ELA Day 4 - Weather or Not

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Weather or Not

by Paula Hunt

What's happening outside can affect your mood.

When it comes to her favorite kind of weather, eleven-year-old Elena W. knows exactly what she likes.

"The sun is out, and there's a cool breeze," says the fifth grader from San Antonio, Texas.

Patrick J., also eleven, likes cold weather the best. That's because some of his favorite outdoor activities, such as ice fishing, take place when it's cold out. But he doesn't mind other types of weather too much-the Bristol, Connecticut, fifth grader says he just finds ways to stay busy and happy indoors.



Larry Williams/Getty Images

Everyone has their favorite kind of days. But can the weather actually make you feel a certain way?

"Absolutely!" says Marti Erickson, founding board member of the Children & Nature Network. "Weather really does affect us. It affects our energy, and it can affect our mood."

Weather or Not

Scientists say it's not surprising that weather affects the way we feel. Spending at least thirty minutes a day in warm, sunny weather could improve people's moods, one recent study found. Another study says that when heat and humidity go up, a person's good mood can go down.

Fifteen-year-old Sean F., of Olney, Maryland, knows what that's like. "When it's hot and humid and sticky, it makes me feel exhausted," he says. And what about his mood? "I'm grumpy."

But for Pete S., of San Antonio, Texas, it's cold, overcast days he can do without. Long days spent indoors make the sixteen-year-old uneasy. "It makes me feel kind of *claustrophobic*," he says. That's

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when people feel uncomfortable about being in a closed space.

But being bummed out about the weather is different for some people. Those who have psychiatric disorders, such as **schizophrenia**, depression, or attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), can be more sensitive to the weather's effects.

If you're bothered by dark winter days, there are treatments to help you feel better. Some people use light therapy boxes, which have bright lights that mimic sunlight. But for most people, things don't need to get that complicated.

"One way to increase your light exposure is to just go outside," says Jennifer Veitch, an environmental psychologist and senior research officer at the National Research Council Canada in Ottawa. "Even when it's overcast or in winter, the amount of light exposure you can get could be enough."

Cure the Blues with Some Green

Going outside has other benefits too. "Take a hike" takes on a whole new meaning when you know that nature can actually help put you in a better mood. Some researchers have found that the outdoors can help people relax and cope with stress, Veitch says.

One study showed that kids with ADHD were able to focus better after taking walks through green areas. Another found that kids who attended schools that had playgrounds with more natural elements such as grass and trees were better behaved.

Just what is it about seeing grass or a tree that lifts your mood? "Some scientists believe living things like plants and animals are so important for human survival that we are specially adapted to pay attention to them," explains Johanna Weber, a researcher at the Landscape and Human Health Laboratory at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. "They signal a place is a good place to live, so we are put in a good mood just by seeing them."

Weather and nature alone can't make you feel happy or sad. But understanding that they do have an effect on your mood means you won't be surprised by your feelings. Or, like Elena's thirteen-year-old sister Olivia W., you'll know what to do when you need a boost.

"When I come back from a walk in the park, I feel nice, I feel good, I feel sort of energized," she says. "Even if the entire rest of your day totally stinks, one walk in the park for me is a perfect cure for it."

A Garden a Day Keeps the Blues Away

When you can't bring people to nature, what do you do? Bring the nature to them! More and more nursing homes, hospitals, and schools are doing just that by creating gardens and green spaces on their grounds.

Going green has healthy benefits. People who live in nursing homes feel less **depressed** if there is a

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garden, studies have found. Even people in hospitals who can't get outside feel better when they can see gardens from their windows.

Kids in schools that have natural playgrounds with grass and trees focus better and are less aggressive than those who don't have such areas. Schools are turning to nature for teaching too. "Gardens and other outdoor spaces can be turned into places to study science, math, and language," says Marti Erickson, founding board member of the Children & Nature Network.



