

Sun Shower

By Melinda Szymanik

Illustrated by Isobel Joy Te Aho-White



• Reading • Writing • Māori • Science • Art

Synopsis

As Rain pitter-patters on the town below, the Clouds suggest setting up a meeting with their friend Sun, who they think is lovely and warm and would be a good friend for Rain. But Rain thinks Sun doesn't want to be friends as she always vanishes when Rain shows up.

Next, the Clouds visit Sun to say it's a shame she doesn't know Rain, who is very cool and makes things grow. But Sun doesn't think Rain likes her because she won't come near when Sun is about. The Clouds are frustrated as they feel their friends Rain and Sun have more in common than they know and explain to each one how they are actually dependent on one another to grow new life.

The Clouds scheme for Rain and Sun to be at the same place at the same time, then wait to witness the nervous meeting between the pair. Deciding they like they look of one another, Rain and Sun reach out to embrace ... sparking a rainbow! The Clouds are happy, saying, "We knew you two would get along, but look at what happens when you come together. This is MAGNIFICENT!" From that day forward, Rain and Sun have been friends ... so whenever you see a rainbow, you know they are spending time together, as good friends do.

Sun Shower is available in a te reo Māori edition, *He Tārū Kahika*.

About the Author

Melinda Szymanik is the author of a number of Scholastic picture books, including *BatKiwi* and *There are No Moa, e Hoa; Sharing with Wolf*; *The Song of Kauri* (2015 Storylines Notable Book); *Fuzzy Doodle* (international White Ravens selection) and *The Were-Nana* (2009 Children's Choice winner). She has also written junior novels, including *A Winter's Day in 1939* which won the LIANZA Librarian's Choice award. She loves long walks (but without too many hills), puzzles of all kinds (except crosswords) and travelling to new and interesting places. Melinda lives with her family in Auckland.

About the Illustrator

Isobel Joy Te Aho-White (Ngāti Kahungunu ki te Wairoa, Kai Tahu) is a freelance graphic artist and illustrator with a passion for the natural world and te ao Māori. She specialises in symbolism and metaphor, and her work is influenced by mythology and folk tales, botanical illustration and life experience. "I've always had an interest in stories that are passed through generations, how they evolve, and where there are similarities and differences across cultures," she says.



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Writing and Illustration Style

Sun Shower is a beautifully written 32-page paperback picture book that would appeal to those in the 3–7 age group. This wonderful modern myth explores how Sun and Rain, who traditionally aren't friends, put aside their differences to form a friendship. The result is a magnificent rainbow. The body copy text is written in past tense and is woven with lyrical language. The speech, or dialogue, between Sun, Rain and the Clouds is written in present tense and consists of easy, conversational language. The book's themes are friendship and celebrating differences.

The illustrator's watercolour-style illustrations are highly detailed and were created on an iPad using Procreate®. Throughout the book, there are busy scenes that are bursting with details for the students to discover. The illustrator takes them on a journey to explore the surrounding urban and rural communities and the many activities that people in them undertake for work and leisure. Often the readers are given a bird's-eye view. The illustrator has also included weather-related details, such as wind turbines, paragliders, umbrellas, kites, and wind-swept trees. The facial expressions of the characters help convey the different emotions as the story unfolds, ending with magnificent smiles from both Sun and Rain as they become everlasting friends. The book is also retold in te reo Māori titled *He Tārū Kahika*.

Shared Learning and Discussion Points

Asking questions helps students make sense of the world, as well as what is happening in the story. Open-ended questions encourage them to answer with more than a simple 'yes' or 'no'. Read the book aloud and, if appropriate, have the students read alongside or by themselves. Use the questions below to help promote discussion and critical thinking about the themes of friendship and accepting differences.

ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

Look at the front cover and read the blurb on the back cover. Then turn to the title page.

