



The True Adventures of Charley Darwin

Carolyn Meyer

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The fascinating journey of a famous naturalist

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.

Here, historical novelist Carolyn Meyer tells the story of his unconventional adventures. 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.

The True Adventures of Charley Darwin Details

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Linda says

This book is the biographical story of Charles Darwin, the famous controversial naturalist. It's meant as a young adult book but I think that it's a great book for adults also. It starts with his young life and chronicles his 5 year voyage on a ship around the world collecting specimens of flora and fauna and how he documented his finds. It shows how he came about with his theories of evolution. I found it very interesting and loved the story of his travels.

Katherine Basto says

I really enjoyed this book! I always learn so much from Carolyn Meyer's books. And I always want to read more on any of the subjects that she writes about. This was no exception. A well written, fictionalized narrative told by a young Charles Darwin, the story goes from Charles as a young boy to Charles a young adult aboard the Beagle! Well done!

Ryan says

This book is about the young Charles Darwin and his dangerous and enlightening adventures. The genre is Historical Fiction. I would use this in a 7th grade class as a story path.

Heather Crozier says

The True Adventures of Charley Darwin is the fictionalized account of the early years of naturalist Charles Darwin, covering his childhood in Shropshire, England up through his marriage at age 29. Told in the first person, the early years of Charley's life are described in detail that makes the era come alive, although the author's choice to tell the story as Charley might have written in the nineteenth century, complete with the English spellings, may make reading more difficult for young adult readers. The time Darwin spent on the HMS Beagle seemed to drag on and I found myself losing interest; however, it is sure to appeal to those who enjoy historical fiction as well as stories of discovery and sea voyages. The book is an excellent introduction to Darwin's personal history as a means to understanding the man that he became and does not focus on evolution.

Dagny says

The True Adventures of Charley Darwin by Carolyn Meyer is a book about, well, the true adventures of Charley Darwin. It gives a vivid window into the life of one of the most famous naturalists in the world beginning in his childhood. The famous, hard-faced, solemn picture that is always shown along with Charles Darwin is, apparently, a terrible representation of who he really was. Charles was wild at heart, curious, shy,

and passionate about nature.

Charley Darwin grew up in Shrewsbury, Shropshire, England in the early 1800's- as a wild little boy who was always running out into nature to collect specimens and samples. He hated going to school, and the methods of education at that time were horrible and made Charley miserable. He would much rather be doing experiments with animal eggs, insects, feathers, and plants. During his time in England, he's also always running off to see his extended family and his love interest- Fanny Owen. Charley wants to study nature, conduct experiments, and spend time with Fanny, but unfortunately his father greatly disapproves. He eventually is privileged to leave the school he suffered in for so long, but his father now wants him to become a clergyman. Despite all the efforts to turn Charley into a man he isn't, Charley can't shake the childish, wild side of himself and at the age of 21 he gets on the HMS Beagle and spends the next five years sailing to exotic places to study nature and animals and fulfill his life dream.

I found this book very interesting, although some parts seemed to drag. You find a lot of sympathy for Charles and really root for him during the times when he's having it rough. This book also had it's doses of humor and fun, relieving the serious aura that embodied a lot of Charley's life. I think the foundation of the story was Charley's obsession with nature that never went away. After all, it pulled him through every hardship thrown at him and set him on his path to become one of the most famous naturalists of all time. Charles Darwin is often portrayed as controversial, serious, and solemn. In this book you see how his childhood curiosity never died, how despite his father's warnings and the school environment he endured, he would always be conducting experiments. He would always be collecting insect specimens. He would always dissect and observe every interesting rock, bird, plant, and egg he could find, and he would never stop following his passions. It led him to travel to remote islands and continue his collecting until he came up with his theory of evolution. People hated him for going against Christian ideas, but he still didn't stop. This book shows who Charles really was, his ambition, curiosity, and wildness never fading.

Rachel Sandhorst says

For a young adult book, I found this book engaging, interesting and informative. The author did a good job of describing Darwin's life as a child in England and his interest in the natural world from a young age. I also enjoyed the section about his travels on the Beagle and all the amazing natural wonders he found. It helped put his future work in perspective. I definitely recommend this to middle grade readers.

