

Lesson 1: Charles Darwin – an explorer of the British Empire

You will need access to the [TEM Charles Darwin Explorer](#) for this lesson.

During the C18th and C19th Britain sent its royal and merchant navy fleets on expeditions around the world to map coastlines and discover new things for its growing empire. They found new land for farming, new ingredients for eating and as medicine, gold and diamonds for mining, and people they enslaved to work on their farms (plantations)... Scientists were important members of the crew on board these ships whose role it was to identify plants and rocks that were discovered on route. They also came up with new scientific ideas about how the world worked.

One of these scientists was Charles Darwin, who boarded HMS Beagle at Plymouth in England and departed for his trip around the world on 27th December 1831. He returned home again almost 5 years later, on 2nd October 1836. This trip inspired him to develop a theory of evolution called 'natural selection' which he published in a book called the 'Origin of Species' over 20 years later in 1859.

Exercise 1: Darwin's Scientific Journey on HMS Beagle

Teacher notes: 20 minutes

Darwin visited several countries on his trip around the world. Work out his route. Follow the Beagle's trail from England, find one pin in each of these countries and add the name of the place and date when he was there into the table below:

(Tip: don't forget to zoom in/ use the search bar/ change the base map if this helps)

Flag						
	Brazil	Chile	Ecuador (Galapagos)	New Zealand (Aotearoa)	Australia	South Africa
Place						
date						

Exercise 2: Darwin's collecting in Tierra del Fuego

Teacher notes: 20 minutes






Wherever HMS Beagle went, Darwin found and collected natural history objects from the landscape. While at sea he caught marine creatures in a big net or shot birds in the air. On land, he took his hammer to collect rocks from the mountains, picked plants and captured insects, birds and animals to send home as dead 'specimens'.

During 1833-4 Darwin spent a lot of time travelling and collecting in the far south of South America – in a place we call Tierra del Fuego (or 'land of fire' in Spanish). We are going to follow in Darwin's footsteps by zooming into Tierra del Fuego on the map and discovering some of the specimens he found there. All these objects were sent home by Darwin and are now in museums mostly here in the UK. He used them to help develop his scientific ideas about evolution. An artist travelled with Darwin on his travels. Conrad Martens sketched many of the views they saw, and this provided a vital record in the days before cameras and photography.



Zoom into the bottom of South America on your map to find Tierra del Fuego and Magellan Strait

Explore Darwin's collecting journey in Tierra del Fuego by clicking on various pins, and choose an example object for each of the following categories:




					
	Rock specimen from the ground	Creature from the sea	Bird from the air	Plant specimen from the landscape	Artist's picture
Name of object/ picture					
Place it is from					
Why I chose this object/ picture					

We will add this information to a new *Explorers and the British Empire* map we will create for your work over the next few months.

Exercise 3: Darwin and HMS Beagle's Impact on Local (Indigenous) communities

Teacher notes: 20 minutes

During their travels around the world, Darwin and the crew of HMS Beagle met several groups of local (indigenous) people who were already living in the places he visited. It was often the case that explorers from Britain were not the first people to find a place but were the first people from Britain to come across a place that others lived in.

		
<p>Imagine you were walking home from school one day and an alien spaceship suddenly appeared in the sky and landed right in front of you. Discuss as a group what you think might happen next? How might you feel? How might the visitors feel? Would you run away or stay? Would you try and talk to them? Would you be able to understand each other?</p>		
<p>This is pretty much how it might have been for indigenous people when HMS Beagle arrived, with the Beagle being the spaceship and Darwin being one of the aliens!</p>		
<p>Discover and describe 2 examples of these 'encounters'.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Search for the story of o'run-del'lico along the Beagle Channel and Ponsonby Sound... <p>If you have time:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">2. Search for the word Indigenous and choose an example from Australia/ New Zealand	<p>Example 1: O'run-del'lico</p>	<p>Example 2: Australia/ New Zealand</p>

Exercise 4: Legacies of British empire for indigenous people

Teacher notes: 15 minutes

The journeys of explorers like Darwin were part of an expansion of British empire which resulted in significant loss for local indigenous people around the world. This past still influences the world we have today.

Shuffle the 'legacies of empire' cards and place face down on the table. Each student, pick up a card and read out its content. Talk about your thoughts on each card as a group.