

Quartz

Quartz is the second most common mineral on the face of the Earth with feldspar being the first. Quartz is found in nearly every geological environment and is at least a component of almost every rock type. It is also the most diverse in terms of varieties, colours and forms. The extensive variety of quartz comes about because of its abundance and widespread distribution.

Some of the better known quartz varieties are:

Rose quartz - pink in colour and generally transparent to translucent.

Smoky quartz - brown transparent Quartz, sometimes incorrectly referred to as smoky topaz which is misleading since the mineral variety is quartz and not topaz.

Tiger's eye - quartz containing brown iron which produces the rich golden yellow colour.

Rock crystal - a transparent colourless quartz variety.

Lodolite, rutilated quartz & tourmalinated quartz - some of the better known included quartz varieties but there are hundreds more. Inclusions in quartz are very common.

The Roman naturalist 'Pliny the Elder' believed quartz to be permanently frozen ice. He supported this idea by saying it's found near glaciers in the Alps and that large crystals were made into spheres to cool the hands. The Greeks had originally named quartz 'krystallos', meaning 'frozen' because they too believed these transparent rock crystals were frozen water which had been turned to stone. The finest quality rock crystal can have the clarity and shimmer of water.

Even though quartz is relatively common, large flawless specimens are not which is why modern crystal balls are made of glass and not quartz!

While most varieties of transparent quartz are valued most when they lack inclusions, some varieties are valued because of their inclusions. The most popular being rutilated quartz.

Chalcedony is quartz that is formed not of one single crystal but many finely grained micro crystals.

Quartz was the first crystal used in radio transmission and reception and was essential in the development of computers. Australian tribes use quartz crystals in rain-making ceremonies and native American Indians used it for arrowheads, knives, divining stones and ornaments. Some West African tribes created ceremonial seats from a single piece of quartz and the early inhabitants of Great Britain used it for their curative powers to purify water and cure sterility.

Around 2.5 million years ago in the Omo valley in Ethiopia, some of the earliest primitive stone tools such as axes were made of quartzites. These materials were used because of their hardness and their isotropic brittleness which made it possible to shape the tools with relative ease.

Because of its abundance worldwide, quartz is frequently mentioned in ancient myths. Persian folklore says that placing a quartz stone on a baby will ensure intake of mother's milk.

In crystal healing, quartz is known as the power stone. It has an energetic quality and the ability to amplify subtle energies. It is said to enhance thoughts as they are a form of energy. Due to its ability to balance, quartz is excellent for harmonizing and balancing one's own environment. It is also good for energizing other crystals. It's a gemstone of clarity which dispels negativity and clears away negative energy and is powerfully protective. It enhances spiritual growth, spirituality and wisdom and because it clarifies thought processes and emotions, it also increases inspiration and creativity. It can help with concentration, studying and retaining what is learnt. Quartz is a master healing gemstone which has been used historically to detect poisons in food and is also said to draw out pain.

Quartz is graded 7 on Mohs scale of mineral hardness.

The following links offer further reading on quartz

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quartz>

<http://www.gemologyonline.com/quartz.html>

<http://www.gemstone.org/gem-by-gem/english/quartz.html>

<http://www.gemstoneeducation.com/Quartz.htm>

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