

What Is the Water Cycle?

Warm-Up 33



Name: _____

What is the water cycle, and how does it work? The water cycle in nature works efficiently and without fail. It does so because air absorbs and releases water like a sponge. When the Sun heats up the water in oceans, rivers, lakes, and seas, the water evaporates and becomes water vapor, a kind of gas. As this water vapor rises in the air, it cools again. This makes the vapor condense again. This means that it turns into a liquid again. The liquid water is now in the form of very tiny droplets that form clouds in the air. The clouds may be carried a great distance by the wind. The constant movement of the air makes the droplets move around and collide with each other. This activity makes the droplets become larger in the cloud. The average raindrop has about one million times more water than the original cloud droplet. When the droplets become

heavy enough, they fall from the clouds as rain, snow, or occasionally as hail.

Rain falls over both land and the oceans. Plants absorb the water from the soil. The water then is released from the leaves of the plants as water vapor. Humans and animals take in the liquid water. They also release water vapor when they breathe out. Water flows from the higher land areas to lower ones. It flows both on the land and below the surface. Water eventually enters rivers and flows back to the oceans, which hold 97 percent of all the water on Earth. The clouds hold enough water in the air at any one time to produce about an inch of rain over the entire world. The total amount of precipitation (rain, snow, or hail) in one year on Earth is about 1 quadrillion (1,000,000,000,000,000) tons.

What Did You Learn ?

1. Where does most water get evaporated from?

- (A) oceans
- (B) rivers

- (C) lakes
- (D) all of the above

2. What makes droplets get bigger and heavier?

- (A) air movement
- (B) snow

- (C) colliding with each other
- (D) both A and C

3. Water flows in what direction?

- (A) from higher land to lower land
- (B) from the land to the seas

- (C) from oceans to the mountains
- (D) both A and B

4. What holds 97 percent of all Earth's water?

- (A) oceans
- (B) the air

- (C) the clouds
- (D) the land

What Am I ?

I am a word that means water from the sky in the form of rain, snow, hail, or mist.