

The Inside World of Minerals

By Marcia Glaze Wyatt

Competition, feuds, even coups! A feisty group this can be. Typically, quite snobbish, they often restrict their inner circle to a select few. If you find one group member, you can assume the others are nearby. But there are exceptions, with unlikely associations born of heated circumstances. Once passions subside, these unlikely allegiances can be fleeting; shifting conditions beget shifting affections.

Associations aside, these characters don't like to be alone. Whether fraternizing with those of their family or consorting with those of similar backgrounds, they are a gregarious lot, preferring crowds to solitude, with individual potential surrendered for camaraderie. Group presentation – generally massive, bulky, and nondescript in character - masks individual expression.

A certain collection of constituents, with similar life stories, may share identical internal characteristics; yet sport different looks, depending on where “home” is; a product of environment influencing outer appearance – regional wardrobe fads, so to speak. This habit of outer expression partly contributes to a diversity that belies a more uniform parent stock.

In addition, change in ones external circumstances tends to translate to change in external appearances; while internally, no change occurs. Conversely, there is the rarer situation where the outside appearance remains unchanged, but internally, something has gone awry. Only the shell remains to suggest nothing new; but clues of the inner destruction manifest in changed abilities and behaviors – traces of environmental assaults. Occasionally, the internal disorder can be reversed. Time and conditions: the determining factors.

Some come of age sooner than others, marching into new territory, invading en mass, leaving little room for latecomers. Some yield, giving away parts of themselves to better those around them. Exploiting that generosity, some grow at the expense of the giving. There are those you think you know, but then again, you don't. They look one way in one light; a completely different way in another. Some even change identities later in life. Their environments change, and this changes them.

Some keep their inner identities; yet revamp their appearance with age – a mid-life crisis, of sorts. Some get cozy with others and grow so close to them that they actually merge with one another; two seeming to become one – new designs, inside and out! At times, that close union fails; and they separate – not an easy process. But it happens. Their alliance survives; its character simply modified. They trade merger for co-existence.

Fickle they can be. Some are soft and hard at the same time; it's all in how you approach them. Some are tough, but break with ease. While others seem meek; yet they are among the toughest. Some of these traits are just the nature of the individuals. Some quirks result from early mistakes – mistakes at birth or along the journey to maturity. It all makes for unexpected outcomes!

Through it all, time is the arbiter of history and manifestation. One would seldom guess that underpinning all the eccentricities and diversity is a fairly uniform blueprint. Uniqueness boils down to the details – time, among them. This society of minerals is a group as capricious, practical, and magnificent as you will find. Knowing the “what” of the mineral world excites, but knowing the “whys” intoxicate. The “whys” are numerous. All spawn from a finite collection of atomic species, arranged into a limited variety of building blocks. And how these building blocks are assembled is the magic! Lego’s for earth! It is from minerals that rocks are built. And from rocks; oceans, land, atmosphere, and life evolved. Minerals are the opening chapter to the story of your recent family history – of how your planet became your home.