

ZigZagZine

Issue 5

CREATING, THINKING, IMAGINING

July/August 2008

Having Fun with Online Games and Virtual Communities

by Jessica Chase

Here are some of my favorite online places. Do you have a favorite site for online games or communities? Let us know by leaving your comments at zigzagzine.com.

Gaia Online

Gaia Online is an online community for tweens, teens, and even adults. You can earn "gold" by playing games, or by just surfing around the site. Then, you can use gold to buy clothes and furniture for your avatar and virtual house. There are forums where you can chat with other members, and you can go to Towns to look in other people's houses, and walk around and chat with others as your avatar. Gold covers most things, but if you want to buy really fancy stuff, you have to use Gaia Cash. In order to get cash, however, you have to pay real money.

There are always cool things happening on Gaia. They often hold contests where Gaia users can submit their own clothing designs, and other



members can vote which one gets turned into a real buyable item on Gaia. Every time there's a holiday, there'll be a huge event. During Christmas of 2007, Gaians got the chance to adopt "orphans," make them happy by buying them toys and stuff, then putting them up for adoption by a nice family to get prizes.

Club Penguin

Club Penguin is an online multiplayer game for kids of all ages. Each player has a penguin to represent herself while playing. There are 13 colors of penguins to choose from. You can also dress your penguin in cool clothes. You play games to earn coins, then you can spend the money on clothes or furniture for your igloo. You can even buy fluffy little pets called puffles, that come in various colors.



There are parties all the time, some on the days of main holidays, such as Christmas and Halloween, but also just random parties. Once, there was a medieval party. In June, 2008, there was a summer water party!

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Online Glossary

An **avatar** is a picture you use to represent yourself online. Examples:



A **virtual world** is a computer-based simulated environment for users to move around in and interact with others via avatars. Neopets, for example, includes Neopia, a virtual world of pets.

A **massively multiplayer online game** (MMOG) is a video game that can support hundreds or thousands of players at the same time through the Internet, and that includes a virtual world. Club Penguin and Puzzle Pirates are examples of MMOGs.

A **virtual online community** is a place in which people can communicate and interact with each other in an online environment using chat-rooms, forums, and possibly avatars. Gaia Online is an example.

Online role-playing games (RPGs) include a fictional setting, avatars, character development, and often include a quest. They can be either single-player or multiple-player. Dragon Fable is an example of an online single-player RPG.

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Hot Sun, Beach or Pool Days– It's Summer!

Summertime is here, along with our new issue. We've got art, an article on online games and communities, and an article on Charles Darwin and his home in England.

Readers from around the country can send in articles, stories, poems, and artwork for our next issue. If you'd like to contribute to our September/October issue, see page 4 for details. In the meantime, check out our Web site at zigzagzine.com. – Jessica Chase, Editor

Note – All text in blue represents clickable links in this zine's pdf.

But although it's free to have an account on Club Penguin, you can become a 'member' by paying about six dollars a month for some privileges. Members can buy clothes and furniture, and can decorate their igloos. Non-members can only have two varieties of puffles out of seven, and members can take their pick.

Non-members, however, can still play games and earn coins, and still get an igloo even if they can't decorate it. They can also collect freebies to wear from the many parties (members can as well).

Neopets

Neopets is set in Neopia, a virtual world of pets. You can have up to four neopets. There are many different species of neopet. You can also buy "petpets" for your neopets, which come in many species. The main currency is neopoints, which can be used to buy almost anything. You earn neopoints by playing one of the many games. You can use neopoints to buy all sorts of things—food, to feed your neopets with, and toys to keep them happy, for example. You can have your own shop and sell your items for whatever price you like to other users, and you can shop from other users as well.



However, not everything can be bought with neopoints. Some things cost neocash. you have to pay real money to get neocash. With it, you can buy backgrounds, clothing, and other accessories for your pets. Neopets is free, except for neocash.

