

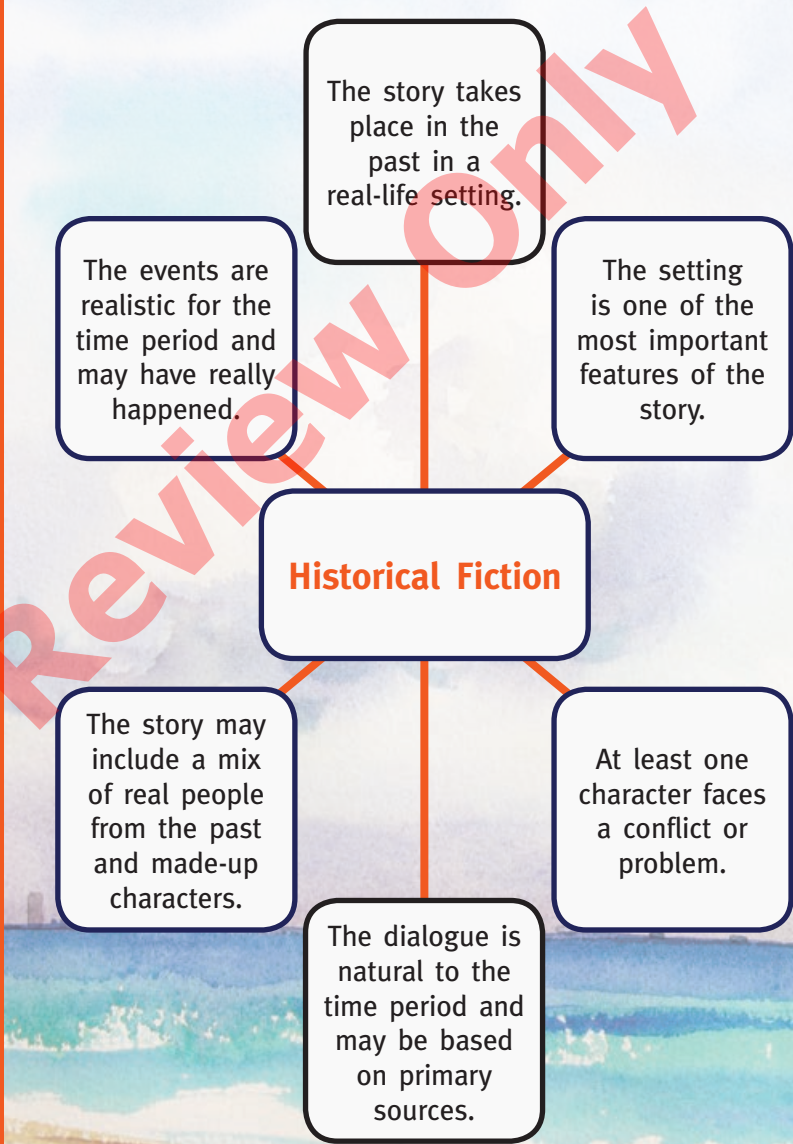
Voyage Home

by Sherine Gilmour • illustrated by Victor McLindon



Historical Fiction

Look for the genre features noted below as you read this book. Use the features to help you understand the text.



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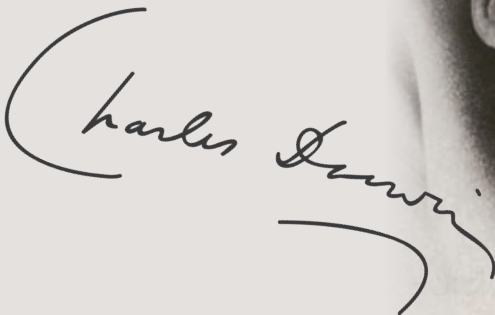
An Amazing Discovery

Charles Robert Darwin was born in England in 1809. He enjoyed studying animals and observing nature. He is best known for his book *On the Origin of Species*. In this book, he described his theory of how living things change over time.

