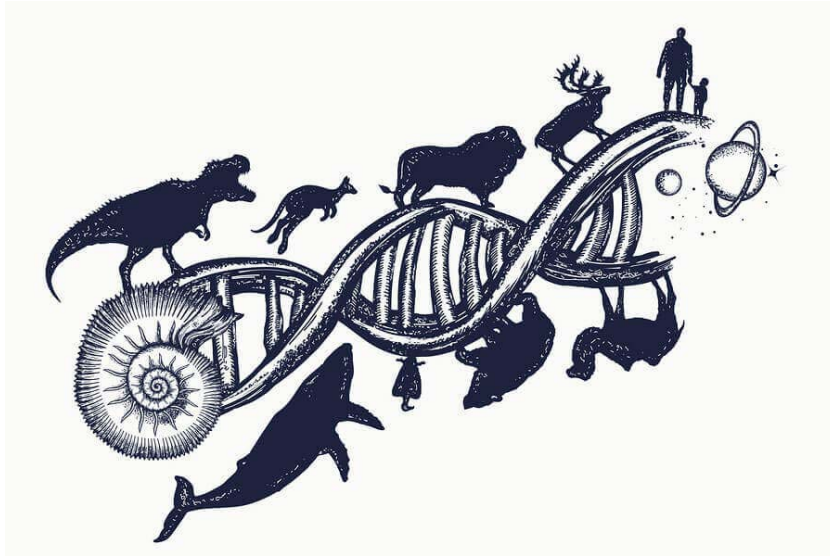


Jack London, To Build a Fire, and Biological Evolution



Interesting Biographical Facts about Jack London

Web resources:

<https://blog.bookstellyouwhy.com/ten-interesting-facts-about-jack-london>

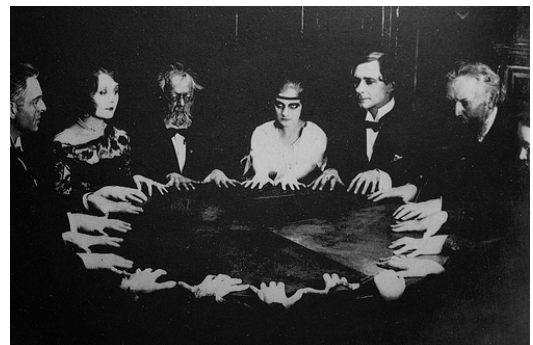
<https://interestingliterature.com/2015/05/23/five-fascinating-facts-about-jack-london/>



Jack London was born as John Griffith Chaney on January 12, 1876 in the slums of San Francisco.

London's mother was a spiritualist and his biological father was an astrologist.

Flora Wellman came from a wealthy home in Massillon, Ohio. She believed she could communicate with the dead, a belief called Spiritualism that reached heights of popularity as she grew up in the 1840s. She also believed she could predict the future. When she was fifteen, the panic of 1858 destroyed her father's finances, and she left home. During the Civil War she was a volunteer with the Sanitary Commission, but nothing else is known about where and how she lived between the years 1860 and 1870. In the early 1870s she took up with William Chaney, a traveling astrologer, in Seattle, Washington. In 1874 the couple moved to San Francisco where Flora brought in money performing seances and teaching music, and William gave lectures on astrology.



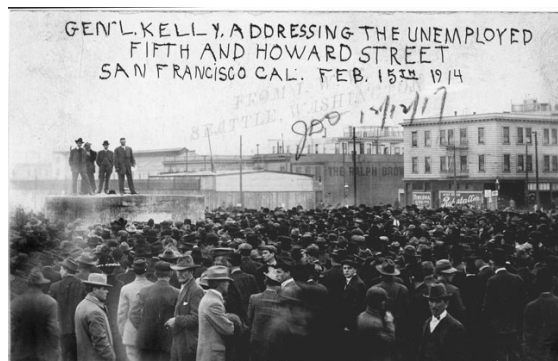


Jack London was a 15-year-old oyster pirate.

As a fifteen year old, London became tired of his grueling, low-paying job at a cannery (where he worked 12-18 hour days), and borrowed \$300 from Virginia Prentiss. With the money he bought a sloop, which he called the Razzle Dazzle, and became an oyster pirate, or poacher, on the San Francisco Bay. After a few months, his boat became irreparably damaged and London was hired by the California Fish Patrol.