- What is a sun shower? Have you ever been in the rain when the sun is shining?
- Why do you think Sun and Rain are smiling on the front cover?
- Do you think Sun and Rain can be friends? Why or why not?
- Why would Sun vanish when Rain shows up, and vice versa?
- Do you think people with differences can be friends? Why or why not?
- On the title page, why do you think Rain looks worried?

COMPREHENSION

- The author starts by saying that Sun and Rain have never met. How does the illustrator show us this? (pp.2–3)
- The author says that the rain 'pattered' and 'pittered' on the roofs and windows. What other words could she have used? Think about how rain sounds. (p.4)
- The Clouds say that their good friend Sun is lovely and so warm. Sun gives off lots of heat and warms up the surroundings, but what else might the Clouds mean by the word 'warm'? (p.4)
- Spend some time exploring the detailed illustration on pages 4–5. How do you know that it's a rainy and windy day? (pp.4–5)
- If someone vanishes when you turn up in the playground, do you think they want to be your friend? How does that make you feel? (p.6)
- When the Clouds melt away, why does Rain cease to fall? (p.7)
- What clue in the illustration lets you know it's a windy day? Also point out the mythical taniwha in the water. (pp.6–7)
- What does the author mean when she says 'Sun gently traced her arc across the sky'? (p.8)
- When Sun traces her arc across the sky, what would you see at the beginning and the end of the arc? (Sunrise and sunset.) (p.8)
- If clouds change from white to grey, what does this mean? (p.8)
- The Clouds say that Rain is cool. What are the different meanings of this word? (p.9)
- Sun has a 'fiery mane'. What do you imagine when you hear these words? Does this make Sun sound strong or weak? Why? What other words could the author have used to describe Sun's fiery rays? (p.10)
- The Clouds' expressions have changed. Why? What does Sun's expression tell you about how she is feeling? (pp.10–11)
- If the Clouds sulk over some mountains, what do you imagine the weather is like? What words in the text tell you that the Clouds are feeling a little sad, annoyed, or disappointed with Sun? (p.12)



- Why do the Clouds say that Sun and Rain are alike? The author uses opposite words to describe Sun and Rain (*wet/dry; warm/cool*). What other opposites could describe them? (p.14)
- Can you still be friends with someone, even if you don't have much in common? Explain your answer. (p.14)
- Rain cries her heart out. Why does she do this? (p.15)
- The illustrator lives in Wellington, New Zealand. What clues in the illustration reflect that? (pp.14–15)
- What actions tell you that the Clouds are angry? (p.18)
- Why do you need balance in nature? How can you make sure you have balance in your life too? (p.18)
- In sentences two and three on page 20, the author hints at the water cycle, which is the constant journey that all water takes as it moves around Earth. The sun's rays help to heat up and turn the liquid water or solid water (ice and snow) in our oceans, lakes, rivers, and underground into water vapour, which rises up into the air. The water vapour collects and forms clouds. As the vapour cools, it falls back to the ground as rain, snow, hail, or sleet. Then the cycle starts all over again. What would happen to the water cycle if Sun didn't shine at all? Could people survive if it was always cold and dark? Why or why not? (p.20)
- Do you think the Clouds will give up and not try to make Sun and Rain friends any more? Why or why not? (p.21)
- Why is dawn a good time for Sun to meet Rain at the mountains? (p.22)
- Which words on page 26 let you know that Sun, Rain and the Clouds are nervous or slightly on edge about meeting up? (p.26)
- What is another word for 'embrace'?
- What happens when Sun and Rain embrace? Why are the Clouds so happy about Sun and Rain's friendship? (pp.28–29)
- A myth is a made-up story that often explains something in nature. In this modern myth, the author explains how rainbows form. Often a myth ends with a brief explanation of why or how the story relates to the present day. Do you think the author ends her myth well? Explain your answer. (pp.30–31)

Activities

ACTIVITY 1: EMOJI YOUR EMOTIONS!

