

Student Instructions for Performing the Luster Test

1. Shine the penlight on mineral A.



2. How does the mineral look under the light? Place it in one of the boxes on your sorting sheet.



3. Record the word from that box in the space marked "Luster" on your profile sheet for mineral A.

4. Repeat Steps 1, 2, and 3 with the remaining 11 minerals.

Reading Selections

Galena

Galena is shiny and very soft. You can scratch it with your fingernail. It melts and can be molded into shapes. If it breaks, it separates into small cubes.

Galena contains lead, which is a common metal. Hundreds of years ago, some people believed that lead could keep away evil spirits. They stored their jewels and religious objects in chests made of lead. Today, we know that lead really does keep out something that may be harmful—radiation. That’s why we keep radioactive materials in lead containers. The walls in nuclear power plants are made of lead.

Lead has other uses. Mixed with tin, it is used to cover and protect underground electrical cables. It is also used in batteries.

We have to be careful about how we use lead. We now know that it is also a poison. Lead used to be added to gasoline, for example, because it kept the car’s engine running smoothly. Because the lead fumes were dangerous to the environment, lead is no longer used in gasoline. Lead also was once used in most paints. Because it can be poisonous if eaten, lead is no longer used in house paints.

Can you find galena in your minerals? Can you describe its luster?



Gypsum

Gypsum looks dull and earthy. It is usually found in small pieces. These pieces are ground up and used to make plaster of Paris. Have you seen plaster of Paris? What color is it?



Casts for broken bones used to be made from gypsum. Today, gypsum is used to construct walls in homes and buildings. The building material called “drywall” is really “gypsum board.”

Artists sometimes use large pieces of a special kind of gypsum to carve beautiful statues. The name of this special gypsum is alabaster. It is pink or white. Have you ever seen an alabaster statue? It looks a lot like polished plaster!

Is gypsum in your set of minerals? What color was its streak?

Sorting Minerals by Luster

Place each mineral in one box.

Metallic	Glassy
Dull	Waxy