

# Flying Lesson

By Dolores Hayden

Focus on the shapes. *Cirrus*, a curl,  
*stratus*, a layer, *cumulus*, a heap.

*Humilis*, a small cloud,  
*cumulus humilis*, a fine day to fly.

*Incus*, the anvil, stay grounded.  
*Nimbus*, rain, be careful,

don't take off near *nimbostratus*,  
a shapeless layer

of rain, hail, ice, or snow.  
Ice weighs on the blades of your propeller,

weighs on the entering edge of your wings.  
Read a cloud,

decode it,  
a dense, chilly mass

can shift, flood with light.  
Watch for clouds closing under you,

the sky opens in a breath,  
shuts in a heartbeat.

Source: *Poetry* (April 2014)