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2nd assignment, Darwin's Revolutions

Selected letter: To J.D. Hooker, 11 Jan.1844. <https://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/letter/DCP-LETT-729.xml>

Your analysis begins here:

This letter was written by Charles Darwin to Joseph Dalton Hooker who was his closest friend in order to express his gratitude that Hooker shared his research on the Botany of S. Patagonia mainly the collection of specimens, and the discussion of the concept of “the origin of species”. By reading the letter, we can figure out the personality of Darwin.

Darwin appears to be rigorous and cautious. He requested Hooker to observe and collect the Galapagos organisms and, in the words, “I determined to collect blindly every sort of fact, which bear any way on what are species.” demonstrated that even though Darwin had come up with the idea of “species are not (it is like confessing a murder) immutable” in this letter in 1844, he didn’t eager for publishing his research.

Indeed, Darwin was cautious about publishing his comprehensive theory of evolution through natural selection. He gathered evidence, conducted experiments, and refined his ideas starting in 1831(the voyage on *HMS* Beagle) to 1859(publishing "On the Origin of Species"). His project was highly ambitious and of immense scope, challenging other scientists, theologians, and even religion. Therefore, he spent over 20 years in order to ensure that his theory was well-supported and could withstand scrutiny.

After the theory of natural selection had finally been brought before a scientific audience at the Linnean Society of London in 1858, Darwin still maintained his rigorous attitude in publishing his theory. He felt that he should publish a fuller and more formal statement, particularly since the excerpts from his writings in the joint paper had not been written for publication.[[1]](#footnote-1)

By the middle of March 1859, when Darwin finally finished all his writing work, he called upon the firm of John Murray, a publisher well-known for its scientific list, and kept sending letters to solve his concern about his book.[[2]](#footnote-2)[[3]](#footnote-3) He was meticulous about the details, including the title, the price, the number of copies to be printed, and the timing of publication. These letters reflect Darwin's aim to ensure the book's success and also his attitude in rigorous.

In conclusion, by reviewing the creation process of The Origin of Species, no matter in selecting evidence, writing content and the publication, Darwin was cautious and rigorous from beginning to end.

I think you seem to have missed the key message of this letter. It was “the mutability of species” that was at the heart of this letter. He described himself as almost like a criminal confessing a murder because of his growing confidence that species are not immutable as the Bible prescribes. Although you did mention Darwin came up with the idea of species change but you didn’t seem to grasp what made him so fearful and anxious.

Level of your understanding of the letter. 1.5/2%

Ability to construct a clear, coherent argument from a specific point of view, to convey this argument to your reader, and to support it through analysis of the letter.1.5/2%

Suitability and effective use of evidence**.** 1.5/2%

Writing style, including good paragraph structure, clarity, and organizational structure.

Good grammar and essay-mechanics (title, spelling, punctuation) 2/2%

Ability to follow presentation instructions for format. 2/2%

Overall: 8.5/10

1. Darwin in letters, 1858-1859: Origin [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. letter from Elwin to Murray, 3 May 1859 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. letter to John Murray, 6 May 1859 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)