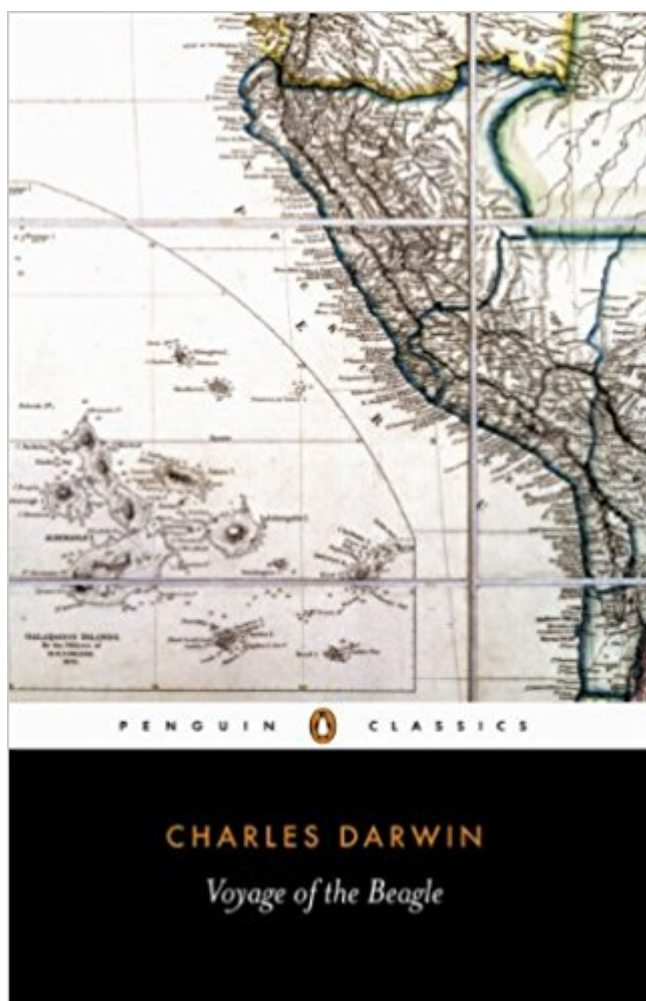


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The Voyage Of The Beagle: Charles Darwin's Journal Of Researches (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

Charles Darwin's account of the momentous voyage which set in motion the current of intellectual events leading to *The Origin of Species*. When HMS Beagle sailed out of Devonport on 27 December 1831, Charles Darwin was twenty-two and setting off on the voyage of a lifetime. His journal, here reprinted in a shortened form, shows a naturalist making patient observations concerning geology, natural history, people, places and events. Volcanoes in the Galapagos, the Gossamer spider of Patagonia and the Australasian coral reefs - all are to be found in these extraordinary writings. The insights made here were to set in motion the intellectual currents that led to the theory of evolution, and the most controversial book of the Victorian age: *The Origin of Species*. This volume reprints Charles Darwin's journal in a shortened form. In their introduction Janet Brown and Michael Neve provide a background to Darwin's thought and work, and this edition also includes notes, maps, appendices and an essay on scientific geology and the Bible by Robert FitzRoy, Darwin's friend and Captain of the Beagle. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

Charles Darwin, a Victorian scientist and naturalist, has become one of the most famous figures of science to date. Born in 1809 to an upper-middle-class medical family, he was destined for a career in either medicine or the Anglican Church. However, he never completed his medical education and his future changed entirely in 1831 when he joined HMS Beagle as a self-financing, independent naturalist. On returning to England in 1836 he began to write up his theories and observations which culminated in a series of books, most famously *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* in 1859, where he challenged and contradicted contemporary biological and religious beliefs with two decades worth of scientific investigation and theory. Darwin's theory of natural selection is now the most widely accepted scientific model of how species evolve. He died in 1882 and was buried in Westminster Abbey. Damien Hirst is an internationally renowned English artist, who has dominated the art scene in England since the 1990s. Known in particular for his series of works on death, Hirst here provides a contemporary, visual take on Darwin's theory of evolution - the struggle between life and death in nature. William Bynum is Professor Emeritus of the History of Medicine at University College, London, and was for many years Head of the Academic Unit of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine. He edited the scholarly journal *Medical History* from 1980 to 2001, and his previous publications include *Science and the Practice of Medicine in the Nineteenth Century*; *The Companion Encyclopedia of the History of Medicine* (co-edited with Roy Porter); *The Oxford Dictionary of Scientific Quotations* (with Roy Porter), *The Dictionary of Medical Biography* (with Helen Bynum), and *History of Medicine: A Very Short Introduction*. He lives in Suffolk.

