

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)