

Rene Descartes 1596 to 1650



Rene Descartes was a French philosopher born in 1596. He attended a Jesuit college and because of his poor health he was allowed to remain in bed until 11 o'clock in the morning, a habit he continued until his death in 1650.

Descartes studied law at the University of Poitiers which is located south west of Paris. After graduating in 1618 he went to Holland to study mathematics.

Over the next decade he travelled through Europe eventually settling in Holland in 1628. Here Descartes lived a solitary life only concentrating on mathematics and philosophy.

Descartes main contribution to mathematics was his analytic geometry which included our present x - y plane and the three dimensional space.

In 1649 Descartes moved to Sweden to teach Queen Christina. However she wanted to learn her mathematics early in the morning (5am) which did not suit Descartes because he had a habit of getting up at 11am. Combined with these 5am starts and the harsh Swedish winter Descartes died of pneumonia in 1650.