

35

BROMINE ~ Br

At room temperature, bromine is a deep red-orange liquid. It is one of only four elements that are liquid at room or body temperature. (The others are gallium, mercury, and cesium.)

Although red-orange by itself, bromine is the source of the purple color extracted from a mollusc, *Murex brandaris*, in the Mediterranean. This was used for Tyrian purple, a dye famous all over the ancient world, used in Roman togas, and mentioned several times in the Bible, Ezechiel 27:7 and 27:15.



36

KRYPTON Kr

Besides being the fabled element of vulnerability for Superman, krypton is very simply a noble gas, and combines with nothing except, occasionally and under great pressure, fluorine.

Krypton has one radioactive isotope Kr-85, which is released into the air during nuclear testing. Because nuclear testing and nuclear power plants are the only source of this isotope, measuring the amount of Kr-85 in the atmosphere is a way of knowing how much testing is going on. During the Cold War, when countries were not always honest about what they were doing, monitoring Kr-85 was our way to know whether other countries were engaged in secret nuclear activity.

