

IELTS LISTENING – Details of Order S63T4



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Today few people can be unaware of Darwin and his theory of evolution. He **single-handedly revolutionised** the way we think about the natural world.



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However, when I say ‘single-handedly’ that is not entirely correct. At precisely the same time as Darwin was formulating his theory of evolution, another scientist, Alfred Russell Wallace, was working on a virtually **identical theory**. In parallel to Darwin. However, whilst Darwin's name has been preserved for posterity, the name of Wallace is virtually unknown. Why one should have been celebrated in scientific circles whilst the other was relegated to obscurity is puzzling. Both decided to make their discoveries public in a joint announcement once they were made aware of one another's work. There is no question that Darwin acted dishonorably, therefore, falsely claiming the **sole credit** for a theory of evolution. However, the publication of Darwin's ground-breaking ‘On the Origin of Species by Natural Selection’ the following year almost certainly helped to secure him enduring fame.

The publication of Darwin's book proved to be a watershed in the history of science. It also proved **extremely controversial** in the eyes of the Church since Darwin claimed that Man was merely an animal, homo sapiens, and a product **of evolution** rather than of divine intervention. Such a theory was in direct opposition to religious dogmas of the day and threatened to undermine the very core of religious belief.

Today, however, many have successfully managed to reconcile Darwin's theory of evolution with religion. Only for some people, known as ‘Creationists’, is Darwin's theory seen as being incompatible with religion. For these individuals, Darwin's theory is seen as heretical since they believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible and a biblical reference to the world being created in seven days rather than as a slow evolutionary process spanning millions of years. In addition, Darwin's claim that Man is no more than a highly evolved ape is regarded as a blasphemy, since Creationists insist on the divine origin of Man.

Whilst not many would dispute Darwin's theory of evolution nowadays, curiously, an ape-man that bridges the gap between Man and ape has yet to be found. The search for the **‘missing link’**, as it has been called, has both occupied and perplexed scientists since the time of Darwin. Many hoaxers over the years have tried to exploit the desire of scientists to find conclusive **proof of** Darwin's theory in the form of a missing link. The most memorable and also convincing hoax was that of the ‘Piltdown Man’. Named after the Sussex village where it was first unearthed in 1908, the skull of the Piltdown Man represented a transition from an ape to a man. **So convincing** a hoax was it that it fooled the scientific establishment into believing for some 40 years that the ‘missing link’ had indeed been found. In fact, the Manchester Guardian newspaper went so far as to call the discovery of the ape-man skull ‘by far the earliest trace of mankind that has yet been found in England’.

The find was credited to a local solicitor and fossil hunter, Charles Dawson. When Dawson died in 1916, Piltdown Man's place in history seemed secure. In 1950, a reconstruction of a head was made based on the skull. However, only 3 years later, the skull was declared **a fake**. People later questioned how such a hoax could have escaped detection without the compliance of an expert.

It is certainly an interesting footnote in the theory of evolution. However, the questions **still remain** today: where is the missing link and why hasn't it been found?

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