At the age of 18, London was arrested for vagrancy.

In 1894, London joined a group called Kelly's Army, a throng of unemployed men dubbed tramps and hobos, who set out from California riding the rails. Kelly's Army was part of a larger group of protesters known as Coxey's Army, which originated in Massillon, Ohio. The goal of Coxey's Army was to march on Washington D.C. and protest unemployment. London split from the group in Missouri and traveled to Niagara Falls where he was arrested, charged with vagrancy, and kept in jail for a month.





London wrote 1,000 words every day.

While toiling in the gold fields of the Klondike, London became severely malnourished and lost several of his front teeth to scurvy. His failing health forced him to return home. When he returned to California in 1898, he was met with the news that his step-father, John London, had died. He decided to dedicate himself to professional writing in order to support his mother. From that moment on, he made it his discipline to write 1,000 words every day.

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CALL OF THE WILD FOR JACK LONDON COMES SUDDENLY

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Santa Rosa, Cal., Nov. 22.—Jack London, the author, died at his Glen Ellen, Cal., ranch near here at 7:45 o'clock to-night, a victim of uremic poisoning. London was taken ill last night and was found unconscious early today by a servant who went to his room to awaken him.

His condition at first alarmed his sister, Mrs. Eliza Shepard, who summoned physicians from this city. It at first was believed that the author was a victim of ptomaine poisoning. Dr. J. Wilson Shields, of San Francisco, a close friend of the writer, was summoned during the day and declared that the patient's condition was serious.

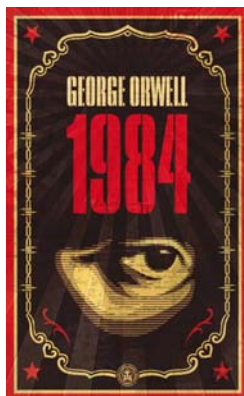
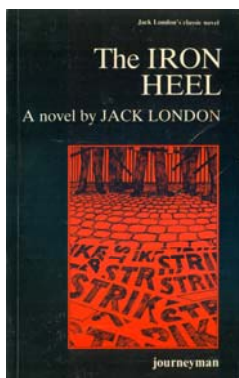
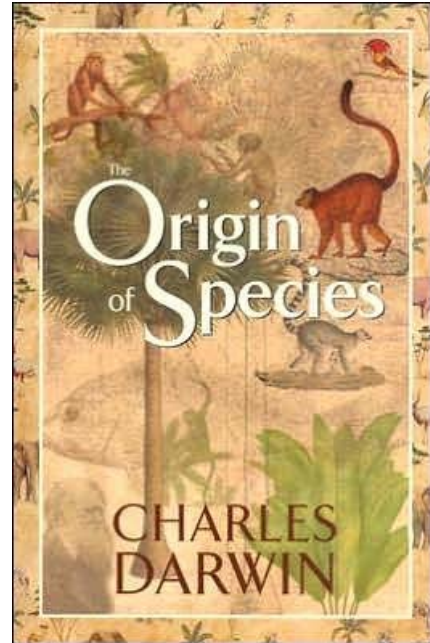
From the time London was found this morning he did not regain consciousness.

Jack London died at the age of 40.

Jack London struggled with his health his entire adult life, due in large part to alcoholism. In 1913, London's doctor discovered that his kidney's were failing, and London began taking morphine to help control the pain. He died at his California ranch on November 22, 1916. His cause of death was a combination of uremia and morphine poisoning. It has been debated among biographers and scholars whether the morphine poisoning was intentional by London.

