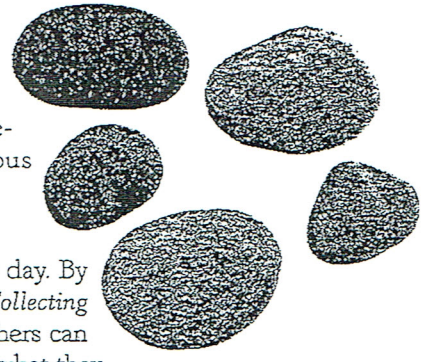
Rocking Around the Rock Cycle

By Christine Anne Royce



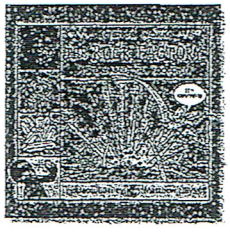
"What type of rock is this?" is a common question spoken by all children at some point in their young lives. Many students have rocks of all shapes and sizes in their "collections." In this column, young students will have the opportunity to explore more in depth as they make observations of the three types of rocks—igneous, metamorphic, and sedimentary. Upper-grade students who have some previous study of rocks can use these books to review what they know of the rock cycle.

This Month's Trade Books

Let's Go Rock Collecting
By Roma Gans.
Harper Collins. 1997.
ISBN 0064451704.
Grades preK–3

Synopsis

Children go on a rock collecting expedition. This "Let's Read and Find Out About Science Series" book introduces students to the different types of rocks and how they are formed, and it builds excitement about collecting rocks. The book can be a useful addition to helping examine different types of rocks and what happens to them over time. It should be noted that they use the term *rocks* loosely in this book and include some minerals.



The Rock Factory
By Jacqui Bailey.
Picture Window Books. 2006.
ISBN 1404815961.
Grades 2–5

Synopsis

The author uses colorful pictures and creative text in describing the rock cycle, differences between rocks and minerals, and other related topics. This book can be used to assist the reader in understanding the different types of rocks and how they are formed.

Curricular Connections

Who hasn't had a rock collection at some point in their lives? It may have been rocks that were a certain color, or a certain shape, or rocks that sparkled. Regardless, rocks are all around us—in streams, on paths, in fields—they are literally beneath our feet every day. By using *Let's Go Rock Collecting* as a springboard, teachers can begin to ask students what they know about rocks—*Where did they come from? What are they made from? How have they changed over time?* All of these questions can be posed to the student throughout the reading of this book. Young students will generate many similar questions—*Why are they different colors? Why do some have stripes and others have spots?*

This excitement about such a common object can be used to meet part of the National Science Education Standards and have students make observations about and describe the properties of rocks. At this age, the use of the science-process skills of observation and classification into groups and the use of language skills for providing detail about rocks is sufficient. The NSES point out that "understanding rocks and minerals should not be extended to the study of the source of the rocks, such as sedimentary, igneous, and metamorphic, because the origin of rocks and minerals has little meaning to young children" (NRC 1996, p. 130). By allowing students to be introduced to rock collecting, they will begin to understand that each rock has its own unique features.

Older students can then explore how and where individual rocks fit into a larger process—the rock cycle. Students at this level have likely learned about the geological changes that happen as different types of rocks—igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic—form through the rock cycle. *The Rock Factory* serves as a good resource to review these concepts as they complete an assessment activity that demonstrates their understanding of the different ways rocks form.

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