On page 18, the clouds have a range of facial expressions, such as angry and sad. They look a little like emojis. An emoji expresses different emotions or ideas. List ten different emotions, such as happy, sad, angry, stubborn, bored, guilty, worried, confused and so on. Then design a new emoji to match each emotion. You could make your emojis look like the cloud characters from the book or classic yellow emojis.

ACTIVITY 2: COTTON WOOL CLOUDS

The author describes some of the clouds as marshmallow-white and damp grey. On page 26, she talks about Rain hovering shyly just behind her nimbus friends. Nimbus is a type of cloud. Find pictures of the main types of clouds to show the children. There are some good posters online that show the different shapes of clouds and where in the sky they sit.. You could introduce the scientific names if it's appropriate for your students. For example:

- **Cirrus** clouds are thin and wispy and are found at high altitudes.
- **Cumulus** clouds are big and fluffy. When they are white, there's no rain. When they are grey or dark, it's going to rain.
- **Stratus** clouds are like a thick blanket across the sky.
- **Nimbus** clouds have rain or snow falling from them. They appear during a thunderstorm and are often accompanied with thunder and lightning.

Have the students create different types of clouds using light card, cotton wool, glue, and grey, black and blue and paint. Label the different cloud names or add descriptions of how each cloud looks.



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ACTIVITY 3: SUN SHOWER, SUN POWER, SUNFLOWER!

On page 9, the Clouds talk to Sun and explain how wherever Rain goes life springs up and things grow. Have the students grow sunflower plants. A sunflower plant has a large flower head that looks like the sun. In New Zealand, you can plant sunflower seeds from September. Talk about how young sunflowers turn their flower heads to face the sun and how they like lots of sunshine, about 6 to 8 hours per day. Go online to find easy-to-follow instructions on how to grow sunflowers and what you will need.

ACTIVITY 4: GAUGE THAT RAIN

Raindrops fall from clouds. A rain gauge helps you to measure the amount of rain that falls. Use the Internet to find out how to make a simple rain gauge. You will need an empty fizzy drink bottle, a permanent marker pen, scissors and a ruler. Use a pencil and paper to record your measurements after it rains then empty the gauge ready for the next downpour. Find a level surface outside for your rain gauge. Keep it away from trees or buildings that may drip water, because this will give a false reading. For those who live in areas that receive little or no rainfall, you could do Activity 5 instead.

ACTIVITY 5: RAINDROPS, TEARDROPS

Rain cries when Sun doesn't want to get to know her. Many illustrators draw raindrops like teardrops, but in real life, raindrops are shaped more spherocal, like the tops of hamburger buns. Make a hanging cloud and raindrop mobile using light card, cotton wool balls, scissors, glue, and string. Cut the raindrops into shapes and dangle them from the cloud. With coloured marker pens, write words on the raindrops that describe Rain or how she is feeling: *wet, cold, drizzly, splashy, drippy, sad, annoyed* and so on.

ACTIVITY 6: WILD AND WINDY

There are many activities that people can do on a windy day. You can have fun with whirling pinwheels, windsocks, wind chimes, and kites. The illustrator has drawn two children in the book having a wonderful time flying their kites in the wild wind. Research and make your own kite. You could decorate your kite to look like Sun, Rain or the Clouds from the story. Then wait for a windy day and fly your creation. Remember to fly your kite in a wide, open area that has no power lines overhead. Also, never fly your kite in wet, stormy weather.

ACTIVITY 7: RAINBOW FRIENDS

A rainbow is made up of seven different colours: **red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet**. Red is always the longest arc of the rainbow and violet is always the shortest arc of the rainbow. The acronym ROYGBIV helps you to remember the colours of the rainbow and the order in which they appear. Draw a character named Roy G. Biv. He could wear colourful rain clothes and a rainbow-coloured umbrella and rain boots. Now imagine that Roy G. Biv has to encourage Sun and Rain to be friends instead of the Clouds. Add two speech bubbles. In one speech bubble, his words encourage Sun to be friends with Rain. In the other speech bubble, his words encourage Rain to be friends with Sun.

Written by Janine Scott



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