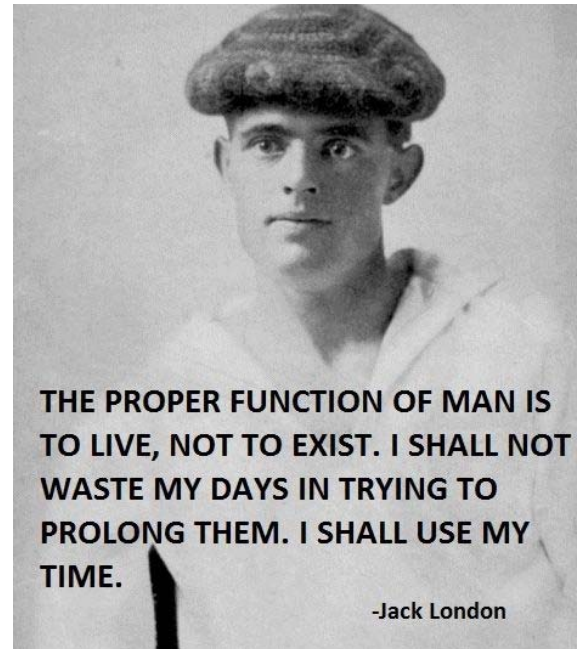
Jack London's San Francisco home has a collection of some of the 600 rejections he received before he sold a single story. Born John Griffith Chaney in 1876, Jack London read voraciously as a youth, and amassed a library of some 15,000 volumes which he described as 'the tools of my trade'.

Darwin was a big influence: (1903) was inspired by his adventures in Alaska and *The Call of the Wild* Canada, when he had a copy of *On the Origin of Species* with him.



He wrote an early dystopian novel which influenced George Orwell. The 1908 novel *The Iron Heel* is widely regarded as the first modern dystopian novel, predating *We*, *Brave New World*, *Fahrenheit 451*, and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by a number of years. *The Iron Heel* advocated socialism – though, as London himself maintained, it was 'the socialism of the caveman'. The dystopian genre would become much more famous in the mid-twentieth century thanks to works like Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949)

He was the first author in the world to become a millionaire from his writing. Perhaps surprisingly given his advocacy for 'the socialism of the caveman', London was an enterprising man driven by a desire to amass wealth, as exemplified by his spell in the Klondike during the gold rush. Gold-mining didn't make him a millionaire, but London's fiction would prove to be a literary goldmine. By the end of his life he was bringing in over \$75,000 a year from his writing.



Jack London (1876-1916)

- Author: Jack London



- 1876-1916
- First American writer to become a millionaire
- 1897 took off to prospect for Yukon Territory in northwestern Canada
- His own adventures in the frozen area were the basis for many of his own stories



General Information

General Information

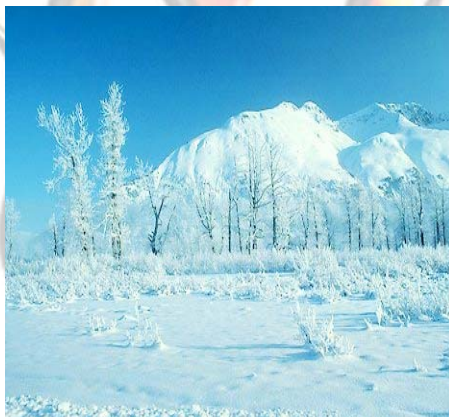


- The unnamed protagonist is presented as being too confident and often unaware of his own “frailty”
- As the harshness of nature surrounds him, he becomes more aware about the folly of this thinking

General Information

General Information

- **Setting**



- The action takes place in Alaska as an unnamed man tries to make his way along the Yukon Trail.
- The story's setting is important in that the story unfolds during a time of extreme cold: the story describes 75 below 0 temperatures and a sun that is seldom seen

Summary and Plot Overview

Summary and Plot Overview



- An unnamed protagonist and his dog ignore advice and make a trek on the Yukon trail in below freezing temperatures
- The protagonist, walking at a brisk pace, hopes to meet “the boys” at camp in 4 hours time

Literary Focus

Literary Focus

- **Foreshadowing**
- London gives subtle clues throughout the narrative pointing to future points of danger in the cold conditions.
 - ***Make sure to take mental notes of these subtle warnings!***
- **Symbolism**
- London intentionally does not tell the reader protagonist’s name: he is symbolic of any man, and any man struggling against forces outside of this control

Literary Focus

- **Point of View**



- The 3rd Person
Omniscient narration offers the reader three distinct views:
 1. That of an uncaring, unattached observer
 2. Insight into the thoughts of the protagonist
 3. Insight into the thoughts of his companion, a dog.

