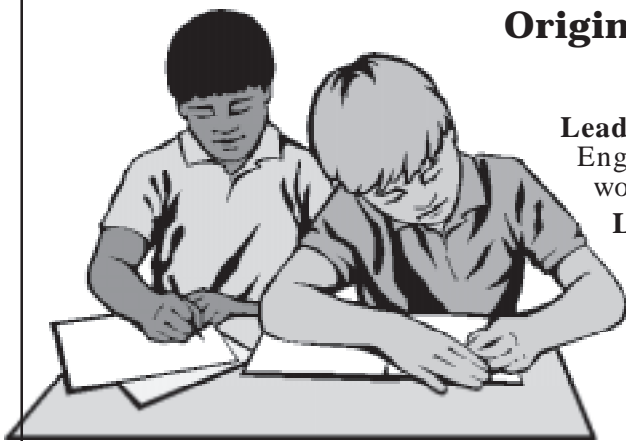


Origin of Mineral Names (Etymology)



Antimony: A Middle English to Old French word.

Asbestos: Greek word—to extinguish.

Barite: Greek word—weighty.

Bauxite: named after a town, les Beaux (beautiful), in southern France.

Beryllium: Latin and Greek words—a gem.

Columbite-tantalite: Latin—Columb former name of niobium.

Copper: Greek name—Cyprus, an island in the Mediterranean known for its copper mines.

Diamond: Greek—invincible.

Diopase: Named by Hau'y from Greek—transparency.

Feldspar: German words—field, spar (a rod or spear).

Fluorspar/fluorite: Latin—flow, flux.

Gold: Old English or Old Norse words—to shine, gleam.

Graphite: Greek word—to write.

Gypsum: Greek word—chalk.

Halite: Greek word, hals—salt.

Iron: Indo-European word—to move vigorously, strong.

Kyanite: also spelled cyanite; cyano or kyanos, Greek word for blue, the common color of kyanite.

Lead: akin to Old and Middle English, Dutch, and German words—plummet.

Lithium: Greek—a stone.

Mica: Latin—a crumb, grain, particle; also to shine, glitter.

Molybdenum: Greek—lead, galena.

Niobium: Latin and Greek—niobe; Niobe (Greek Myth) a queen of Thebes, daughter of Tantalus, who, weeping for her slain children, was turned into a stone from which tears continue to flow.

Perlite: French—pearl.

Potash: Dutch—potasschen, a word referring to the preparation by evaporation of the lixivium of wood ashes in iron pots. “Potash” is loosely used for potassium carbonate, p. oxide, or p. hydroxide.

Pyrite: Greek—flint or millstone, fire stone.

Quartz: German, quarz, unknown meaning.

Silica: Latin—silex, flint.

Silver: Middle and Old English, German, Gothic—probably a loanword.

Smithsonite: Named for an Englishman, John Smithson (1765?-1829), founder of the Smithsonian Institution. He was a well-known chemist and mineralogist and he discovered the chemical properties of the mineral named after him.

Sodium carbonate (soda ash, trona): Middle Latin or Italian—soda (firm, solid).

Sphalerite: German—sphalerit and Greek—sphaleros; to deceive, so named from being mistaken for other ores. The principal ore of zinc.

Stibnite: Latin—antimony.

Sulfur: Middle English and Latin—sulphur.

Tantalum: Modern Latin and Greek—Tantalus, son of the mythical god/king Zeus.

Tungsten: Swedish—heavy stone.

Vanadium: Old Norse—Vanadis, a name of the goddess Freya.

Zeolite: Swedish and Greek words—to boil; so named by A.F. Cronstedt (1702?-65) Swedish mineralogist, from its swelling up when heated.

Zinc: German—prong, point.

Zoisite: named after Baron von Zois, an Austrian.

Rare Earth Elements

cerium: named in 1803 after the asteroid Ceres;

dysprosium: Greek—difficult of access;

erbium: Modern Latin—named after Ytterby, Sweden, the town where first found;

europium: Modern Latin—Europe;

gadolinium: German— named by the Swiss chemist, J. Marignac, who discovered it in the mineral gadolinite in 1886; gadolinite was named after J. Gadolin (1760-1852) who isolated it;

holmium: Latinized form of Stockholm, the capital of Sweden;

lanthanum: Greek, to be concealed, hidden;

lutetium: Modern Latin— named for Lutetia, ancient Roman name of Paris;

neodymium: Modern Latin—neo (Greek, new), plus dymium;

praseodymium: Greek—green, plus dymium;

promethium: Greek— forethought;

samarium: French—named after Col. Samarski, Russian mining official;

terbium: named for Ytterby, a town in Sweden;

thulium: Latin—named after Thule, the northernmost region of the world, possibly Norway, Iceland, Jutland, etc.;

ytterbium: Modern Latin— Ytterby, village in Sweden.

Platinum Group Minerals

palladium: Greek, Pallas, the goddess;

rhodium: Modern Latin or Greek—a rose;

iridium: Latin—rainbow;

osmium: Modern Latin, named in 1804 by its discoverer, S. Tennant, English chemist;

ruthenium: Modern Latin— Ruthenia (Russia), because it was first found in ores from the Ural Mountains.