



Pebbles, sand and clay

As rocks roll down river beds, they get broken down into smaller pieces. We call these pieces pebbles, sand and clay.

The bed of most rivers is covered with small pieces of rock that have been worn into rounded shapes.

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The large pieces of rounded rock we call **PEBBLES**. They are big enough for us to see that they are made of rock.

Sand is too small for you to see that it is made of rock (Picture 1). But when rubbed between the fingers it feels rough, or gritty.

The finest pieces of rock are called mud or clay. You cannot see these grains because they are too small.

They are what make water look muddy.

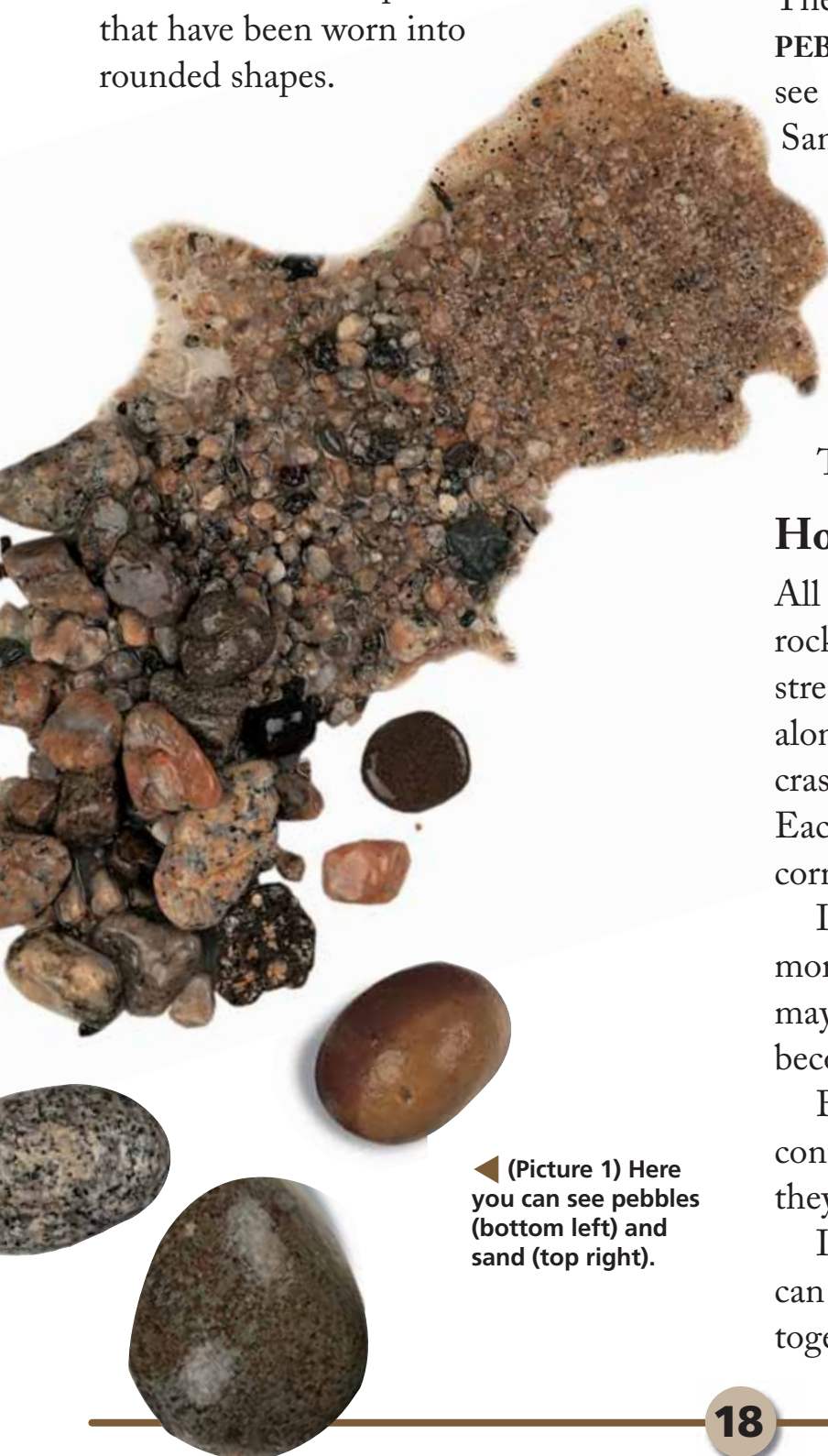
How rock is made smaller

All pebbles, sand and clay start out as rock. The force of water in rivers and streams carries rocks along, bouncing them along the river bed (Picture 2A) so they crash into one another and the river bed. Each crash breaks off small chips from the corners or edges.

