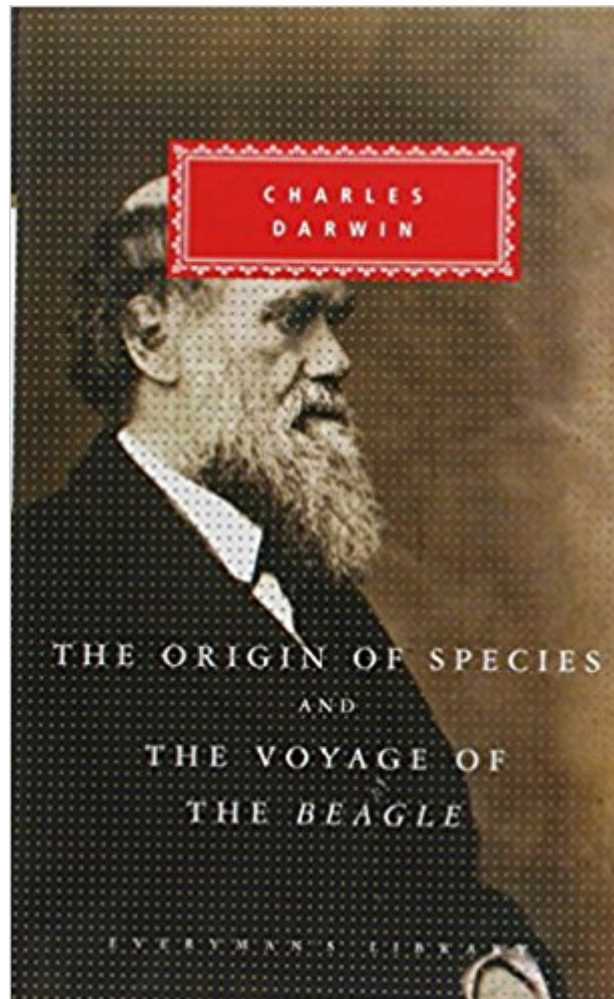


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The Origin Of Species And The Voyage Of The Beagle



Synopsis

Easily the most influential book published in the nineteenth century, Darwin's *The Origin of Species* is also that most unusual phenomenon, an altogether readable discussion of a scientific subject. On its appearance in 1859 it was immediately recognized by enthusiasts and detractors alike as a work of the greatest importance: its revolutionary theory of evolution by means of natural selection provoked a furious reaction that continues to this day. *The Origin of Species* is here published together with Darwin's earlier *Voyage of the "Beagle"*. This 1839 account of the journeys to South America and the Pacific islands that first put Darwin on the track of his remarkable theories derives an added charm from his vivid description of his travels in exotic places and his eye for the piquant detail. (Book Jacket Status: Jacketed)

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Customer Reviews

Having read on Evolution by Natural Selection (EBNS) in many books and articles previously, including Richard Dawkins' excellent works *The Selfish Gene: 30th Anniversary Edition*--with a new Introduction by the Author, *The Extended Phenotype: The Long Reach of the Gene* (Popular Science) and Dr. Jerry Coyne's *Why Evolution Is True*, all highly recommended, I wanted to read Charles Darwin's own account of EBNS. Here it is: the First Edition with the later Historical Note and Glossary added. I had already read and enjoyed "*The Voyage of the Beagle*," and I consider it a classic of travel writing (broadly defined.) You may be wary of the classic "*The Origin of Species*" as stylistically remote or overly technical. It is neither. This book (anachronisms aside) could have been

written yesterday. The style (as I find amongst a fair number of 19th century writers) eschews the flowery prose we associate with the Victorian Era; and is rather: clear, concise, nicely flowing, quite modern, and eminently readable. Any technical writer could learn from Darwin's writing. Though some technical details are included, it is written such that an informed layman will have no trouble in following it. "The Origin of Species" is a logical and persuasive tour de force.

This is an excellent volume. Two of Charles Darwin's major works are included: "The Voyage of the Beagle" and "The Origin of Species." There is a well written and sprightly introduction by evolutionary theorist Richard Dawkins. One additional good feature is a Chronology, beginning on page xxxiv. Dawkins sets the stage with his 20+ page introduction. He speaks eloquently of the importance of Darwin's work, and the profound nature of his theoretical perspective on evolution. He places Darwin's work in an historical context, in which we see other theorists before Darwin working on how to explain change in animal species. He concludes with the strong statement that (Page xxix): "[Darwin] also gave us by far the most plausible theory for how evolution has taken place, the theory of natural selection." Darwin's "The Voyage of the Beagle" provides a view of his trip, as the resident naturalist, on the ship Beagle, during which time (left England in 1831 and returned in 1836) he made myriad observations that helped him work through his theory of evolution. As he notes elsewhere (page 537), the facts that he observed on this voyage "seemed to me to throw new light on the origin of species. . . ." Upon reflection, he felt that this voyage had been a wonderful developmental experience in his life. He observes (Page 516): "In conclusion, it appears to me that nothing can be more improving to a young naturalist, than a journey in distant countries. It both sharpens, and partly allays that want and craving, which. . . a man experiences although every corporeal sense be fully satisfied." There follows his chef d'oeuvre, "On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection.

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