Crude oil: separating a mixture

Teacher / technician

YEAR 11 / LESSON 73 / CHEMISTRY + SCIENCE (DOUBLE AWARD)

Staff preparation and answer guidance. Keep separate from student sheets. Written and model-based lesson; no laboratory procedure is implied.

Coverage and delivery

Shared core: 4.7–4.8. Industrial fractional-distillation model; no school distillation of flammable liquids.

Allow about 60 minutes. Follow the student sequence and use the answers to check reasoning.

Requisition • class of 30, working in 15 pairs

Item	Per pair / setup	Class total
Booklet / writing tools	1 per learner	30 sets
Model kit / periodic table	1 set per pair	15 sets

Immediate safety

Desk activity only; keep small model pieces away from mouths.

Preparation and delivery

Read alongside the student method

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1. Provide 30 booklets and 15 model kits or reusable atom counters; no chemicals are needed.

2. Use 10 minutes retrieval, 25 independent/pair tasks, 15 explanation and 10 corrections. Keep first attempts visible.

3. Use paper/model work only. No crude oil, organic solvent or heating apparatus is needed.

4. Avoid claiming that boiling breaks hydrocarbon covalent bonds or that each fraction is a single alkane.

5. Check all carbon valencies, formula subscripts and equation coefficients. Label any supplied numbers as practice data, not class observations.

Close of lesson

- Return shared equipment and retain corrected reasoning.

Check before teaching

Check the cards, reference data and quantities against this requisition. Keep the staff answer guide separate until the checking stage. Supplied numerical practice datasets are labelled examples; they are not class measurements.

Answers and teaching notes

Expected explanations • do not give as experimental observations

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• It contains different substances in variable proportions, chiefly hydrocarbons; they are not all chemically bonded to one another.

• Hotter at the bottom and cooler towards the top.

• The 300 °C component: it condenses at a higher temperature, lower in the cooling column.

• A collected mixture of substances with similar boiling ranges/properties.

• No; molecules remain intact while intermolecular separation and state change.

• Real crude has many components and boiling ranges; real columns use reflux and continuous mass/heat transfer, not just three isolated pure substances.

References and provenance

Pearson Chemistry specification

RSC fractional-distillation teaching reference

Prepared 22 November 2026. Original wording, tables and questions. Sources inform the concepts and technique; the lesson scope and classroom quantities are explicitly described here. No laboratory trial or final school risk approval is claimed.