

Name _____ *Drawing Inferences*

Scientific Celebrities:

Charles Darwin

DIRECTIONS: Read the article. Answer the questions.

Charles Darwin had one of the most revolutionary ideas ever in science: the theory of evolution. Before the publication of Darwin's *The Origin of Species by Natural Selection*, people believed that every species on earth had always been there and had never changed in form. But Darwin showed that all living creatures on earth are descended from common ancestors and are still evolving today.

Charles Darwin was born in England and for most of his childhood he was raised by his oldest sister. As a boy, Darwin loved to collect insects and rocks, and to experiment with them. He originally planned to become a doctor, but soon discovered that he didn't have the temperament for it. There was no such thing as anesthesia then, so surgeries were done while the patient was still awake. Darwin left medical school feeling like a failure. He then turned to the study of Theology, but he remained more interested in beetles than in his studies, and barely earned his degree, though he did make some friends, notably the professors of botany and geology.

In 1831 he was hired as a naturalist to join a scientific expedition that was travelling around the world on a ship called the HMBS Beagle. Darwin's friends from Cambridge recommended him, and he spent the next five years travelling the world, collecting the bones of extinct animals. In the Galapagos Islands he noticed that the same animals did not look exactly the same on the different islands. These observations eventually led to his ideas on evolution.

He published a collaborative report on evolution in 1858 with another naturalist, Alfred Russel Wallace, who had made similar observations as Darwin. Darwin's famous book, *The Origin of Species by Natural Selection* was published in 1859. It was in this book that Darwin made the observation that we know today as "the survival of the fittest".

While his book made him famous, it was also very controversial, as some people believed it conflicted with religious views on the creation of the world. Darwin wrote several other books, one of which, *The Variation of*



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Animals and Plants Under Domestication showed that man could use selective breeding to create different breeds of pigeons, dogs, and even some plants.

Darwin died when he was 74. He had had 10 children, and of the seven who survived him, four became prominent scientists in their own right.

QUESTIONS

1. What scientific skills did Darwin use? _____

2. Why do you think Darwin made friends with the professors of botany and geology?

3. What do you think survival of the fittest means? _____

4. When it comes to deciding on a career, what can you learn from Darwin's experience?
