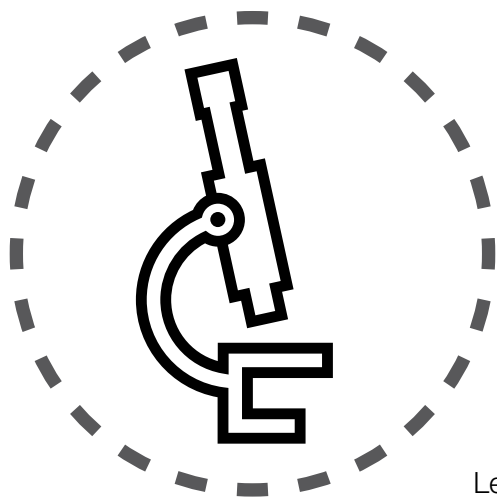


Anton van Leeuwenhoek (Layu-un-hook): Microscope maker

Name: _____

Date: _____



Anton van Leeuwenhoek (1632–1723) was born over 350 years ago in Holland. He wasn't a scientist but had a hobby that allowed him to see a world that no one before him had seen.

Leeuwenhoek was a businessman who bought and sold cloth. To look closely at the fibre in the cloth, he used a little hand lens. This hand lens magnified objects only three times but Leeuwenhoek enjoyed using it to look at things in nature or even his own fingerprints. Leeuwenhoek became interested in how the lens was made and he started to grind his own lenses and make his own microscopes. He found that he was very good at making lenses. As a hobby, he made more than 250 simple microscopes. Some of these microscopes could magnify objects 300 times. Leeuwenhoek set out to study as many things as he could find. He looked at the sting of a bee and what mould was like. He looked at blood and thin slices of plants. He looked at a drop of water and discovered little creatures moving in it. He discovered little creatures everywhere. He called them animalcules. He was the first person to see microscopic creatures.

Leeuwenhoek wrote down everything he saw and drew very accurate pictures. He wrote letters to important scientific societies and told the scientists about his discoveries.

At first he wasn't believed. Then the scientists of the Royal Society of London sent an observer to Holland to meet him and to investigate his microscopes. The report was very good and caused such excitement that Queen Anne of England and Czar Peter the Great of Russia visited Leeuwenhoek to see the little creatures. Some years later, Leeuwenhoek was made a full member of the Royal Society of London. Leeuwenhoek never gave up his fascinating hobby. He kept making new discoveries with his home-made microscopes throughout his life. He died in 1723 when he was 91 years old.

Find out more at this website:

www.ucmp.berkeley.edu/history/leeuwenhoek.html