Literary Focus

- **Style: Naturalism and Realism**



- **Naturalism:**
 - Humans were often subjects to natural forces beyond their control
 - He was strongly influenced by Charles Darwin's theories of natural selection and survival of the fittest
- **Realism:**
 - stories were painfully realistic

Themes and Focus

Themes and Focus



Keep the image of this tree in your mind as we read the story "To Build a Fire".

- Man's Insignificance
 - Nature is unfeeling, unresponsive and will continue to survive long after man died
- Nature's Power
 - A seemingly skilled, intelligent protagonist quickly finds himself in dire circumstances

Themes and Focus

Themes and Focus



- Instinct over Reason
 - As the story progresses the man's ability to reason becomes of less value than his dog's ability to rely on its instinct
- Natural Selection and the Survival of the Fittest
 - Man is not made to survive in the elements presented in the story

Character Analysis

Character Analysis

• The Prospector



- Confident to a fault, it is the prospector's own sense of invulnerability that puts him in dangerous situations
- His personality and thoughts alter drastically as his situation worsens

Character Analysis

Character Analysis

• The Dog



- Relies solely on a sense of instinct and survival
- The dog is able to detect subtle clues of danger that his master cannot
- He is better suited for the cold conditions than his human counterpart

The Theory of Biological Evolution

The Theory of Evolution, defined:

“All living species are descendants of ancestral species and are **different** from present day ones due to the cumulative change in the **genetic composition** of a population”

- Sooo in a nutshell, **populations** of living things look and behave differently because over time, their DNA has changed... *but how?*

Charles Darwin (1809-1882)

- Father of the theory of Evolution
- Suggested that **natural selection** is the mechanism by which species evolve over geologic time.
- Proposed **Descent with Modification**:
 - *All organisms on Earth are related through some unknown ancestral type that lived long ago.*



History of the Theory

- **Evolutionary theory** was developed through many generations of scientists interpreting **new evidence** to refine and expand our understanding of biological change across time.
 - Darwin and Wallace (Evolution)
 - Gregor Mendel (Genetics)
 - Franklin, Watson & Crick (Genetics)

The Nuts and Bolts of Evolution

- **Evolution:** A cumulative change in the inherited characteristics of population.
- **Population!!** Is what changes.
- **Evolution is like a tree** – many branches emerged from a common beginning, some branches died off (extinction), others branched multiple times (present-day diversity)



The Nuts and Bolts of Evolution

- The great diversity of living organisms is the result of over 3.5 billion years of evolution, filling every available **niche** with life forms.
- **Niche:** The area within a habitat occupied by an organism OR the ecological role of an organism within its community.
 - *“I’ve found my niche in society, I am a social worker”*
 - *“The arctic fish have found their niche in cold waters due to the adaptations in their cell membranes”*



***Niche:** The area within a habitat occupied by an organism OR the function of an organism within its community.*

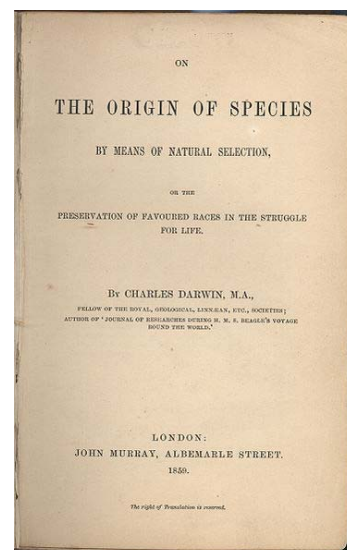
Discuss with your neighbors a possible **niche** for

- Elephant
 - Whale
 - Fish
-
- *Why* have these life forms filled these niches?
 - *How* have these life forms filled these niches?

The Origin of Species

Darwin developed two main ideas:

- Evolution explains life's **unity and diversity**
- **Natural selection** is a cause of adaptive evolution



To Darwin, the history of life is like a tree.