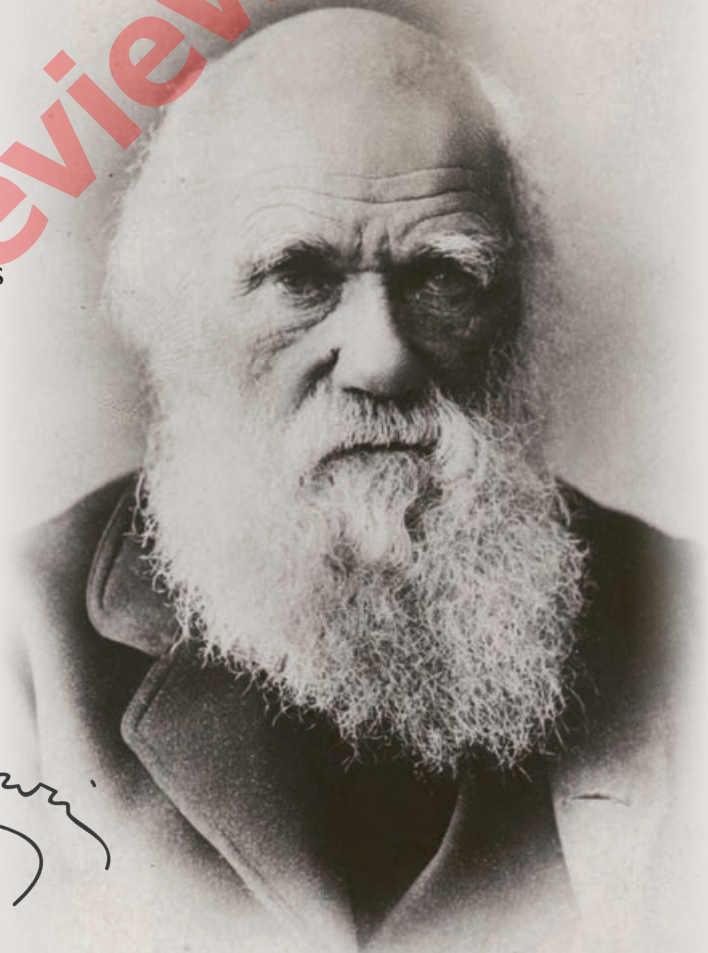
Darwin developed ideas about how characteristics were inherited, or passed on from parent to offspring.

He referred to his ideas about how characteristics changed over time as “**natural selection.**”

► Darwin



Charles Darwin



Initially, Darwin studied medicine, but early on he realized that it was not the right field for him. Instead, he turned his attention to becoming a **naturalist**. This meant that he wanted to study the science of the natural world, such as plants, rocks, and animals. After graduating from Cambridge University, he signed up to travel on the HMS *Beagle*. The ship was planning an **expedition** to South America, and Darwin hoped to study the plants, animals, and geology of the islands they visited.

The ship set off in 1831, when Darwin was only twenty-two years old. At the time, such an expedition was considered dangerous. The crew encountered many storms, and Darwin frequently became seasick on the journey. The trip, which was originally expected to last less than two years, ended up taking five years.

