

Mining – why on Earth?

Last month *Material World* asked our readers what they thought about **mining**. Read on to see what Alex had to say.

Mining is a disaster for our environment. The materials we mine may be useful to us and many people may even feel that they can't live without them; however, mining can't go on forever.

Mining is ruining our environment. Every day, mining companies drill into the Earth and tear up our land. Forests are cut down to make way for mines, and we lose the trees that help keep our air healthy and that house hundreds of wildlife species. Poisonous chemicals used in mining run into rivers, spoiling our water supply and killing marine animals. And after the mining has finished, the mined areas of land are very rarely brought back to life.



A uranium mine cut into the Earth

mining taking materials from the ground



Polluted water flowing into a contaminated river

We clearly depend on mining to provide us with a huge range of materials that we use in our everyday lives. Much of what's around us is made from mined materials – metals, such as gold, silver, copper and iron, and non-metals, such as oil, gas, coal and salt. These materials may provide us with many **conveniences** and may seem invaluable to us, but we need to think about how using them impacts our world.

We need to realise that many of the materials we rob the Earth of are **finite** resources. This means that if we use them all up, one day they will run out.

Think about plastic shopping bags. Most are used once and then thrown away. Plastic is made from **crude** oil, which is taken out of the ground at an alarming rate.

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- conveniences** things that make life easier or nicer
- finite** limited; have an end
- crude** raw, not processed