→ multiple branchings from a common trunk to the tips of the youngest twigs that represent the diversity of living organisms

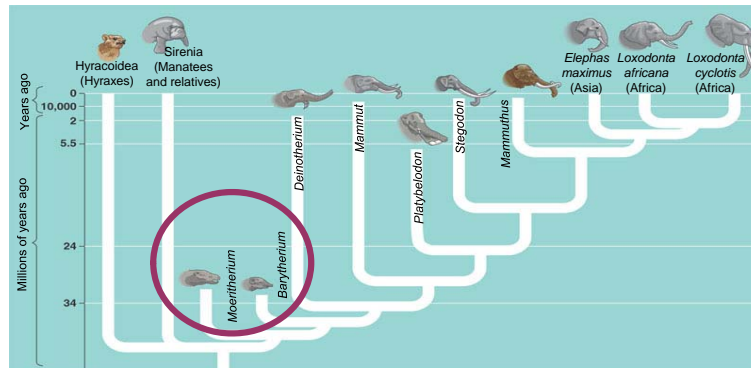


Figure 22.7

The Six Main Points of Darwin's Theory of Evolution

Observations and Inferences



Natural selection does not grant organisms what they "need".

1. Overproduction*

- Most species produce far more offspring than are needed to maintain the population.
- Species populations remain more or less constant (“stable”) because a small fraction of offspring live long enough to reproduce.

2. Competition*



- Living space and food are limited, so offspring from each generation must compete among themselves in order to live.
- Only a small fraction can possibly survive long enough to reproduce.

3. Genetic Variation*

- Characteristics in individuals in any species are not exactly alike.
 - Ex: Differences for *Homo sapiens* (humans) can be exact size or shape of body, strength in running, or resistance to disease.
- These differences are considered to be the variations within a species. *What causes slight variations between individuals?*



4. Adaptation

An adaptation is an **inherited trait** that **increases** an organisms' chance of survival and reproduction in a given environment.

*The word "adapt" is a **VERBAL SHORTCUT** and I hate it.*

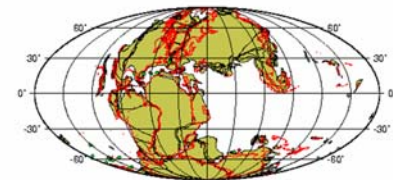


5. Natural Selection*

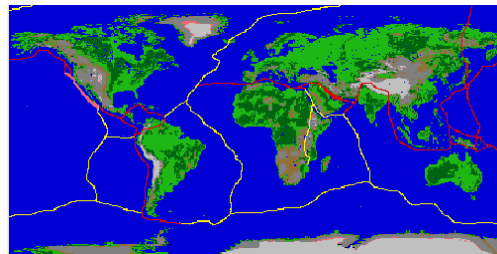
- **Nature**/environment **selects** for living organisms with better suited **inherited** traits to survive and reproduce.
- Variation **caused by** _____ within a species (ex: giraffe) *may* make them better “equipped” for survival.
- Offspring inherit these better traits, and **as a whole** the population improves *for that particular environment*.

5. Natural Selection, cont.

- Natural Selection does not move in a pre-determined direction! The changing earth determines what will and can survive.



150 My Reconstruction



6. Speciation

- Over many generations, favorable adaptations (in a *particular* environment) gradually accumulate a in species and “bad” ones (in a *particular* environment) disappear.
- Eventually, accumulated changes become so great, the result is a **new species**.
- Formation of a new species is called “Speciation” and it takes *many, many* generations to do.

The four factors*

1. Overproduction
2. Competition
3. Genetic Variation
4. Natural Selection

Biological Evolution is a consequence of these 4 factors - they work together to impact any living population

Which one of **Darwin's Six Points** do the following pictures show?

