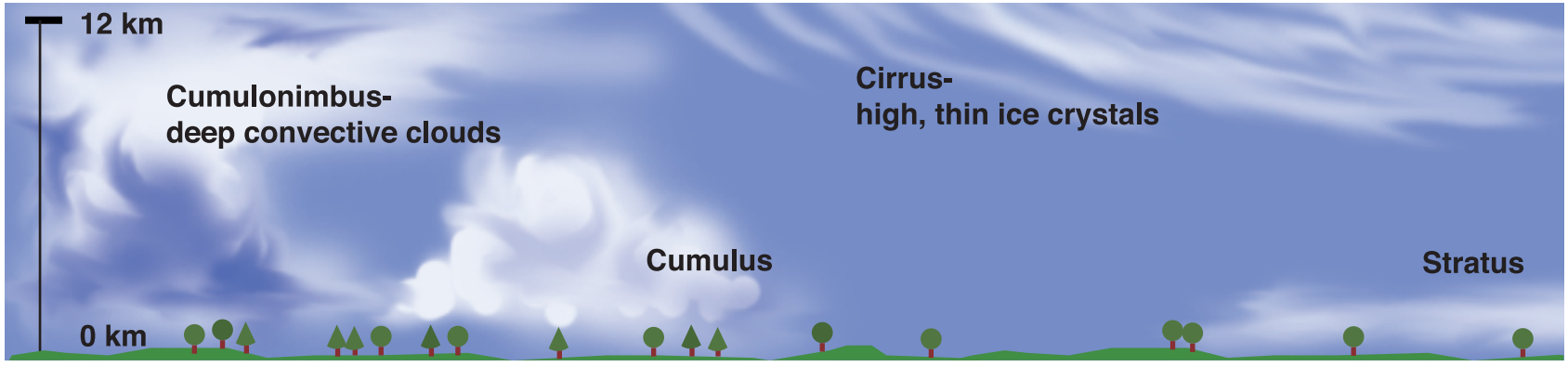

Why are clouds important to us?
1. Clouds lead to precipitation.
2. Some clouds reflect sunlight back out to space.
3. Some clouds trap heat from the Earth like a blanket.

How are different cloud types important?
a. Cirrus clouds warm the Earth because they trap heat and do not reflect much sunlight.
b. Stratus clouds cool the Earth because they reflect sunlight and don't trap much heat.
c. Convective clouds are very reflective and trap heat effectively, so their total impact is small.

For more information on clouds and the atmosphere in general, contact the following web sites:

http://asd-www.larc.nasa.gov/ceres/ASDceres.html
http://asd-www.larc.nasa.gov/asd_over/new_asdover.html
http://www.earth.nasa.gov/
http://asd-www.larc.nasa.gov/SCOOL/

National Aeronautics
and Space Administration
Earth Science Enterprise
Langley Research Center