

## Exercise 1

by Joe Stubbersfield

### Background

Before considering how cultural evolution theory can be used to better understand narratives, it's vital to have a good understanding of that theory. Alex Mesoudi, Andrew Whiten and Kevin Laland's article *Is Human Cultural Evolution Darwinian? Evidence Reviewed from The Perspective of the Origin of Species* provides an excellent introduction into thinking about cultural change over time as a Darwinian, evolutionary process. It also discusses key issues related to the nature of particulate inheritance in culture.

### The Exercise

To complete this exercise simply read the article:

Mesoudi, A., Whiten, A., & Laland, K. N. (2004). Perspective: Is human cultural evolution Darwinian? Evidence reviewed from the perspective of The Origin of Species. *Evolution*, 58(1), 1-11.

A pdf copy of the article is included, and it can also be accessed at this link:

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/j.0014-3820.2004.tb01568.x>

After completing the exercise, reflect on the key questions below.

## **Key questions**

**Can you think of how the processes of variation, competition and inheritance operate in the context of narratives?**

**How might variation occur?**

**Do different stories compete with each other?**

**How do we inherit a story?**

**Do you think it's possible to divide a narrative into discrete heritable particles?**

**If we can't, does it matter?**