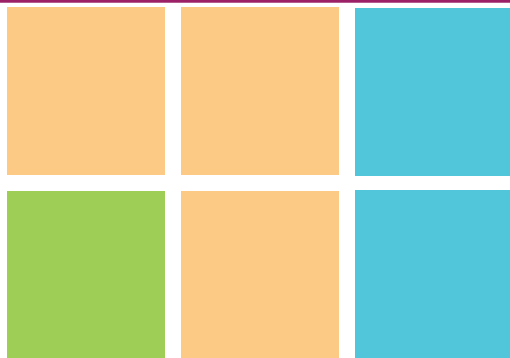


What is an Atom?



Painting of Democritus

People were thinking about atoms as early as 370 B.C.! A philosopher named Democritus believed that there must be an unbreakable particle that makes up all things. Not everyone agreed with him.

The word “atom” comes from the Greek word *atomos*, which means “indivisible.” This was the name Democritus gave to his theoretical particle.

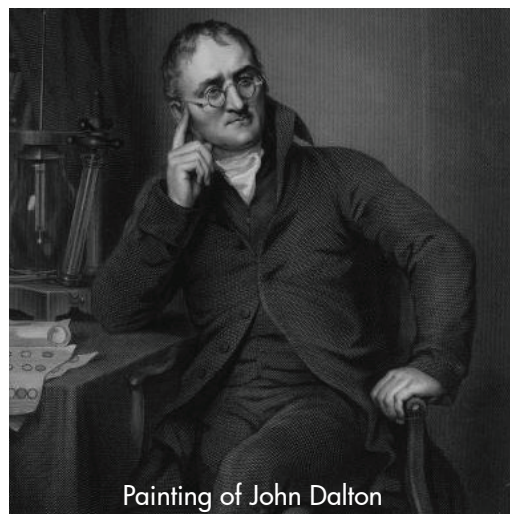
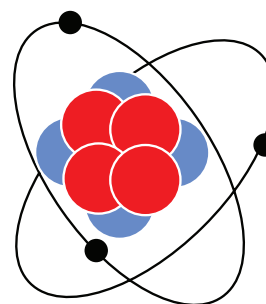
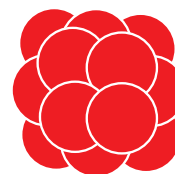
In the 1800s scientists knew that there were certain substances, which we now call elements, that cannot be broken down into anything simpler.

Then, a scientist named John Dalton discovered that all elements are made up of tiny particles called atoms.

As it turns out, atoms can also be broken down into smaller pieces. However, if you divide an atom of hydrogen, it won't be hydrogen any more.

This means that an atom is the smallest particle of a substance that has the same qualities of that substance.

Atoms are also made up of even smaller particles. These are known as *sub-atomic particles*, or protons, neutrons and electrons.



Painting of John Dalton