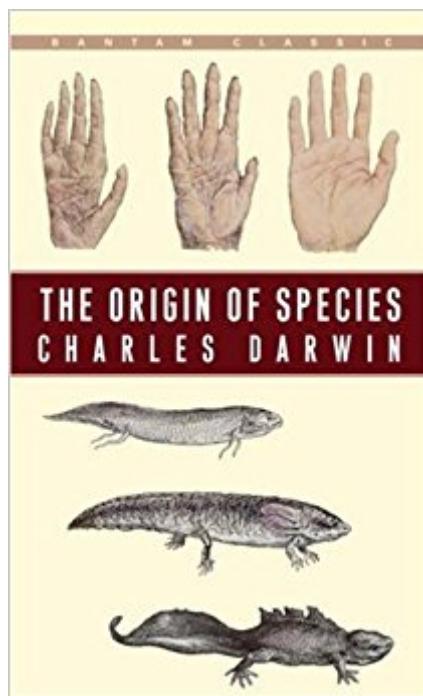


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The Origin Of Species



Synopsis

The publication of Darwin's *The Origin of Species* in 1859 marked a dramatic turning point in scientific thought. The volume had taken Darwin more than twenty years to publish, in part because he envisioned the storm of controversy it was certain to unleash. Indeed, selling out its first edition on its first day, *The Origin of Species* revolutionized science, philosophy, and theology. Darwin's reasoned, documented arguments carefully advance his theory of natural selection and his assertion that species were not created all at once by a divine hand but started with a few simple forms that mutated and adapted over time. Whether commenting on his own poor health, discussing his experiments to test instinct in bees, or relating a conversation about a South American burrowing rodent, Darwin's monumental achievement is surprisingly personal and delightfully readable. Its profound ideas remain controversial even today, making it the most influential book in the natural sciences ever written—an important work not just to its time but to the history of humankind.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It's hard to talk about *The Origin of Species* without making statements that seem overwrought and fulsome. But it's true: this is indeed one of the most important and influential books ever written, and it is one of the very few groundbreaking works of science that is truly readable. To a certain extent it suffers from the Hamlet problem--it's full of clichés! Or what are now clichés, but which Darwin was the first to pen. Natural selection, variation, the struggle for existence, survival of the fittest: it's all in here. Darwin's friend and "bulldog" T.H. Huxley said upon reading the *Origin*, "How

extremely stupid of me not to have thought of that." Alfred Russel Wallace had thought of the same theory of evolution Darwin did, but it was Darwin who gathered the mass of supporting evidence--on domestic animals and plants, on variability, on sexual selection, on dispersal--that swept most scientists before it. It's hardly necessary to mention that the book is still controversial: Darwin's remark in his conclusion that "Light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history" is surely the pinnacle of British understatement. --Mary Ellen Curtin

Starred Review. Originally published in 1859, Darwin's revolutionary idea is revisited in this spirited and profoundly enthralling reading by Professor Richard Dawkins, who in reading Darwin's material aloud manages to rediscover old ideas and unearth some dramatic subtleties in his prose. Dawkins offers a well-pronounced, pitch-perfect delivery and smartly never attempts to turn the reading into a performance from Darwin's point of view. Instead, Dawkins delivers the material from his own context as a modern-day interpreter of the classical work. Dawkins also splendidly adapts this abridgment, leaving out sections of Darwin's original theories that have been discredited by modern science. Dawkins says he believes his alterations are what Darwin himself would have wished for the recording, and the final result is an absolutely astounding glimpse into life as we know it. (Aug.)

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-- This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Though at times the volume of facts that are presented seemed overwhelming, I had to remind myself of the difficulties Darwin faced in expounding his new theory. Still more impressive are the arguments he makes that anticipated some of the modern attacks of creationism. I am glad to have read this classic book of the biological sciences.

