Charles Darwin Essay, Research Paper

Charles Darwin

By: Melissa Paul

Charles Robert Darwin, as he was known in full, brought many interesting ideas to the world of science. He was credited for developing the evolutionary theory by natural selection and also for discovering a species of frog while in South America. Darwin has many followers of his theory of evolution but there are many people who are trying to disprove his theory. These people have showed that their different theories prove Darwin could not have been correct in every aspect of his theory, but there is no absolute right or wrong to the theory of evolution. The world will continue to be divided on the subject of evolution.

Charles Darwin was born on February 18, 1809 in Shrewsbury, England. He is the son of Robert Waring Darwin and Susannah Wedgwood Darwin. His father, Robert Darwin, was a physician and naturalist. Eramus Darwin was Charles Darwin?s paternal grandfather. He was a poet, philosopher, and naturalist. Eramus Darwin was also the author of Zoonomia, which is more commonly known as the Law of Organic Life. Charles Darwin?s maternal grandfather was Josiah Wedgwood. Josiah Wedgwood was an artisan-entrepreneur. Charles Darwin is best known for developing the theory of evolution by natural selection.

Charles Darwin spent his childhood in England. When Charles was at the young age of eight his mother died. After his mother?s death adoring sisters and an older brother raised him. As a young child, in a Divinity School in Shrewbury, it was stressed that he learn the classics, but he was a very uninspired student. He was repeatedly reprimanded for wasting his time collecting animal specimens, especially beetles, and performing chemical experiments. At sixteen he went to The University of Edinburgh to study medicine. He had planned to study medicine,

but he could not take the sight of surgery without anesthetics so he did not continue in that field. The fact that Darwin did not show enthusiasm in the field of medicine disappointed his father very much. Then Darwin was sent to The University of Cambridge in 1827. Here he was to study for the clergy. The clergy is the body of people ordained for religious work such as ministers, pastors, and priest. (The World Book Encyclopedia, Volume 1, page 389) However, his academic record reflected his lack of interest in his studies of this field. He eventually abandoned it completely and never became a clergyman.

Charles Darwin received money from his father, which made it unnecessary for him to acquire a job and allowed him the freedom to work as an independent scientist. Since he did not become a clergyman, as his schooling had prepared him, Darwin proposed to his first cousin, Emma Wedgwood. They were married on January 29, 1839. She was a devoted wife and brought money and housewifery skills that provided him an environment to work in peacefully for forty years. During this forty years Charles and Emma Darwin had ten children. Two that died when they were infants and one, Anne, died when she was ten years old. (1994-2000 Encyclopedia Britannica). They had five surviving sons and three surviving daughters.

Charles Darwin was known as a British naturalist even from a young age because of his interest in the animal species. A naturalist is a person who makes a study of animals and plants, especially in their native habitats. (The World Book Encylopedia, Volume 2, page 1371). During August of 1831, at the age of twenty-two, Darwin served as a naturalist aboard the H.M.S. Beagle on a British science expedition around the world, but he was not paid while on this trip. This trip took five years, from 1831 to 1836. During this trip Darwin took extremely detailed notes and collected many specimens. After returning to London and studying his notes and specimens carefully Darwin developed several theories, all related to each other. The first, that evolution did occur; second, evolutionary change was gradual, taking millions of years to occur; third, the main mechanism for evolution was the process of natural selection; and fourth, that the millions of species alive in our world today all came from a single original form of life. This ?evolution? occurred through a branching process called ?specialization.? All of these processes made up his theory of evolution.

It took Charles Darwin more than twenty years to publish his ?Magnum Opus?, The Origin of the Species, which he is still known for today; one hundred and twenty years later! There are many different opinions as to why it would take him so long to decide to publish his book. The most popular opinion, probably, is that he did not want to publish his theory until he was sure he had gathered enough evidence to support his theory. Another interesting ?theory? is that Charles Darwin had a severe childhood reading problem that could have very possibly have been a form of dyslexia. It is said that his reading problems destroyed his self-confidence and therefore delayed the publication of his evolutionary theory by twenty years. Whatever the delay, Darwin finally published in 1859, On the Origin of Species by Natural Selection.

Charles Darwin lived a long, fulfilling life with his family at their home on Downe, England. He spent much of his spare time gardening and raising pigeons. It was thought he might have contracted and illness during his travels in South America. After living seventy-three years, he died on April 19, 1882. He is now buried at Westminster Abbey in England. (Krista Gowans) At the time of his death his two main works included The Origin of Species, published in 1859 and The Decent of Man, published in 1871.

?Biography of Charles Darwin.? September 9, 2000

?Clergy.? World Book Dictionary. Chicago: Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, 1973.

?Darwin, Charles.? Encyclopedia Brittanica Deluxe edition, CD. Brittanica.com,

2000.

Gowans, Krista. ?Charles Darwin.? September 6, 2000

?Naturalist.? World Book Dictionary. Chicago: Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, 1973.

?Talented Dyslexics.? September 11, 2000