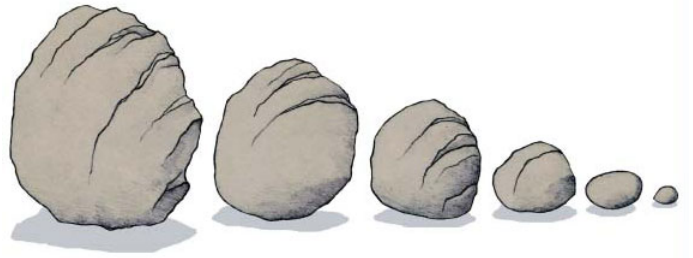


The Pebble in my Pocket by Meredith Hooper

The pebble in my pocket is round and smooth and brown. I found it on the ground.

Where did you come from pebble?

Everything on the surface of the earth is slowly being eroded and broken down into smaller and smaller pieces. Boulders powder into streaks of mud. Cliffs crumble into grains of sand. The tops of mountains disintegrate into pebbles. It has always happened. It will always happen. It is happening now. All that is needed is time. And the weather.



Worm-like creatures burrow in moss jungles and millipedes shelter under the rock.

It is 390 million years ago.

The rain pours down, loosening the earth. Mud and rocks slide off the mountainside into a river. The river rushes along, dragging silt, sand, gravel, boulder, stripping away the mountain's surface, layer by layer.

The river tumbles and rolls the rock, chipping edges, smoothing corners, rubbing it against other rocks. Gradually, the rock becomes rounder and rounder, smaller. The river widens, flowing brown and slow.

The current nudges the rock past forests of ferns where spiders hide. It eases the rock through swamps where fish haul themselves out of the water and breathe the air.

The rock travels for thousands and thousands of years. When it reaches the sea, it is a smooth, round, brown pebble.

It is 375 million years ago.

The river drops the pebble onto a beach filled with other pebbles. The waves of the sea wash them backwards and forwards, grinding them up and grinding them down, rattling and clinking the pebbles together. Each pebble has come from its own special rock. Each was made in its own time and place.

Shiny grains of sand settle between the pebbles. The sand fills the spaces like the mixture between pieces of fruit in a pudding.

Slowly the sea starts to flood the land. The sea covers the pebbles packed in their grains of sand. Gradually the sand hardens forming a new layer of rock, a conglomerate 'pudding stone' rock. The sea covers the cliffs and drowns the mouth of the river and washes into the forests.

It is 340 million years ago.