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Activities

Chemistry of Fire

Name: _____ Date: _____

Our ancient ancestors didn't know about atoms and molecules when they first tamed fire. In this Planet Diary activity, you'll explore the chemistry of a substance that forever changed the way people live.

Directions

- Go to NOVA's The Science of Fire and click *Launch Interactive*. Read the *On Fire*. Read the introduction, then answer Workspace questions 1 through 3.
- Click *Strike a Match*. Read the text below the picture, then answer questions 4 and 5.
- Drag the match at the upper right across the screen to light it. The trick is to drag it fast enough to get the temperature over the threshold temperature line on the left. (You may need to try it a few times.) Read the screen after the match ignites, then click *Chain Reaction* to learn what happens next. Drag the hydrogen atom at the top of the screen to the area with the hydrogen and oxygen atoms. Watch the chemical reaction that results. Read the explanation, then *Step Through This Reaction*. Answer the last question.

Workspace

1. What happens to the atoms of molecules when a chemical change takes place?

2. What type of reaction takes place when iron rusts?

3. Explain why iron doesn't burst into flames when it rusts.

4. What three things are needed for combustion?

5. How does striking a match start a fire?

6. On an atomic level, what happens in the chemical reaction that occurs when hydrogen is ignited?

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