Darwin's Journey

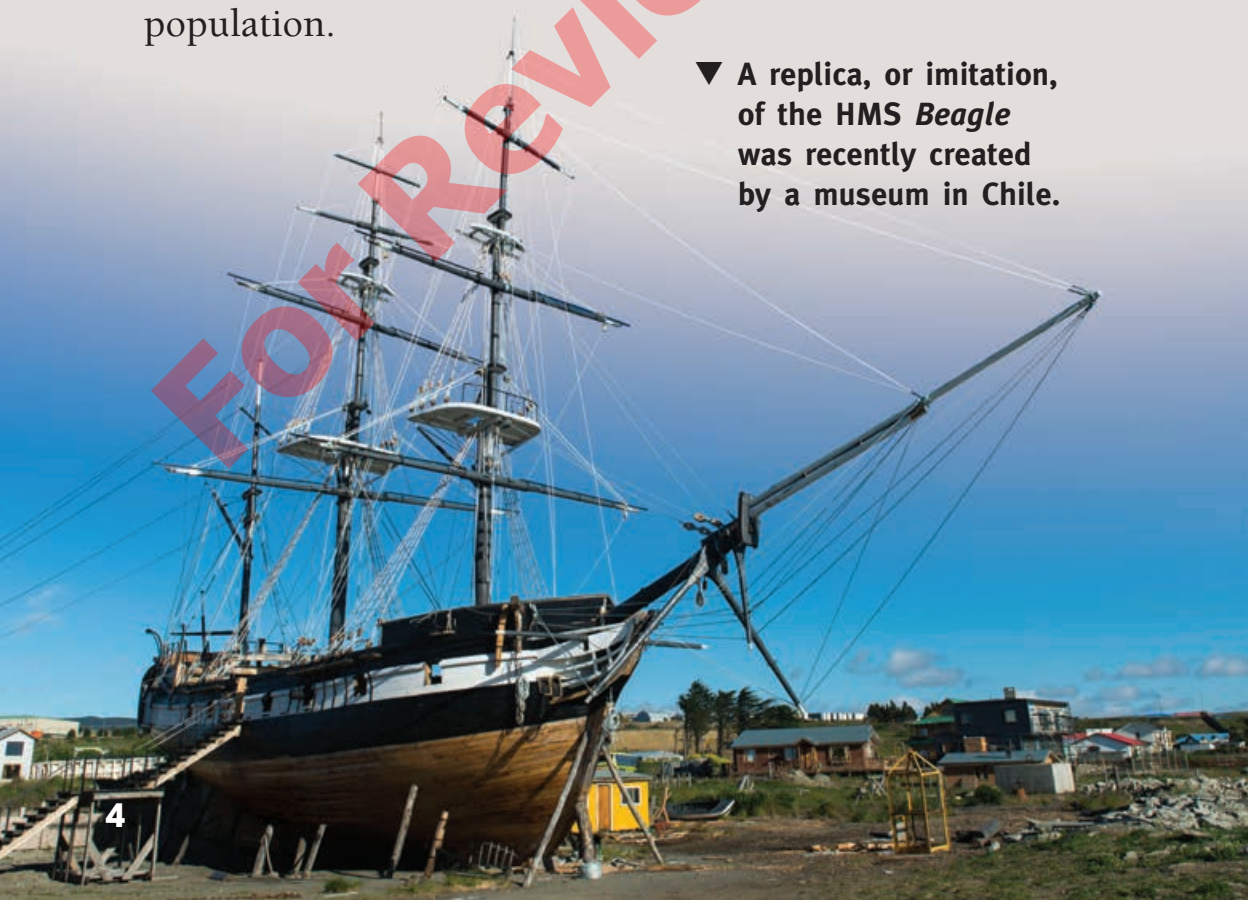


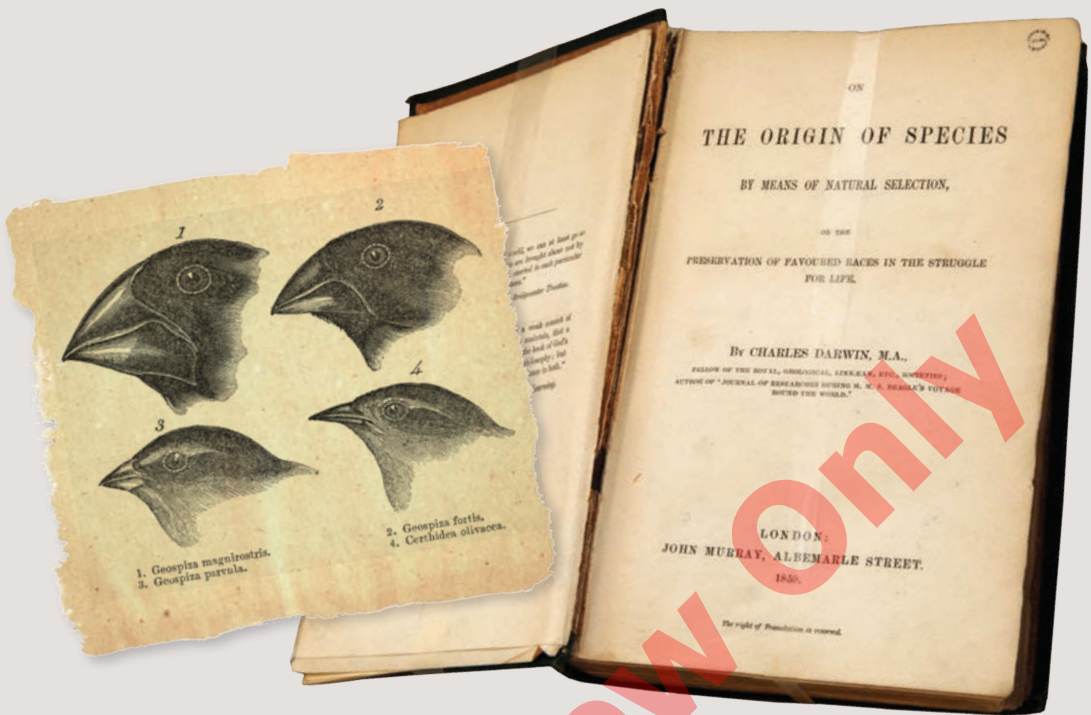
INTRODUCTION

At the time, research about animal species was still being gathered, and scientists debated the accuracy of the information. There were many competing **hypotheses** about how a species could change. But eventually Darwin's ideas became the most accepted among scientists. He suggested that traits change in a population of living things over time.

According to this theory, organisms that survive best in their environment live to pass their traits on to the next generation. For example, short sunflowers might be shaded from the sun by taller sunflowers. The taller sunflowers get more of the sunlight they need to grow. As a result, more of the taller sunflowers survive and reproduce. The shorter ones may die and not reproduce, thus making tall sunflowers more abundant in the population.

▼ A replica, or imitation, of the HMS *Beagle* was recently created by a museum in Chile.





▲ Later in his career, Darwin used his observations of finches to describe his theory of natural selection and inheritance in his book *On the Origin of Species*.

Darwin's experiences on the HMS *Beagle* would eventually help him develop his groundbreaking theory of natural selection. Scientists around the world look at this trip as one of the most important scientific journeys of all time.

