

READING

# The theory of evolution

**LEVEL**

Upper-Intermediate  
(B2)

**NUMBER**

EN\_B2\_1064R

**LANGUAGE**

English



## Learning outcomes

- I can read a text about the theory of evolution and understand its main points.
- I can express my thoughts on evolution in greater detail.



## Warm-up

**What do you know  
about the theory of  
evolution?**



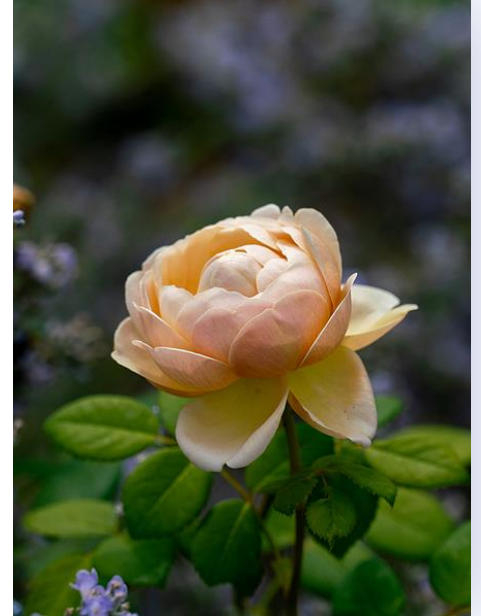
**What does it tell us  
about?**

# The theory of evolution

**Read** the text. **Answer** the questions below.

Charles Darwin's **theory of evolution** is currently the most widely accepted explanation as to how life on Earth came to be. Darwin was an English naturalist who lived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and is now considered to be **the father of evolution**.

Darwin travelled across the globe studying **variation** in plant and animal species. What he discovered led him to write a book explaining his theory of evolution. There are two main **elements** to his theory.



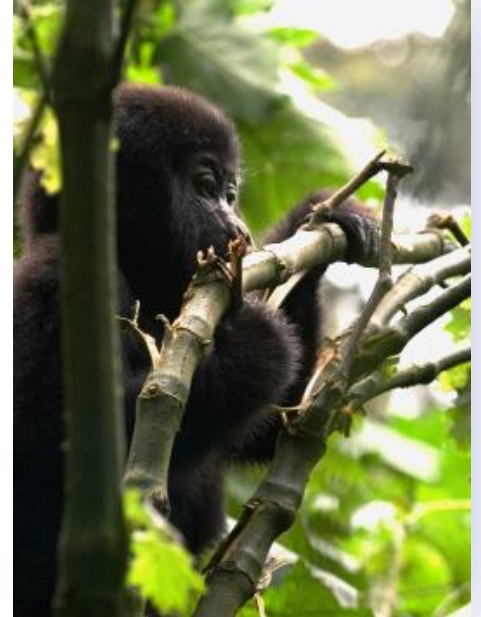
1. What does Darwin's theory of evolution explain?
2. What did Darwin look at to come up with his theory?



# The theory of evolution

**Read** the text. **Answer** the questions below.

The first is that all life is connected and **evolved** from simple **organisms**. The second is that this **evolution occurred** due to **natural selection**, or the passing of **advantageous traits** from one generation to the next, making all living things better **adapted** to their environment. His theory explained why species with more useful **characteristics**, such as excellent **vision**, were more likely to survive and have **offspring**, while those without these characteristics would die out.



3. What were the first life forms according to Darwin?
4. What is natural selection?



# Fill in the gaps

- 1 Darwin originally set out to look at \_\_\_\_\_ in plant and animal life.
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_ inherit their parents' genes.
- 3 Offspring usually inherit and pass on the most \_\_\_\_\_ traits, which allow them to compete best with other species.
- 4 Inherited \_\_\_\_\_ which give us an advantage are most likely to be passed on.
- 5 Darwin has been called the \_\_\_\_\_ of evolution.

advantageous  
variation  
characteristics  
father  
offspring



# Making a guess



So, what was Darwin's theory all about?

Off the top of my head, it was, 'only the fittest survive!'

