

# Lesson 1.3 – Cats, Birds and Rabbits

## How to Find Shapes in the Clouds

*Objective: Students are encouraged to explore the shapes they see in clouds. They will find out that this is not just fun, it is also how the Latin naming system for clouds works. Many of the Latin names just describe what the clouds look like, and so the science of identifying clouds is the same as finding shapes in the sky. The mindfulness activity will apply awareness of the body to sky observations.*

**Time: 45-90 minutes depending on activity options selected and teacher preference.**

### **Materials:**

1. Print Cloud Lookalikes or have them ready to show on a projection board.
2. Fabric, buttons, random accessories
3. Glue
4. Markers
5. Poster board for each student.

### **Lesson Prep:**

1. Print Three Mindful Breaths (for individuals or groups)
2. Prep room for art projects.

### **Resources:**

1. Cloud Lookalikes printout <we will also supply as files for showing on screen>
2. Three Mindful Breaths printout
3. [‘The Clouds’ poem by Dutch poet Martinus Nijhoff](#) (translated by John Irons)

**Review previous lesson:** Each cloud is unique but there are ten main types, each of which has a certain feeling or ‘personality’. Just as the clouds are different, each student is different and experiences emotions differently. Recall that they learned Cloud Breathing.

## Lesson Intro: Have you ever found shapes in the clouds?

Ask the students to recall if they've ever seen the shape of something in a cloud. If you pay attention to the clouds you will start to see shapes more and more. Show examples of cloud lookalikes from the Cloud Appreciation Society. Ask students to say what shapes they see:



Cat

Spotted over Ashted, Surrey, England by Debbie Whatt (Member 43,013)



Bird of prey

Spotted over Les Allues, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, France by James McAllister



A face in the storm

Spotted over Erm, Netherlands by Nienke Lantman (Member 24,009).



A rabbit on a roof

Spotted over Provence, France by Fiorella Iacono (Member 9,702)



A breakdancer

Spotted over Zalau, Romania by Fiorella Iacono (Member 9,702).



A heart

Spotted over Darwin, Australia by Shirley Hendy (Member 45,123)

### The science of cloud identification is all about finding shapes!

Many of the Latin names we use for the different cloud formations just describe what the cloud looks like.



The name of the **Cirrus** cloud comes from the Latin word a 'curl' or a 'lock' or hair:



The name for the **lacunosus** cloud is Latin for 'full of holes':



The name for **lenticularis** clouds is the Latin for a 'lentil':

The Latin names may sound strange to you, but actually we use Latin to stop people getting confused. Latin is a language no one speaks these days (the Romans used to speak it a couple of thousand years ago) and this means people around the world don't try to translate cloud names into their own language like they would if the names were in, say, English. If everyone around the world uses the same names for the clouds there is less chance for confusion between different countries about who's referring to which type of cloud.



From this picture, can you guess what the name for this **fluctus** cloud means in Latin?

(Answer: Fluctus means 'wave' in Latin).

## Activity Options:

### Option 1 (No preparation): Go outside and look for shapes

PRIMARY & SECONDARY: If conditions are right, everyone goes outside and looks for shapes in the clouds. If not, the educator sets a class challenge for students to spot and photograph the best cloud lookalike over the coming week, and share with class as they spot them.

### Option 2 (Some preparation): STEAM project

PRIMARY & SECONDARY: Have students create a piece of artwork combining multiple types of clouds and shapes to their liking. Use fabric, buttons, random accessories, glue, and markers.

Educator makes a slideshow with student's photos of the cloud lookalikes they spot over the coming week.

SECONDARY: Have students spot lookalikes in the sky and make presentation slideshows of what they saw, naming both what the cloud looked like and which of the ten main cloud types they identified it as being, to share with the class the following week. Class votes on the best cloud lookalike.

### Option 3: (More preparation) STEAM

PRIMARY: <Need ideas to add here!>

SECONDARY: Give students printouts of [‘The Clouds’ poem by Dutch poet Martinus Nijhoff](#) (translated by John Irons). Discuss the poem and explore why lying down finding shapes in the clouds with a child might make an adult want to cry.

## Mindfulness:

Have you noticed that it takes time to find clouds that look like things? The shapes don't appear right away. Sometimes, this is because the clouds just don't happen to be drifting in the right way across the sky. More often, though, it is because you have to be in the right mood to find cloud shapes – you have to relax and slow down. Don't try too hard when you are looking for clouds in the shape of things. Instead, just try lying back and relaxing for a bit. Just look at the shapes and see what starts slowly to appear.

PRIMARY: Outside if possible, looking at a cloud, inhale from the cloud, exhale back to the cloud. Notice what changed about the cloud in that one breath. Repeat two more times and discuss what they noticed about their breath and breathing from and to the cloud. What other things did they notice about the clouds while they were outside?

### SECONDARY: Three Mindful Breaths

This can be a guided meditation, have students do it independently or guide their mates.

1. Become aware of your body and any discomfort or sensations.
2. Notice the sky, the clouds, while feeling the sitting sensation.
3. As you begin to inhale, notice the air flowing into your nose.
4. Notice the expansion of your chest and hold it.

5. Notice the details of the sky, the clouds, the colors, the movement.
6. Exhale and hold it. Continue noticing any minor shifts within you and the sky.
7. Inhale and hold, noticing both body and sky shifts. Exhale.
8. Inhale one last time. Hold it and exhale.
8. Were you able to see a shift in the clouds, the color, the shape?
9. Check in with current emotions or body sensations.
10. Mindful breathing is about noticing what is happening in the present moment without judgement. What did you notice? What shifted?
11. Finding peace, calm, and relaxation can be as simple as watching the sky around us shift while mindfully breathing.

What does it feel like to look for shapes? Do you find it hard to do this for long, or is it easy? Did you find it became easier the more you did? Take photos of any you spotted, but don't feel that they have to be award-winning cloud lookalikes! All cloud shapes are good even if no one else sees it quite the same way you do.

Mindfulness Check-In can start with this lesson by asking students to do a Weather Check. It might sound something like this: "Cloudy with sunny spells later," or "Stormy."

**Assessment:** Have students recall a Latin name that is based on the shape of the cloud. Encourage students to see if they can find that cloud in the coming week.

**Conclusion:** Spotting and naming clouds is a science. Remind students they are scientists when they use the latin names to observe clouds. Calming the body and mind down with mindfulness will allow us to spot cloud lookalikes.