NATURAL MATERIALS

For centuries, materials that occur naturally in the world around us have been used to build everyday structures. Over the years, wood and stone proved to be reliable construction materials and gradually these materials have been used together to make more complex structures.

Some natural materials need to be purified (refined), separated or extracted before we can use them. Oil is refined to give a range of materials, from wax to petrol.

Metals are separated from their ores and salt is separated from sea water or rock salt. Combining and treating natural materials can also produce artificial or ‘man-made’ materials.

OIL IS EXTRACTED FROM BENEATH THE EARTH’S SURFACE.

MAKING GLASS

Glass is made mostly of sand – small, loose grains that come from rocks that have been weathered by the action of winds, rivers, waves or glaciers. The world’s largest deposits of sand are found in the deserts and on beaches. Glass is made by mixing sand with soda ash and limestone. When these substances are heated in a furnace at high temperatures they melt and join together to make glass. Sand is also used extensively in the manufacture of bricks, mortar, cement, concrete, plaster and paving materials.