This book is a fictional account of the end of the expedition, when the HMS *Beagle* is on its return trip to England. The ship encounters a severe storm, and in the cleanup afterward, Darwin gets a spark of inspiration that helps him set the groundwork for his theory.

Departing for Home

Leaves spun like tops across the sandy beach. The wind was relentless. The ocean was frothy, angry, and spitting long-lost hulks of wood onto the shore from old ships that must have sunk long ago.

It was a good thing Captain FitzRoy had decided to take shelter in South America along the safe harbor of the Pernambuco shore in Brazil. Darwin preferred to be on dry land anyway. Even after nearly five years on this journey, he still became seasick at the slightest bounce of the ship on the water. They had already been ten days in Pernambuco. Darwin and most of the crew passed the time in town, crowded into a few rooms at the local inn. But today the winds had been a touch less fierce, and so Darwin had decided to stroll down to the shore.



There, reaching his hand into the spray of the water, was Captain FitzRoy. As Darwin approached, he thought FitzRoy reminded him of a person offering a hand to an angry dog. Would the dog sniff or snap? The ocean was a more powerful force than Darwin had ever imagined. It seemed to him that the ocean might snap. Instead, FitzRoy simply shook off the droplets of water and looked up.

“Hello there,” FitzRoy said. “Out for a stroll?”

