

Heinrich Schliemann

1822–1890



WHY HE MADE HISTORY Heinrich Schliemann was the German archaeologist who discovered the sites of ancient Troy and prehistoric Greece.



As you read the biography below, think about how Heinrich Schliemann's determination helped him discover the ruins of ancient Troy.

When Heinrich Schliemann was about seven years old, his father gave him a history book with a picture of the ancient city of Troy in flames. This picture impressed him and inspired his interest in later years to find the ruins of the ancient city.

Troy was mentioned in Homer's epic poem, *Iliad*. At an early age, Schliemann memorized Homer's works. Convinced that the ancient **Homeric** city of Troy actually existed, and was not just a legend, he became determined to find it.

Schliemann's family was poor. When he was 14 Schliemann began an **apprenticeship** with a grocer. A few years later he shipped out as a cabin boy on a vessel going to Venezuela. After being shipwrecked off the Dutch coast, Schliemann went to work as an office boy and later a bookkeeper at a trading firm in Amsterdam.

Schliemann's gift for languages helped him greatly. It is said that he was fluent in as many as 13 languages, including Russian and both ancient and modern Greek. His company sent him to St. Petersburg, Russia, where he began his own business and eventually made a fortune. This large fortune enabled Schliemann to retire from business when he was only 36 years old. He then dedicated himself

VOCABULARY

Homeric related to Homer's literary works

apprenticeship in service to someone in order to learn a trade

to his passion—archaeology and the search for the ancient city of Troy.

In order to prepare himself for his task, Schliemann traveled extensively and studied archaeology in Paris. Once prepared, he went to Greece and Asia Minor searching for Homeric sites. Schliemann believed that ancient Troy was located at Hisarlik, in what is now Turkey. After digging for several years, Schliemann proved that his theory was correct. While digging, Schliemann discovered that several cities had been built on top of the ruins of Troy. He discovered a city from the Bronze Age, which was much older than Homer's Troy, that actually lay beneath the other cities.

Schliemann wrote several books about his discoveries and contributed articles for important newspapers. It was the news of Schliemann's adventures and discoveries that widely popularized the field of archaeology during the nineteenth century. The public was so excited and inspired by his adventures that when Schliemann died, a professor at the University of Oxford in England commented that "the spring had gone out of the year."

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. **Recall** Which ancient city did Heinrich Schliemann discover?

2. **Draw a Conclusion** Why do you think it was said that "the spring had gone out of the year" when Schliemann died?

ACTIVITY

3. Imagine that you are determined to discover an ancient city. Write a list of at least 10 things that you will need to learn, do, or have before starting out on your adventure of discovery. Explain why you need each item.