Christi says

Summary: In *The True Adventures of Charley Darwin* by Carolyn Meyer explores the early life of a young Charles Darwin as he begins his academic career and discovers his love of nature and the outdoors. As a student, Charles is not very studious, but does his work. He spends the majority of his time exploring the school grounds and the wilderness surrounding his home and other places he travels to vacation with his family. Having lost his mother at a very young age, his father, brother, and sisters provide him with the support he needs to discover his true calling, not as a doctor, as his father intended, but as a naturalist and scientist. His desire to explore sends him on a five year embarkation around the world with Captain Robert FitzRoy on the HMS Beagle. On this adventure, Charles collects the many different species discovered in South America, the Galapagos Islands, Australia, and Africa. He finally returns home to begin analyzing his findings, his collection of species, and his many journals. He also finds love and marries his cousin Emma. Charles makes the observation of species and their adaptation to the environment as he rewrites his journal

but decides to wait on its publication. Finally, at the age of fifty, he published his findings *On the Origin of Species* which became a huge success and began a debate that continues even now.

Review: Carolyn Meyer's book *The True Adventures of Charley Darwin* is an easy, informative read that provides a narrative of Charles Darwin's early life as a boy. Meyer characterizes Charles as an aimless youth, disinterested in school and eager for more. Charles learns from his experiences who he is and what he wants to be without anyone else telling him, including his father. His father helps him along his journey providing him with sage advice and financial support. It takes a trip around the world on the HMS Beagle for Charles to truly come into his own, and when he returns five years later, he has become a worldly young man. Young boys and girls alike can certainly identify with his character and will learn that sometimes it may take longer to discover who you are meant to be.

Erica says

For most people the name Darwin brings to mind an old, serious-looking man with a long, white beard. But what about Charley Darwin--the small boy who couldn't still in class because he'd rather be collecting specimens outside? Darwin's life was not always certain and the man who would go on to become one of the most important and controversial scientists of his day (and ours) was once a young man, unsure of himself and without a clue as to what he'd do with his life. This book follows that boy from his days as a mediocre student worshiping his older brother who seemed much more likely to make something out of his life through his growth into the young man who joined the Beagle Expedition and set off on a trip around the world from which he knew he may never return.

I read this book just a couple of days after Darwin's birthday and enjoyed it immensely. It was easy to relate to the young Darwin and the picture of his life as a young boy was charming and surprising. The book also seemed fairly well-researched while allowing for small discrepancies to augment the narrative, which is just how I like it. What results is a fascinating portrait of a man and his time that provides a context to better understand both the man and his theories. I found it interesting following him on his travels as his ideas grew and become more solid and certain and seeing just how his theory evolved (I couldn't resist). Plus, I love it when novels have bibliographies in the back.

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Sherrie says

I've always thought of Charles Darwin as an old man with grey hair and a beard. But this book gives you a bird's eye view into the young Charley Darwin. This book is about Charley in school, which he hated, and as a young man sailing around the world. What starts out as a voyage of 2 years turns out to be 5 years. He sees things he's never seen before. And he is so sea sick during the voyage. He spends most of his time on ship in his hammock. But once on land Charley is his old self again. Off to find the elusive plant, rock, animal or whatever he finds. If you like reading about history this is the book for you.

Karin Gastreich says

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 Wedgewood 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. We see, step by small step, how Charley Darwin's keen eye for natural history led him from a very early age toward the inevitable development of the theory that would revolutionize science and inaugurate a new era of biological inquiry.

Most of all, is a great read. I would recommend it without reservation for anyone interested in adventure, history, biology, evolution, exploration, and the ever-appealing theme of coming-of-age.

Julia Lacy says

Growing up in a Christian, God-centered home, I never was fully allowed access to the theories of Darwin and evolution. Even in school, my biology teacher would always skim the "Evolution Links" at the beginning of each section in the text book. He would always preface the evolution chapters with, "Now remember, these are theories- they have never been proven, which means that aren't necessarily true." Before reading this book, I have had very seldom and brief exposure to the life of Charles Darwin and his discoveries while travelling on the HMS Beagle. To my surprise, I absolutely loved reading from the perspective of such an accomplished and dignified scientist and naturalist. I am excited to share this book with my future students.

From the perspective of Charley Darwin, the author takes the reader through the young life of Darwin to about his thirties, when he marries his wife, Emma. From the beginning of the book, I knew I was going to enjoy the factual based account of Charley's life through the lens of his own thoughts. It is no surprise to read of Charley's obsession with living things, like insects and other various specimens. His unrivaled interest is exactly what I would expect from the famous naturalist in the making. It is so interesting to read- even if some of the material is fictional- about his findings and discoveries as a young boy, while knowing about his renowned work in the future. I believe students would enjoy reading such a perspective as well. This book humanizes the great Charles Darwin; it makes his relatable and accessible. After completing the book, I feel more familiarized with his work (and reasoning behind his work) than I did after several complete biology courses.