Walden Project student Julia W. reads to her classmates from the Dr. Seuss book The Lorax.
Angie Beaulieu

For learning from nature and in nature, it's hard to beat the Walden Project, a school in Vermont that was named after the book *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau. Thoreau said he did some of his best thinking outdoors. Teachers hold classes outside every day of the year, in all kinds of weather, with just a makeshift tent for shelter and a wood burning stove for warmth.

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Vocabulary

depress

verb

definition: to cause to be unhappy or in low spirits.
Failing the test depressed him.
Cold, gray days depress me.

Spanish: deprimir, abatir, entristecer

forms: depressed, depresses, depressing

depressed

adjective

definition: When someone is depressed, they are in a very sad mood, sometimes for a long time.
Sara's aunt got depressed when she couldn't find a job. She'd spent a long time looking but nobody hired her.

Spanish: deprimida, deprimido

schizophrenia

noun

definition: a severe and often incurable mental disorder that is marked by visual and especially auditory hallucinations, intellectual and emotional isolation from others, and unpredictable behavior.

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1. Before you start reading...

Here are the vocabulary words that will be in this reading. Let's see how well you already know them.

Check the box that shows how well you know each word. It's ok if you don't know them yet (this is not graded)!

	Don't know it	Have heard of it but not sure of its meaning	Know something about its meaning	Know it well
depress				
depressed				

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2. Word Matcher

Every word has other words that have similar meanings or even the exact same meaning (these are called synonyms!). Draw a line from each similar word or synonym to the vocabulary word that it matches!

weigh down oppress deflate

depress **depressed**

down sad blue

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3. After reading and exploring the words through some activities...

Do you know these words better? Check the box that shows how well you know each word. It's ok if you don't know them yet (this is not graded)!

	Don't know it	Have heard of it but not sure of its meaning	Know something about its meaning	Know it well
depress				
depressed				

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Name: _____ **Date:** _____

1. What is Elena W.'s favorite kind of weather?

A. sunny with a cool breeze

B. humid, sticky weather

C. wet, rainy weather

D. cold and overcast

2. The text describes the effects different types of weather can have on your mood. What effect could spending at least thirty minutes a day in warm, sunny weather have on your mood?

A. It could improve your mood.

B. It could make you feel exhausted.

C. It could put you in a bad mood.

D. It could make you feel lonely.

3. Different people prefer different types of weather.

What evidence from the text supports this conclusion?

A. Some of Patrick J.'s favorite outdoor activities, such as ice fishing, take place when it's cold out.

B. One study says that when heat and humidity go up, a person's good mood can go down.

C. Patrick J. likes cold weather the best, but Pete S. can do without cold, overcast days.

D. Long days spent indoors make Pete S. feel claustrophobic, or uncomfortable about being in a closed space.

4. Why might someone who usually enjoys the outdoors not find it relaxing every time?

A. A person might not enjoy certain types of weather, which would make his or her experience outdoors less relaxing.

B. The outdoors is only enjoyable the first time a person experiences it.

C. The outdoors is only enjoyable during the summer.

D. Most people prefer being indoors to being outdoors.

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5. What is the main idea of this text?

A. Some people use light therapy boxes to help them feel better.

B. People should stay indoors on dark winter days.

C. Henry David Thoreau did some of his best thinking outdoors.

D. The weather and the outdoors can affect a person's mood.

6. Read these sentences from the text.

"Going green has healthy benefits. People who live in nursing homes feel less depressed if there is a garden, studies have found."

What does the phrase "going green" mean here?

A. to recycle plastic bottles and cans

B. to be around nature

C. to save the environment

D. to spend a lot of money

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

_____ weather and nature alone can't make you feel happy or sad, understanding that they do have an effect on your mood means you won't be surprised by your feelings.

A. If

B. Since

C. Because

D. Although

8. How does Olivia W. feel after a walk in the park?

9. Why is a person's mood lifted when he or she sees grass or a tree?

Support your answer with evidence from the text.

10. Explain how where a person lives might affect his or her mood.

Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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