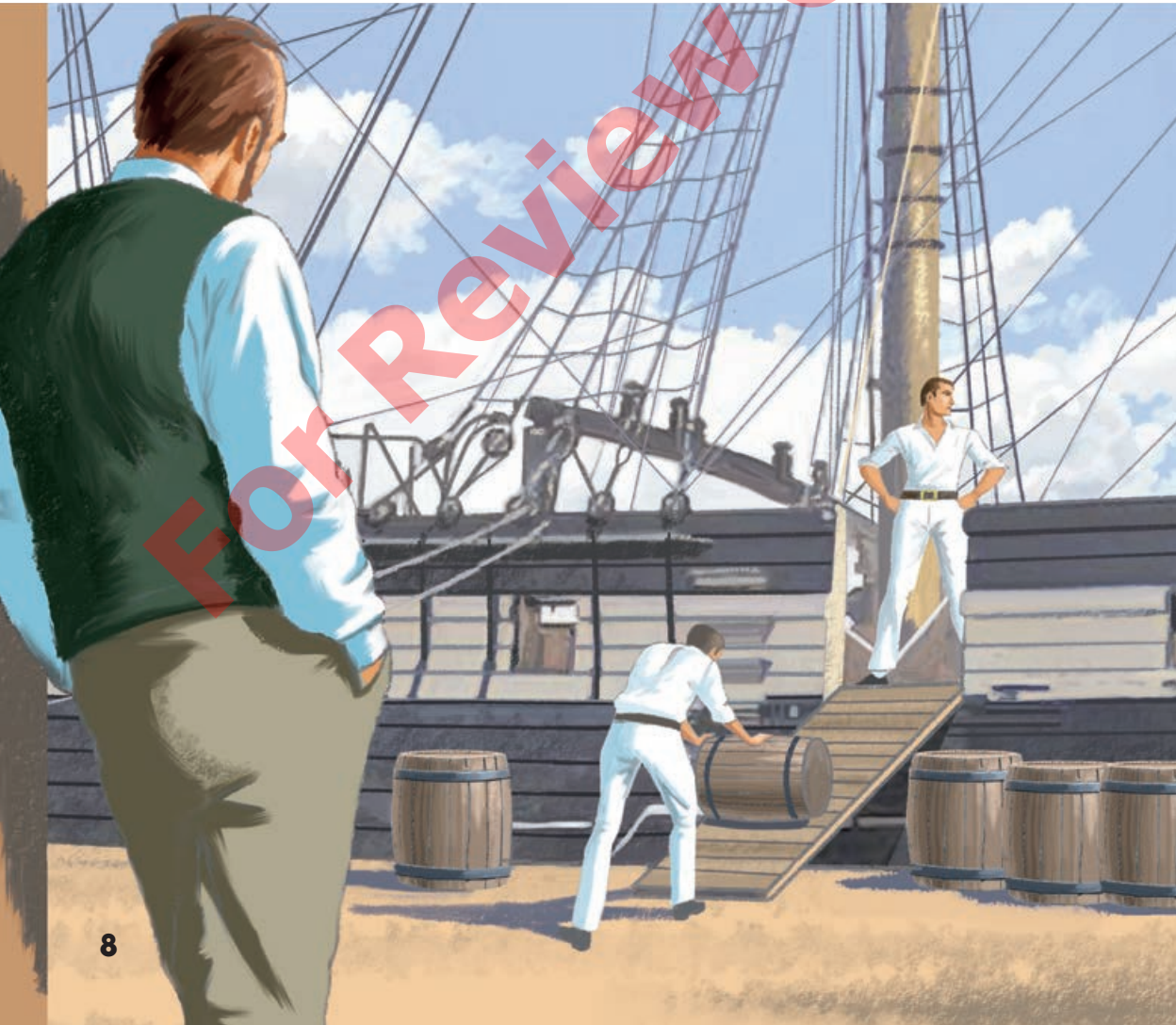
Darwin chuckled. “The ocean doesn’t distress you, does it?” he asked.

“No,” FitzRoy replied. “As a matter of fact, these seas are calming.” FitzRoy pointed his hand to the horizon as if commanding the ocean itself. “I think we will be able to set sail tomorrow.”



Darwin, although excited to learn they might be able at last to begin the journey home, was unsettled. *These seas?* he thought to himself, skeptically. The waves sounded as loud as buildings crashing down.

FitzRoy was right! The very next morning, crewmen were getting ready to set sail, rolling barrels of hardtack and salted, preserved meats onto the ship. Darwin lingered on the shore a little longer, knowing that as soon as he set foot back on the *Beagle* his endless seasickness would return.



During the years he was with the crew of the *Beagle*, they had traveled around the **Galapagos Islands** for about five weeks. His time traveling and adventuring on those islands had been life-changing. He'd seen giant tortoises, birds of every variety, fish, and flowers that amazed.

Now, however, even though he faced a return of seasickness, he couldn't wait to travel back home. He was impatient to see his family, and he was eager to begin reviewing all his sketches, observations, and notes.

Once everyone was on board, anchors were pulled. Captain FitzRoy stood on deck and declared that they would be back home in England before the holidays. Darwin, looking out at the morning sun rising over the endless waves, smiled and hoped for calm seas.