Diagram 1



Diagram 2

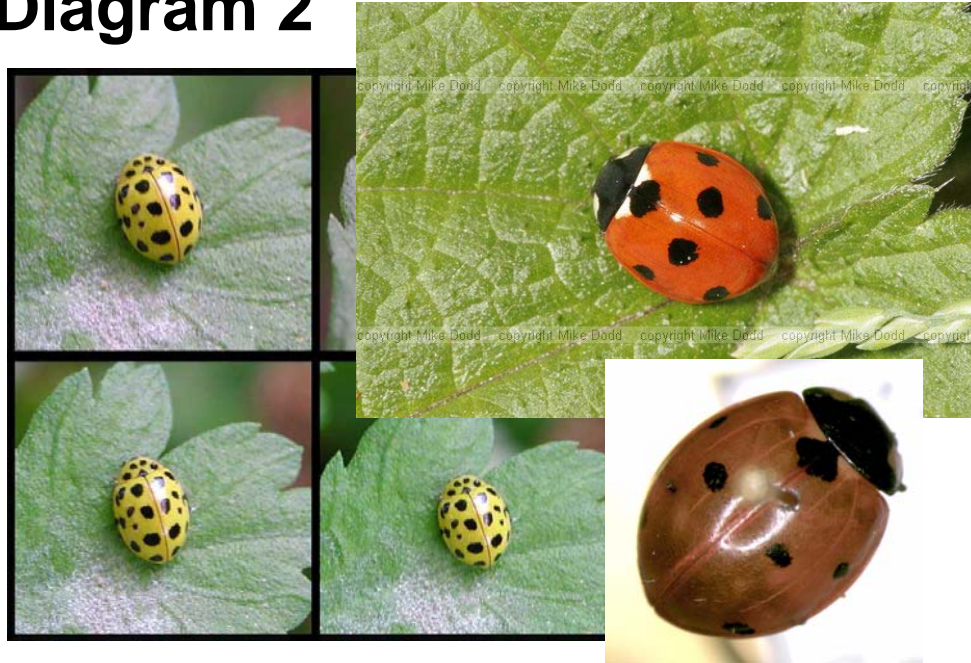


Diagram 3

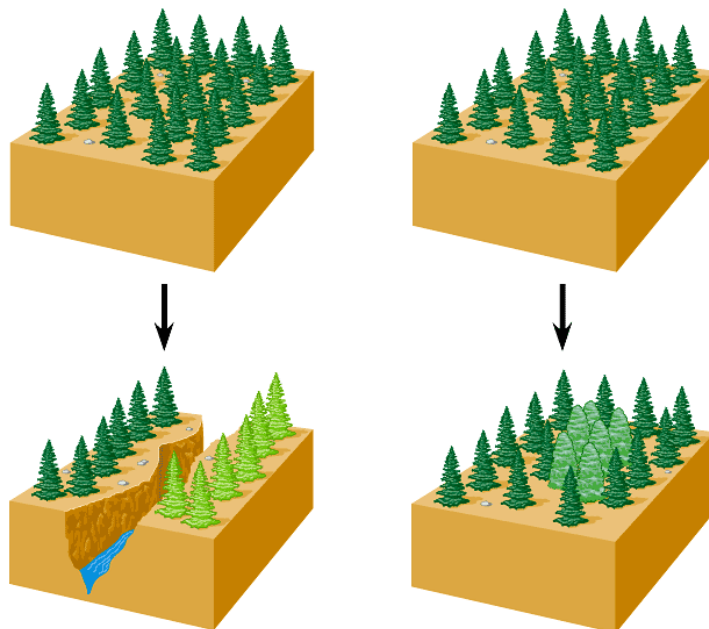
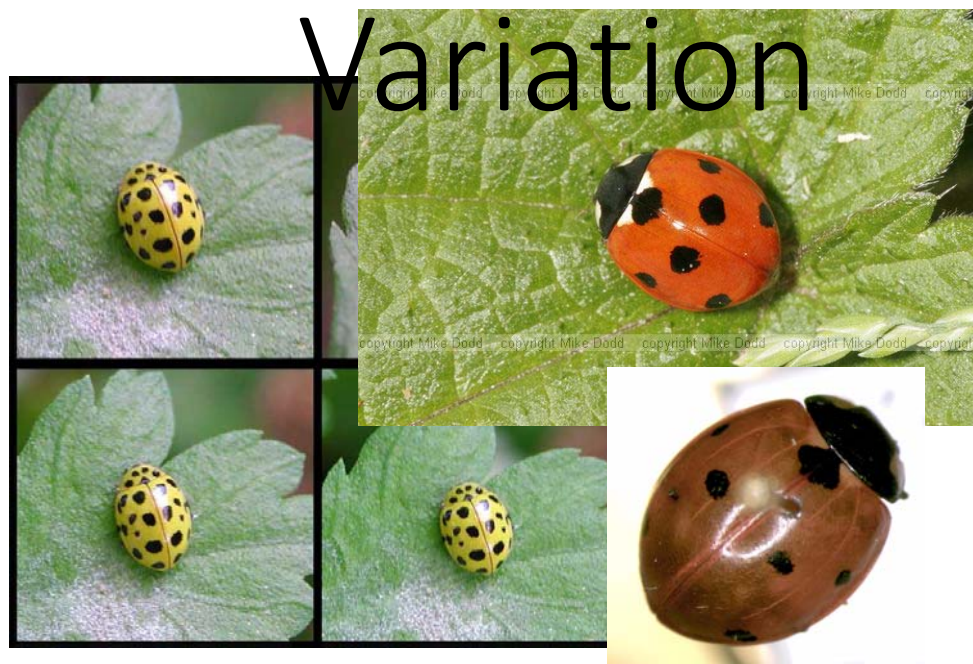
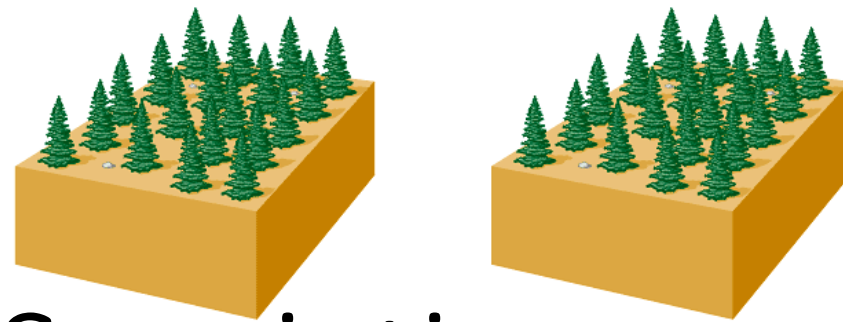


