Name: _____ Minerals and Rocks

Minerals

M**inerals** are natural, non-living, solids that make up rocks. Most minerals form into crystals. This means that they form into regular three-dimensional shapes with flat surfaces.

Precious gems, such as emeralds, rubies, diamonds and sapphires are all individual mineral crystals that are valued for their beauty. Common table salt is also a mineral; one that forms into small cube shaped crystals.

There are over 3000 different minerals in the earth's crust. To identify a mineral, scientists test its properties, which include color, luster, hardness, streak, cleavage, and crystal shape.

Luster - Luster describes how well a mineral reflects light.

Hardness – Hardness describes how easy it is to scratch the surface of a mineral. (The softest mineral is talc; it is used to make baby powder. Do you know—or can you guess—what is the hardest mineral?)

Streak - Streak is the color of the powder that a mineral leaves when it is scratched across a special plate.

Cleavage - Cleavage describes how a mineral breaks up into pieces. Some minerals break up into small cubes while others may break up into thin sheets.

Rocks

A **rock** is a solid that is made up of minerals.

Minerals are the building blocks of rocks. But rocks and minerals are *not* the same thing. Although some rocks are made of just one mineral, *most* rocks are a mixture of different types of minerals all stuck together.

1. What are some properties of minerals that help scientists identify them?

2. What is a rock?

What is the difference between a rock and a mineral?