

## Picturing Minerals -1

### Visualise and draw minerals from a verbal description

Encourage pupils to look carefully at minerals and to describe them verbally so that another person can visualise them from the description.

Seat pupils in pairs, with each person holding half of the photograph cards showing minerals, printed off and cut up from those shown below. They should NOT show each other what cards they have in their hands.

Pupil A then examines one photograph and describes it as fully as possible to Pupil B, who listens carefully and then tries to draw it. Pupil B must listen in silence and not ask any questions. Pupil B then takes a turn with another card, with Pupil A doing the drawing, also in silence. Pupils must not name the mineral but should be encouraged to use technical terms, e.g. for the shape of each mineral – needle-like, fibrous, tabular etc. Crystal faces may also be described, e.g. cubic, octahedral, etc. The hardness is shown

but should not be quoted until the partner is ready to suggest an identification of the mineral. Pupils should then compare their hand-drawn efforts with the photographs.

This first round should be tried without any guidance. Then give each participant the Prompt Card, to encourage them to be more specific in further descriptions, and ask them to work through the remaining photographs, comparing their drawings with the photographs after each round. Note that some minerals may be repeated on different photographs.

When all have finished, give out the descriptive cards and ask pupils to match the descriptions to the photographs which they have been using.

The scale bar in the photographs is 10mm.

A Hardness = 3



B Hardness = 6



C Hardness = 1



D Hardness = 2



E Hardness = 6



F Hardness = 3.5



G Hardness = 4



H Hardness = 1

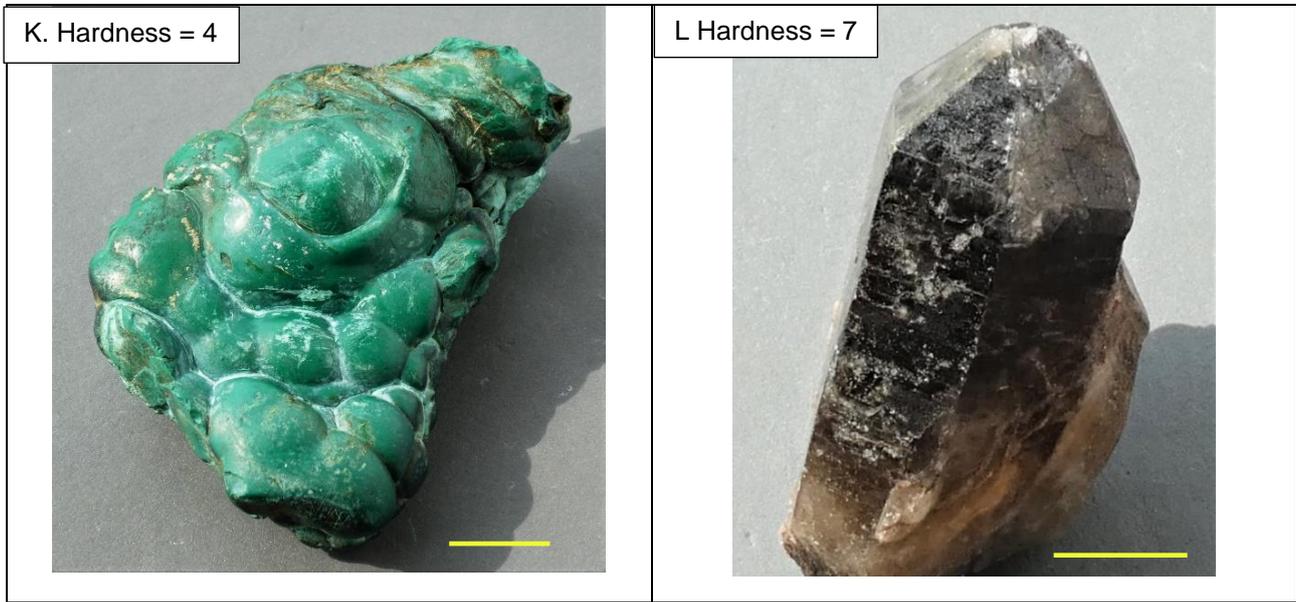


I. Hardness = 6



J Hardness = 2.5





**Prompt Card**

Use this card as a check list to aid your verbal description of your photographs to your partner  
 Even if you think that you know the name of the mineral, do not tell your partner. Instead, describe the mineral using its visual properties. These could include:  
 Optical properties: colour, lustre, transparency  
 Mineral shape: needle-like, fibrous, prismatic, kidney-shaped, flaky, tabular, twinned  
 Fracture: conchoidal, uneven  
 Cleavage: single, multiple – e.g. cubic, octahedral, rhombohedral

If your partner wishes to suggest the name for the mineral, they may request its hardness.

