

acteristics (size, texture, color, degree of "sparkle," etc.) to create the groups. The idea here is to have the 6 rocks for each group look as similar as possible. Number four brown paper lunch bags (4 of #1, 4 of #2, etc.) for each of the groups, but hold on to the two extra rocks for each group, being sure to have them labeled in their own bag so you know to which group they belong. Finally, prepare labeled charts for each group to place their rocks after they have written their descriptions (Figure 1).

## The Literature Link

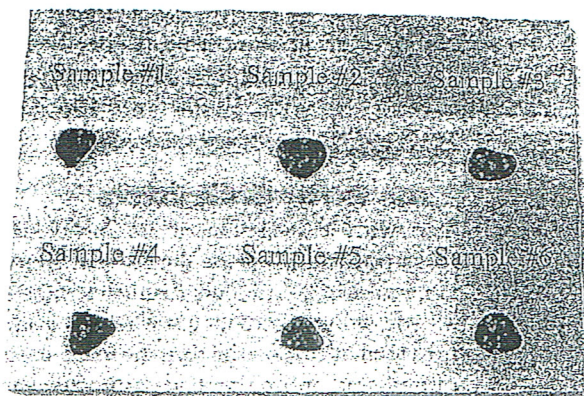
Before reading the book, let students examine the cover of the book and make observations about what they see. Typically, students share such comments as, "it looks like a girl is sitting in a rock," "the whole picture is made of rocks," "there is someone sitting on the ground looking at the rocks she has in her hand," "there is a sun in the corner that looks like a rock," and "it looks like a desert because it is barren, and there are not many plants." When you read the book, tell students to pay attention to how the girl in the story describes different kinds of rocks—students will record these descriptions when the story is finished.

As you read the story, students share their comments about the text and illustrations and make any connections with the text to their own lives (text to self), to other texts (text to text), and to the world. For example, "We made pet rocks in art class last year," and "You could find lots of rocks in the mountains."

Afterward, students (or the teacher) record the book's descriptive phrases about the rocks on the board, including:

- Roundish
- Mouse might mistake it for a seed
- Lumpy
- Smooth

**Figure 1.** One group's rock chart.



- Silver shine
- Small enough to fit in your pocket

This list provides a point of reference for students when they begin writing their own descriptions.

## Know Your Rock

After students hear that they will be writing descriptions of rocks just like in *Everybody Needs a Rock*, the materials person for each group distributes the bags to each of the group members, who are instructed to keep their rocks secret and not allow anyone else to see them. Students then individually examine their rock without their classmates seeing what their rock looks like (no peeking!).

After spending about five minutes examining the rocks, students are instructed to write a five-sentence paragraph describing their rock. Students are not given any explicit instructions about what to write for their paragraphs, but the purpose of the descriptive paragraph is to have a rich enough description so that, when back together in a small group, each student can identify the others' rocks when all are displayed together. Students are not aware that there will be additional "dummy" rocks, which no one has seen previously, also included in the final grouping.

We usually have students write the paragraphs before leaving the classroom for lunch, recess, or a special class such as PE or music. This provides time for the teacher to collect and redistribute the materials in an appropriate manner, and it allows the rocks to cool off after having been handled by the students—warm rocks are good indicators of which rocks have been handled and which have not! While the students are out of the room, we place each group's rocks on a chart as shown in Figure 1.

## The Secret Rock

When students return to the classroom, they find the rocks (including the two additional rocks) organized on a chart. The sound of students' delighted groans is a good indication that they realize that their rocks are similar to all the others in the group, and that the phrase "my rock is small and red" will really not be enough information to help others distinguish among the rocks. Students are then instructed to make a list of each person in their group and record details from their paragraphs that will be helpful as they make a decision about whose rock is whose. They can then record who they think is the owner of each rock. No sharing regarding ownership is done until all students have read their paragraphs aloud. This prevents students from guessing who the rock's owner is based on the process of elimination and helps to ensure that each student gets a chance to read his or her paragraph.

It is often difficult for students to identify their own rocks when they see them in the larger group. As Baylor indicates, "any rock looks good sitting among a thousand