Wait until the last chapter - it's worth the slog. The major part of the book repeatedly shows us evidence of evolution, with minor comments on how this or that theory is incompatible with the 'creation' of species. It is almost painfully repetitive, until the last chapter. But then he makes a change of direction and elaborates (in his impeccable politeness) how the old ideas of creation are about the die down, and that even eminent scientists of his era won't accept his theory. But he states that a new, fresh set of 'young and rising naturalists' will 'do good service by conscientiously expressing his conviction; for only thus can the load of prejudice by which this subject is overwhelmed be removed.'

I liked this book. People who are interested in historical books should be interested in reading this book... One of the things that was especially interesting is the author's writing style and ability to get his message across. Overall, this book was very well written and I highly recommend to those who have not read. To those who have read it - read it again!

This is a classic in the study of biology that would never have been written if Darwin knew what we know about cellular biology today. It is a big and complex book about a small and erroneous idea, but it is good to read what students are still being taught in their schools today. The book is complex because it is a compendium of evidence that variation does occur and this is important to understand. But it is tragic in that the author fails to understand that "survival of the fittest" offers only loss of life and can never introduce anything new. Note that he refers to the "Creator" as he is confronted by evidence that clearly fails to be explained by his religious evolution myths. Darwin had as much training in religion as he had in biology and this helps explain why faith is so important to him where he lacks evidence.

This book should be on every nonfiction shelf on earth. I've heard it called the second most important text second only to the bible, but its unfair to me to even compare in that category. Both the bible and origin of species have always been open to interpretation as any book should, the difference is that since its publishment, the theory of natural selection has been shown by evidence and repeated demonstration of experiment, to be absolutely true as a theory of how simple organisms can evolve over great spans of time into much more complex beings. This book does not preach, it does not command, and it does not judge. It only shows the scientific observations of a very intelligent and thoughtful man on the origin of species.

This classic needs no introduction. It is mandatory reading for anyone pretending to know anything about the life sciences. Fortunately, Darwin was a gifted writer. It is very accessible. There is ample human interest in his personal experiences, whether sailing around the world on the HMS Beagle, exchanging correspondence with the leading minds of his day, or engaging his ever-curious mind in conversation with all whom he encountered in life. Don't be afraid to give it to adolescents. I found a musty old volume in the UC Berkeley library at the age of fifteen and was fascinated. It is now, via and the Internet, much more accessible. Do it!

The hardcover illustrated version is a keeper. I wanted to help get my 13 yr. old interested in

learning about evolution and Darwin. The illustrations help make a possibly difficult read for her way more interesting. It also makes for an excellent conversational coffee table book. Simply awesome.

The original book by Charles Darwin is a classic that should be on everyone's reading list. There are ample reviews here which address it, praise it, and I am completely in agreement with them.

Darwin's Origin of Species is a true masterpiece. Unfortunately, this review is to help readers/buyers realize that there is a 'vandalized' version which has been published, and to tell you how to avoid it and get the real thing. To explain; there is yet another edition also called "The Origin of Species, 150th Anniversary Edition", put out by Christian Fundamentalist Ray Comfort in an attempt to discredit evolutionary theory and Charles Darwin, and it has some extra 50 pages of unintelligible drivel about creationism, as well as having ABRIDGED Darwin's original text. If you want to read about creationism, find another book... if you want the facts, read ALL of what Darwin has to say, and please don't give any money to Comfort by accidentally buying his ABRIDGED version. Note that he used the EXACT same name as the 'real' anniversary edition -- "The Origin Of Species: 150th Anniversary Edition by Charles Darwin". You can easily tell which version you're getting by who wrote the introduction - go with Julian Huxley, NOT Ray Comfort, and you'll have the correct and complete version. Also, note that reviews are mixed between the books (normally not a problem at all) - I hope they are straightening this out, but currently that's not the case. Sadly, the negative reviews of the Comfort version are bringing down the rating of the 'good/real' book. Sorry to have to write about the 'drama', but I'm sure you want to know that you have ordered the correct book, and I know you'll love it. Enjoy.

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