**Descriptions of the photographs**

<p><b>1. Gypsum var. selenite – twin</b> [CaSO<sub>4</sub>]                  Translucent, vitreous, colourless crystal with well-developed crystal faces. A single cleavage parallel to the upper surface is visible. The re-entrant angle shows that this is a twinned crystal.</p>	<p><b>7. Haematite</b> [Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>]                  Opaque, reddish-brown mineral, with a metallic lustre and kidney shaped (reniform) upper surface. Uneven fracture visible in places.</p>
<p><b>2. Fluorite</b> [CaF<sub>2</sub>]                  Very pale green transparent vitreous crystal showing cubic crystal faces, with one octahedral cleavage face at the front of the photograph. A second crystal has intergrown with the main one and can be seen towards the rear.</p>	<p><b>8. Pyrite</b> [FeS<sub>2</sub>]                  Opaque, gold coloured mineral, with a metallic lustre. The upper face of the cubic crystal shows marked striations (lines).</p>
<p><b>3. Calcite var. Iceland spar</b> [CaCO<sub>3</sub>]                  Transparent, colourless, vitreous crystal. All the faces seen are cleavage faces, forming a rhombohedron.</p>	<p><b>9. Malachite</b> [CuCO<sub>3</sub>.Cu(OH)<sub>2</sub>]                  Bright green opaque mineral with a dull lustre. The surface shows “bunch of grapes” (botryoidal) habit.</p>
<p><b>4. Quartz var. smoky quartz</b> [SiO<sub>2</sub>]                  Translucent, vitreous crystal of ‘smoky’ grey-brown colour. Hexagonal prism faces, capped by a hexagonal pyramid. There is no cleavage but a hint of conchoidal fracture at the top of the pyramid. Part of a second intergrown crystal is visible at the rear.</p>	<p><b>10. Talc</b> [Mg<sub>3</sub>Si<sub>4</sub>O<sub>10</sub>(OH)<sub>2</sub>]                  Pale blueish grey colour, translucent, with pearly lustre, with perfect basal cleavage.</p>

<p>5. <b>Biotite mica</b> [Silicate of Mg, Fe, Al, K, F &amp; OH] Dark brown, vitreous mineral of flaky form and perfect cleavage. The pale brown edges mark original crystal faces: the planar edges at the left and at the back have probably been cut.</p>	<p>11. <b>Barites var. cockscomb</b> [BaSO<sub>4</sub>] Opaque, pinkish crystals with brown upper surface. The closely-spaced bladed nature of the crystals results in the unusual 'cockscomb' appearance.</p>
<p>6. <b>Plagioclase feldspar</b> [Silicate of Na, Ca, Al] Large vitreous crystal within an igneous rock. The top surface is a cleavage plane, displaying many fine lines. These mark the multiple 'albite twin', characteristic of the plagioclase family of feldspars.</p>	<p>12. <b>Graphite</b> [C] Opaque, dark grey mineral with dull metallic lustre and flaky appearance, resulting from the perfect cleavage. The specimen is rather shapeless, but it is crystalline and so should not be regarded as amorphous.</p>

## The back up

**Title:** Picturing minerals - 1

**Subtitle:** Visualise and draw minerals from a verbal description

**Topic:** Enhancing pupils' skills of description and interpretation using photographs of minerals

**Age range of pupils:** 16 years upwards

**Time needed to complete activity:** About 30 minutes, depending on depth of discussion

**Pupil learning outcomes:** Pupils can:

- examine photographs of minerals carefully and describe them intelligibly;
- listen carefully to a verbal description and interpret it in a drawing;
- enhance their observational skills as a prelude to field work.
- use the properties to identify the mineral.

**Context:** This could form a useful revision activity, once pupils have studied minerals. Answers to the matching exercise are:

A3, B6, C10, D1, E8, F11, G2, H12, I7, J5, K9, L4

**Following up the activity:**

- Adopt the same approach to real specimens, if you have them.
- Ensure that pupils use the same careful description and interpretation approach to geology in the field.

**Underlying principles:**

- This strategy provides training in careful observation and interpretation of all relevant features.

- Being obliged to give a verbal description encourages careful observation, to ensure that clues are not missed.

**Thinking skill development:**

Verbal dexterity and metacognition are encouraged by the need to give intelligible verbal descriptions and to interpret from them. Applying the activity to real specimens or to the field situation is a bridging activity.

**Resource list:**

- Card sets of Photographs, Prompt Cards and Description Cards, cut out from those shown above.
- If real specimens are available these may be used instead, with appropriate matching descriptions drawn up by the teacher (although it is harder to hide real specimens from each other).
- A ruler and protractor per pair might encourage accurate observation and description.
- For those who wish to examine more examples, a data sheet of the properties of some common minerals is given in the Appendix, page 5.