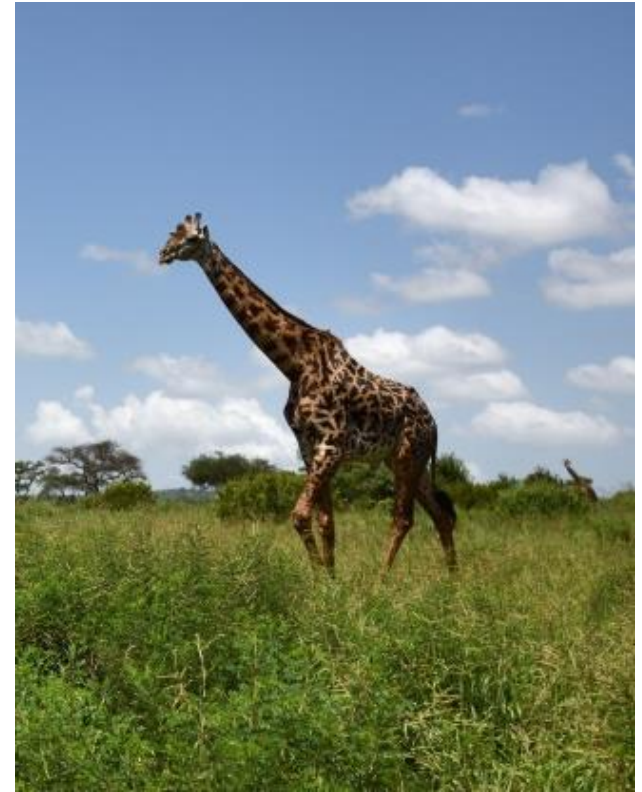
We can use **this phrase** to **make a guess** about something or to say **the first answer** that comes to our mind.



## Discuss

**Do you know any  
animals that are  
well adapted to their  
environment?**

**Share your knowledge  
with the class.**







# Work in pairs

Write your own definition of *evolution* in **breakout rooms**.

natural  
selection

advantageous  
traits

Charles  
Darwin

organisms

characteristics

offspring

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**Use** the words in the  
boxes to help you!

# The theory of evolution

**Read** the text. **Answer** the questions below.

Something that Darwin never claimed was that humans are directly **descended from** apes. The modern human species, **Homo sapiens**, has a huge amount in common with the great apes of Africa, the chimpanzees and the gorillas, despite the species having **diverged** so long ago. Scientists now agree that humans and apes did have a common **ancestor** that lived between 6 and 8 million years ago.

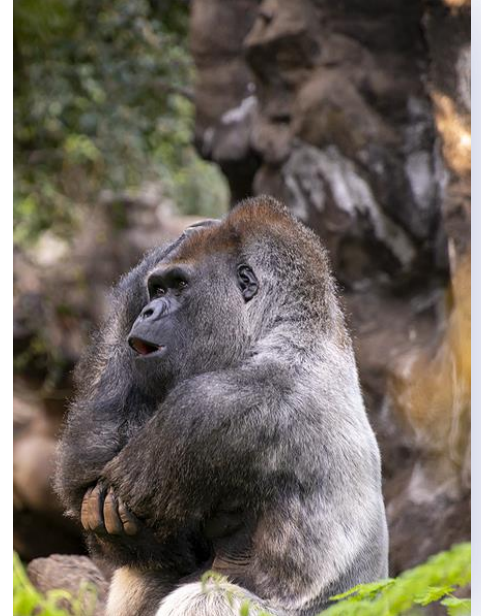


1. Who do humans share lots of characteristics with?
2. Who lived between 6 and 8 million years ago?

# The theory of evolution

**Read** the text. **Answer** the questions below.

The earliest humans evolved in Africa around 6 million years ago, when **primates** started to become **bipedal**. Scientists currently recognise around 15 to 20 different species of human which came before us, though they disagree about how these humans are related and how they died out. We only have evidence for some of our most recent ancestors.



3. What happened to primates around 6 million years ago?
4. What do scientists still disagree on when it comes to evolution?



# Match with the correct definition

1 **to descend from**

2 **primate**

3 **ancestor**

4 **to diverge**

5 **bipedal**

a person related to you who lived long ago

b walking on two legs

c to become different

d to develop from something or someone in the past

e a member of a group of mammals which includes humans and apes



## Discuss

**Humans and chimpanzees share over 95% of their DNA.**



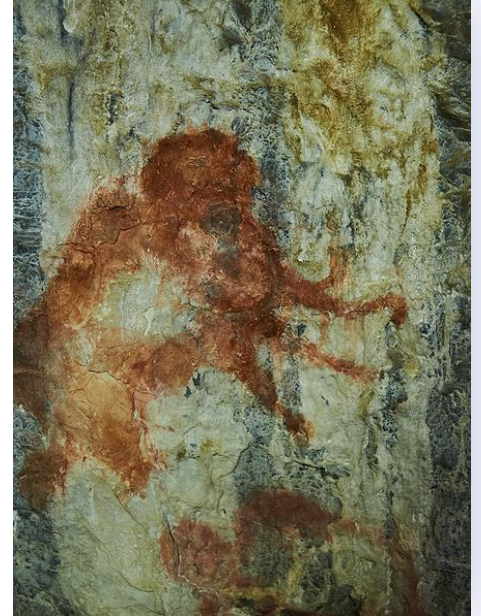
**Which characteristics do humans and chimps share?**



# The theory of evolution

Read the text. Answer the questions below.

