



TEACHERS' NOTES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Upper primary

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English
- **General capabilities:** Critical and creative thinking, ethical understanding, personal and social capability

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Class enjoyment
- Visual literacy
- Journalling enhances writing skills

THEMES

- Friendship and loyalty
- The challenge of navigating peers at school
- Self-esteem and bullying

PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia

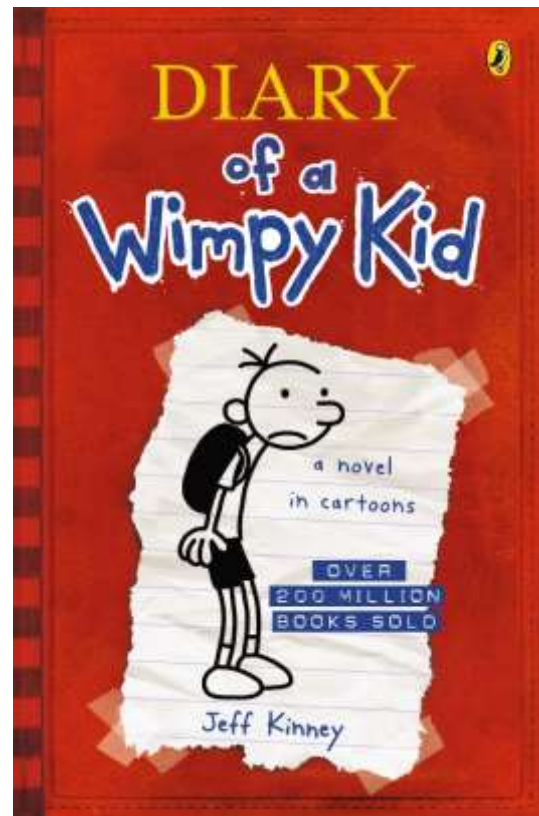
PUBLICATION DETAILS

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Copyright © Rachael Walker (www.belleofthebook.com) created this guide. She consults on a wide variety of educational programs and multimedia projects with a special focus on children's literacy and develops educational materials and reading resources for children, parents, and teachers.



Diary of a Wimpy Kid Jeff Kinney

PLOT SUMMARY

This book is a journal—NOT a diary—belonging to Greg Heffley, a middle school student struggling to navigate among the morons, girls, and gorillas that fill his school. Greg figures he's around the 52nd or 53rd most popular kid this year and soon to move up in the ranks.

Though this middle school weakling works hard to figure out the angle that will always make things come out best for him, Greg's schemes to gain popularity and status rarely seem to pay off. Especially when it comes to dealings

with his best friend Rowley, who has Greg to thank for a broken hand and getting blamed for terrorizing a group of kindergartners.

Throughout his journal, Greg shares all the misadventures of his middle school experience and his family life. From wrestling in gym with a weird classmate who shouts "Juice!" when he has to go to the bathroom to being chased by teenagers on Halloween (and losing all his candy when his father douses him

with a trash can full of water) to the daily emptying of his little brother's plastic potty, Greg acerbically chronicles his year, from the first awkward day of school to the last.

Diary of a Wimpy Kid is the first book in the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series. First published in 2007, the book has gone on to achieve the status of becoming a #1 international bestseller and has been credited with helping reluctant readers around the world fall in love with reading. The full *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series, which includes nine titles as well as *The Wimpy Kid Do-It-Yourself Book* and *The Wimpy Kid Movie Diary*, has more than 150 million books in print worldwide, and has been translated into 45 languages.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Diary of a Wimpy Kid author Jeff Kinney was born in 1971 in Maryland and attended the University of Maryland in the early 1990s. It was there that Jeff ran a comic strip called *Igdoof* in the campus newspaper, and knew he wanted to be a cartoonist.

However, Jeff was not successful in getting his comic strip syndicated after college, and in 1998 he started writing down ideas for *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, which he hoped to turn into a book. Jeff worked on the book for six years before publishing it online on Funbrain.com in daily installments.

In 2006, Jeff signed a multi-book deal with publisher Harry N. Abrams, Inc. to turn *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* into a print series. *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* was released in April 2007 and quickly became a *New York Times* bestseller a few months later. In 2009, Jeff was named one of *Time* magazine's 100 Most Influential People in the world.

In 2007, Jeff also created Poptropica.com, where he continues to work full time as the creative and editorial director. Jeff lives in southern Massachusetts, where he is opening a bookstore.

Why Use this Book in Your Classroom

Millions of kids are readers because of this book! Even the most reluctant readers can't put it down. Finishing *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* gives struggling readers a great sense of accomplishment.

