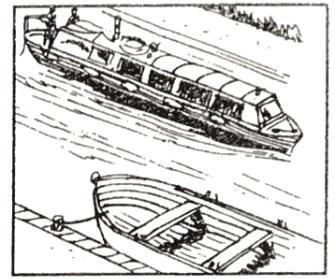


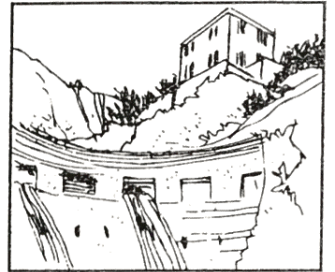
Water and the water cycle

All living things depend on water for their survival. As well as the part it plays in essential life processes, water is also used by people for:

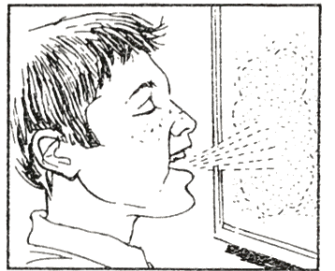
- recreation
- industrial processes
- sanitation.
- transport
- electricity generation



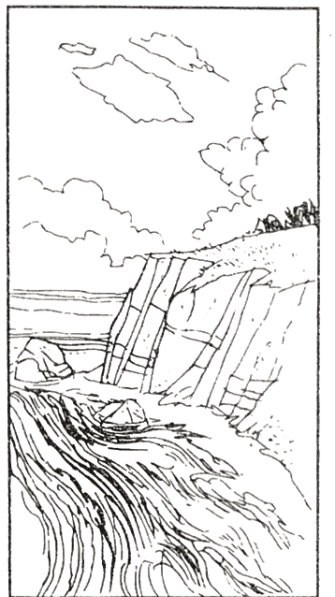
Most of the water on Earth has been here as long as the Earth itself. The water is continually being recycled over long periods of time in a **process** called the **water cycle**. The water cycle works in the following way.



1. When water is warmed by the Sun, it **evaporates** into the **atmosphere** in the form of a **gas** called **water vapour**. A huge amount of water evaporates from oceans, seas and lakes every day. The atmosphere also receives water vapour from animals when they **exhale** and from plants when they **transpire**.



2. As water vapour rises into the sky, it cools and **condenses** to form **clouds**. Clouds are made up of tiny **droplets** of water.



3. The clouds are blown by the wind over the land.
4. When clouds rise over higher ground, larger drops of water form and start to fall as **rain**. If it is very cold, the water will **freeze** and fall as **hail**, **snow** or **sleet**. Rain, hail, snow and sleet are all different forms of **precipitation**.

5. The rain collects in streams and rivers and flows back to the sea, and the whole process starts again.

Some rainwater also **soaks** into the ground. Some of this water is taken in by plants through their roots, and is released through their leaves as water vapour when the plants transpire.

