The Line Behind You

A children's journey through 4 billion years of ancestry

The 50,000 km queue that leads to you

By Craig Haffey. For ages 8–11 (UK KS2 / US Grade 5)

Imagine your ancestors lined up behind you – one ancestor per generation. That line would stretch nearly 50,000 km. More than a full lap of the Earth. From tiny sea-blobs to fish, furry burrowers, and the first humans – this book tells the epic story of your family line.

Written to spark awe and curiosity for readers aged 8–11, while directly supporting the science curriculum on Evolution & Inheritance. Designed for easy classroom use, with ready-to-run activities that teachers can use anywhere in the world.

The Line Behind You is the first in a planned series of narrative nonfiction books linking awe-inspiring science with the school curriculum. The first follow-up, ***Cousin Cabbage***, is already in draft, exploring biodiversity, empathy, and other PSHE themes through the idea that every living thing is part of one vast family.

Advance Endorsements

"Engaging, accurate, and perfectly pitched for KS2 — a wonderful resource for classrooms and curious minds alike."

Professor Mike Benton, University of Bristol, world-leading palaeontologist and author of *The Dinosaurs Rediscovered*

"A wonderfully readable, beautifully illustrated account of human evolution. This book should be in every primary classroom."

Professor Michael J. Reiss, UCL Institute of Education, former Director of Education at the Royal Society of Biology

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"Some children find KS2 evolution dry. This book makes it engaging and gives me exercises I can use straight in the classroom."

Charlie Allen, KS2 Teacher, with over a decade of primary teaching experience

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Professor Steve Brusatte (University of Edinburgh), bestselling author of *The Rise and Fall of the Dinosaurs*, has also indicated he likes the concept and would be interested in reviewing and potentially endorsing once the book is with a publisher.

Comparable Titles

The Line Behind You sits within a proven market of children's nonfiction that makes evolution and deep time vivid for KS2 readers—while offering a fresh, continuous, human-centred ancestry narrative with ready-to-use classroom activities.

Grandmother Fish — Jonathan Tweet (Feiwel & Friends, 2016)
Introduces evolution through a family-tree metaphor for younger readers; ***The Line Behind You*** extends this idea for older KS2 readers with a continuous 50,000-km ancestor line and includes teacher resources.

The Story of Life: A First Book about Evolution — Catherine Barr & Steve Williams (Frances Lincoln Children's, 2015)
An accessible evolution overview; ***The Line Behind You*** personalises the journey by tracing one child's direct ancestral line from first life to today.

Humanimal: Incredible Ways Animals Are Just Like Us! — Christopher Lloyd (What on Earth Books, 2019)
Bold, engaging science for classrooms; ***The Line Behind You*** offers a chronological ancestry story rather than thematic comparisons.

Timelines of Everything — DK (2018)
Demonstrates strong demand for big chronological narratives (280,000+ copies sold); ***The Line Behind You*** delivers a similar "time-journey" satisfaction focused on one lineage.

How the World Works — Christiane Dorion (Templar, 2010)
Royal Society Young People's Book Prize winner for big-idea science explained clearly; ***The Line Behind You*** brings that clarity to evolution with plug-and-play activities.

Your Line Begins as Blobs

✨ Superpower: Splitting in two
🕒 4 billion to 540 million years ago
👨‍👩‍👧 1-3 days per generation… for about a trillion generations!
📏 At first, a million blobs could fit in just one metre. Later, they got much bigger. Together, they cover the first 7,000 km of your line.

Before anything wriggled, ran, or roared…
there was this.

Tiny bubbles in the sea, too small to see.
No eyes. No bones. No brains.
Just blobs, quietly copying themselves.

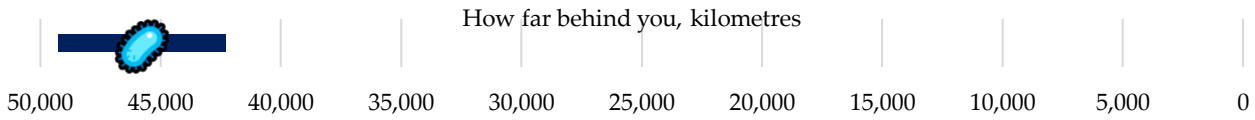
Over time, the blobs in your line get fancy.
Some even team up — clumping together into the first blobby building blocks of bodies!

They aren't much to look at…
But they are your great-great-grandparents.
Well… add about a **trillion** greats!

Power-up!

One blob swallowed another — but instead of digesting it, they teamed up! The swallowed blob became a built-in power station called a mitochondrion, still carrying its own DNA today, different to the DNA in the nucleus of the cell — proof it was once its own creature.

Without that team-up, there'd be no plants, no fungi… no you!




All illustrations are temporary placeholders to show tone and layout — final artwork will be professionally produced.

Brave Fish and First Steps

✨ Superpower: Breathing air on land
🕑 400 to 320 million years ago
👨‍👩‍👧 3-7 years per generation: 20 million in total
📏 30-150cm each. 16,000km of your line – the longest stretch!

Some fish do something strange.

Instead of swimming away, they haul themselves up, gasping.

Their flipper-like legs push against the mud. **They wriggle, heave, and belly-slide across soggy ground.**

They breathe air.
Squint at the sun.

And take the very first, clumsy steps toward frogs, lizards… and, one day, you.

