

NHMU: This is Your Rock, This is My Rock

Summary

Students will learn to recognize a variety of rocks and minerals found in Utah as well as their identifying characteristics.

Group Size

Individual

Materials

Rocks and minerals (at least one per student)

Hand lenses

Index cards and pencils

Instructional Procedures

Give each student or pair of students a rock or mineral sample. Give the students 10 or 15 minutes to look at the samples with hand lenses. Have students describe their sample, noting the colors, weight, size, and/or shape. Before beginning, the teacher could model the procedure by holding up one large sample, and writing student observations about the sample on the board. Samples are then collected and put into a pile at the front of the room.

Students exchange their index card with another student or group for the detective phase. Using the rock or mineral descriptions, the students will then try to find the sample (5 minutes).

The teacher then checks to see if each detective group has the correct sample for their description sheet.

Detective groups should then expand the original description sheets with their own observations of the sample. (5 - 10 minutes)

(Optional) Have the students repeat steps 2 - 4, and see if the expanded descriptions and additional observations have made this process easier.

(Alternative) Instead of passing the samples around, the teacher may want to hold up the samples and have students offer descriptive terms that can be written on the blackboard.

Students could then be handed samples to identify based on the written descriptions on the blackboard.

Additional Activities

The students can discuss the advantages of having more than one student add their observations to the rock descriptions.

Students can create a booklet of the samples and their descriptions for display in the school library.

Have students feel, smell, examine or even taste (if you have halite) their rock (use hand lenses).

Ask students how rocks feel and discuss all the different qualities that were discovered by touching the rocks.

Continue asking students about smell, taste, visible features, etc. and discuss answers.

Pass rocks to another classmate and have them add observations to the first students'. Continue passing along until children are satisfied that they have observed all they can about the rock samples.

Sort rocks into groups based on the observations students made.

For example -- "Who is holding a rock with wavy lines in it? Let's put them on *this* table." "Who has a rock that has specks of black in it?" etc.

Discuss how the rocks were grouped and if there are any more ways to group or regroup them.

Bibliography

This lesson plan was developed by the [Utah Museum of Natural History](#).

Adapted from an activity by Laurie Wallace, U.S. Geological Survey Educational Programs.

Authors

[Utah LessonPlans](#)