

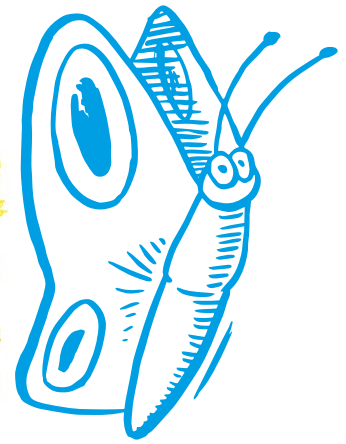
Super Scientists



Sir David Attenborough
Naturalist, Broadcaster
and Campaigner

The Story of Sir David Attenborough

1 David Attenborough was born in London on 8 May 1926. By the time he was 7 years old, he had become very interested in science and the natural world. He enjoyed going on cycling expeditions and collecting fossils, rocks and even bird eggs. He kept tanks of tropical fish and loved searching for newts in local ponds. When he was 8 years old, he visited the Natural History Museum in London, and was amazed at the thousands of different butterflies that were on display.



2

David grew up in Leicester where his father was head of the university. He lived with his parents, Mary and Frederick, and his two brothers, Richard and John. In 1939, just before the start of the Second World War, sisters Irene and Helga came to live with the family. They were Jewish refugees from Germany and had lost both of their parents. David and his brothers immediately welcomed the girls into their home and treated them as if they were their sisters. The girls stayed for seven years.



3

Throughout his school years, David became more interested in the natural world. His love of living things led him to study natural sciences at Cambridge University. After university, he served in the Royal Navy for two years and spent time in both North Wales and Scotland. In 1947, David went to London and became an editor for a publishing company who made science books for schools. He had to make sure that the science in the books was completely accurate. In 1950 he married Jane and had two children, Robert and Susan.



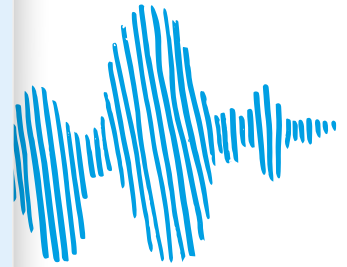
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4

A few years later, David decided he wanted to work in television. In the 1950s, televisions were black and white and only had two channels: BBC and ITV. When David joined the BBC, he disliked the natural history programmes that were being made, as they brought animals into the television studio and away from their natural habitats. He introduced a new series called Zoo Quest, which filmed animals in zoos but also in the wild. The show was a huge success and David's career as a naturalist and broadcaster had begun.



5

Over the last seventy years, David has produced, written and presented many of the world's most famous wildlife documentaries, watched by millions of people all over the world. They include Life on Earth (1979), The Living Planet (1984), The Blue Planet (2001) and Planet Earth (2005). Not only has he shown us the beauty of our planet, but he has also introduced us to animals and plants never seen before. He has received many awards for his work including a knighthood in 1985. In 2020, the Queen gave him a very special medal called the Knight Grand Cross of the Order of St Michael and St George. It is one of the highest honours given by the Queen and was given to David for the work he has done in broadcasting and conservation. He has also had eleven plant and animal species named after him including a 190 million year old reptile called Attenborosaurus!



6

In recent years David has become a campaigner for the environment. Many of his more recent documentaries warn us of the damage we are causing to our fragile planet. In 2017, his Blue Planet series showed us what plastics are doing to marine life and many people changed their use of plastic after watching it. Extinction: The Facts (2020) highlighted the number of animals and plants being lost all over the world and encourages us all to take action to rebuild our planet, before it's too late.

David's popularity continues to grow. In September 2020, he joined Instagram and gained over 1 million followers in just 4 hours. Despite being in his nineties, he works hard protecting our planet and is still seen as an inspiration to people of all ages, all over the world.