

Professor Bruce Byland and Graduate Writing Fellow Patricia Duffett created the following assignment for Anthropology 212, "Ancient Peoples and Cultures."

Essay Assignment #1

For this assignment you are to become Charles Darwin. If you received the following letter from Jean Baptiste Lamarck, how would you, as the esteemed Professor Darwin, have responded? Your assignment is to write a letter from Charles Darwin to Monsieur Lamarck in reply.

Dear Professor Darwin,

When I look at the best, most productive farms in France, I note that their milk cows give more milk than cows from other farms that are not so well run. I also note that the offspring of these cows give even larger quantities of milk. With this observation in mind, I am led to the conclusion that the act of making lots of milk changes the mothers' bodies in some fundamental way. These changes in the mothers' bodies seem to be inheritable because their daughters, in turn, are able to produce large quantities of milk themselves.

Am I right or wrong? If I am wrong, then how do you explain the evidence that I have just described? Please try to convince me of your position.

Your most humble servant,
Jean Baptiste Lamarck

Essay requirements

- All drafts and final papers must be proof-read and typed. Please hand in two copies (one for Professor Byland and one for the Writing Fellow).
- Length: 4-5 pages, double-spaced, standard font and margins
- Schedule: Wed., 2/26: First draft due.
Wed., 3/5: Drafts returned to you with comments.
Mon., 3/17: Final paper due. Hand in draft and final together.
- Sources: The whole point of the paper is for you to spend some more time thinking about inheritance as a mechanism of evolutionary change. The letter format allows you to look at these ideas from two perspectives: Lamarck's mistaken approach and Darwin's more informed point of view. As your instructors, we are interested in seeing you grapple with both Lamarck's and Darwin's ideas, and your own ability to communicate them clearly in the letter format—TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY. We want to see your own work, in your own words. We are NOT interested in reading a research paper or report about inheritance. For this reason, you are not being asked to use any sources, other than your class notes, handouts, and textbook. If you are interested in using an additional source, you need to ask Professor Byland for his approval.
- Conferences: We are happy to talk with you and help you in any way with your paper. Don't hesitate to make an appointment with one or both of us.