

**Project Darwinaut Story Treatment**

**Version 3**

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Based on the concept created by Hannah Fajnor for  
TPA 6186 at the University of Central Florida

## High Concept

Project Darwinaut is an immersive learning experience that takes guest Explorers on an exploratory journey through the different periods of evolution to see what all those funky text books are really trying to explain. Using the lens of silly science to teach and entertain, Explorers can interact with the environment with an RFID sensor providing data to teachers, parents, and guests as to how they learn best.

## Backstory

Almost Doctor JUSTIN THYMES, the founder of Project Darwinaut, always had a penchant for science, technology and adventure. He was even accepted to EFU (Extremely Fancy University) for his PhD. However, Justin soon discovered that EFU did not cater to every kind of learner, and although he knew he was intelligent and innovative, he struggled to succeed under the strict regiment of the school. After a particularly difficult exam Justin discovered many of his classmates were also having a hard time, and none of them felt like they were truly learning, they were just memorizing facts and figures. Even some of his professors were feeling disillusioned with the rigorous, inflexible academics at EFU. Justin tried to appeal to the director of the program, but was told if he could not handle the coursework the way it was he would never be a real scientist. So Justin and several of his classmates dropped out, and decided to take their learning into their own hands and make science more real than ever before by forming Project Darwinaut!

Determined to make science real, Justin and the Darwinauts set out to create the most real science exhibit of all time. Together they worked for months to perfect a time machine, capable of visiting eras of history they could have only dreamed about. Of course a time machine that was made in a matter of months isn't perfect, so they're still working the kinks out. Justin then sent one of his teammates to each of the eras of exploration to set up bases, so they could learn more than ever before about evolution, the fossil record, and the world before recorded history.

Justin welcomes every guest to the Project Darwinaut headquarters himself, and likes to lead the tours. He is personable, perky, and high energy. Justin hands out the evolutionary passports to guests and explains the rules and philosophies of Project Darwinaut before introducing them to the time machine, whom he has lovingly nicknamed "CHUCK". Before taking off a rogue butterfly flutters into the machine! Justin catches it in his net and lets the Explorers know that the butterfly effect isn't real and they can touch and interact with anything they want and it will have no effect on history.

Justin transports everyone to the *Cambrian Explosion* where they meet the stationed Darwinaut, PHINEAS "GIL" AND/OR "FIN" GILMAN, a shy marine biologist. Gil is enthusiastic about the sea creatures, but a very calm and gentle presence. In his base camp there are ancient deep sea specimens under microscopes for Explorers to marvel at, and a really cool

fish tank with an absolutely horrifying Cambrian pet who Gil refers to affectionately as his pal “BUBBLES”!

Justin rounds everyone up and takes the Explorers to the Age of Fish where he introduces them to the resident Darwinaut, SHELLY FISHER. Shelly is very curious and spunky, she loves to collect things and has a lot of interests beyond science. She loves mythology, and telling stories about mythological aquatic animals; from mermaids, to ancient Greek Ichthyocentaurs, to the Lochness Monster! Her base camp is filled with fossils and she has a stack of letters on her desk, showing she is pen pals with Gil as well as a copy of Hans Christian Anderson’s “The Little Mermaid” by her bunk.

Next Justin and the Explorers head to the Great Dying to visit the almost mammals, where they meet ELIZA ARD, a Darwinaut who loves unfinished things. Eliza’s base camp is filled with half-finished coloring books, projects, inventions, and more. Eliza explains to guests that at this phase mammals are still a work in progress, just like they are! Eliza is understanding, kind, and loves affirmations and self care.

Justin takes the Explorers to the Age of Mammals to see the sort of monkeys! The Darwinaut stationed there is DR. CURTIS GEORGE, one of Justin’s former professors. Curtis refers to themselves as a sort-of-scientist because their true passion is actually teaching! It was hard for him to leave EFU and some of the school banners are still hanging in his base camp, but his love of tutelage led him away from traditional academics and straight to Project Darwinaut! Curtis is really good at drawing comparisons and their base camp is filled with charts and drawings making the Age of Mammals really easy to understand.

In the final era the Explorers meet ERIC TICE, who explains to the Explorers all the ins and outs of the early humanoids. ERIC refers to themselves as a “people person” and his base camp is filled with polaroids of him and the local homo erectus that he has befriended doing various outdoor activities.

Justin announces it is time to head home, but on the way back to the present there is a small malfunction with the machine, landing the Explorers in the right time, but the wrong place! Justin opens Chuck’s doors to discover that the ordinary office space is populated with modern day humans, as well as dinosaurs, and early humans, all working together in chaotic corporate harmony! As Justin restarts the machine, he chuckles and laments that perhaps the butterfly effect is real after all. He tells the Explorers not to worry, the Darwinauts will set everything right before the next excursion as he shows them out towards the gift shop.