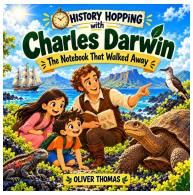
Charles Darwin
Teaching & Activity Pack

The Notebook That Walked Away | Ages 5–8



Read, discuss and try

Use alongside *History Hopping with Charles Darwin*. This pack contains a session plan, discussion prompts, a child worksheet, adult answer guidance and six original learning pages from the book.

Find what you need

Session plan: page 2. Discussion: page 3. Child worksheet: page 4.
Adult guidance: page 5. Original book learning pages: pages 6–11.
Print page 4 for each child; display or share the book extracts as needed.

One session: 45 minutes

Read for 15 minutes, discuss for 7, try the activity for 17 and share for 6. Split or extend the session to suit your group.

Every child can take part

Read instructions aloud. Children can answer by speaking, drawing or pointing. An adult may write down their words. Follow the preparation and supervision instructions on page 2.

Real people, imagined adventures

The children’s visit and dialogue are fictional. Factual notes explain the history and ideas. Activities supplement the story; they are not a complete curriculum.

© 2026 Oliver Thomas. You may print and photocopy these educational resources for non-commercial use with children you teach or care for. Keep the copyright notices. No resale or public re-upload. Book illustrations created with AI assistance.

Darwin session

The Notebook That Walked Away | Adult guide



Aim

Use a visible clue to support an idea, then separate what was seen from what was guessed.

Materials

Book; pencils; worksheet 4; two similar potted plants, or the book's bird pictures.

Prepare

Choose visible details. Observe without touching, picking or tasting. Watch animals from a distance.

Step		Time
Read	Read the story and Explorer's Notebook activity. Pause at the moon-shaped patch and misleading trail.	15 min
Discuss	Use page 3. Ask: What helped them change their minds?	7 min
Do	First find the shell patch in the book and explain the wrong trail. Then draw three plant or bird details, with place and date. Companion extension: separate "I saw" from "I think".	17 min
Reflect	Share a guess and a safe way to check it. One meal is not enough to know what every bird eats.	6 min

Start with the notebook mystery. Observing one plant today does not demonstrate evolution.

Darwin discussion

Ask the question, then use the suggested answer if needed

1. Which clue helped Daniel recognise the tortoise?

The pale, moon-shaped patch on its shell.

2. Why was the first trail misleading?

The line between the prints was an iguana’s tail mark. Daniel then followed wider prints without that line.

3. What did Sarah add to the bird drawings?

Place and date, so the record said where and when she observed them.

4. Why did Darwin want to watch more birds?

One meal cannot tell us what every bird with that beak eats.

Make it easier

Point to the moon patch, then name or draw one plant detail. An adult writes the words.

Try more

Companion extension: observe the same subject another day. Could light or viewing angle explain a difference?

Optional family activity

Observe a plant from a window or safe path. Draw details and record place and date. Leave wildlife and plants undisturbed.

My explorer notebook

Name _____ Date _____

1 Find the story clue

Point to the tortoise’s moon-shaped patch.
Tell an adult why the first trail was wrong.

2 Look closely and draw

Choose a plant or the book’s birds.
Draw three things you can see.

Place _____ Date _____

3 Tell an adult

“I saw…” “I think…”
How could you check your guess?

© 2026 Oliver Thomas

Adult answers and teaching notes

Darwin worksheet

The story clue is the pale moon-shaped patch. The wrong trail had an iguana?s tail line. Nature drawings depend on the subject. ?I see a pointed leaf? is an observation; ?an insect ate it? is a guess needing evidence.

Keep observation distinct from evolution

One meal cannot establish every bird?s diet. Inherited differences may become more common over many generations. Birds do not choose new beaks. This short activity does not test natural selection.

7 Amazing Facts About Charles Darwin

1. Darwin was 26 when he visited the Galápagos in 1835.
2. HMS Beagle's voyage lasted from 1831 to 1836.
3. Birds called mockingbirds looked different on different islands. Darwin wanted to know why.
4. Darwin studied earthworms for years. He even wrote a whole book about them!
5. As a student at Cambridge, Darwin loved collecting beetles and other insects.
6. Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace had similar ideas. Their work was shared together in 1858.
7. Darwin's famous book, On the Origin of Species, came out in 1859.

Original book page numbering retained. Read factual notes with an adult.

© 2026 Oliver Thomas. For non-commercial educational use.

Charles Darwin: A Life of Discovery

1809	Born in Shrewsbury, England.
1825-1831	Studies in Edinburgh, then Cambridge. Loves exploring nature.
1831-1836	Sails around the world aboard HMS Beagle.
1835	Visits the Galápagos. Spots differences between island animals.
1838	Works out his idea of natural selection.
1858-1859	Shares his idea with Wallace in 1858. His famous book comes out in 1859.
1882	Dies aged 73. His ideas help us understand life today.

