

ESSENTIAL READING LIST

Charles Darwin

John van Wyhe, whose latest book is *Charles Darwin's Shorter Publications*, is director of Darwin Online. He recommends five more books on the scientist

THIS YEAR is Charles Darwin's 200th birthday and the 150th anniversary of *The Origin of Species*. These events are being celebrated by a huge number of exhibitions, broadcasts and publications. No one can have yet read all of the new Darwin books that have appeared. Below are five good places to start.

Darwin's astonishing scientific career was determined by his voyage on HMS *Beagle* as naturalist. Although there are many fine accounts of the voyage, ► **Richard Keynes's wonderful *Fossils, Finches and Fuegians* (Harper Collins, 2002)** is the only account of the *Beagle* voyage which focuses on Darwin's scientific work. Science was what Darwin's voyage was all about.

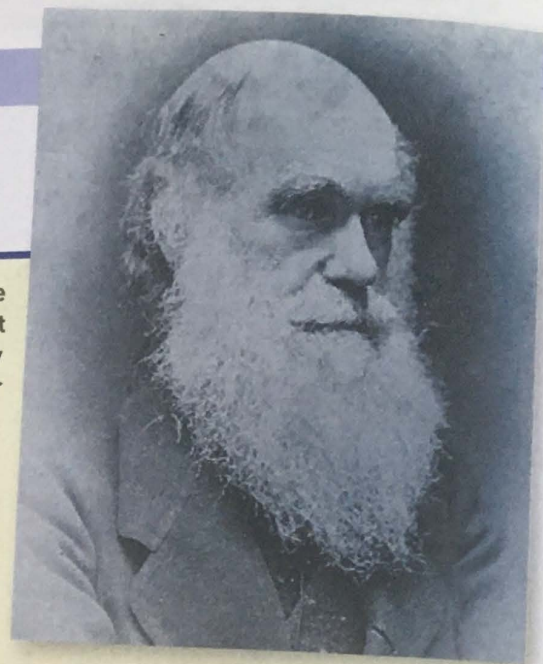
Nothing can replace reading Darwin in the original. ► **James Secord's *Evolutionary Writings: Including the Autobiographies* (Oxford World's Classics, 2008)**, is perhaps the best place to start. It contains carefully chosen selections from *Journal of Researches* (usually called *Voyage of the Beagle*), *Origin of Species*, *Descent of Man* and Darwin's autobiographies together with an amazing collection of contemporary reviews and correspondence in reaction to Darwin from around the world. The book is a great way to get to know what Darwin said and how it was originally received. Unfortunately it perpetuates the view (without mentioning that it has been challenged) that Darwin kept his

theory secret for many years because he was afraid.

Darwin biographer ► **Janet Browne's *Darwin's Origin of Species: A biography* (Atlantic Books, 2006)** is a concise, delightfully readable summary of Darwin's great work and how it came to be written. It is often forgotten that Darwin made many other discoveries besides evolution by natural selection and the new edition of his seminal work

► ***The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (Penguin, 2009)**, edited by **Joe Cain and Sharon Messenger**, is an excellent example not only of the diversity of Darwin's research and impact but of a thoroughly readable edition with many interesting newly published

Charles Darwin, the eminent scientist whose 200th birthday is this year



illustrations and research.

For an excellent all round overview of the history, the science, the myths, the controversies (especially in the USA), tourist attractions and modern cultural legacies of Darwin and evolution, ► **Mark Pallen's *The Rough Guide to Evolution* (Rough Guides, 2009)** is the book to read. **II**



John van Wyhe's books include *Charles Darwin's Shorter Publications 1829-1883* and *Charles Darwin's Notebooks from the Voyage of the Beagle* (both CUP, 2009)