

# The Cloud

## A Folktale

Public Domain Text; Questions by Center for Urban Education

## 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Fiction

One hot summer morning a little Cloud rose out of the sea and 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, hither and thither, without a care.

"Oh, if I could only help the poor people down there!" she thought. "If I could but make their work easier, or give the hungry ones food or the thirsty a drink!" And, as the day passed, and the Cloud became larger, this wish to do something for the people of earth was ever greater in her heart.

On earth it grew hotter and hotter; the sun burned down so fiercely that the people were fainting in its rays. It seemed as if they must die of heat, and yet they were obliged to go on with their work, for they were very poor. Sometimes they stood and looked up at the Cloud, as if they were praying, and saying, "Ah, if you could help us!"

"I will help you; I will!" said the Cloud. And she began to sink softly down toward the 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, "Men 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 of blessing, she stood above the earth, and lifted her head and spread her wings far over the fields and woods. She was so great, so majestic, that men 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 blessed, healing shower of rain.

That rain was the Cloud's great deed. People cheered. Over the whole countryside, as far as the rain fell, a lovely rainbow crossed the sky.

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

## **Identify and Analyze Tone, Mood, Voice, Plot, and Setting - Fiction**

Questions developed by Center for Urban Education for use by Chicago Public Schools 2008-2009.

*Choose the best answer for each question.*

1. What is it like where the story takes place?

- a. a beautiful land
- b. a dry land
- c. a big city
- d. a small town

3. How does the writer help you understand how the cloud feels?

- a. The people thank the cloud.
- b. The rainbow shows what it did.
- c. The cloud speaks.
- d. The rain falls.

2. How does the writer start the story?

- a. It starts with a problem.
- b. It starts with a surprise.
- c. It starts with information.
- d. It starts with sadness.

4. What is the mood at the beginning of the story?

- a. happy
- b. sad
- c. worried
- d. relaxed

5. Write your own answer to this question. What is one way the writer helps you understand how the people feel at the end of the story?

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### **TEACHER NOTES: Develop Students' Skills: Exercise Thinking**

These questions have not been validated, so decisions about student's achievement should not be made based on their responses. They are intended to exercise skills. Recommended activities include: students work in pairs to choose the best response; give students the questions without the responses so they generate their own answers; students make up additional questions; students make up questions like these for another passage.

**Answers:** You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.

Item	1	2	3	4
Answer	b	a	c	c

Question 5 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.

Answers should include that the people see the rainbow and remember.