



People and microscopy in focus (7-12)

Antonie van Leeuwenhoek



Connect with nature

Promote microscopy

Inspire STEM

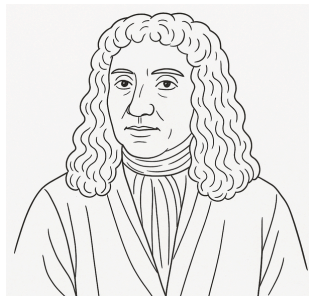
Introduction

Antonie van Leeuwenhoek (say: Lay-ven-hook) was born in 1632 in the Netherlands. He lived to be 90 years old!

At first, he worked in a shop selling cloth (linen). To check the cloth, he used little glass beads as lenses to see the tiny threads. This gave him the idea to make his own microscopes.

By looking through his simple microscopes, he was the first person ever to see tiny living things in water and even from his own teeth! He called them “animalcules” (little animals). Today, we call them bacteria and protozoa.

He also saw blood cells, capillaries (tiny blood tubes), rotifers, nematodes, and sperm cells. That’s why he is known as the Father of Microbiology.



1632 – Born in Delft, Netherlands

1650s – Worked in a shop selling cloth

1668 – Visited London and saw Robert Hooke’s Micrographia

1673 – Sent first letter to the Royal Society about what he saw under his microscope

1674–1676 – Saw tiny living things in pond water (protozoa)

1676 – First person to see bacteria (“animalcules”)

1677 – First person to see sperm cells

1680 – Elected Fellow of the Royal Society

1723 – Died aged 90

Activities

From the text:

Use the information to answer these questions

1. Make a timeline of van Leeuwenhoek’s life.
2. What were “animalcules”? Why do you think he gave them this name?
3. Why is he called the Father of Microbiology?

Research Further:

Use the library or internet

1. What is the Royal Society?
2. Look up a picture of van Leeuwenhoek’s microscope. Draw and label it.
3. How is his microscope different from a modern one?

