



Charles Darwin

ACTIVITIES

The voyage of HMS Beagle

Provide the students with atlases, books, the internet and a world map. Invite the students to trace and label the voyage of Charles Darwin aboard HMS *Beagle* onto their world map. Encourage the students to calculate the time and distance travelled by Darwin on this trip.

Tortoises

Darwin was inspired by his visit to the Galapagos Islands in 1831, and the tortoises he saw. Encourage the students to research the giant tortoises around the Galapagos Islands. Ask them to create a poster or chart with information on the tortoises, including diagrams and labelled illustrations.

Natural selection

Discuss Darwin's theory in detail with the students, and what he discovered in nature that limited populations. Invite the class to sit in a large circle. Go around the circle asking the students to say whether they agree or disagree with Darwin's theory of natural selection. Continue around the circle, asking students to give reasons for their answers and justifications for their responses. Tell the students there are no wrong answers and they may say 'Pass' if they choose.

The HMS Beagle in Australia: a timeline

In January 1836, the HMS *Beagle* landed in Australia, and Charles Darwin made many observations in the months that followed. Darwin's observations of Australia on this trip were recorded in his book *The Voyage of the Beagle* (1839).

12 January 1836

HMS *Beagle* anchors at Port Jackson, Sydney Cove. Darwin describes the place as an impressive city, although the population of Sydney was only 23,000 at the time. Captain FitzRoy thinks the people in Sydney lack literary pursuits, as there were very few booksellers in town.

16 January

Darwin goes with a guide and two horses on a 190 kilometre inland trip to Bathurst, New South Wales. They pass through Parramatta along the way and spend the night at Emu Ferry, 56 kilometres west of Sydney. Darwin comments on the scant vegetation, and contrasts it with the tropical forests of South America. The next day some Aboriginal people pass them on the road, and Darwin pays them a shilling to display their spear-throwing skills.

18 January

Early in the morning, Darwin walks to Govett's Leap in the Blue Mountains to admire the view. He then leaves the Blackheath area and descends the mountains via the pass of Mount Victoria.

19 January

Darwin goes on a kangaroo-hunting trip. In the evening he takes a stroll along a small stream and sees a few platypus, which he thinks are extraordinary. (During his time in New South Wales, Darwin made observations on the local wildlife and was astonished by the creatures he saw—especially the platypus.) In his diary, he remarks on the social divide among the different classes of the people.

30 January

HMS *Beagle* leaves Sydney Harbour and sails for Tasmania (then called Van Diemen's Land).

5–16 February

HMS *Beagle* enters Storm Bay at Hobart Town, Van Diemen’s Land. The population of the island was 13,826 people at the time, and the entire island was a convict colony. The *Beagle* stays. He also climbs Mount Wellington, and collects botanical specimens—just as Robert Brown had done as part of Matthew Flinders’ crew in 1803.

17 February – 12 March

HMS *Beagle* sets sail for King George’s Sound, Western Australia, and arrives on 6 March. The ship remains there for 8 days, and Darwin finds the place very dull-looking. He goes on a few inland excursions, but is not very impressed with the landscape.

13 March

After a delay due to poor weather, the *Beagle* sails out of King George’s Sound.

In April 1836, Darwin also spent time on the Cocos (Keeling) islands in the Indian Ocean, where he developed his theory on the formation of coral atolls.

Darwin’s Visit to Australia

Encourage the students to select a time or place during Darwin’s visit to Australia to do further research on what Darwin saw and found. Invite the students to mark the locations he visited on a map of Australia, and to write a short paragraph on Darwin’s findings and feelings. Have the students illustrate their writing.

Evolution

Discuss with the students the theory of evolution. Provide them with a summary of information on what this theory is about. Ask the students to list similarities and differences between the theory of evolution and Darwin’s theory of natural selection.

Darwin drama

Reread a diary entry from Darwin’s visit to Australia with the students. Divide the class into small groups and ask the groups to perform a section from Darwin’s diary entries.

Model of HMS Beagle

Provide the students with different recyclable materials. Divide the class into small groups and invite them to design and make a model of HMS *Beagle*. Hang or display the models around the classroom. Log onto **www.anmm.gov.au** and visit the Blogs section to see how a model-maker created a specially commissioned model of HMS *Beagle* for the exhibition at the Australian National Maritime Museum.

Looking into the future

After meeting many Indigenous Australians and viewing their many acts of kindness and generosity, Charles Darwin made the comment that 'the white man is doomed to rob him of his country'. Look at this statement in the context of Darwin's trip to Australia and the time he lived in, then as a class discuss why you think Darwin made this prediction. Talk with students about whether they think he was right. Discuss how relationships with Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians have been since the 1800s, and how they are now.

Find out more about the Australian National Maritime Museum's exhibition *Charles Darwin—Voyages and ideas that shook the world* and accompanying school programs at **www.anmm.gov.au**

Charles Darwin

VOYAGES AND IDEAS THAT SHOOK THE WORLD