



Cloudland

Lisa Gorton

Teachers' Notes

Introduction

Lisa Gorton writes essays, poems and reviews for journals and newspapers including the *Age*, the *Australian Book Review* and *HEAT*. Her first poetry collection, *Press Release*, was released by Giramondo last year. Lisa is a Rhodes Scholar with a Doctorate in Renaissance English Literature from Oxford University.

Her first novel *Cloudland* begins after a year of endless rain. Cities are flooded; families are living on rooftops. Called into a world above the clouds, Lucy stumbles across a strange society of injustice, weird beauty, and danger. With a few odd companions, Lucy must travel across Cloudland and face the seemingly impenetrable force of Kazia, the ice queen, to try to stop the world from drowning and the dawning of an Age of Ice.

Curriculum Links

English: Reading, Writing, Research, Presenting

Creative and Performing Arts: Drawing, Painting

Science and Technology: Design and Make, Earth and its surroundings, Technology

PDHPE: Interpersonal relationships

Learning Outcomes

Students will have the opportunity to:

- read texts independently and in groups
- respond to themes and issues in a text
- draw on a range of skills and strategies to read and comprehend a text
- analyse techniques used by authors to create certain effects and use language creatively
- discuss the qualities of a loyal friend

Before you read

Look at the title and front cover picture of the novel. Work in pairs to discuss what the story may be about. Share your group's ideas with the rest of the class.

Read the book

Read *Cloudland* as directed by your teacher in one of the following ways:

- as a whole class
- in small reading groups
- individually

Stop everyone now and then to re-evaluate where you think the story may be heading. Discuss your ideas with a friend as well as parts of the story you like and why.



After You Read

Use the following questions to promote discussion of the book. Discuss these questions as a class or write the answers down.

1. Why is Lucy on a plane to London?
2. What does Lucy see as she looks out the plane window?
3. Do you think Lucy and Daniel would have been friends if they hadn't been in Cloudland together? Why or why not?
4. Who do the Cloudians believe Lucy to be and what do they hope she will do?
5. What does Lucy discover has caused the never-ending rain on the earth?
6. How do you think Lucy's feelings towards with her mother change while she is in Cloudland?
7. Why was Daniel's family life unhappy? Do you think it will change after his return to earth?
8. How was Kazia defeated and how was Alkazia destroyed?
9. Who helped Lucy and Daniel to get home and how did they return?
10. What was life on earth like after Lucy's return from Cloudland?

Activities

Families

There are many different types and structures within families. With a friend, sensitively discuss as many different types and mixes of families as you can.

Social Justice

There are many levels and types of clouds in the story. Some are the workers and others are in charge of important things such as the law. There is a definite social hierarchy.

Have a class circle meeting and discuss the following questions on social justice.

- Does the society we live in have different layers and levels?
- Do these layers operate in the school and classroom?



Environment

In *Cloudland* the earth is in danger of being flooded by too much rain. On the board list any environmental issues that worry you. Work in small groups and select an issue that interests your group. Write down your issue. Draw up three columns. In the first column write down what causes the issue, in the second column write down how the issue may be addressed or solved. In the third column write down the interesting facts that don't fit into the first two columns.

Emotions

Lucy experiences a wide range of emotions in her quest to destroy Kazia and save the earth from flood. With a friend write down the emotions Lucy experiences throughout the book and what causes these different feelings.

Bird's Eye View

- Decide if you are above land or the ocean, the city or the country.
- Imagine you are with Lucy looking down through the clouds to the earth.
- Draw or paint the view you see from above.

Clouds

The story involves different layers of clouds. In small groups, use the Internet and books to research the types of clouds mentioned in the story: Cumulus, Cirrus, Stratus, Nimbus ... (etc)

Find out as much as you can about these different types of clouds and share your information with the class in a creative way.

Flood Plan

- Imagine the suburb or town you are living in is about to be flooded. Write down what you would take to survive the flood if you only had your school bag.
- Write a plan for how you would try to survive if the flood came.



Circle of Friends

Lucy and Daniel become unlikely friends and allies. As a class, sit in a circle and discuss the following points.

- What makes you become friends with someone?
- What makes you dismiss someone as a friend?
- What is bullying?
- How could you stop bullying?
- How can you be a loyal friend?

The Albatross

The albatross played an important part in destroying Kazia and Alkazia in *Cloudland*.

- Find out as much as you can about albatrosses in science and literature.
- Write down facts about albatrosses and read out prose or poems you have found about albatrosses.

Secret Codes

In chapter 17 of *Cloudland* the Mist-snake gives a message. Read the message and then make up a secret code of your own to pass this message on.

Cloudland

Cloudland is one type of imaginary world. Invent your own imaginary world. Describe its physical appearance. Create the creatures that inhabit the land. Name and draw the land. Identify and describe a crisis in your land. Write about how your land is saved and by whom.

Cloud shapes

Lie on the grass or just look up on a cloudy day. Write down or draw the shapes you see and how the shapes change. If you have access to a digital camera take photos of different cloud formations and as a class decide what each cloud looks like.



Snowflakes

Take some different types of white paper. Fold each piece as many times as you like and snip pieces out from the folded edges. Unfold the paper to make snowflakes. Compare your snowflakes with those of a friend's. Are any exactly the same? Try to make a snowflake that is exactly the same as your friend's snowflake. Is it possible?

Cloudians

Choose your favourite Cloudian. Use cotton wool and other recyclable materials to create a 3D version of your Cloudian.

Sleeping on a cloud

Imagine you are sleeping on a cloud. Think about how things would look, feel, smell, sound and taste. Write a description about living in the clouds.

Book Review

Write a short book review for *Cloudland*. Include the following:

- Title
- Author
- Character – descriptions of the main characters
- Brief plot summary
- Favourite part of the novel
- What you learnt from this novel
- Recommendation (who you would recommend the book to and why)
- An illustration

