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Biology

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The following review appeared in the April 2010 issue of CHOICE:

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Reznick, David N. The Origin then and now: an interpretive guide to the Origin of Species. Princeton, 2010.
432p bibl index afp ISBN 9780691129785, \$29.95

An unfortunate fact of science is that its classics, while appreciated, often go unread. Such is the case with *On the Origin of Species* (1859), the book in which Darwin first published his "long argument" in favor of natural selection as the primary engine of organic change. During the past decade, a number of writers have hoped to rectify this situation with books that summarize, modernize, or otherwise elucidate this seminal work of evolutionary biology. Within this growing corpus of "guides" and "companions," this new book by Reznick (Univ. of California, Riverside) occupies a place somewhere between the easygoing narrative of *Darwin's Ghost* by Steve Jones (CH, Oct'00, 38-0921) and the scholarly analysis of *The Cambridge Companion to the "Origin of Species,"* edited by Michael Ruse and Robert J. Richards (CH, Jun'09, 46-5587). (Ruse, incidentally, contributes a historical introduction to the present volume.) Though Reznick paraphrases Darwin's arguments, he stops well short of oversimplification. Major post-Darwinian concepts are discussed as needed to explain the modern repercussions of the *Origin*. Overall, this is a very readable and insightful guide that will provide readers with both the understanding and the motivation to tackle the original. **Summing Up:** Highly recommended. All levels of academic, public, and professional libraries. -- R. Gilmour, Ithaca College