Dragon Fable

Dragon Fable is a role-playing game that has a whole underlying plot involving an evil king called Sepulchre. You go on quests in which you battle monsters to get to the end and win. All the quests are involved a plot, and almost every plot connects somehow with the main plot. You buy weapons with gold, which you earn by defeating monsters. One of the things I like about Dragon Fable is that there is no bloodshed or graphic violence. Dragon Fable is free, but you can purchase a dragon amulet for \$20 for access to some special features.



Puzzle Pirates

Puzzle Pirates is a massively multi-player online game(MMOG), which means many people can play it at the same time. There are several oceans to play in, all with many unique islands.



When you start, you create your pirate. You can then go on different missions that will help you learn your way around. You can get a job on someone else's ship, with tasks like bilging, carpentry, sailing and gunnery. All of them are done by playing puzzle games. You can chat with other players, and you're encouraged to use pirate lingo like "Ahoy!" and "Yarr!" It's free, but you can buy a premium version. *???*

Self-Portrait

by Cailley Gerald-Yamaski



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If you'd like to receive announcements about new issues of *ZigZagZine*, you can sign up for our mailing list. You'll receive an email every time a new issue comes out.

Sign up at
groups.google.com/group/zigzagzine.

Visit to a Museum: Charles Darwin's Home, Down House

By Jack Wooldridge

On a recent family trip to England, I enjoyed our visit to historic Down House immensely. Down House was the home of naturalist Charles Darwin, author of *On The Origin of Species* and father of the theory of evolution.

Charles Darwin was quite an interesting character, with the patience to do research for his four volumes on barnacles and the creativity to draw from the world he saw around him to produce his theory of evolution (which he called the theory of natural selection at first). He also traveled to South America and the Galapagos Islands to find fossils and new species.

Down House is in the village of Downe, southeast of London. When you step into Down House, you get a little audio player that hangs around your neck. When you walk into a room, you press the room number and it tells you a bit about that room. In the first room, I learned that Darwin's father was a large man with a high, squeaky voice. There are also different numbers that give you extra information about the room, about paintings, decor and furniture (and wouldn't you want to learn about Charles Darwin's favorite chair?).

There were five rooms to look at (and listen about), but my favorite was definitely the first. There were a lot of interesting objects in that room, including a piano that Darwin used to test whether worms hear and a beautiful portrait of his wife, Emma, in her old age. Her face is so lifelike you almost believe it might be a photograph! There were also portraits of Darwin's family, including one of himself as a young boy. Upstairs was a museum of Darwin's life, his voyage on the *Beagle*, and of the creation of his theory of natural selection. I found the museum extremely interesting and it was full of hands-on projects, such as a giant DNA string puzzle and a "How Does An Arm Work" finger pinching thing (I don't think it was created to pinch your finger, but I have my doubts). The funny thing is, a bunch of five-year-olds trotted in

and managed to handle everything without hurting themselves. Bah.

We walked out of Down House and into the gardens, where there were both beautiful plants outdoors and carnivorous plants in the greenhouse (Don't panic! They don't eat people...I hope.). Darwin performed many experiments with these plants to prove his theory of evolution. There were sun dew plants, pitcher plants, Venus fly-traps and many others, as well as his non-carnivorous orchids.



Photo by Jack Wooldridge

The gardens were really pretty, with colorful flowers growing all around. I really enjoyed going around the grounds of Down House.

It was on Darwin's famous voyage on a ship called the *Beagle* that he first began nurturing the idea of evolution. He was recommended for the voyage by his professor and mentor, John Steven Henslow. The trip aboard the *Beagle* was the first sea voyage Charles Darwin ever took, and he was copiously sick through most of it. When he got to land, he was always collecting specimens and observing wildlife.

In South America, he began to wonder whether there might be another way that life came about. As he dug up more evidence, his theory grew, although he was afraid to tell

anyone about it for fear of losing the support of his peers. And so he kept his idea bottled up like the bottled specimens he brought back.

He married his cousin, whose name was Emma, and they had quite a few children together. But all the while, Darwin's theory was bubbling at the back of his mind. Before long, he started work on it, in secret. As his theory grew, he knew he would have to tell Emma about it. Emma was a devout Christian and Darwin wasn't sure how she would react to his theory. As it was, she was worried about the theory but her love of her husband made up for it.

