

The Cloud A Folktale

Source: Public Domain, adapted by Center for Urban Education, may be used with citation.

One hot summer morning a little Cloud floated lightly and happily across the blue sky. Far below lay the earth: brown, dry, and desolate, from drought. The little Cloud could see the poor people of the earth working and suffering in the hot fields, while she herself floated on the morning breeze without a care.

"Oh, if I could only help the poor people down there!" she thought. They look so worried and tired. "If I could but make their work easier, or give the hungry ones food or the thirsty a drink!"

On earth it grew hotter and hotter; the sun burned down so fiercely that the people were fainting in its rays. They could not stop to rest. They were obliged to go on with their work, for they were very poor. As the day passed, the Cloud became larger, and it cast a big shadow on the land. She noticed that people were stopping in the place she shaded. Sometimes they stood and looked up at the Cloud, as if they were praying, and saying, "Ah, if you could help us!" Her wish to do something for the people of earth was ever greater.

"I will help you; I will!" said the Cloud. And she began to sink softly down toward earth.

But suddenly, as she floated down, she remembered something that had been told to her when she was a tiny Cloud-child, in the lap of Mother Ocean: it had been whispered that if the Clouds go too near the earth, they die. When she remembered this, she held herself from sinking, and swayed here and there on the breeze, thinking, thinking.

At last, she stood quite still, and spoke boldly and proudly. She said, "People of earth, I will help you, come what may!"

The thought made her suddenly marvelously big, strong, and powerful. Never had she dreamed that she could be so big. Like a mighty angel, she expanded above the earth, and lifted her head and spread her wings far over the fields and woods. She was so great, so majestic, that people and animals were awe-struck at the sight; the trees and the grasses bowed before her; yet all the earth-creatures felt that she meant them well.

"Yes, I will help you," cried the Cloud once more. "I will give my life for you!"

As she said the words a wonderful light glowed from her heart, the sound of thunder rolled through the sky, and a love greater than words can tell filled the Cloud; down, down, close to the earth she swept, and gave up her life in a welcome, healing shower of rain.

That rain was the Cloud's great deed. People cheered, "We are blessed! The cloud has rescued us!" The earth was wet, there were puddles and shiny leaves, animals were able to drink from the dry creek bed. Then they saw as they looked up that over the whole countryside, a great rainbow crossed the sky.

Soon that, too, was gone. But long, long afterward the people and animals the Cloud had saved kept her blessing in their hearts. They remembered it every time they saw a rainbow.

What is a lesson people can learn from this story?

Underline the parts of the story that show that is the lesson you can learn.
