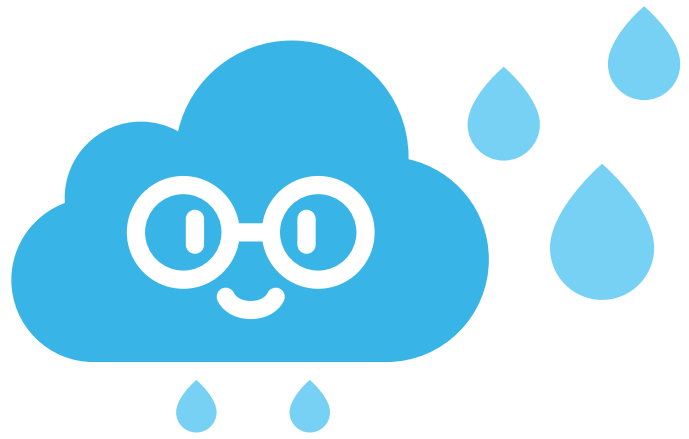


Eco-story

written by Guido Quarzo

Grandma Cloud



I knew a little girl in first grade called **Honor**, who said her grandma was a cloud.

“Your grandma can’t be a cloud” said her classmates.

They had all learned that clouds are made up of lots of drops of water, I was their teacher and this was something I had taught them.

When Honor said that her grandma was a cloud, the other children laughed and I would shake my head. But Honor didn’t seem bothered at all. She would laugh too, so no one ever made fun of her.

“It’s strange, isn’t it?” said Honor.

“It’s a nice thought, Honor, but you know as well as I do that it’s all in your imagination” I told her.

But Honor kept on insisting that her grandma really was a cloud.

"I know that clouds are made up of lots of drops of water" she said. "So?" I asked.

"My grandma is made up of lots of drops of water too"

It seemed that there was no way to make her change her mind. It gradually became normal to think that Honor's grandma was a cloud.

Every now and then, Honor would let us know how her grandma was getting on, telling us things that only a cloud could possibly know.

"I think it's going to rain" she said.

"Did you watch the weather forecast on TV?"

"No, my grandma told me"

Or:

"We've used more water than usual this month"

"Who, where..."

"More or less everyone, my grandma told me"

One day, Honor turned up at school with a very serious look on her face.

"What is it Honor, is something wrong?"

"My grandma is worried" she said.

So I asked what her grandma was worried about.

"All that salt... Grandma says that almost all the water in the world is salty, like the sea... and this is bad for people like us and bad for clouds like her".

So I told her that, fortunately, where we live, there is lots of water in rivers and lakes.

“But grandma says there are places where there’s no water at all... She knows, because she’s a cloud, and clouds know these things: she once told me that she sailed over a big desert and all there was, was sand.

Then at last she saw a pond and a few plants... But there were no other clouds with her so she couldn’t make it rain...”

“That place is called an oasis” I said.

An oasis is a water reserve in the desert - the only place where plants can grow - and there are just a few of them.

“That’s right. Grandma says that we, on the other hand, are lucky, but that we waste too much water”.

“You should ask your grandma what we can do to avoid wasting water” I told Honor.

“I will” she replied.

A few days later I was thinking that Honor must’ve forgotten about her imaginary grandma cloud when, one morning she turned up at school with a water bottle and asked me if she could talk to the whole class.

“OK Honor” I answered - *“As long as it won’t take too long”*. To be honest, I was curious.

Honor stood up on a chair and began.

“My grandma says we should turn off the tap when we aren’t using the water!” “Is that it?”

“Oh, and another thing, I filled this water bottle with tap water because my grandma says that it’s best not to bottle the water that comes down from the mountains. The more bottles there are, the more plastic we use. And that’s not good. Finished”.

I must say, her classmates did give her some funny looks that time.

“Yuck” said Jack “I don’t like tap water! I like sparkling water”.

Erika raised her hand and said:

“At home we turn the water that comes out of the tap into sparkling water”.

Peter, who was shy and rarely opened his mouth, stood up and said:
“My dad isn’t a cloud, but he works for the water board and he says that tap water is the best in the world. And he knows, because he checks it every day!”

This triggered a discussion about what we use water for: to drink, to wash, to cook, to clean the house... Thanks to Honor’s **GRANDMA CLOUD** we all discovered how important water is in our lives and in the life of plants.

The following year, Honor and her family went to live in a city far away and I never saw her again.

Sometimes though, I look at the clouds and think:

I wonder whether that's Honor's grandma?

And I'd like to ask Grandma Cloud lots of questions:

How much water is there in the ice at the North Pole?

Why doesn't everyone have water?

How far does the water that flows out of my tap have to travel?

And will it always be there?

And then the most important question of all:

WHAT CAN I DO TO USE WATER IN THE BEST WAY POSSIBLE?

Colour me

