What Are Clouds?

Grade 3

Name _____ Date _____

Remember: Read the passage **twice**: once to enjoy it, and once to look for details. Then answer the questions. Look back at the text to **prove** your answers.

Tip: Underline the sentence in the passage that helps you answer each question.

What Are Clouds?



Have you ever lain on the grass and found shapes in the clouds? Clouds may look like fluffy cotton, but they are made of something you use every day: water.

When the sun warms oceans, lakes and puddles, some of the water turns into an invisible gas called water vapour. The warm, damp air rises into the sky. High up, the air is cooler. When water vapour cools, it turns into tiny drops of water or tiny bits of ice. Billions of these drops crowd together to form a cloud.

Scientists sort clouds into groups by their shape and how high they are. **Cumulus** clouds are puffy and white, like cotton balls. They usually mean fair weather, but if they grow very tall and dark, a thunderstorm may be coming.

Stratus clouds are flat, grey sheets that cover the whole sky like a blanket. They often bring drizzle or light rain. Fog is really a stratus cloud that forms close to the ground.

Cirrus clouds are thin and wispy, like feathers. They float very high in the sky, where it is so cold that they are made of ice crystals. Cirrus clouds can mean the weather will change soon.

When the drops in a cloud join together and become too heavy, they fall as rain or snow. Then the water cycle starts all over again.

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1. Check your understanding

Circle the best answer.

1. What are clouds made of?

(a) Cotton
(b) Tiny drops of water or bits of ice
(c) Smoke

2. What is water vapour?

(a) Water as an invisible gas
(b) Frozen water
(c) A kind of cloud

3. Which clouds are flat, grey sheets?

(a) Cumulus
(b) Cirrus
(c) Stratus

4. Why are cirrus clouds made of ice crystals?

(a) They float very high where it is very cold.
(b) They are near the ground.
(c) They are full of rain.

2. Write your answer

Answer in complete sentences. Use details from the text.

1. **Explain how a cloud forms in your own words.**

2. **How are cumulus and stratus clouds different?**

3. **Why does rain fall from a cloud?**

Answer Key

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1. Check your understanding

1. What are clouds made of?

- (a) Cotton
- **(b) Tiny drops of water or bits of ice**
- (c) Smoke

2. What is water vapour?

- **(a) Water as an invisible gas**
- (b) Frozen water
- (c) A kind of cloud

3. Which clouds are flat, grey sheets?

- (a) Cumulus
- (b) Cirrus
- **(c) Stratus**

4. Why are cirrus clouds made of ice crystals?

- **(a) They float very high where it is very cold.**
- (b) They are near the ground.
- (c) They are full of rain.

2. Write your answer

Sample answers. Students' wording will vary.

1. **Explain how a cloud forms in your own words.**
   The sun warms water and turns it into water vapour. The vapour rises, cools, and turns into tiny drops that crowd together into a cloud.
2. **How are cumulus and stratus clouds different?**
   Cumulus clouds are puffy and white. Stratus clouds are flat, grey sheets that cover the sky.
3. **Why does rain fall from a cloud?**
   The drops join together and become too heavy, so they fall as rain or snow.