GALAPAGOS ARCHIPELAGO The natural history of this archipelago is very remarkable: it seems to be a little world within itself; the greater number of its inhabitants, both vegetable and animal, being found nowhere else. As I shall refer to this subject again, I will only here remark, as forming a striking character on first landing, that the birds are strangers to man. So tame and unsuspecting were they, that they did not even understand what was meant by stones being thrown at them; and quite regardless of us, they approached so close that any number of them might have been killed with a stick. The Beagle sailed round Chatham Island, and anchored in several bays. One night I slept on shore, on a part of the island where some black cones - "the former chimneys of the subterranean heated fluids" - were extraordinarily numerous. From one small eminence, I counted sixty of these truncated hillocks, which were all surmounted by a more or less perfect crater. The greater number consisted merely of a ring of red scoriae, or slags, cemented together: and their

height above the plain of lava, was not more than from 50 to 100 feet. From their regular form, they gave the country a workshop appearance, which strongly reminded me of those parts of Stratfordshire where the great iron foundries are most numerous.

I was surprised at how easy this is to read! I was particularly interested in Tierra del Fuego and the Falkland Islands, having just returned from a trip to that area. Also, I am reading another book about the area, "The Uttermost Part of the Earth", written by a man born there in the mid 1800s, son of a missionary. It has been interesting, reading the books together, because both authors share many experiences, but with often differing opinions. Darwin's descriptions of the geography and the wildlife are wonderful. My one complaint (and it's a big one) is that this is supposed to be the "Illustrated Edition" and there is not one illustration in the e-book. Still, I have really enjoyed the book, and encourage others to try it.

When I bought this, I missed the part about it being an abridged version. I gave it away and ordered the real thing

I learned a lot about Darwin in this book that I simply didn't know beforehand. The most important is what an exceptional writer he was. If he had never published his Origin of Species and become famous by it, this book would still be a classic, if not of science, than certainly of literature. His prose, while necessarily more pedestrian, reminds me more than anything of the prose of another famous naturalist, Thoreau (who actually quotes the "Naturalist Darwin" in Walden from this book regarding the natives of Tierra Del Fuego). The "scientific detail" cited by another reviewer did not bog down the prose at all, a remarkable feat....a talent also found in Thoreau. The famed passage on The Galapagos was indeed interesting. But the most scientifically intriguing passages, I found, had to do with barrier reefs and atolls and how they come to be...I almost said "evolve"....But perhaps that would be premature for this book. In any event, I've never read a scientific account so riveting and fascinating as Darwin's on this subject given herein. But, as I say, I learned quite a bit about Darwin as a young man, ready for adventure, risks, and brimming with curiosity. He is almost as much a poet as scientist in some passages, quoting Shelley at one point, and he fortifies his narrative with a poignancy absent in most scientific accounts. This stylistic flavour is evident in many passages, but I'll just proffer one from the end of the narrative: "In my walk I stopped again and again to gaze upon these beauties, and endeavoured to fix in my mind and for ever, an impression which at the time I knew sooner or later must fail. The form of the orange-tree, the cocoa-nut, the

palm, the mango, the tree-fern, the banana, will remain clear and separate; but the thousand beauties which unite these into one perfect scene must fade away: yet they will leave, like a tale heard in childhood, a picture full of indistinct, but most beautiful figures." (P.444, in my edition) Whether as poetic or scientific, this work is virtuosic and unsurpassed in its seamless melding of the two. I'll leave the reader to decide which s/he enjoys the most.

This wonderful book is produced with beautiful and appropriate illustrations to accompany Darwin's text. The cover is sumptuous and the book is very large and heavy. It arrived in England amazingly quickly from its American seller. Nothing like this would appear to be available from an English seller so I am amazed at how well the market place works

I was glad to find that the Kindle version contained both illustrations and footnotes, just as the bound book does. The tale, itself, makes one want to hie to a travel agency and book passage following the exact route of the Beagle. Darwin's ability to draw you into his fascination with the natural world is astounding, detailed, marvelous. It's beautiful. While I'll always prefer bound books, I have come to love the Kindle versions of books. If nothing else, it's a somewhat less expensive way of finding out whether or not you want to pay full price for the bound book.

Although this journal is nearly 200 years old, it continues to be one of the most important pieces of world literature. I was particularly interested in Darwin's exploration of the Andes Mountains. He takes us with him as he observes the fossil deposits on the mountain pass between Chile and Argentina. He speculates about how former seas were uplifted thousands of feet above sea level. In our era in which various groups debunk Darwin and much of modern science, it is marvelous to see how in the 1830s humble Darwin stretched his knowledge and imagination to understand the dramatic history of our planet.

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