Using rocks in art

Have you ever used a rock to draw? It's great fun to use chalk and scribble away on a pavement. The colours held inside some rocks and minerals have been used by artists for thousands of years.

Who needs paper?
Cave painters had no paper, so they used rock as their canvas. They used a mixture of materials to produce just four or five colours.

Cave paintings date back 20,000 years.

Cave painters used charcoal - the remains of burnt wood - to make black.

Arty facts
- Chalk was used to make the first white colouring for art.
- Clay was often used by early artists as a colouring for green and brown.
- For thousands of years, people crushed coloured rocks and mixed the powder with animal fat to make paint.

A light source
The sedimentary rock chalk is messy to use, but it is a fantastic material to use to show how light bounces off an object.

Gold was extracted from a mineral and used in this 600-year-old painting.

Rich reds
The powder of a mineral rock called cinnabar makes a brilliant red that was widely used in religious art in the Middle Ages.

Cinnabar is the main source of the poisonous metal mercury.