



Why Are Materials and Minerals Important?

Many of the materials that you see, touch, or use every day rely on minerals for their creation. Perhaps last night you slept on a bed with steel springs in the mattress. An alarm clock with copper wires and quartz crystals woke you up this morning. You ate breakfast with stainless steel silverware on a plate or bowl made with clay. You dressed in clothes with metal zippers. You rode to school on a bicycle or in a car or bus made with metals. All these materials, and many more, come from minerals.



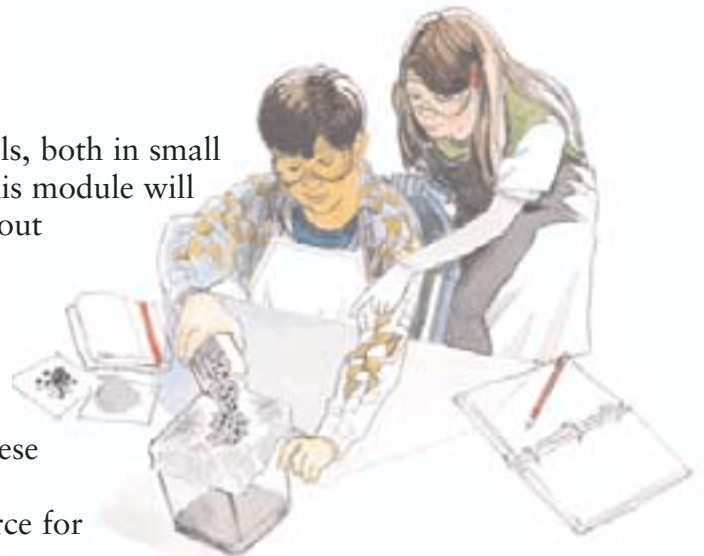
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As the world population grows, demand for natural resources increases. More people need more food and more materials. We are not in danger of running out of most minerals in the near future, but we still must be careful to use our resources wisely. Understanding how we use minerals and where they come from helps us make wise decisions about their management.

What Will You Investigate?

Your class will be studying materials and minerals, both in small groups and as an entire class. The activities in this module will help you to understand a variety of key ideas about materials and minerals, including:

- where deposits of minerals can be found;
- how the deposits form;
- how minerals are mined;
- what responsibilities you have in managing these resources;
- the importance of minerals as a natural resource for producing materials.



You will need to practice your problem-solving skills to find out as much as you can about materials and minerals. In the last investigation you will have a chance to apply all that you have learned about materials and minerals. You will be choosing a common household object and developing a “resource trail” for it.