**High Islands and Low Islands**

There are two main kinds of islands in the Pacific Ocean: high islands and low islands. Communities of people on both kinds of islands have homes, grow food, fish, and drink fresh water.

The fresh water that they have comes from the rain that falls on their island. High islands usually get more rain than low islands. For instance, on the low island of Majuro in the Republic of the Marshall Islands, rainfall averages 132 inches a year. On the high island of Kosrae in the Federated States of Micronesia, the annual rainfall averages 300 inches in the mountains and 200 inches on the coast.

The fact that Kosrae’s mountains get more rain than its coasts provides the clue why high islands get more rain than low islands. The air is much colder near the top of a high mountain compared with the bottom of that mountain. When warm, humid air blowing in from the ocean hits a mountain, that air is forced upward into the colder mountain areas. When warm humid air becomes colder, its water vapor condenses from the gas state into the liquid state, and forms water droplets. These water droplets become clouds that then can rain on the island.