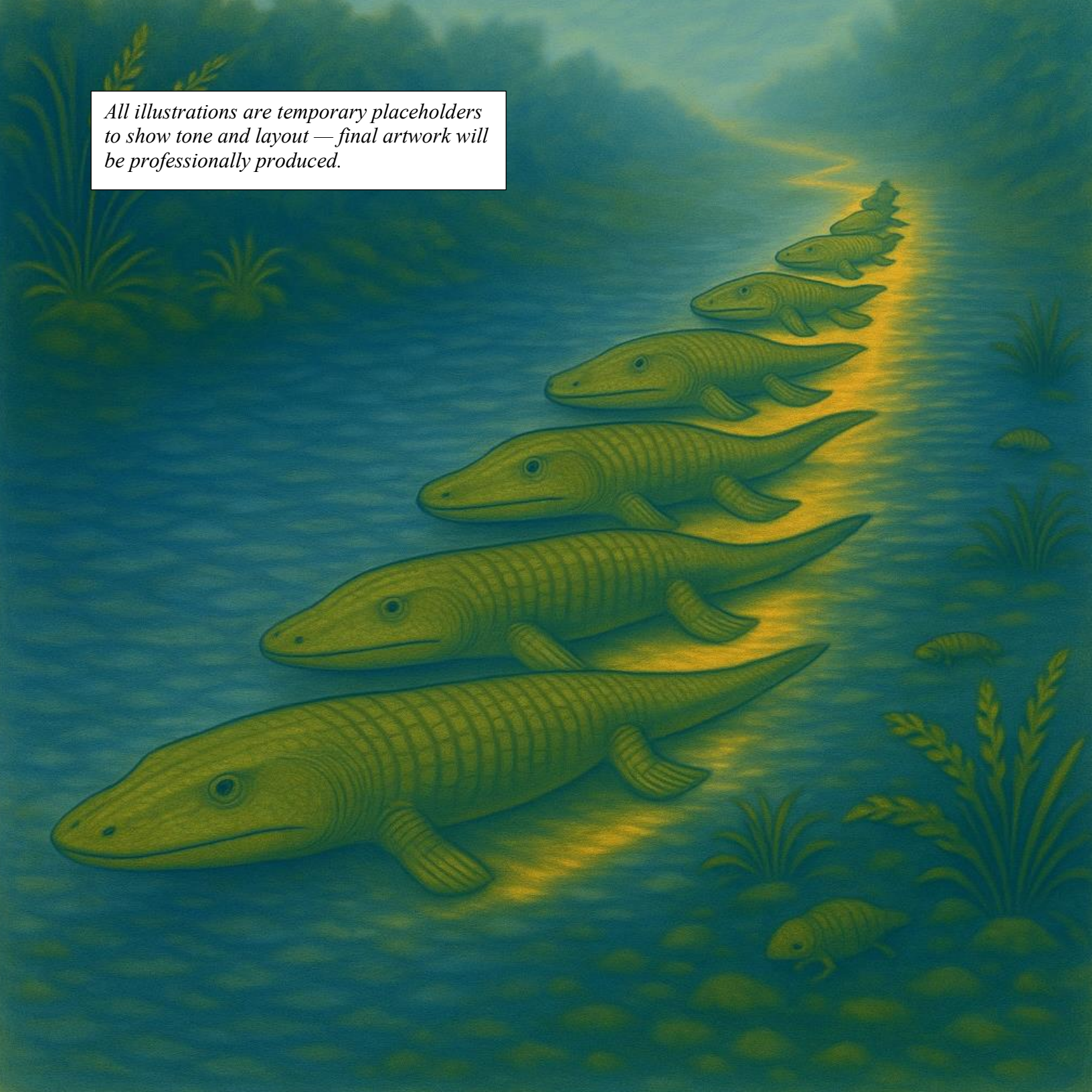
Clamber time!

Ichthyostega had strong paddles with toes for pushing through mud — but no stride for walking.

Fossils from Greenland show it was built for swimming, then heaving itself ashore in short, clumsy crawls.

How do fossils form?

Buried in mud
Turn to stone
Rock uncovered
Fossil found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📘 For Teachers and Classrooms

Big scientific ideas made age-appropriate and engaging — ideal for KS2 enrichment, assemblies, and displays, with clear links to Year 6 Science (Evolution & Inheritance; Working Scientifically) and cross-curricular opportunities.

👣 **Where in History Do You Stand?** (10–15 mins | KS2 History)

- **Goal:** Feel how many generations back familiar periods (Tudors, Romans, Egyptians) really are.
- **You'll need:** Space to line up, QR for full script and a slide.
- **How:** Pupils form a living "ancestor line" and count back by generations. Works with a single class or a whole assembly.

📜 **Evidence Hunter** (10-15 mins | KS2 Science)

- **Goal:** Link evolutionary milestones to the scientific evidence that supports them – including fossils, living species, and DNA.
- **You'll need:** Printable sheet from the QR code.
- **How:** Work out which evidence supports which evolutionary event. Discussion prompts include how Darwin used clues from living species.

📏 **Timeline Challenge** (15–25 mins | STEM extension)

- **Goal:** Grasp the vast scale of Earth's history.
- **You'll need:** Pupil sheet with timelines from the QR code.
- **How:** Place 13 events on a to-scale 4.5-billion-year timeline.