

Diary From The Beagle

Diary,

It finally feels like the adventure has begun. We set sail over a fortnight ago but, until now, I didn't dare assume we would get far. We were due to leave under the summer sun of September, but this blasted ship took longer than anticipated to complete. Gales and the like delayed us further and the captain was far too merry over Christmas. You can forgive me for thinking this voyage was cursed in some way.

Our first stop was at Madeira. We weren't allowed to disembark and were soon on our way again. In Tenerife, we had received word of a cholera outbreak back home in England and were quarantined offshore. What I would have given at that point to set foot on land that didn't rock with every movement. Alas, it wasn't to be.

Bereft of anything else to do, I turned my hand to creating a net to trail behind the ship. It was easy enough work, and we soon had it in the water. The wonder of the creature that we caught, even so far out to sea, is something that I shall remember forever. It created a feeling of wonder that so much beauty should be apparently created for such little purpose.

Much to my relief, today we finally set foot on land. We landed at Praia on the island of Santiago. How I yearned for the rolling hills of Her Majesty's own land, but instead we were faced with nothing but endless volcanic rock. I've never felt such discomfort underfoot.

Nevertheless, first impressions can be deceiving. I took myself away from the crew and ventured inland to the town. What glory lay before me - tropical vegetation towering above us all and the glorious colours and sounds of a thousand creatures.

FitzRoy set out to Quail Island to conduct his own experiments into the islands' locations. I joined him, of course, but I am far too entranced by the overwhelming novelty of the sights and sounds to be of much use.

On the beach, I noticed the oddest thing. Squashed between layers of black lava rock, there is a line of white, most probably created by crushed coral and shells. A similar phenomenon occurs on the island of St. Jago, only much further above sea level. At some point in time, these were probably aligned. I shall have to pass these findings on to my good friend Charles Lyell, who suggested that the Earth's crust rises and falls like the tide. He will be most interested.

With that, I must return to my duties. FitzRoy possesses one of the shortest tempers I know; he will not suffer me being late for supper.

Charles Darwin

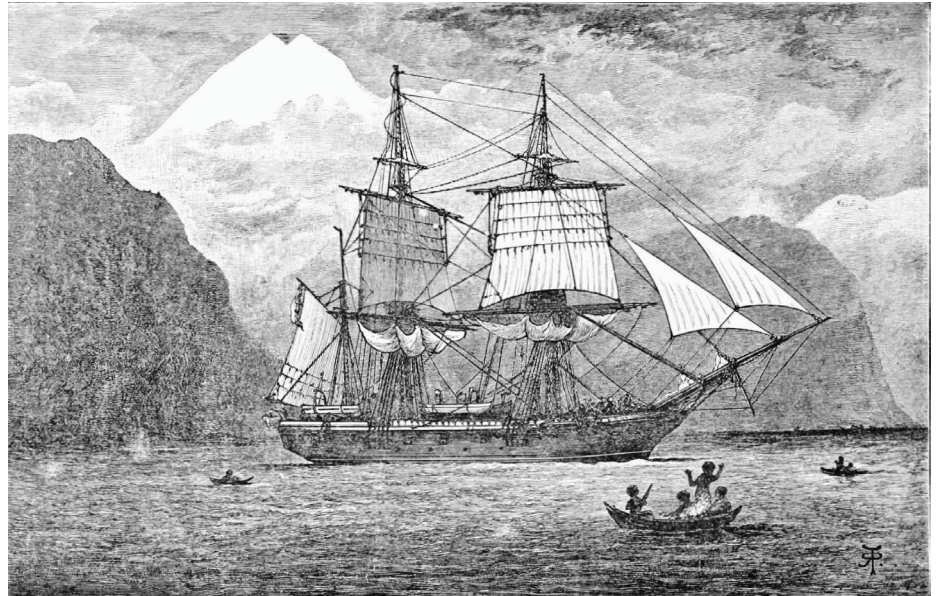


Illustration of the HMS Beagle from 1890

INFERENCE FOCUS

1. When they arrived at Tenerife, how was Darwin feeling? What tells you this?
2. How did Darwin feel when they landed in Praia. What tells you this?
3. What impression of Praia do you get when Darwin ventures further onto the island?
4. What do we know about Darwin's state of mind when he first went to Quail Island?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

V

What does the word "alas" mean?

S

What happened after they arrived in Tenerife?

V

Find and write a definition for the word "bereft".

E

How do you know that this text is from a different period in time?

S

Where was the first stop for the boat?

Answers:

1. He thought it might be cursed, he was desperate to land and walk on solid ground
2. Happy to be on land but disappointed by what he found
3. It is a lush tropical place with lots of animals and colour
4. He was distracted and amazed by everything he was seeing

V: Unfortunately

S: They were quarantined offshore

V: Deprived or lacking something

E: The use of old-fashioned language like alas, nevertheless, glory, shall. His amazement at finding creatures in the sea, which they wouldn't have known then.

S: Madeira