

This guide was created by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer, a reading specialist and children's author. Visit her Web site www.tracievaughnzimmer.com to find hundreds of guides to children's literature.

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BOOKS BY DEBORAH HOPKINSON



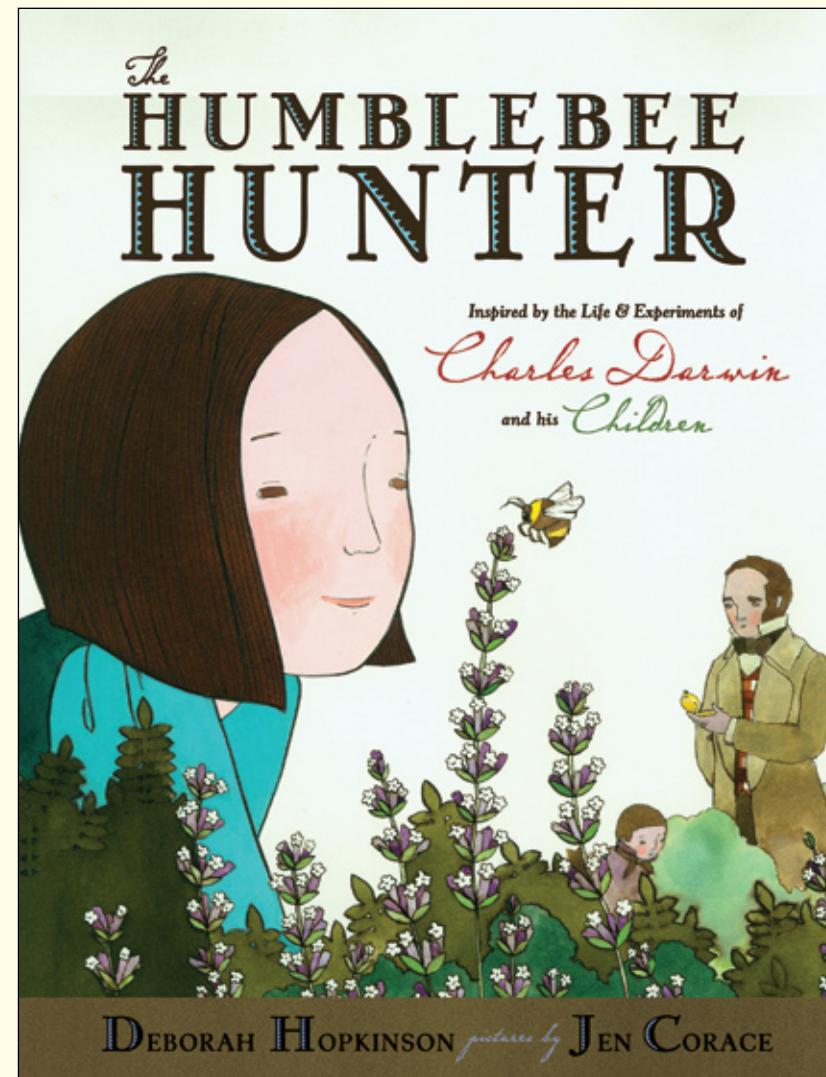
HUMBLEBEE HUNTER

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DISCUSSION GUIDE

Disney • HYPERION BOOKS

ABOUT THE BOOK

On a beautiful day, the last thing Etty wants to do is sit inside baking honey cake. She'd much rather be outside. Who wouldn't? And there's no better person to be outside with than Etty's father, Charles Darwin.

While many may be familiar with the story of Darwin's theory of evolution, few of us have had the opportunity to see Darwin the family man, at home in England, doing what he loved best—walking, exploring, observing. All the while, he pursued the answers to his most persistent questions, and he often had a little bit of help.

In her lyrical story of Charles Darwin at home with his children, Deborah Hopkinson portrays a very human side of one of the most revered figures in the history of science. In doing so, she awakens the natural affinity children have for the natural world.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



- 1 What is Henrietta being asked to learn how to do? What do you get asked to do that you'd rather not?
- 2 Where would Henrietta rather be? Where is your favorite place to be?
- 3 What do you think a kitchen garden is? If you had one, what would you grow?
- 4 To what does Mother compare Henrietta's father? Which animal or insect are you most like?
- 5 Describe what happens when Mr. Darwin tries to capture three rare beetles at the same time.
- 6 What are Henrietta's favorite stories? If you could go anywhere in the world to study an animal, where would you go, and what would you research?
- 7 What is the most important thing Mr. Darwin collects? How does he teach this habit to his children?
- 8 What questions do the children ask before each of their experiments?
- 9 How does Etty finally get out of the kitchen? Do you think she's happy? What details let you know?
- 10 Explain how the family keeps track of the bees. What is the question that this experiment answers?
- 11 What does Henrietta observe about the bee?
- 12 After reading this book, what else would you like to learn about Charles Darwin and his experiments?

