Name _____

How Clouds Help Scientists Predict Weather

Have you ever looked up at the sky and noticed different kinds of clouds? Some are big and fluffy. Others are thin and wispy. Some are dark and heavy, while others are bright and white. These clouds aren't just fun to watch—they give scientists clues about the weather.

Clouds are made of tiny drops of water or ice that float in the sky. They form when warm air rises, cools down, and releases moisture. Different types of clouds form in different ways, and each one can tell us something about what's going to happen next.

Cumulus clouds are white, puffy clouds that look like cotton balls. They usually mean fair weather, especially if they're high in the sky. But if they grow taller and darker, they can turn into cumulonimbus clouds, which may bring thunderstorms.

Stratus clouds are flat and gray. They can cover the whole sky like a blanket. These clouds often bring light rain or drizzle. If you see them in the morning, it could mean a cloudy day ahead.

Cirrus clouds are thin and feathery. They form high up in the sky where it's very cold. These clouds don't bring rain themselves, but they can be a sign that rain or snow is on the way within a day or two.

Meteorologists—scientists who study the weather—use clouds, along with tools like satellites and radar, to help predict what kind of weather is coming. By studying the height, shape, and movement of clouds, they can make better forecasts.

You don't need fancy tools to start being a weather watcher. Next time you go outside, look at the clouds. Are they fluffy, flat, or wispy? Are they moving fast or slow? By learning what different clouds mean, you can become your own junior weather scientist.