

Harry – gefangen in der Zeit

Culture and society

86 | Regional information | A visit to Thuringia

In addition to being in the geographic center of Germany, Thuringia has other advantages. The tiny state, which has 2.2 million residents, is also rich in history. As a German language learner, Harry's first stop would be Schleiz. It was here that the first Duden, known as the "bible" of German spelling, was produced in 1872. The must-have dictionary is continuously updated.

It was given its name in honor of its creator, Dr. Konrad Duden, the Schleiz grammar school's former principal. He frequently had communication issues from outside the region because the kids from the other towns spoke German differently. The "proper" spelling of a word back then also differed from instructor to teacher. This was sufficient justification for Mr. Duden to support standardizing German spelling.

To do so, he created a set of rules using the concepts he had learned in his classes. Anecdotally, Duden also enjoyed posing riddles. Is there a German sentence that uses the article "die" six times, for instance? Naturally, the riddle goes in jest: "Die, die die, die die Dietriche erfunden haben, verurteilen, tun Unrecht." ("People who criticize those who devised the Dietrich are unfair." A Dietrich is a duplicate key that is frequently used in robberies, by the way.)