



# Scientific Explorers

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My all-time favourite explorer - Charles Waterton - doesn't appear here - he doesn't appear in most 'explorer' books, but then he was a Yorkshire rhubarb addict. The same thirst for knowledge, though, that propelled Waterton into the South American depths was the motivator for all those explorers assembled here - who went to find something out rather than just 'because it's there'. The author shows how, as the need to measure everything became an Enlightenment passion, scientific exploration began. It was mapping and measuring the world that took Cook and Darwin to the Pacific - Australia and evolution were just by-products. Steffoff clearly relishes her subject - which she divides into three parts. First, 'Knowledge in Far Places' - including the Rosetta Stone, the American West, Cook's tours and the unbearable Charles Wilkes. Then come 'Naturalists in the Great Unknown' - South America, Asia. Africa (full marks for the story of how Mungo Park, mugged in Pisania, was robbed of all but his hat - which held his journal) and Darwin. 'Exploring New Worlds' looks at deep sea and deep space, making the essential point that exploration never finishes. Although the maps are small and hard to follow, there are serviceable contemporary illustrations and a useful chronology to save dates and sequences from spoiling the read. For it is a really good read; its American origin is an advantage, allowing a refreshing objectivity as well as introducing Zebulon Pike. I hope the other series members are as original and stimulating; if they are, they will provide an enjoyable addition to a secondary school library.

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