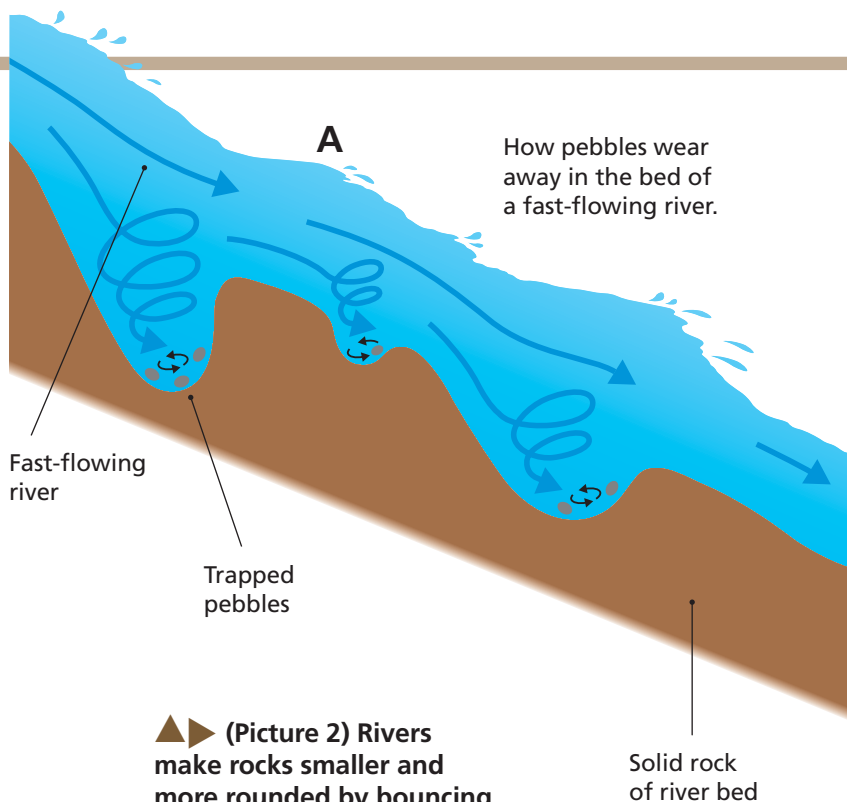
In time the rocks get smaller and more rounded (Picture 2B). The chippings may make sand, while the chipped rock becomes a pebble.

Bouncing, crashing and chipping continue, so that rocks become smaller as they get farther down the river.

If you look in the banks of a river you can often see all three types of material together (Picture 3).



◀ (Picture 1) Here you can see pebbles (bottom left) and sand (top right).



▲► (Picture 2) Rivers make rocks smaller and more rounded by bouncing them down the river bed and making them crash into one another.

B This pebble was found on a river bed. It has been worn down to a shape almost like a ball.



▲ (Picture 3) Pebbles, sand and clay occur in this river bank. If you were to take a sample and shake it in water, you would see the three types separate out.

Summary

- Pebbles, sand and clay are different sizes of rock worn down by rivers.
- As rock becomes worn down, so it becomes more rounded.