

Darwin's Origin of Species: Books That Changed the World

By Janet Browne

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Charles Darwin’s foremost biographer, Janet Browne, delivers a vivid and accessible introduction to the book that permanently altered our understanding of what it is to be human. A sensation on its publication in 1859, *The Origin of the Species* profoundly shocked Victorian readers by calling into question the belief in a Creator with its description of evolution through natural selection. And Darwin’s seminal work is nearly as controversial today. In her illuminating study, Browne delves into the long genesis of Darwin’s theories, from his readings as a university student and his five-year voyage on the *Beagle*, to his debates with contemporaries and experiments in his garden. She explores the shock to Darwin when he read of competing scientist’s similar discoveries and the wide and immediate impact of Darwin’s theories on the world. As one of the launch titles in Atlantic Monthly Press’ “Books That Changed the World” series, Browne’s history takes readers inside *The Origin of the Species* and shows why it can fairly claim to be the greatest science book ever published.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
Starred Review. It may seem peculiar to write a biography of a book, but Darwin's *Origin of Species* is certainly a worthy subject. A foremost Darwin biographer, Browne takes a straightforward approach to the life and times of this famous tome, beginning with Darwin's early years and journey around the world. She then explains how he developed his theory of evolution (a word that doesn't appear in the first edition) during his years as a country scientist. Darwin included an unusual chapter on things he couldn't yet explain with his theory. On publication, the book gained instant celebrity around the globe—even Queen Victoria took notice of it, though she mused that the book would be too difficult for her to understand. In her discussion of the storm the book aroused, Browne makes the fascinating point that Darwin highly respected his American friend Asa Gray, whose views were very similar to those of today's advocates of intelligent design. Browne's final chapter on the book's legacy isn't comprehensive, but it's a good summary of subsequent modifications to Darwin's theory. This excellent introduction is highly recommended for all readers who want to better understand the heated debates that this book still causes today. *(Mar.)*
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From Booklist
Browne is probably the most knowledgeable living Charles Darwin expert. Author of a two-volume biography detailing his remarkable and influential life, she now presents a biography of the book that made Darwin a household name, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (1859). Browne's contribution to the Books That Changed the World series is written with verve as she emphasizes the immediacy of the book's impact as Darwin shattered the biblical Creation story with a theory elegant in its simplicity. Naturally, religious leaders and other believers in faith over facts challenged the book's evolutionary vision. But Darwin's logic withstood all scrutiny. A mild man with a relentlessly curious, profoundly scientific mind, Darwin never intended to upset his world's moral values, nor could he have imagined that his book would transform Western thought. *Steve Weinberg*
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Review
"Clear and artful. It reads like a compelling mystery; indeed it draws us into the compelling mystery of speculation that captivated Darwin."

"Browne shows great respect for the purity of Darwin's intellectual, moral, and spiritual endeavors. She believes in, and conveys, the lasting power of his legacy--to science and to human culture."

"Browne takes a straightforward approach to the life and times of this famous tome. . . . This excellent introduction is highly recommended for all readers who want to better understand the heated debates that this book still causes today."

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Bobbi Brunner:

The event that you get from Darwin's Origin of Species: Books That Changed the World is the more deep you searching the information that hide inside the words the more you get interested in reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to know but Darwin's Origin of Species: Books That Changed the World giving you thrill feeling of reading. The article author conveys their point in certain way that can be understood by simply anyone who read the idea because the author of this e-book is well-known enough. This particular book also makes your current vocabulary increase well. It is therefore easy to understand then can go to you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We highly recommend you for having this kind of Darwin's Origin of Species: Books That Changed the World instantly.

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