Spenser and the Rocks
Spenser and the rocks is part of the I Wonder Why book series, written to ignite the curiosity of children in grades K-6 while encouraging them to become avid readers. In addition to the information pertaining to rocks, the heart of the story is a young boy named Spenser and his interests, which are initiated by curiosity. When we don’t know something about an area of interest, we try to understand it by asking questions and doing investigations. These five Earth science activities in the Parent/Teacher Handbook section in each book enable learners to carry out their own investigations to test the content of the book. The materials needed for these activities are easily obtained, and the activities have been tested with youngsters to be sure they are age appropriate.

Each book uses a different approach to take the reader through simple scientific information. One book is expository, providing factual information. Several are narratives that tell how we gradually learn science through experiencing and inferring. The five books in this set of the I Wonder Why series focus on Earth science content. The materials of our Earth are mostly in the forms of solids (rocks and minerals), liquids (water), and gases (air). Inquiries about these materials are initiated by curiosity. When we don’t know something about an area of interest, we try to understand it by asking questions and doing investigations. These five Earth science books are written from the learner’s point of view: an Earth science book was chosen to be appropriate for youngsters who are beginning to construct knowledge of the world around them. These youngsters ask questions. They want to know about things. They are more curious than they will be when they are a decade older. Research shows that science is students’ favorite subject when they enter school for the first time. Science is both what we know and how we come to know it. What we know is the content knowledge that accumulates over time as scientists continue to explore the universe in which we live. How we come to know science is the set of thinking and reasoning processes we use to get answers to the questions and inquiries in which we are engaged.

Scientists learn by observing, comparing, and organizing the objects and ideas they are investigating. Children learn the same way. These thinking processes are among several inquiry behaviors that enable us to find out about our world and how it works. Observing, comparing, and organizing are fundamental to the more advanced thinking and reasoning processes we use to get answers to the questions and inquiries in which we are engaged.

In addition, the content in these books correlates to criteria set forth by national standards. Often the content is woven into each book so that its presence is subtle but powerful. The science activities in the Parent/Teacher Handbook section in each book enable learners to carry out their own investigations that relate to the content of the book. The materials needed for these activities are easily obtained, and the activities have been tested with youngsters to be sure they are age appropriate. After students have completed a science activity, rereading or referring back to the book and talking about it stabilizes the learning as a long-term memory.
Spenser’s collection became bigger and bigger. Soon he had rocks all over his room. Spenser enjoyed arranging his rocks.

He put all the red rocks together, all the black together, all the gray together, all the pink together, and all the white together.

He said to himself, “What a great collection!”
One day, Spenser wondered what else he could do with his collection.

He noticed the rocks were different in other ways besides color.

Spenser arranged his collection in many new ways.
As he begins to discover the interesting rocks all around him, Spenser has many questions about what he finds. Given the differences in the rocks’ colors, sizes, shapes, and textures, there is much to learn about rocks! But that’s not all the curious child learns in this tale of discovery. Spenser’s fascination grows as he sorts and re-sorts his rock collection and asks questions about what he observes. For Spenser—as well as young readers—the experience is an engaging introduction to scientific procedures such as classification and research.

*Spenser and the Rocks* is part of the *I Wonder Why* book series, written to ignite the curiosity of children in grades K–6 while encouraging them to become avid readers. These books explore the marvels of geology, land forms, weather, environments, and other phenomena related to science and nature. Included in each volume is a Parent/Teacher Handbook with coordinating activities. The *I Wonder Why* series is written by an award-winning science educator and published by NSTA Kids, a division of NSTA Press.