Work on the theory was slow until

one day, when a surprising letter arrived from a young naturalist, Alfred Russel Wallace. Wallace had formulated a theory very similar to Darwin's own! Darwin decided that this was a sign that he should get on with his theory, and he finished his book, *On the Origin of Species*, within a year. When it was published, it sold 1500 copies before the book was even released.

The book sparked controversy, particularly in the scientific community, where most of its members believed the Bible story in the book of Genesis without question. Many scientists shouted Darwin down, but others, particularly the younger scientists, defended him. His most loyal supporter, Thomas Henry Huxley,

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became known as “Darwin’s Bulldog,” because he defended Darwin so fiercely.

Darwin’s main opposition from the church came in the form of Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford. He stated publicly that he intended to “smash” Darwin. When he came up against Huxley, he asked him if he was related to an ape on his mother’s or father’s side. Huxley responded that he would rather be related to an ape than a man who used his position to abuse the truth.

Darwin later went on to write many other books, some on evolution and some on evolution and plants. Darwin did many experiments with plants. He would dissect them, observe them and cross-pollinate them. His experiments with plants also helped to fuel his theory of evolution. For example, he observed orchids and tried to figure out what pollinated them. He dissected the orchids and discovered that when he tried to remove the pollinia (male part of the flower), it would bend over and align to pollinate another flower exactly as if it were a moth’s proboscis. He concluded that the pollinator of the Comet Orchid would have to be a moth. His theory of evolution explained how these dependencies would come about. He also discovered that plants had both male and female parts, instead of there being both male and female plants.

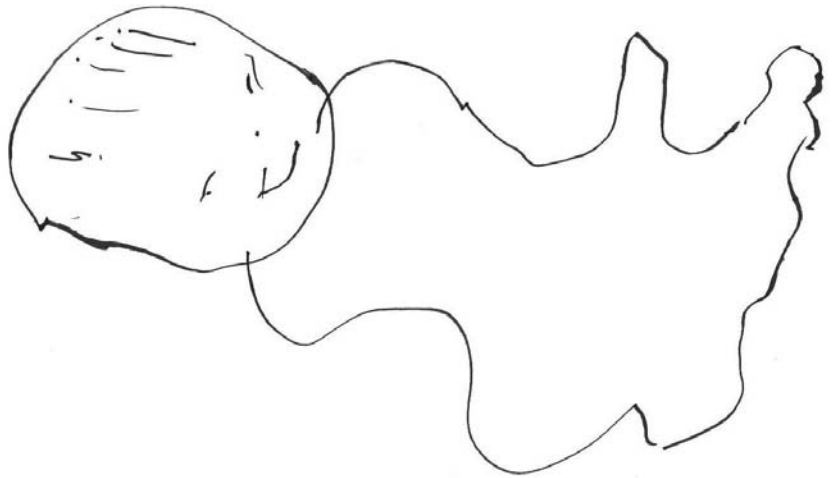
He also discovered that it is the male part of the plant that gives off pollen, which sticks to the female part. He did many experiments with insectivorous plants as well, including the sun dew and the Venus fly trap.

He wrote a few books on plants, including *Fertilization of Orchids*, *Forms of Flowers*, and *Effects of Cross and Self-Fertilization* (sound fascinating, don’t they?).

Because Darwin and his work are so important to the foundation of modern science, his former home, Down House, has been proposed as a World Heritage Site. To learn more and to take a virtual tour of the site, visit darwinatdowne.co.uk. A good site for kids who want to learn more about Charles Darwin, and see maps showing the voyage of the Beagle, is aboutdarwin.com. 

Smiling Baby

by Soleil Betts-LaCroix



Red

by Soleil Betts-LaCroix



CONTRIBUTE!

We accept stories, poems, articles, and artwork by kids and teens. The deadline for our September/October 2008 issue is August 15.

If you’d like to see your work in *ZigZagZine*, please send submissions to info@zigzagzine.com. Check out our Web site at zigzagzine.com for details!

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