

Natural and Man-made Materials

Chapter 6: Materials Around Us · Topic 2

Key Concept

Natural materials are often biodegradable, meaning they break down naturally over time, while many synthetic materials like plastic can take hundreds of years to decompose, contributing to pollution if not disposed of properly. Synthetic materials were developed to be cheaper, more durable, or to have properties not found in natural materials — for instance, nylon is stronger and more elastic than natural silk, which is why it's used in ropes and parachutes.

Quick Revision Notes

- Natural materials: wood, cotton, wool, clay — come directly from nature.
- Man-made/synthetic materials: plastic, nylon, polyester — created through factory processes.
- Natural materials are often biodegradable; many synthetic materials are not.
- Synthetic materials are often developed for durability or properties not found in nature.

Practice Questions

- 1 List two natural and two man-made materials around you.
- 2 Why can synthetic materials like plastic cause pollution problems?
- 3 Explain why nylon might be chosen over cotton for making a rope.