



# Dark Days, Dark Mood

## Pre-reading

Questions: What subject might this reading be about? What do you know about that topic?

Definitions: Depression – a state of unhappiness; low spirits

Variation – a change

Anxiety – an uneasy feeling of nervousness or worry

## Reading

As summer turns to fall and fall turns to winter, things change. The summer colors fade.

16 The temperature drops. Days get shorter and darkness is more plentiful. These changes can affect  
31 people, too. Some feel more sluggish. Others find it difficult to focus on their work. This  
47 seasonal change in mood and behavior is known as seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

60 This mood disorder is a type of depression that is related to seasonal variations of light.  
76 Symptoms of SAD include: depression, fatigue or loss of energy, overeating, lack of sex drive,  
91 anxiety, and difficulty concentrating or processing information.

98 Researchers say that about 25% of people who live in northern states have the “winter  
113 blues.” This milder form of SAD can make a person feel less cheerful, creative, and energetic  
129 during the dark days of winter.

135 As the seasons change, there is a shift in our “biological clocks,” partly in response to the  
152 changes in sunlight patterns. Our inner clocks can fall out of step with our daily schedules. People  
169 with SAD have a difficult time adjusting to the shortage of sunlight in the winter months.

185 Melatonin is a sleep related hormone that has been linked to SAD. This hormone is  
200 believed to cause symptoms of depression and is produced at increased levels in the dark. So,  
216 when the days are shorter and darker, the production of this hormone increases.

229 Young people and women are at the highest risk for SAD, but it can affect anyone. The  
246 main age of onset is between 18 and 30. It usually decreases around the age of 50.

263 How can people **cope** with the winter blues? Changing the environment can help. Remove  
277 the drapes and let the natural light shine in! Paint the walls a brighter color. Install brighter light  
295 bulbs.

296 Taking care of yourself can help, too. Stay warm and healthy. Wrap-up in a cozy blanket  
312 and enjoy a warm cup of cocoa. Eat good foods and get daily exercise! These coping tools will  
330 keep your mood up when the dark days try to pull it down.

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Level 5.5

## Understanding

1. What is SAD? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. What are its symptoms? \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. What may be the cause of it? Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. What does the word **cope** mean? \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. Who is at the greatest risk for SAD? \_\_\_\_\_  
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6. What are the winter blues? \_\_\_\_\_  
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7. How can a person improve his/her mood? (List at least three ways.) \_\_\_\_\_  
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## Writing

Option A: Summarize the reading in your own words.

Option B: How is your mood during the fall and winter months?

Option C: Do you or someone you know have SAD or the winter blues? If yes, how does it feel?  
How is it being managed?

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