I never knew many things about Charles Darwin, and that really surprised me. I should definitely be more familiar with the man from whom millions of people gain their beliefs about the theories of life. I was never

aware of the strict home in which Charley lived. Though his father loved Charley and his brother and sisters dearly, he never really showed his love. Rather, he was cold and business-like- only visiting Charley once at Shrewsbury School, a boarding school in Shropshire, England. I also never knew of Charley's harsh treatment while at school or about his close relationship with his "sisterhood" Other students, like his roommate, Garnett, bullied him relentlessly. Despite this, Charley never really acted in such ways to retaliate against his peers. His sisters were a driving force for him, especially during the years in which he attended boarding school. The most shocking fact about Darwin though, was his studies at Christ's College. For some reason, in my mind, I believed that Darwin was a godless man, and that simply isn't the case. In all honesty, Darwin's studies and strict knowledge of the Bible and Christianity might be more extensive than my own. When he went on his voyage, he was simply discovering the truth. He even felt conflicted about publishing his "big book" of all of his discoveries. He feared he hurt his family and his wife, Emma.

This book really surprised me in a variety of ways. I was really pleased with the manner in which it portrayed Darwin and his discoveries. If I had had the chance to read this book when I was younger, I think I would have definitely had a much deeper understanding of the roots of evolution. Instead of listening to the negative stigmas brought along with the idea of evolution and other "anti-creation" theories, I would have been more likely to seek out the actual facts behind Darwin's theories and renowned discoveries in the Galapagos. Though some of this story is certainly fictionalized, such as some of the trivial dialogue, the major events, discoveries, and figures are factual.

I would love to have this book in my future classroom. Students have the right to seek out knowledge with which they might be confused.

Andrea Wall says

I think this may be my favourite book by Carolyn Meyer.

Before reading this I knew nothing about Charles Darwin, I just knew that he had had some very very good ideas and had changed how we think about things and evolution. etc. etc. I had never thought of him as an actual real living person who falls in love and had feelings. So I think that is what made me enjoy this book so much. Now I feel like I really know him and he is a character that sticks out in my mind instead of some old guy.

I think this is what Meyer was trying to do too. Look at Charley Darwin, instead of Charles Darwin. And I thought she did an excellent job of it.

There were parts during the sea voyage where I got a bit distracted/bored but overall it was a good read, and I am now very much interested in finding out more of Mr. Darwin.

David says

The 150th anniversary of the publication of Darwin's **On The Origin of Species** saw a flurry of activity in the publishing industry. This book is written as a novel and focuses on Darwin's education, his fascination with the natural world and eventual voyage of discovery aboard the Beagle with Captain Fitzroy. Along the way is the story of Darwin's love life, or lack thereof until his eventual marriage at the age of 29 to Emma Wedgewood, his cousin.

This book is a fun read. The historical recreation of English life among the landed gentry at the beginning of the 19th Century is recreated in the manner of a typical 19th Century novel, though in less florid style. I had been hoping the author would have broken into a Bulwer-Lytton style when she described one of the dark and rainy scenes: "Through the dark, wet hours we rolled from stage to stage, stopping only long enough to change horses. By morning the rain had lessened, then ceased, and a few rays of sunshine pierced the iron grey clouds." (p.261) The mimesis alone is reason enough to read this book.

Theresa says

I don't know how to rate this book. Before Charley got on the Beagle it was a high 4 star book. Much of his travels bored me to tears and made it hard to imagine even giving it a 3 star. But then he came home and it warmed up again. I'm just going to give it a 4.

I feel like most people would understand Charley's situation. Who really knows what they want to do with their lives? It's pretty grueling. Charley has it no better.

Then he falls in love with a girl he can't have. He doesn't even get to gloat when her new life isn't grand.

The time he spent exploring had me constantly cringing. Just imagining those tortoises on their backs slowly dying made me want to puke. I kept trying to remember as he killed animals that it was for science but it still made me upset. Rediculous I know.

I'm so glad he ended up with lil miss boat tipper. They were perfect together.

Jaeri Ayarez says

When I saw this book, I bought it expecting something thrilling and philosophical story. But it gave me a different one.

As I read it, I realized that it was about Charles Darwin's life. Therefore, I am more interested.

The story wasn't really thrilling even though he had a journey, wasn't that exciting, not really a dramatic one, not a romantic one and of course not BORING. I don't know how exactly should I explain it. It's just when I read it, it feels like normal and peaceful. Yes, he had an adventure, Fanny unexpectedly had such fate and many died. But it feels like, "Ah this is LIFE." it feels like that. Since most of the recent book I read are extraordinary and not really realistic, my heart and mind are at ease and peace while reading this.

Yes, authors would like the readers to be emotionally connected and to reflect within the story. But reading this for a worth while is really a relaxing one.

Now, I honestly didn't understand some parts since there are different language and unfamiliar words. But still I enjoyed reading this. It is worth reading ^^

Oh~ and I was shock about FitzRoy. Why did he do that? (O_O)
