adventure, Darwin had no time to relax. So much to do, so many scientific questions left unanswered! He later said that the two years after his voyage were the busiest of his life.

Charles started writing a book about his adventures. He also started to think about the Galapagos finches and about what he called the “transmutation of species”, the slow changing of one species into another, which today is called evolution.



Charles Darwin's book

Choosing a Wife

Charles didn't spend all his time thinking about science. In 1837, he started thinking about getting married. After all, he was already 29 years old! Being a good scientist, he made a list of reasons why he should not get married. He would have less time to study evolution, but he would have a friend in old age.

He would have fewer expeditions, but he would have kids... Looking over the list, he decided that the time had come to get married after all.



Emma Wedgwood,
Darwin's wife

Married Life

In 1839 Charles got married. Their marriage was successful and they had lots of kids.

At first Charles and Emma lived in London and had a busy social life – but not for long. Soon Charles found that he was getting very tired.

Though only 30, from then on he was never really well again – sometimes he was too ill to work for days. It's a mystery what this illness was.

In 1842, Charles and Emma moved to Down House in Downe on the Downs. Darwin turned the house and gardens into a research centre: he even filled a greenhouse with flesh – eating plants!

It was at Down House that Charles lived with his devoted family for 40 years.



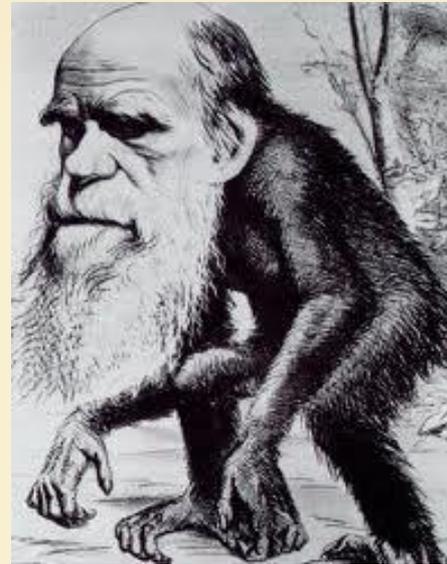
Down House

The Storm Breaks

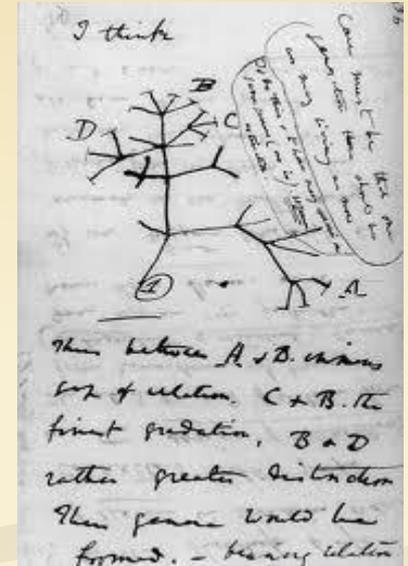
Darwin had formulated his theory of evolution by 1838. In 1844, he wrote 230 pages of his future book. But he just showed it to a few friends and didn't publish it. He knew it would upset religious people like his wife. He once said publishing his idea would be like 'confessing a murder'.

When *The Origin of Species* was finally published 1858, many people got really angry because it didn't agree with the Bible. Charles had carefully avoided saying anything specific about the evolution of human beings, but it didn't take a genius to get the point. If evolution was true, it must mean that humans, like all other living things, were descended from some primitive creature or other. Most people decided this creature was a monkey.

By the time, Darwin died in 1882, other scientists began to think he might be right.



A cartoon making fun of Darwin – many people thought that his ideas were silly



A page from Darwin's book