

Quiz Questions

Quiz on *Frankenstein*, by Mary Shelley

1. What is the name of the monster? What is the significance of that?
2. Describe in some detail a location in this book. Why do locations matter in the tale?
3. What is the concept of reductionism? How is it relevant to understanding this novel?
4. When Robert Walton meets Victor Frankenstein, Victor says, “Unhappy man! Do you share my madness? Have you drunk also of the intoxicating draught? Hear me - let me reveal my tale, and you will dash the cup from your lips!” What is he talking about? What do you think the cup represents and/or what is in it?

Quiz on *The Reluctant Mr. Darwin* by David Quammen

1. The book’s title is “The Reluctant Mr. Darwin,” but that adjective doesn’t sum up Quammen’s take on the man in his Beagle-to-Origin biography. Choose another adjective that sums up Quammen’s description of Darwin, at least at some point in those decades, and give some reasoning for that word.
2. Describe one of the experiments or projects that Darwin undertook at Down House, as well as what he hoped to prove with that work.
3. In a brief interlude, Quammen describes the egg of a female kiwi bird. He says it’s a metaphor, but he offers hardly any explanation. Explain the connections Quammen probably had in mind for that metaphor.
4. Quammen discusses evolution and religion throughout the text, particularly in the chapter entitled “The Fittest Idea.” What is Quammen’s view of the compatibility of the theory of evolution by natural selection and religion?
5. Alfred Wallace is an intriguing character in Darwin’s story. How does Quammen present Wallace’s role in the discovery of gradual evolution by natural selection? How does it seem that Wallace understood his own role in that discovery?

Quiz on *On the Origin of Species*, by Charles Darwin

- 1) Describe succinctly and in detail Darwin’s theory of evolution through natural selection. Please end by using an example that Darwin uses within the text.
- 2) From the chapters on “Geographical Distribution,” choose one type of geographic feature that Darwin considers. For that type, how does he explain similar species that are separated by thousands of miles without similar species in between?
- 3) Darwin used a few different argumentative strategies. One was presenting his theory as an explanation for seemingly inexplicable facts. Another was making his ideas look more empirical, the evidence speaking for itself. Give an example of one of these, or another, of Darwin’s argumentative strategies.
- 4) Darwin summarizes his entire argument in his “Recapitulation and Conclusion.” He begins by outlining the difficulties to his theory, but then moves to other, positive arguments. What are these other arguments?

Quiz on *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, by H.G. Wells

1. There is a two-way transformation taking place in this novel. Dr. Moreau transforms beasts into more human-like creatures and Prendick becomes less human. How does Prendick become less human, and what view of humanity does that show the reader?
2. Moreau uses “the Law” to control the animals. Explain the overall purpose of “the law” and give one of the laws that animals must follow *with* an explanation as to why Moreau would have created that law.
3. Prendick is horrified by Dr. Moreau’s experiments in vivisection. Why does Moreau do his experiments and how does he justify causing the animals pain?
4. What are some of the ways in which Wells’ text is linked to Darwinism and scientific debates in nineteenth century Britain?
5. In terms of the relationship between ethics and science, what is the connection between this text and Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*?

Quiz on *Biology as Ideology*, by Richard Lewontin

1. Lewontin uses the phrases “biology as ideology” and “biological determinism” as central ideas. Choose one of those two and define what Lewontin means by it, giving an example from the text.
2. Lewontin claims scientists conflate (confuse as though they’re the same thing) *agents* and *causes*. Explain what he means and how this happens by using one of his specific public health examples.
3. According to Lewontin, what is wrong with the Human Genome Project? You can name multiple problems, but give a little bit more explanation for at least one.
4. Lewontin argues against the power of reductionism as a guiding concept in biology. Does he offer an alternative? How does he feel we should be answering today’s problems?