

Fremont Great Books Discussion Questions
“The Origin of the Species” by Charles Darwin
August 27, 2022

1. What does Darwin mean by the phrase “**Natural Selection**” vs. selective breeding?
(Introduction)
2. Describe the phrase “**Survival of the Fittest**” Give some examples of successful adaptations Darwin observed. (Chapter IV)
3. What does Darwin mean by the phrase “**Sexual Selection?**” Give some examples. (Chapter IV)
4. How do **use and disuse** affect modifications in animals? Give examples. (Chapter V)
5. Geographical barriers, such as mountains and bodies of water, show that the **more dominant life forms migrate and survive**. Darwin presents several examples of species which migrate from one environment to another surprisingly successfully. Give examples. (Chapter XIII)
6. The first five chapters describe Darwin’s theories and include examples, while the later chapters provide arguments for and against various difficulties and objections.
7. How do you imagine Darwin’s ideas were received by fellow scientists?
8. Darwin’s book replaced the belief of God’s creation of animals, plants, and humans. This theory shook religious doctrine to its core, provoked cries of heresy, lively debates and were very controversial. How would you describe the continuing conflict in today’s educational system over whether the theory of evolution vs intelligent design may be presented to students?

Additional Resources:

For background on Darwin’s life and the development of his theories, these YouTube videos are excellent:

“**The Making of a Theory: Darwin, Wallace and Natural Selection**” 31 minutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XOiUZ3ycZwU>

“**People of Science with Brian Cox – Sir David Attenborough on Charles Darwin**” 5 minutes

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6yEX_OI0xbQ

Note: Reviewing our recent reading *Alexander Humboldt’s New World* shows that Darwin “admired and worshiped” Humboldt, and studied his writings while on board the HMS Beagle.