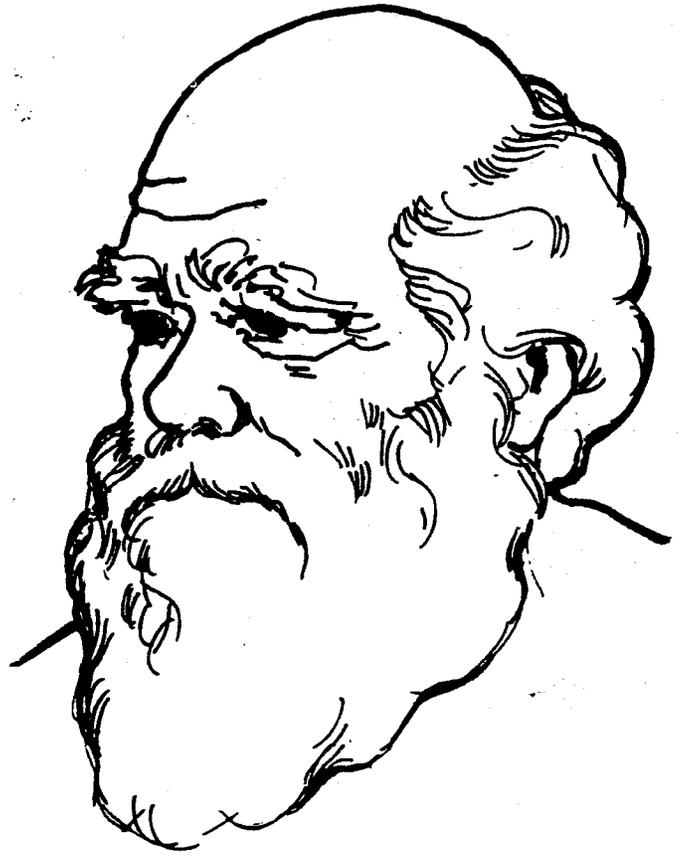


Charles Darwin



Naturalist

Charles Darwin was born on the same day as Abraham Lincoln — February 12, 1809 — 4,000 miles across the sea in Shrewsbury, England. His parents were well-to-do and prosperous. Charles' father expected him to follow in his footsteps and become a doctor, but this was not to be. Although Charles did graduate from Cambridge University with a degree in divinity, his real interest was in studying nature. He was able to obtain a non-salaried position as a naturalist on a five-year cruise around the world. During that time he studied plant and animal species and collected fossils. Some species were collected and brought back to England with him for further studies.

While Darwin was in the Galapagos Islands, he noticed that there were many variations among the tortoises and among the finches. Upon his return to England, he studied the finches. He found that these variations or differences were what helped some animals to survive. In one case, for example, he observed that round-billed finches who lived on the ground were able to survive by gathering nuts and grains. Pointed-billed finches, however, were used to living in the trees. On the ground they were not able to gather food easily and eventually died out.

From these and other observations, Darwin formulated his theory of evolution through natural selection. His theory implies that when a particular variation in a plant or an animal enables it to survive more easily in a particular environment, the variations will be continued through future generations. His first book on the topic, *Origin of Species*, was printed in 1859 and sparked a storm of controversy. Although he never received any honors for his work, Darwin's theories about evolution changed the thinking of scientists, philosophers, writers, and politicians forever.

Date:

Name of Scientist of this week:

Birthday _____ M or F (circle)
From where (country, city and state)

Nationality _____
Field of Science _____
Why did this Scientist become famous? _____

Does this field of science interest you?
_____ Why or Why
not? _____

