



Kate: Hello, I'm Kate Colin and welcome to this week's edition of 6 Minute English. I'm joined by Rebecca Byrne and our topic today is clouds.

Rebecca: Hello Kate - yes, wherever you are in the world, clouds are part of our surrounding and they are constantly changing which in itself makes them interesting to watch. But how much attention do we give them and do clouds get the appreciation they deserve?

Kate: Well, here in the UK we often see the appearance of clouds as a negative thing because seeing them in the sky usually means that it's about to rain!

Rebecca: Well, yes, unfortunately here in England people do tend to dread the appearance of grey clouds and would rather have clear blue skies instead. I have to say though, we have lots of other types of clouds of all colours and shapes and not just grey ones.

Kate: So Rebecca do you take much notice of clouds?

Rebecca: Answers....

Kate: Here's my question for this week:
Not all clouds are a sign for rain. In fact, some clouds mean that good weather is about to arrive. So which type of cloud signifies good weather?
Is it:

- a) a wispy and thin cloud
- b) a tall fluffy cloud
- c) a gray flat cloud

Rebecca: answers

Kate: We'll check your answer later in the programme. Now we're going to hear from someone called Gavin Pretor-Pinney who has a special interest in clouds. In fact, he has written a book about them and is the founder of the Cloud Appreciation Society. This is a club where people can share their photographs on the internet and talk about their interest in clouds with each other. Let's listen to the first extract - he's talking about how different types of clouds are **classified**. Have a listen – how many groups are there?

Insert 1

There are 10 basic ones, they're called genera. They're the ten basic groups but there are lots of **species** and varieties. There's a whole range, a whole host of other **formations**.

Rebecca: He said there are ten basic types of clouds but there are lots of **species** and varieties. The word **species** normally refers to a set of animals or plants (although here it refers to clouds) where certain things have similar characteristics to each other.

Kate: So now we know that clouds are divided to groups according to their type, height and appearance, in other words their formation or shape. In the next extract you'll hear Gavin talking about the person who came up with the names of the definitions for clouds. Can you tell me whether this man was a professional **meteorologist**? This means a person who studies weather patterns for a living.

Insert 2

Somebody called Luke Howard came up with the naming system, 1802, 1803. He was an **amateur meteorologist** and a pharmacist by profession. And he came up with the names cumulus, stratus, cirrus and nimbus.

Rebecca: He said that it was a man called Luke Howard who first came up with the four basic cloud types. He was not a professional **meteorologist**, he was an **amateur** one, which means he studied the weather as a hobby, not as a job. He was in fact a pharmacist. Interestingly, the four names he came up with are still being used today over 200 years later. The four types cloud are cumulus, stratus, cirrus and nimbus.

Kate: All those names come from Latin, have you heard of them before?

Rebecca: Yes, I have heard of some of them. I think I remember them from my Geography lessons at school and I remember learning that 'nimbus' is the name for a rain or storm cloud that cloud signals bad weather. But I can't remember what the others mean

Kate: Now we're going to listen to another extract. This time he's talking about the type of cloud which is a sign for good or fair weather. Have a listen and find out if you got the answer to the question I asked you earlier correct.

Insert 3

A cumulus cloud is the fair-weather cloud, the puffy cotton wool ones. And they're a great one to watch on a summer's afternoon.

Rebecca: Oh yes, he said that it was a 'cumulus' cloud which signifies good weather. That's the type of fluffy, white clouds which look a bit like a bit ice cream. So I was wrong in my guess this week.

Kate: Better luck next time! Just for your information the other two types of cloud: stratus clouds are a uniform gray cloud and usually cover most of the sky. And cirrus clouds are thin and tend to be high up.

Rebecca: In the UK we tend to have negative associations with clouds. We have sayings such as '**he's under a cloud**', or '**he's got a cloud hanging over him**'. We use these expressions when describing someone who is depressed or sad. And the expression '**a cloud on the horizon**' means that there is trouble or bad things approaching in the near future.

Kate: Not every culture uses clouds to describe a negative or bad thing. Let's listen to the next extract. Which country has a different attitude to clouds altogether?

Insert 4

There's a Arabic phrase that they use in Iran and Iraq which is when someone is lucky or blessed they say his sky is always filled with clouds.

Rebecca: He said that in Iran and Iraq, when someone is lucky they say 'his sky is filled with clouds'. Definitely a different attitude to the one we have here in the UK.

Kate: Well, we're nearly out of time now, but Rebecca, do you think you'll be paying more attention to the sky from now on. I know I will.

Rebecca: answers

Kate: That's all we've got time for this week, until next time, Happy Cloud spotting!