**Social Studies Article of the Week   
*Article Title: What’s happening outside can affect your mood***

**Directions:** ***Read the article three times following the directions below.***

**1st Read:** ~Quick read of the article to *Get the Gist.* While reading highlight words you do not know.

**2nd Read:** ~Make two footprints in the text per chunk of text. (Use Active Reading Marks)

**(+)** agree **(-)** disagree **(\*)** important **(!)** surprising **(?)** question **(∞)** text-connection

~Write one note (annotations) in the margins per chunk to show your thoughts, reactions, and questions as you read.

**3rd Read:** ~Write a one sentence summary statement after each chunk of text.

***After completing reads 1-3 answer the comprehension and reflection questions in complete sentences.***

**What’s happening outside can affect your mood**

(1) When it comes to her favorite kind of weather, eleven-year-old Elena knows exactly what she likes. “The sun is out, and there’s a cool breeze,” says the fifth grader from Texas. Patrick, also eleven, likes cold weather the best. That is because some of his favorite outdoor activities, such as ice fishing, take place when it is cold out. However, he does not mind other types of weather too much—the Bristol, Connecticut, fifth grader says he just finds ways to stay busy and happy indoors. Everyone has their favorite kind of days. However, can the weather actually make you feel a certain way? “Absolutely!” says Marti Erickson, founding board member of the Children and Nature Network. “Weather really does affect us. It affects our energy, and it can affect our mood.”

**Weather or Not?**

(2) Some scientists say it is 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, of Maryland, knows what that is like. “When it’s hot and humid and sticky, it makes me feel exhausted,” he says. *What about his mood?* “I’m grumpy.” However, for Pete when it is 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 is when people feel uncomfortable about being in a closed space. However, feeling bummed out about the weather is different for some people. Those who have schizophrenia, depression, or attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) can be more sensitive to the weather’s effects.

If you are 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 be 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 in Canada. “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**

(3) Going outside has other benefits too. “Take a hike” takes on a completely 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. “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 cannot 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, 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.”

***Notes as I read:***

**Social Studies Article of the Week  
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***Notes as I read:***

**Garden a Day Keeps the Blues Away**

(4) When you cannot 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 many health benefits. People who live in nursing homes feel less depressed if there is a garden, studies have found. Even people in hospitals who cannot 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 do not 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 and Nature Network.



Angie Beaulieu

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

For learning from nature and in nature, it is 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.

***Notes as I read:***

**Social Studies Article of the Week  
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***1. Go back to the article to find the information. You may list you answers in this box.***

What is the title of the article?

What is the source of this article?

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***2. Answer each question in one or more complete sentences.***

What do scientists say is improved if people spend 30 minutes a day in the warm, sunny weather?

According to the article what happens to people’s mood as the heat and humidity go up?

Who can be more sensitive to the weather and weather changes?

What are some nursing homes, hospitals, and schools doing to improve people’s mood?

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*3.*  *What would you think about learning outside? State your position and then use textual evidence to support your position.*

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