

Dmitri Mendeleev (1834 - 1907)

Made the Periodic Table of elements.

Born Tobolsk, Siberia (now Tyumen Oblast), Russia.

Mendeleev was the fourteenth and last child of Ivan Pavlovich Mendeleev, a teacher of Russian literature and Maria Dmitrievna Kornileva, who herself owned a glass factory near Tobolsk.



Dmitri Mendeleev's life started with a series of disasters. His father died when he was fifteen, and shortly afterwards the factory his mother ran burned down. She took him to start a new life in Leningrad. The university turned down this country lad from Siberia, and he went to the Technical School—where he received prizes for science. He studied advanced chemistry at university, and became a chemistry teacher. He wrote his own textbook in 1870. It was the finest chemistry book ever written in Russia and greatly improved the standard of teaching.

The Russian government was very proud of him but he had a hot temper and was often in trouble with authorities. In 1890 he lost his university job because of his support for his students, who were being oppressed, and he died before the Revolution. He never joined the Imperial Academy of Science in his own country, but was given many honours abroad. The English gave him the Davy and Faraday Medals.

His hot temper led him into a quarrel with an important official of the ministry of Education, and his first teaching assignment was therefore to the Simferopol Gymnasium, which was closed because of the Crimean War.

After two months in the Crimea, where he was unable to work, Mendeleev went to Odessa as a teacher in the lyceum, and there took up the continuation of his early scientific work.