

## *Charles Darwin Biography*

*Charles Robert Darwin was born on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February 1809, in Shrewsbury, Shropshire. He was a scientist who shared his theory of evolution by natural selection.*

### *Young Darwin*

*Darwin was the fifth of six children and was born into a wealthy family with well-connected parents. Charles had a Christian upbringing but his family were open to new and varied thinking. Both his Grandfathers were important figures in the 1800s: Josiah Wedgwood, an industrialist and anti-slavery campaigner, and Erasmus Darwin, a doctor who had his own radical ideas about the theory of evolution.*

### *Early Studies*

*In 1825, Darwin started studying medicine at Edinburgh University following in the footsteps of both his father and grandfather. He however, did not make a good medic as he found the techniques of surgery to brutal to handle, as these were the days before the use of anaesthetic. Fortunately for Darwin, Edinburgh was one of the best places in the whole of Britain to study science. Charles heard people speak about their radical thoughts and ideas of transmutation (now known as evolution).*

*Darwin abandoned the study of medicine, to consider a career in the Church and went on to study Divinity at Cambridge aged only 18. While training to be a clergyman he had lots of time to spend focusing on his true passion which was biology.*

### *Once in a Life-time Opportunity*

*While at Cambridge his tutor recommended Darwin join an around the world voyage on HMS Beagle. Darwin visited four continents over the next five years where he spent lots of time collecting specimens on land and investigating the geology there. HMS Beagle then made a five-week stop at the Galapagos Islands in the Pacific Ocean, off the coast of Ecuador. Darwin studied finches, tortoises and mockingbirds there.*

### *The Theory*

*In 1838, once home again, Darwin began writing up his travels. This was when he began to think about an idea, that his grandfather Erasmus Darwin once had, that evolution (also known as transmutation) occurred by a process of natural selection.*

*Darwin went public with his theory of evolution by natural selection in July 1858. His theory was presented to the Linnean Society, the leading Natural History body in Britain. Charles was fiercely criticised by the Church for implying that human beings were descended from apes. Darwin published his book 'The Descent of Man' in 1871 that presented his theory. His ideas deeply divided Victorian society.*

### *His Death*

*Darwin worked right up to the end of his life and died on 19 April 1882 surrounded by his wife and devoted friends. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.*

