

THE ROUNDUP

BY AND FOR THE STUDENTS OF HALF HOLLOW HILLS HIGH SCHOOL WEST

Feeling Blue

On White Christmas?

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With the holidays arriving sooner than later, it seems like the perfect time for people to be holly, jolly, and full of cheer. However, this is not so for some students of Hills West. With an influx of family gatherings, gloomy weather and seemingly endless tests before the holiday break, some students may sport a long face in the wake of a winter wonderland.

One of the many ways to help with winter blues comes from the SEC, which now hosts *Cookies and Coloring* on Mondays. At this event, students can partake in eating free cookies and socializing with others while coloring therapeutically with a large variety of markers, crayons and colored pencils. The pictures mostly involve winter scenes including snowmen and scenes of children throwing snowballs. Within minutes, creativity was shining through these drawings, and along with a good group of friends and music behind the whole event, the mood of the small meeting was friendly and festive.

"With the holiday season coming and teachers trying to get their students

to learn as much as they can before the break, it's nice to just have a small thing to do after school," said Mrs. Reynolds, the SEC advisor.

"You can come to the cafeteria and draw, hang out with friends, listen to some music, and have some food while doing it." This certainly proves to be true as, after attending one of these meetings, students felt quite

pleased after-wards. As Sophomore Nadeen put it, "It was really fun to be able to just slow

down and have some fun time with friends." It is clear that this "small club" has a bright future, and could grow to be something more very quickly.

Another interesting note that Mrs. Reynolds added was pretty intriguing. "I feel like teachers are always trying to help their students learn as much as possible, so I can see why this would be needed around this time of

year."

This begs the question of why the weeks before the most wonderful time of the year are thought of as intense

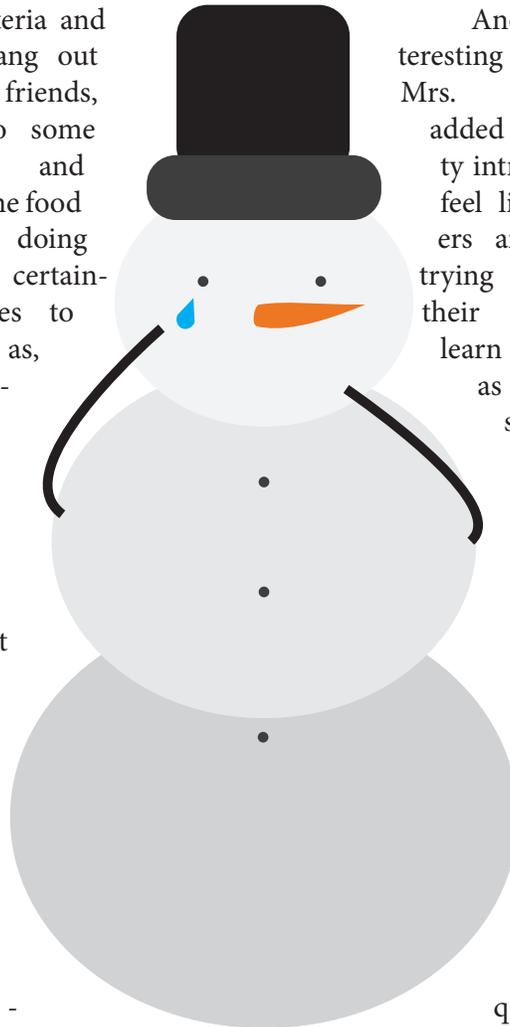
weeks of work. For that, we first went to the students, asking about how much they were being taught, in what frequency and how much homework they were getting. "We always get a lot of homework, we don't really get too much more near the holidays or anything," said Junior Kyle Anatra.

Other grade levels expressed a different sentiment. Freshman Naima Akter shared her agenda book and the available space that has disappeared since December's cold breeze came sweeping in. "It seems like I have so much more to do now that we're so close to the break," said Naima, "There's so many clubs I've been looking forward to joining that I can't join because of all the work I have to finish."

"It's gone up a bit, but it's not overboard. I can see why it's a problem, and having a club like *Cookies and Coloring* could help with that a lot," said Nadeen.

So if there's a clear majority of students that say that the homework load isn't really too much heavier, then why is it a problem? "The holidays are coming up,

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so having a lot of work on any day feels like a lot more than usual,” said freshman Emily Coyne. “After all, everyone’s trying to get ready for [the holidays] and if they have to worry about homework and tests and stuff, they’re not gonna be very happy about it.”

Junior Kyle Anatra responded similarly. “I mean, having any homework is annoying, but I guess people could see it as a problem. Especially with the holidays around the corner, people could be getting depressed maybe.”

Now depression is a rough situation to deal with. and it seems to strike most commonly during the winter. Winter depression is an unfortunate part of what makes this snowy season less white and more blue, and having more homework than usual, even if it’s a small amount, might be setting this in motion for underclassmen. “Oh yeah, I definitely feel more stressed and under pressure,” confirmed Coyne. “There’s no

doubt that the increase of homework is causing a winter depression.”

Winter depression taking a hold on some students might be a form of Seasonal Affective Disorder, or SAD, which is essentially a mood swing that takes place around the same time every year, in this case, winter. About 4 to 6 percent of people may have winter depression. Thankfully, the sadness dissolves the same way it came, with the seasons. Once the birds start chirping again, with bright flowers and lush trees growing and blooming, the problem ends relatively fast.

There are ways to keep from having SAD have too much of an effect on your work ethic and self-esteem. Many doctors give a very simple prescription when they hear of winter depression, that being sunlight. One of these doctors is Alfred Lewy, an MD who researches seasonal depressions at the Oregon Health and Science University, who says that if you get the right

amount of light at the right amount of time, your blues just might go away. “The most important time to get light is in the morning,” he said in an interview with Martin Downs of WebMD.

From the interview, it seems like school might have something to do with winter depression, but not because of homework. “The problem

is waking up before dawn,” Lewy continued. Also, the shortening of days due to Daylight Savings Time doesn’t make this problem much better. Maybe if students suffering from the winter blues step outside into the sunlight whenever they can, maybe there worries could cease to exist.

However, the abundance of homework towards the latter end of December can cause students to feel even more overloaded. Many studies have shown that giving students too much homework can easily

cause stress, depression, and even do the opposite of what teachers give homework for: lower grades. And, with the winter bringing in more work than usual, many students might feel that the overload, in addition to the lack of sunlight, could really bring them down.

So there you have it, due to the increase of homework and decrease of sunlight, students might be suffering from some seasonal depression. To solve it, simply do the opposite of what caused these winter blues in the first place. Hopefully, with this article and the sunlight, along with the *Cookies and Coloring Club*, you will be feeling better in no time.