Diagram 4

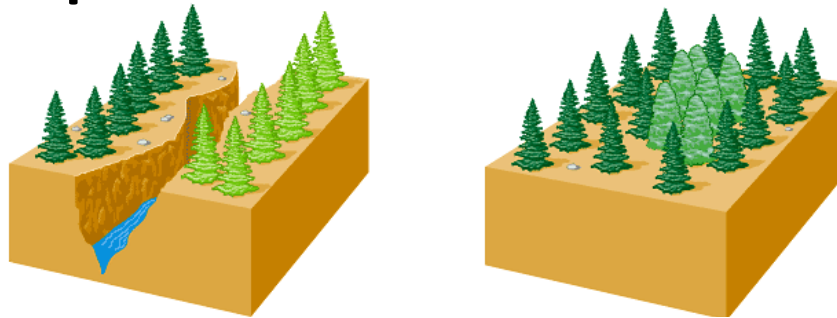


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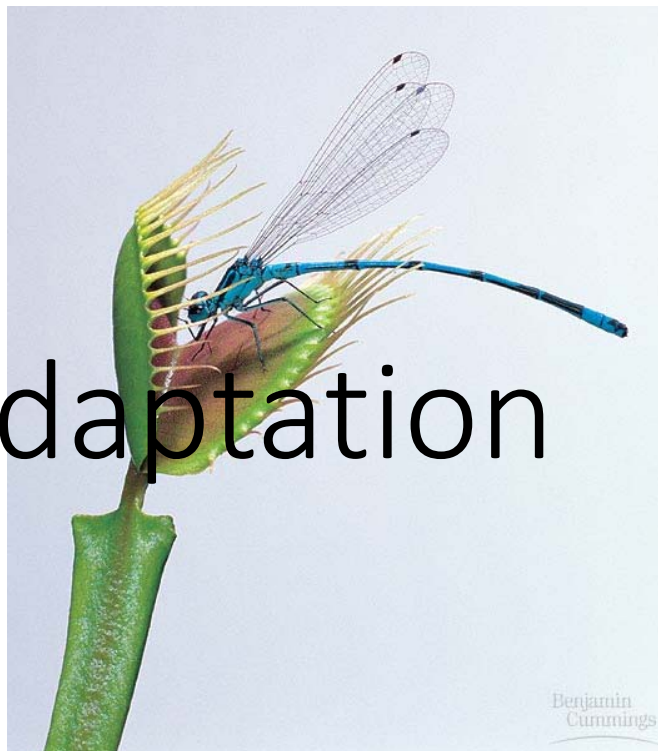




Speciation ↓



Adaptation



Benjamin
Cummings