**Useful links:**

[https://www.earthlearningidea.com/PDF/413\\_Picturing\\_minerals2.pdf](https://www.earthlearningidea.com/PDF/413_Picturing_minerals2.pdf)

[https://www.earthlearningidea.com/Video/165\\_Minerals\\_1.html](https://www.earthlearningidea.com/Video/165_Minerals_1.html)

See the table on page 6 for other Earthlearningidea activities in the "Picturing" series.

**Source:** Written by Peter Kennett of the Earthlearningidea Team. Photos by Peter Kennett

Appendix

Common Mineral Data Sheet for ELI activities

Name	Cleavage/Fracture	Hardness	Relative Density	Streak	Lustre	Colour	Other diagnostic properties
Quartz	RF *none/conchoidal	7	2.65	scratches streak plate	vitreous	colourless, milky but variable	hexagonal prisms terminated by pyramids
Orthoclase Feldspar	RF *2 good, 90	*6	2.6	scratches streak plate	vitreous	pink, white	
Plagioclase Feldspar	RF *2 good, 90	*6	2.7	scratches streak plate	vitreous	creamy-white, grey, colourless	
Muscovite Mica	RF *1 perfect (basal)	*2.5	2.7-3.1	white	pearly	colourless or pale yellow, green or brown	*flaky
Biotite Mica	RF *1 perfect (basal)	*2.5-3	2.7-3.1	white	pearly	brown/black	*flaky
Hornblende	RF *2 good, 60/120	*5-6	3.0-3.5	scratches streak plate	vitreous	black, dark green	prismatic crystals
Augite	RF *2 good, 90	*5-6	3.2-3.5	scratches streak plate	vitreous	greenish-black	prismatic crystals
Olivine	RF none/conchoidal	*6-7	3.2-4.3	scratches streak plate	vitreous	*olive green	
Chialstolite/ Andalusite	poor 1/ uneven fracture	7.5	3.1-3.3	scratches streak plate	vitreous	pearly grey/pink	needle crystals with square x-sections, black centre
Garnet	none	*6.5-7.5	3.5-4.3	scratches streak plate	vitreous	red/brown	*12-sided crystals - each face rhomb shaped
Calcite	RF *3 good, not at 90, perfect rhombs	*3	2.71	white	vitreous	colourless, white, tints	*effervesces with 0.5M HCl, rhombic shape
Fluorite	*4 good, parallel to octahedron	*4	3.0-3.2	white	vitreous	colourless purple/green/yellow	fluoresces in uv light, cubic or octahedral crystals
Halite	3 good, 90 cubic	*2.5	2.2	white	vitreous	colourless, white, often stained	*salty taste cubic crystals, often stained
Gypsum	1 good (basal)	*1.5-2	2.3	white	silky, pearly	colourless, white, often stained	fibrous
Barite	2 good, 90	*3-3.5	*4.5	white	vitreous, pearly	white, pink	bladed crystals
Chalcopyrite	poor/conchoidal	4	4.2	*black	metallic	bronze yellow	*tarnished to peacock colours
Pyrite	none/conchoidal	*6	5.0	*greenish-black	metallic	brass yellow	crystals often striated cubes
Galena	*3 good, 90 cubic	*2.5	*7.5	*lead grey	metallic	lead grey	cubic crystals
Haematite	poor/subconchoidal	*5.5-6.5	4.9-5.3	*cherry red	metallic-dull	red/black/steel grey	kidney shaped masses, fibrous

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\* – Useful property for diagnosis

RF – Common rock-forming mineral

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## Picturing.....

Earthlearningidea has compiled a series of activities involving examination of photographs of geological interest and their careful verbal description to others. This table will be updated as fresh activities are added. All titles begin with: "Picturing....."

<b>Title</b>	<b>Sub-title</b>
<a href="#">Puzzle structures</a>	Visualise and draw sedimentary structures from a verbal description
<a href="#">Trace fossils and other strange shapes</a>	Visualise and draw trace fossils and sedimentary structures from a verbal description
<a href="#">Igneous rocks – 1</a>	Visualise and draw igneous rocks from a verbal description
<a href="#">Igneous rocks – 2</a>	Visualise and draw igneous rocks from a verbal description
<a href="#">Metamorphic rocks</a>	Visualise and draw metamorphic rocks from a verbal description
<a href="#">Tectonic structures – 1 faulting</a>	Visualise and draw fault structures from a verbal description
<a href="#">Tectonic structures – 2 folding</a>	Visualise and draw fold structures from a verbal description
<a href="#">Minerals -1</a>	Visualise and draw minerals from a verbal description
<a href="#">Minerals -2</a>	Visualise and draw minerals from a verbal description
<a href="#">Fossils -1</a>	Visualise and draw fossils from a verbal description
<a href="#">Fossils -2</a>	Visualise and draw fossils from a verbal description
<a href="#">Landforms 1</a>	Visualise and draw landforms from a verbal description
<a href="#">Landforms 2</a>	Visualise and draw landforms from a verbal description