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

READING

Like Darwin, good readers look for important facts as they study a topic. As you read or listen to the story, make a list of all the facts you know about Henrietta and her family. Then, circle the facts you think are most important to the story. Discuss with a reading partner the reason you chose these facts.

WRITING

The author, Deborah Hopkinson, tells the story of a family, using poetic language to bring it to life. Reread the story and find at least three phrases that are written in a poetic way. What makes this writing memorable? How does the author use details and strong verbs to create images in the reader's mind? Revise your current piece of writing taking your inspiration from by the author's work.

SCIENCE

Following the example of Henrietta and her siblings, go outside and observe closely something in nature. Create a question that you would like answered, and try to develop an experiment to answer it. Fill out the following chart as a guide:

WHAT I OBSERVED	A QUESTION I HAVE	AN EXPERIMENT THAT COULD ANSWER THIS QUESTION

MATH

Math and science are great companions. It's good to take data and then convert it into charts or graphs that can be easily understood by others without having to read long paragraphs! Go into your backyard or a nearby park and report on how many of the following you can count: trees, birds, bushes, clouds, children, and insects. Then put your data into two different types of graphs.

ART

On the last page of the story, the artist decides to do a close-up of the bumblebee, just as Henrietta closely observes it. Go outside and choose one thing (it does not have to be an insect or animal) and create a sketch that zooms in and fills the page with a detailed drawing. Add color if you wish.

MUSIC

Sing the following lyrics to the tune of "Here We Go 'Round the Mulberry Bush":

*Let's go follow
the humble bee, the humble bee,
the humble bee.
Let's go follow the humble bee
and count as he lands!*

*Let's go out and play for worms,
play for worms, play for worms.
Let's go out and play for worms
and see if they notice!*

*Let's go out
and count some snakes, count some snakes,
count some snakes.
Let's go out and count some snakes,
as many as we can!*

*Lets go out and experiment,
experiment, experiment!
Let's go out and experiment
and see what we can learn!*



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DEBORAH HOPKINSON is the author of many acclaimed books for children, including *Stagecoach Sal*; *Apples for Oregon*, an ALA Notable Book; and *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt*, winner of the IRA award. She lives in Oregon.



ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

JEN CORACE has illustrated many books for children, including *Little Pea*, by Amy Krouse Rosenthal—a 2005 Book Sense Children’s Pick and an IRA Children’s Choice in 2006—and *Little Hoot*, also by Rosenthal. She recently illustrated *Hansel and Gretel*, a retelling by Cynthia Rylant. A graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design with a BFA in illustration, Jen lives and works in Providence, Rhode Island.



AUTHOR INTERVIEW



1 What first inspired you to tell this story of Charles Darwin and his family?

I had written a nonfiction biography of Darwin for slightly older readers a few years ago and as part of my research read Janet Browne’s marvelous two-volume biography. I also had a chance to see the Darwin exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History a few years ago. The more I learned about Darwin, the more impressed I was by his devotion to his wife and children. It must have been an amazing life at Down House!

Also, I have worked in higher education fund-raising for many years, writing grants for scholarships, the arts, and science. And all the scientists I work with still admire Darwin for his pioneering work, so much of which remains relevant today.

I hope *The Humblebee Hunter* will help young people see Darwin as a real person—as a working field biologist—and a dad!

2 Which do you prefer, research or writing? Why?

I have to say that if someone told me I could have a job where ALL I had to do was research, I would drop everything and do it! However, in many ways I see the research and writing as all part of the same process. When I research, I am looking at the material, I think, with an eye to what will work for young readers. And I don’t know that I’ve lost my own childhood curiosity to learn new things about the world. That is the fun part of “doing history,” which really means to search and find out.

3 What was the best piece of writing advice you ever received?

Well, an editor once said to me, “You have to want to write more than you want to sleep!” And I think for those who want to write, that is probably a great piece of advice. Writing has to be fit in, for most of us, around job and family.

The other best advice I have received is “Writing IS Revision.” When I speak to students in schools I always make sure to tell them just how many drafts I have to do. I think it’s helpful for kids to think of writing like sports practice—even major-league baseball players still practice all the time. And we as writers must practice our craft much the same way.