

Table of Contents

Gold Rush/What's the Rush?	5
The Gold Facts	6
What's So Special About Gold?	7
Fascinating Nuggets of Information.	8
Where Does Gold Come From?/There's Gold in Them Th'ar Hills!	9
The California Gold Rush Is On!	10
Who Were the "Forty-Niners"?	11
Overland Travelers	12
Choose Your Own Gold Rush Adventure	13
In the Beginning; the Lucky Few/Stake a Claim	14
The Gold Dwindles	15
Prospecting Tricks of the Trade	16
Gold Prospector's Get-Up	17
Gold-Seeking Gear	18
Pan for Gold	19
A New World of Prospecting	20
The Legacy of the California Gold Rush	21
The Klondike Rush	22
Plan a Trip to Gold Country/The Legacy of the Klondike Gold Rush.	23
Get Packing.	24
Mining Communities.	25
The Life of a Miner.	26
Camp Food	27
Mining the Miners.	28
Women of the Gold Rush/Children of the Gold Rush	29
Gold Rush Projects	30
Gold Rush Gathering.	31
Speak Like a Miner.	32

Gold Rush

Step into the past, into a time when the extraordinary quest for gold took over the lives of many ordinary men and women.

For would-be gold prospectors, the idea of finding enormous wealth in the earth beneath their feet was irresistible. For the fortunate ones, finding gold was a fast and easy stroke of luck that made them instantly rich. It was news of this kind of lucky strike that spread rapidly and infected so many dreamers with *gold fever*, a “disease” that compelled them to abandon their normal lives in search of glitter.

Think About It

Gold in the ground gave ordinary people a chance to find an instant fortune. Why do you think people in those days might have wanted to get rich? Were their dreams any different from ours? Would you leave everything to pursue a rumor and follow a dream? What other employment or life-style options did people have at the time of the great gold rushes?



What's the Rush?

Materials

package of gold foil-wrapped chocolate coins

Get Ready

Plant the coins around the classroom or outdoors on a nice day.

What to Do

1. Quietly, indicate to one child that there are chocolate coins hidden in the area. Instruct that child to tell a friend or friends if he or she would like to.
2. Observe what follows.
3. Once the chocolate coins have been discovered and after you ensure that each child receives one, discuss what happened.

Discuss

1. Who was the first to notice the gold coins?
2. How did it feel to find a gold coin?
3. Whom did you tell? Did you try to hide your discovery?
4. How did you feel when others found coins and you did not?
5. Why did you “rush” around?
6. How was this activity like a real gold rush?

Gold Rush

The Gold Facts

Gold is one of about 2500 minerals found on Earth. It is classified as a precious metal and has great value. It is found in veins and placer deposits.

Natural State

Gold can be found as dust, flakes or nuggets or in a vein imbedded in rock.

Chemical Symbol

AU

Hardness

Gold measures 2.5 on Mohs' scale of hardness which ranges from 1 to 10. That means gold is quite soft. Diamond, the hardest mineral, registers 10 on this scale.

Malleability

Gold is very soft and easy to shape; it can be flattened to a very thin sheet.

Weight

One cubic foot weighs over 1200 pounds (545 kg)!

Luster

Gold has a glossy, metallic sheen.

Price

The price of gold is fixed twice daily, on the opening and closing of trading markets around the world.

Destructibility

Gold is virtually indestructible and not affected by day-to-day moisture, heat or air.

Rarity

Relatively scarce, only three to four parts per billion of the Earth's crust are gold.

One of few metals most commonly found in its pure state.

Nuggets

Only one percent of all gold found is in nugget form. Gold in this natural form is so rare that nuggets are worth more than the gold they contain. Nuggets are usually about 18 to 22 karats and contain small amounts of copper, silver, iron and platinum. No two nuggets are alike.



Gold Rush

What's So Special About Gold?

In many cultures around the world and throughout history, gold is and has been a highly valued and much-sought-after mineral. It is a rare, precious metal with special qualities. It is beautiful, useful and has exceptional trade value. It has been a symbol of power, wealth and success that has launched expeditions and precipitated wars.

Discuss

Why do you think gold is so valuable and desired?

- Gold is soft and malleable which makes it easy to shape into many useful and beautiful items. It can be hammered into a sheet so thin it can cover windows to reduce glare and the heat of natural light.
- Gold is resilient which makes it useful to many industries.
- Gold is resistant to corrosion, which means it won't rust. This makes it valuable in industry, dentistry and medicine. Contact points on the switch that trigger the air bag in a car to inflate are coated with gold to eliminate corrosion that might inhibit the effectiveness of this life-saving device.
- Archaeological discoveries in Egypt illustrate just how well gold can survive the ravages of time. A 4000-year-old mummy was found to have perfectly preserved gold dental work!
- By 1900 German physician Robert Koch had discovered that synthetic chemical compounds containing gold suppressed the growth of the bacillus that caused tuberculosis. Later research showed that other gold compounds could help to treat arthritis, asthma and other ailments.

Gold Hunt

Although we can't see all of them, many things around us are made of gold. Take children on a hunt around your school, town and their homes. Search for items made of gold. Discuss your findings. Why was gold used in the places you found it? Why is gold not used more often? What contemporary items might have been made of gold before we had access to the variety of materials we do today? What things might be better if they were made of gold?

Follow-Up

So, "What's so special about gold?" Record responses in gold marker on black paper. Ask leading questions to reinforce the fact that gold is rare, beautiful, easily shaped, doesn't rust, is noncorrosive, hypoallergenic and has some medicinal properties.

