

Reading Questions: A Short History of Nearly Everything
Bill Bryson

1. Who was the first person to observe cells? What sample of cells did he observe? What was remarkable about the number of cells he observed?
2. What level of magnification was Hooke able to achieve? How does this compare to the magnifications van Leeuwenhoek was able to achieve?
3. What did van Leeuwenhoek examine through microscopy?
4. What are animalcules? What was remarkable about the number of these found in a drop of water?
5. What is cell theory? Who were the contributors to cell theory?
6. How is the cell like a refinery or a metropolis? How is it unlike these things? Why do you think scientists and the author use metaphors/analogies in describing the cell?
7. Why was van Leeuwenhoek's work surprising to his scientific peers, in terms of its findings and in terms of van Leeuwenhoek's background? Does van Leeuwenhoek's background and work match your expectations for what a scientist should be/do?
8. How do advances in microscope technology relate to discoveries about cells and cell structure? Explain using textual support!