



Probe Unit 1: Traits and Variation

How did the jack rabbit get its long ears?



Beatrice and her friends were discussing how the jack rabbit got its long ears. These were their ideas:

Beatrice: “The jackrabbit used its ears to hear and cool off, so they grew during its lifetime. Then, it passed those longer ears to its offspring.”

Gloria: “There were some jackrabbits with longer ears than others, and they heard predators better and stayed cooler than those with shorter ears. They survived better in the desert environment and had more offspring than jackrabbits with shorter ears.”

Cat: “One jackrabbit got his ears pulled by a hawk until they were the size they are today. As a result, all jackrabbits have long ears in the Sonoran Desert.”

Write your name on a post-it and place it by the person's name that you agree with.

Teacher Key: The best response is from Gloria. We hope students will move towards that response by the end of the unit. It is common for students to think Beatrice is the correct response. She is expressing the idea that use or disuse results in the passing on or reduction of a trait. Cat is expressing an idea that is common in literature where a story or fable might explain the appearance of a unique trait. The key idea here is that individuals do not evolve on their own; only a **population** changes over time - a **long** period of time. There is variation in traits of a population and some variations can be passed on more than others based on the environment and pressures in that specific system.