REAL HISTORY, IMAGINED ADVENTURE

Darwin was real. Our missing notebook adventure is made up. His big idea took years of study after the voyage.

Original book page numbering retained. Read factual notes with an adult.

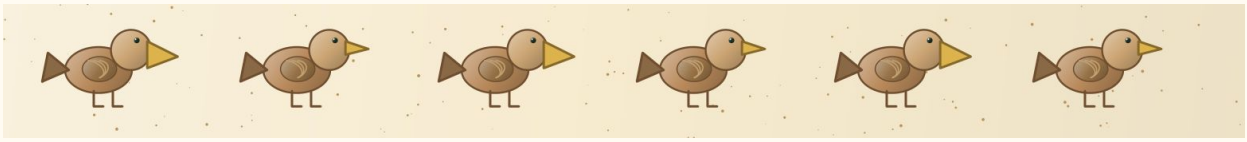
© 2026 Oliver Thomas. For non-commercial educational use.

How Natural Selection Works

Darwin’s idea after the voyage

1 Different beaks

Some birds have small beaks. Others have strong beaks.



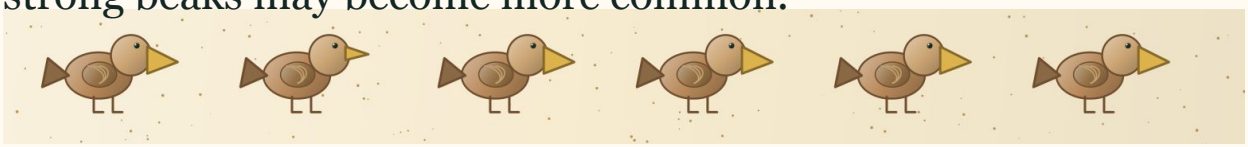
2 Hard seeds are common

Strong beaks can help birds eat hard seeds, survive and raise more chicks.



3 Many generations later

Chicks can inherit beaks from parents. Over many generations, strong beaks may become more common.



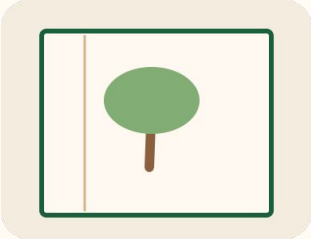
This example is made up. Groups change over generations: evolution. Birds cannot choose new beaks.

Original book page numbering retained. Read factual notes with an adult.

© 2026 Oliver Thomas. For non-commercial educational use.

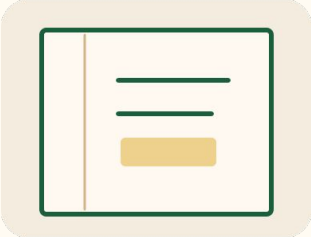
Observe Nature Like Darwin

Your Explorer's Notebook
You need: paper, a pencil and an adult to explore with.



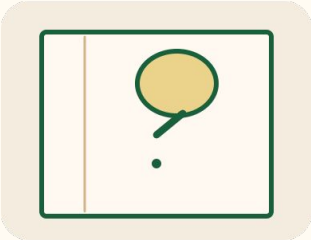
1 Look closely

Choose a tree, flower or bird. Draw three details you notice.



2 Keep a record

Add the place and date. Find another of its kind. What differs?



3 Ask a question

Write or tell an adult one thing you want to find out.

Watch animals from a distance. Leave their food, nests and homes alone.

35

Original book page numbering retained. Read factual notes with an adult.

© 2026 Oliver Thomas. For non-commercial educational use.

3 Questions to Explore Together



1 The shell clue

What detail helped the children find the right tortoise? Point to it.



2 A changing guess

Why did the first trail lead to the wrong animal? What changed their minds?



3 A careful record

Why did Darwin record which island each bird came from?

Find picture clues. Talk, draw or act out your answers together.

Original book page numbering retained. Read factual notes with an adult.

© 2026 Oliver Thomas. For non-commercial educational use.

Sources and Useful Reading

Explore these with an adult. These sources support the facts.

Natural History Museum
What is natural selection?

Natural History Museum
Charles Darwin: History’s most famous biologist

Darwin Online
Darwin’s notes on the geology of Galápagos

Galápagos Conservation Trust
Marine iguana

Darwin Online
Darwin’s book about earthworms

Our visit and dialogue are made up.

37

Original book page numbering retained. Read factual notes with an adult.

© 2026 Oliver Thomas. For non-commercial educational use.