

Name:

Date:

## Black Science Heroes: John Edmonstone

You may have heard of famous scientist Charles Darwin.  
But have you heard of the man who inspired him?

John Edmonstone was born into slavery in Guyana in South America. He gained his freedom and moved to Edinburgh in Scotland. He had learnt taxidermy and earned money by stuffing birds at the Zoology Museum and teaching taxidermy skills to students at Edinburgh University.



Taxidermy is preserving dead animals so they can be studied or displayed. Museums do this, so visitors can see what the animal looks like in life, instead of just seeing a skeleton. It is not easy and needs lots of skills and knowledge.

*Could you recreate an animal like John did?  
Follow the link below to have a go at a jigsaw assembling a bird of paradise from the puzzle pieces (if the link does not work then please cut out the jigsaw from the third page).  
Use the photo below to help you.*



<https://puzzel.org/en/jigsaw/play?p=-MIZgu6yD3REiiPaKh7o>

Taxidermy is a lot like a jigsaw, you have the 'pieces' (the body) but you have to work out what it looked like. This might be easy now, but people in the past did not have easy access to photos of the animals to help them!

Whilst famous scientist Charles Darwin was a student, he took lessons from John on bird taxidermy. Darwin enjoyed his lessons and was fascinated with Edmonstone's descriptions of the tropical rainforests and amazing animals found in Guyana.

*John had travelled from his home of Guyana to the UK. Charles was from the UK and dreamed of visiting Guyana. Draw a picture of your home and label something you like about it and then draw a picture of a place you would like to visit.*

*My home*

*A place I'd like to visit*

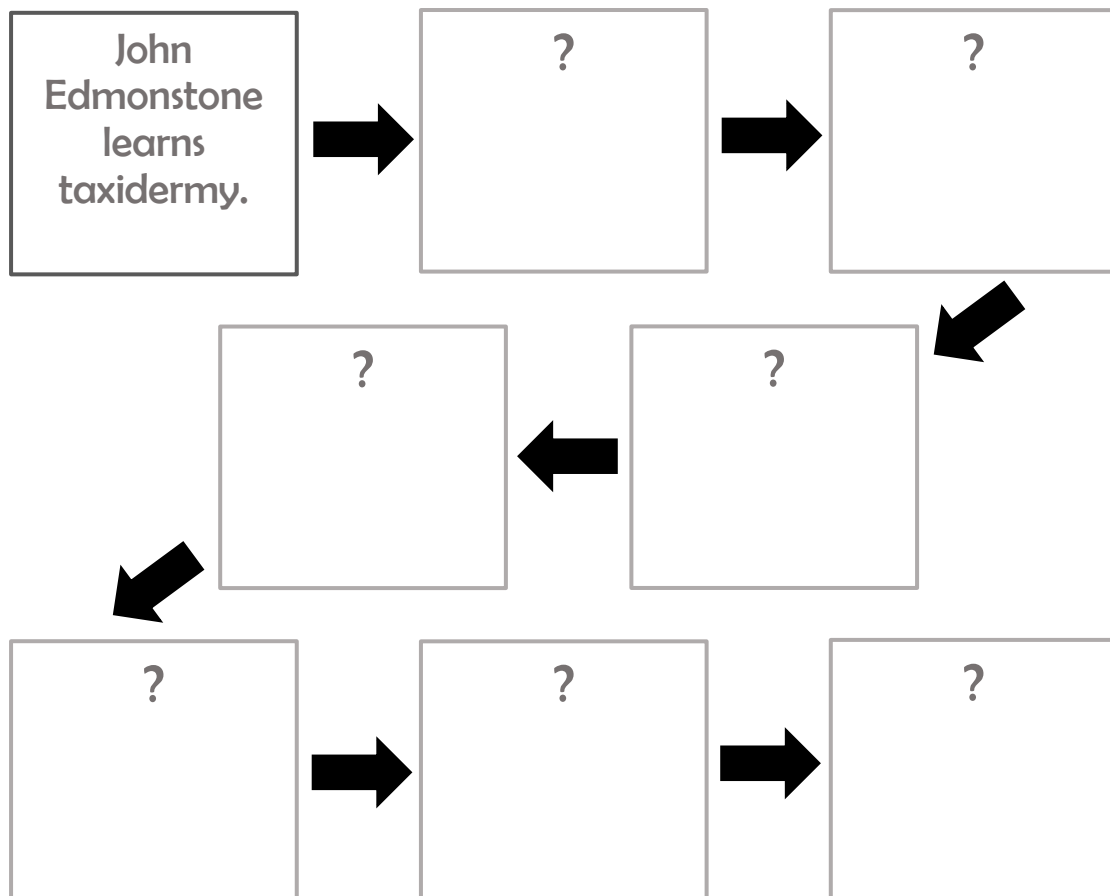
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Inspired by John's lessons, Darwin joined a voyage to study South America's nature. On the Galapagos Islands, Darwin noticed the small birds on each island had different beaks, which helped them get each island's specific foods. He preserved specimens of each bird using the taxidermy skills he had learnt from John. Darwin used the birds as an example of evolution. He argued that they had all evolved from a common ancestor from mainland South America that adapted to the food on each island.

At the time, many people believed that white people and black people were not closely related and did not share an ancestor. Lots of upper class white people believed that they were therefore superior to black people and this was used as an excuse by some to justify slavery of black people. Darwin did not believe this. He always remembered his time with John, who was so intelligent and kind. Darwin's theory of evolution traced all races and species back to a common ancestor. As a rich and influential man, his work helped to challenge racist ideas of the time.

*John learnt his skills and then passed them on. By doing this, John Edmonstone helped to change the world of science and society forever. Cut out the boxes on the next page to assemble a timeline to show his effect on the world.*



Without John Edmonstone, Darwin might not have wanted to travel the world and would have never discovered evolution. We are not always aware of the effect we have on others, but by sharing skills and ideas we can make big changes to the world.

Can you think of anyone who has inspired you?

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## Timeline boxes

These are in a random order. Please cut these out and stick them on the timeline in the right order.

Darwin publishes his ideas.	Specimens from the voyage help Darwin discover evolution.	Edmonstone teaches Charles Darwin and tells him all about South America.	Edmonstone begins to teach taxidermy to others.
Darwin uses his new taxidermy skills on his voyage to South America.	Evolution is a global scientific breakthrough and society's racist views are challenged.	Darwin applies evolution to human races, recalling his teacher and friend John.	

## Puzzle

If the above link does not work, please print this off and cut it out.

