

Weather Types of Clouds

Have you ever sat back to see what shapes the clouds above you were making? Chances are you were looking at **cumulus** clouds. Cumulus clouds are puffy and white like cotton balls. They come in all different shapes and sizes.

But cumulus is only one type of cloud. For years, people have studied the color and speed of clouds so that they can predict the weather. In the process, they've discovered many different types of clouds. Some clouds are found at higher altitudes than others. Some clouds are puffy. Others are flat. Each type of cloud has its own name. But most clouds fall into one of three main types. They can be cumulus, cirrus, or stratus.



Clouds are identified by how far up they're found in the sky and the way that they look. **Cirrus**¹ clouds travel very high in the sky. Generally, they are found at altitudes over 18,000 feet. They are wispy and light. They may look like feathers or like a pony's tail. Sometimes several cirrus clouds will be in a row. The clouds look like a thin line across the sky.



Stratus² clouds are closer to the earth. They are usually found at about 7,000 feet. Stratus clouds are gray and flat. They all look like part of the same mass of cloud. You can't really tell that the group is more than one cloud. Often, they cover the whole sky.

¹ **Cirrus**- high wispy clouds

² **Stratus**- grey clouds that generally hang close to the earth



Cumulus³ clouds are fluffy and thick. They travel at an altitude of about 7,000 feet but can stretch farther up. There may be a lot of blue sky in between the clouds. That's why they're perfect for spotting shapes.

Often rain clouds form from cumulus clouds and sometimes from stratus clouds. The word nimbus means "rain cloud." So when a cumulus cloud brings rain, we call it a cumulonimbus cloud. The clouds become darker grey and stretch higher in the sky. They can stretch from below 7,000 feet to more than 50,000 feet. The cloud may look like a huge tower. Thunderstorms come from these clouds.

³ **Cumulus**- fluffy thick clouds that are close to the earth

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. Based on the passage, the word *altitude* means
 - a. the way a cloud looks
 - b. 18,000 feet
 - c. the height of something above the ground
 - d. the way something looks

2. Clouds that look white and puffy and then become grey and bring rain are called:
 - a. Nimbus clouds
 - b. Nimbostratus clouds
 - c. Cumulonimbus clouds
 - d. Stratocumulus clouds

3. If you wanted to read in the bright sun one day, which type of cloud would you want to find in the sky?
 - a. Cirrus
 - b. Stratus
 - c. Cumulus
 - d. Nimbus

4. Which of the following is an opinion?
 - a. The word nimbus means “rain cloud.”
 - b. Cumulus clouds are fluffy and thick.
 - c. Cumulus clouds are perfect for spotting shapes.
 - d. Stratus clouds are closer to the earth.

5. The passage is mostly about:
 - a. Cumulus clouds
 - b. The different shapes that clouds can make
 - c. Different types of clouds
 - d. Stratus clouds

6. Observe the clouds that are in the sky today. What are some words that you could use to describe these clouds? What type of cloud do you think they are? Use the information you have just read in the passage to support your answer.

7. How can you tell whether a cloud is a stratus cloud?

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Rain can come from any type of cloud, _____ cirrus clouds.

- a. also
- b. while
- c. excluding
- d. including

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Since people have existed, they have studied the color and speed of clouds so that they can predict the weather.

Who? people

(have done) What? _____

Why? _____

(since) When? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word:** predict: if you predict an event, you are saying that it will happen.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____

Teacher Guide and Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 640

Featured Text Structure: Compare/Contrast – the writer presents similarities and differences between two or more objects, places, events, or ideas

Passage Summary: As a result of studying the weather, people have realized that there are several types of clouds. The three most common are cirrus, stratus, and cumulus clouds.

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 - a. the way a cloud looks
 - b. 18,000 feet
 - c. the height of something above the ground**
 - d. the way something looks
2. Clouds that look white and puffy and then become grey and bring rain are called:
 - a. Nimbus clouds
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3. If you wanted to read in the bright sun one day, which type of cloud would you want to find in the sky?
 - a. Cirrus
 - b. Stratus
 - c. Cumulus**
 - d. Nimbus
4. Which of the following is an opinion?
 - a. The word nimbus means “rain cloud.”
 - b. Cumulus clouds are fluffy and thick.
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 - d. Stratus clouds are closer to the earth.
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 - a. Cumulus clouds
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 - c. Different types of clouds**
 - d. Stratus clouds

6. Observe the clouds that are in the sky today. What are some words that you could use to describe these clouds? What type of cloud do you think they are? Use the information you have just read in the passage to support your answer.

Suggested answer: Answers will vary.

7. How can you tell whether a cloud is a stratus cloud?

Suggested answer: A cloud is a stratus cloud if it's gray, flat, and looks like part of a larger cloud mass.

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Rain can come from any type of cloud, _____ cirrus clouds.

- a. also
- b. while
- c. excluding**
- d. including

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Since people have existed, they have studied the color and speed of clouds so that they can predict the weather.

Who? people

(have done) What? **studied the color and speed of clouds**

Why? **in order to predict the weather**

(since) When? **since people have existed**

10. **Vocabulary Word:** predict: if you predict an event, you are saying that it will happen.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.