Perhaps our best-known ancestor is **Homo neanderthalensis**, more commonly known as the **Neanderthal**. They mainly lived in Europe and parts of Asia and were adapted for the cold weather with large noses and **stocky** bodies. Their brains were the same size or larger than ours and they were the most **sophisticated** species up to that point; they buried their dead, made and wore clothing, and occasionally made **symbolic** objects.



1. Who was the Neanderthal?
2. How were Neanderthals similar to humans?

# The theory of evolution

Read the text. Answer the questions below.

**Homo sapiens** and Neanderthals coexisted for around 100,000 years, though Homo sapiens developed in Africa, while Neanderthals were in Europe. When Homo sapiens moved into Europe, they caused the **gradual extinction** of the Neanderthals over a period of around 5000 years as they **competed** for survival. However, some **interbreeding** did occur and it is estimated that modern humans who are not of African descent have around 2% Neanderthal DNA.



3. What caused the Neanderthals to die out?
4. Is there any trace of the Neanderthal left on Earth or not?



# Discuss

1



Which of the species of humans had you heard of before?

2



How well adapted are Homo sapiens to surviving on Earth?

3



If humans could evolve to have any trait, which one should it be? Why?



# End of the lesson

Idiom

***the survival of the fittest***

**Meaning:** only people or things best adapted to their environment will continue to exist.

**Example:** Darwin's ideas are often referred to as the **survival of the fittest**.





# Additional practice



# Fill in the gaps

**Choose** the correct word to complete the sentence.

- 1 Darwin theorised that the evolution of plants and animals occurred by natural \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2 Over time, species change and adapt to their surroundings, but only pass on the genetic \_\_\_\_\_ that help them to survive.
- 3 It's commonly believed that humans are directly \_\_\_\_\_ from apes. However, this belief is too simplistic.
- 4 Humans and apes are both \_\_\_\_\_ and have a common ancestor from around 6 million years ago.
- 5 Humans are the only \_\_\_\_\_ mammal currently in existence.

primates  
selection  
bipedal  
descended  
traits



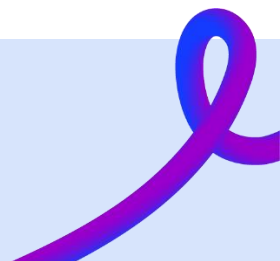


# Discuss

**Homo sapiens means “wise man” in Latin. Do you consider humans to be wise or not?**



**How do you rate your own survival skills?**





# Speaking



**Why do some  
religious groups  
oppose Darwin's  
theory?**

**How do they explain the  
origins of life on Earth?**





# Answer key

- P. 4-5:**
1. Darwin's theory of evolution explains how life on Earth came to be.
  2. Darwin looked at the variation in plant and animal species.
  3. Simple organisms were the first lifeforms.
  4. Natural selection is the passing of advantageous traits from one generation to the next, making all living things better adapted to their environment.
- P. 6:**
1. variation
  2. offspring
  3. advantageous
  4. characteristics
  5. father
- P. 10-11:**
1. Humans share a lot of characteristics with the great apes of Africa.
  2. The common ancestor between humans and apes.
  3. They became bipedal (=only using two legs for walking).
  4. Scientists still disagree on how the 15-20 different species humans descend from relate to each other and how they died out.





# Answer key

**P. 12:** 1. d, 2. e, 3. a, 4. c, 5. b

**P. 14-15:** 1. The Neanderthal is the most well-known human ancestor.  
2. Neanderthals had a similar sized brain to humans. They also buried their dead, wore clothing and made symbolic objects.  
3. Homo sapiens caused the extinction of the Neanderthals when Homo sapiens moved from Africa to Europe where they both competed for survival.  
4. Yes, some humans who are not of African descent have around 2% Neanderthal DNA.

**P. 20:** 1. selection  
2. traits  
3. descended  
4. primates  
5. bipedal



# Summary

## The theory of evolution

- *variation; to evolve; natural selection; advantageous traits; adapted; characteristics; vision; offspring.*
- *to descend from; to diverge; ancestor; primates; bipedal; homo sapiens; interbreeding; sophisticated.*
- *The earliest humans **evolved** around 6 million years ago, when **primates** started to become **bipedal**.*



# Vocabulary

variation

to evolve

natural selection

advantageous traits

adapted

characteristics

vision

offspring

to descend from

to diverge

ancestor

primates

bipedal

homo sapiens

interbreeding

sophisticated

