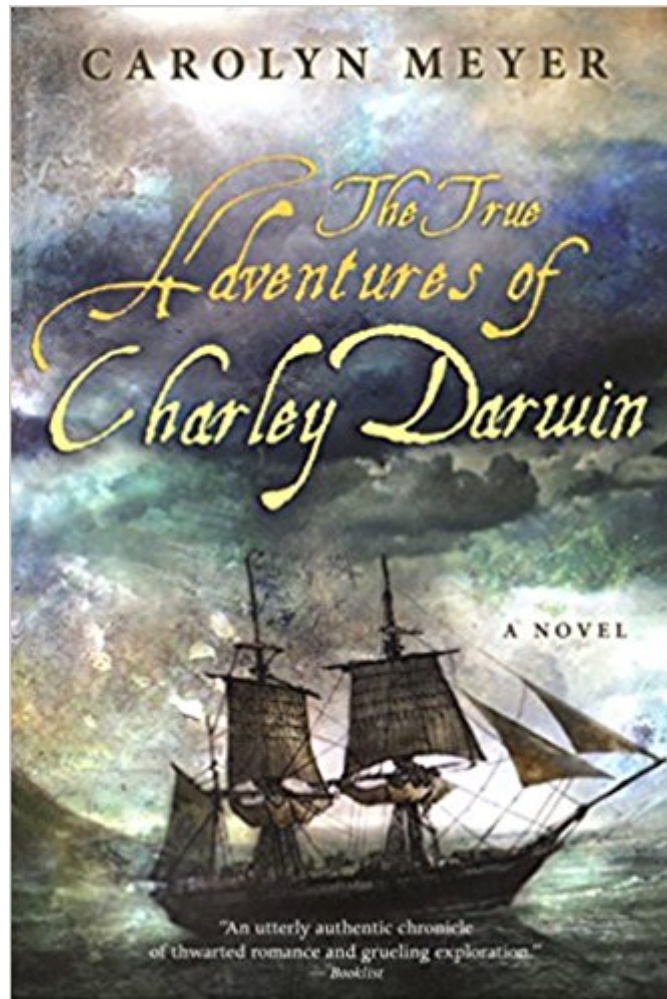


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The True Adventures Of Charley Darwin



Synopsis

Young Charley Darwin hated school—he much preferred to be outside studying birds' eggs, feathers, and insects. And so, at the age of twenty-one, he boarded a ship called HMS Beagle and spent five thrilling but dangerous years sailing around the world, studying plant and animal life that was beyond anything he could have imagined. Historical novelist Carolyn Meyer tells the story of his unconventional adventures of the author of the legendary book *The Origin of Species*. It's the story of a restless childhood, unrequited teenage love, and a passion for studying nature that was so great, Darwin would sacrifice everything to pursue it.

Book Information

Paperback: 336 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars See all reviews (7 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #803,654 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #51 in Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > Exploration & Discovery #131 in Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > Biographical #150 in Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Exploration & Discoveries

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

This wonderful YA historical novel relates the story of young Charles Darwin in a way that allows every reader to experience his journey of discovery. We meet Charley as a boy who prefers to hunt newts in the quarry rather than study Latin and Greek in the classroom; we sympathize with his plight as a youth under immense pressure to pursue careers in which he has no interest; and we experience the excitement of destiny realized when the young man embarks on a perilous journey that will forever transform the way he (and the rest of the world) understands the origin and complexity of life. Written in the voice of Charley Darwin, the text is accessible and thoroughly engaging for all readers who are young, and young at heart. The story focuses on Charley as a

person - his relationships with friends, family and cousins, his struggles with questions of career and marriage. We see his curiosity, enthusiasm, courage and uncertainty, his humility and pride, his capacity for compassion and dedication to his work. The romances with Fanny Owen and Emma Wedgwood are thoroughly charming in their awkwardness, heartbreak, and (in the case of one, at least) fulfillment. In her interpretation of the character of Charley Darwin, Meyer takes the myth out of the personae, and turns this sometimes controversial historical figure into an engaging young man we might have all admired and befriended, had we had the opportunity to know him personally. Though Darwin's coming of age takes center stage, the thread of science is constant throughout, allowing young readers a basic introduction to the foundations and logic of evolutionary theory as originally conceived by this brilliant natural historian.

As an older man, his pictures reveal a thin, white-bearded, imposing-looking figure. Charles Darwin built his reputation as an outstanding scientist and collector. His life's work was devoted to the study of nature and the development of theories that, in his time, made him the subject of controversy. Gentle, shy and ever curious, he seemed destined from childhood to enlighten those around him. Charley Darwin was born in the right place to pursue his avid interests in nature. In England's peaceful Shrewsbury district, with its lovely rivers and woods, he took every opportunity to be outside exploring. Being the youngest boy, with three older, hovering sisters, he was happily indulged. Even his older brother, Erasmus "Ras", had a keen interest in nature and often joined him in dragging back various specimens found in the area. His younger sister, Emily, along with the three older ones --- Marianne, Susan and Caroline --- adored their two brothers. When their mother died, the sisters took over the job of "mothering" eight-year-old Charley --- especially the oldest, Caroline. Though loving, she was also strict in trying to discipline him in his education. Charley's father, a physician with a very successful practice, had great expectations for young Charles, hoping he also would go into medicine. Though Charley had excellent communication with patients and was clever with medicinal formulas, it was not the life he wanted. He had been very unhappy with his time in the Shrewsbury boarding school, and when his medical studies did not work out, his father decided he was more fit for the clergy. At Christ's College, though, he finished his degree, still drawn to botany, hunting and specimen collecting.

"I struggled to gain my footing and held on as best I might to a leg of the chart table, which was bolted down; Midshipman King clung to another leg. His look of terror must have mirrored my own as doors and hatches burst open and water poured through in a great cataract. I was as frightened

as I had ever been, certain I was on my way to a watery grave. My life seemed about to end just as my father had feared: I would be drowned, my body lost forever, my family learning of my death only months from now." "On the eve of the 200th anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth, a new Gallup Poll shows that only 39% of Americans say they 'believe in the theory of evolution,' while a quarter say they do not believe in the theory, and another 36% don't have an opinion either way. These attitudes are strongly related to education and, to an even greater degree, religiosity. There is a strong relationship between education and belief in Darwin's theory, as might be expected, ranging from 21% of those with high-school educations or less to 74% of those with postgraduate degrees." -- Gallup.com

As a child, I enthusiastically collected baseball cards and Matchbox cars, and the coins that I would keep in those blue coin collection folders that many of my fellow kids from the Sixties should remember. In the summer I loved wandering along the Long Island beaches searching for pretty shells to bring home. And for many years, across the street from our house in Commack, there was a vacant lot with a long, exposed face of sand and rock where my friends and I sought out stones of all colors. We then headed home with our treasures and cracked them open with a hammer in order to observe the crystalline structures inside. I've never lost my affinity for collecting shells and stones.

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