Rocks and Minerals

GLOSSARY

acid rain Precipitation of relatively high acidity that is formed when airborne oxides of sulfur and nitrogen combine with moisture in the atmosphere.

conglomerate A rock made of mineral and rock fragments.

crystal A solid substance in which the particles are arranged in an orderly, repeatable pattern.

crystallization The process by which crystals are formed.

cubic A crystal form characterized by three equal axes at right angles to each other.

evaporation The conversion of a substance from a liquid to a gaseous state.

fossil The remains, impressions, or other evidence of living things preserved in rock.

hardness The resistance of the surface of a mineral to scratching by another substance.

hexagonal A crystal form characterized by three equal lateral axes intersected at 60 degrees and a vertical axis of variable length at right angles.

igneous A type of rock formed by the cooling and crystallization of molten materials.

indigenous Occurring naturally in a particular place or region.

laser Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation.

lava Molten rock that flows from volcanoes or Earth fissures.

luster The way a mineral reflects light.

magma The hot, liquid rock within the Earth's crust.

metallic luster Describes a mineral that is usually dark in color, is always opaque, even on its thin edges, and shines like polished metal.

metamorphic A type of rock formed when igneous, sedimentary, or even other metamorphic rocks are subjected to extreme heat and/or pressure deep below the Earth's surface.

mineral A naturally occurring, solid, inorganic substance with a definite chemical composition and usually crystalline in form.

Mohs Scale of Hardness A scale that ranks the hardness of minerals relative to the hardness of other minerals.

monoclinic A crystal form characterized by three unequal axes with one oblique intersection.

nonmetallic luster Describes a mineral that is usually light colored and whose surface appears glassy, greasy, brilliant, pearly, silky, or dull.

orthorhombic A crystal form characterized by three unequal axes at right angles to each other.

petrifaction The process of petrifying, or becoming a fossil (also known as petrification).

piezoelectric A type of electricity generated by applying pressure to a crystalline substance such as quartz.

property Any quality that serves to describe or define an object, material, or relationship.

rock A naturally occurring inorganic solid usually comprised of a mixture of different minerals and other materials.

sedimentary A type of rock formed by the solidification of layers of sediments.

silicon One of the most abundant elements on Earth; its electrical properties enable it to be used in electronic devices.

streak The color of the fine powder of a mineral obtained by scratching or rubbing the mineral against a piece of unglazed ceramic tile.

tetragonal A crystal form characterized by three axes at right angles, of which only the two lateral angles are equal.

triclinic A crystal form characterized by three unequal axes intersecting at oblique angles.

weathering The discoloration or breakdown of rocks and minerals due to the action of water, the atmosphere, and organisms.

Note: The Delta Science Reader includes its own glossary of terms.