- It is a fun, accessible read that helps you promote reflection and self-expression to students reading at all levels.
- Kids talk about this book. Reading it gives them a book in common with kids in their class, community, and around the world. It sparks conversations about books and reading.
- It gives you a springboard to connect students to other titles in the series, in the genre and beyond.
- Kids see themselves in the book and discuss issues that affect their daily lives.
- It helps you initiate critical conversations where students critique text and images and question the status quo.
- Kids love to laugh! And while they're reading carefully so they don't miss a single joke, they'll also be thinking about how language, writing, and images communicate ideas.
- *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* in your classroom is a great way to meet standards and laugh with your students at the same time.
- There are tons of resources to help you! In addition to this *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* teaching guide, you can also find a teaching guide for the entire series, a teaching guide for the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* movies and *The Wimpy Kid Movie Diary*, as well as activity packets, party kits, and event guides. All these resources and more can be downloaded from wimpykid.com

Reading *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* in Your Classroom

Given the popularity of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, it's likely many of your students are already familiar with the book and/ or the films. To accommodate first-time readers and those acquainted with the book, consider these approaches for reading in the classroom. If these are new approaches for your students, introduce and explain the approach in detail before getting started.

Read Aloud/Think Aloud

Whether students have read it or not, having you read *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* aloud will give them a new experience! Having you "think aloud" will give students insights into how to stop, think, and listen to their own thoughts as they read.



First, read the book yourself and plan your “think aloud.” Experiment with how and where to demonstrate your reading thought processes and comprehension strategies when you read aloud to students. Then, preview the book with your students. Set a purpose for reading and talk about why you chose to read *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*.

And finally, with lots of expression, read! Read the first few entries for “September” aloud to your students. If you have a camera in your classroom, use it to share the illustrations with your listeners as you read.

As you read aloud, stop and “think aloud,” modeling some general reading strategies that will help all your students engage with the book. Share with students the kinds of questions you ask yourself that help you get meaning from both the text and from the images. In passages students might find confusing, model how you use context clues to understand unfamiliar words, re-read unusual expressions, etc. Also “think aloud” at passages and pictures that cause you to laugh, pause and question or reflect.

If students continue reading the book independently, encourage students to use the strategies you just modeled (or any others you feel your students most need) to help them monitor their understanding and make connections. Along with their questions and conclusions, you might have them note any strategies they use in a Response Journal.

If you choose to read the entire book aloud, you can continue to “think aloud” when you feel it is appropriate. Most important, model reading flow and really engage your listeners!



Buddy Reading

Reading pairs could include sets of independent readers who read along together or student partners who take turns reading aloud to each other. Pairs can have the same reading ability or you can couple a more fluent reader with a less fluent reader.

Reading buddies should each have their own copy of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, sticky notes, or a Response Journal. Before reading begins, have student pairs meet to preview the book and note their thoughts about what they think the book is about and whether they’ve read it before. Independent reading pairs should decide how many pages they plan to read before meeting again. You should help read-aloud pairs decide if they should each read aloud the same page of the book, alternate reading aloud passages or pages, read aloud together simultaneously or vary the approach at each meeting.

As pairs meet, they should discuss and question each other about:

- What’s going on in Greg’s life and why they agree or disagree with how he deals with the situations he finds himself in.
- Any similar experiences they’ve had.
- What other things they think might happen to Greg and other characters.
- Graphic elements of the book they feel are critical to the story.
- Their own and their buddy’s reading process.

After finishing the book, buddies can pick one of the Activities to complete together or develop their own reading project to share their common reading experience.



Book Club

A book club approach to reading *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* is perfect for independent readers ready to have authentic conversations about books without assigned literature discussion roles. This means that students need to know how

to come up with open-ended questions to share with their group and already have some experience discussing books in a less structured but engaging and meaningful way.

Before forming groups of four or five students, teach or review strategies for active listening and contributing to discussions with the entire class. Brainstorm ideas about what kinds of things to talk about in a discussion of literature and what individuals should do to prepare to participate.

At the initial meeting, students should get to know their book club members, preview the book, negotiate what pages they need to read by the time the group meets next and determine what preparation is expected for the first discussion.

Encourage students to bring their own experiences and perspectives. They should see book club as an opportunity to share their personal responses to the book and the issues addressed in it, like friendship, popularity, bullying, and self-identity.

Because book clubs are reader response centered, having students keep a Response Journal will help support student responsibility and ownership of the book club. Students can use their journal notes, drawings, observations, and questions as a jumping-off point for discussions.

Give students the chance to steer their own discussions, but if they need prompting, Discussion Questions in this guide can help foster and support discussion. After finishing the book, have students compile the best of their own discussion questions and organize them as a discussion guide to share with future book clubs.



Response Journal

Discuss diary and journal writing with the class. Have students offer their ideas about what distinguishes journals, diaries, and blogs.

Ask them to share works they've read or know of in this genre. Ask students to offer reasons why they or others write down their private thoughts, how this exercise can benefit the writer and how it can affect readers.

Tell students they will be keeping a response journal while reading *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. Students will use their journals for asking and answering questions, noting passages or phrases of interest, making predictions and analysis, and for reflecting and relating what they have read to their own lives. Students should plan to draw from their journals during book discussions.

Students may take a cue from Greg and keep their response journal in the same format as his diary. And hopefully they'll also be as descriptive and direct! But remind them that there's no single right way to respond to a book, so encourage equally varied methods of response, including writing, drawing, mapping, and charting. Work with your students to generate prompts to ensure their responses allow them to make a personal connection to the book and take ownership of what they've read.

Discussion Questions

The questions below can be used for class or small group discussion or offered to students as reflective writing prompts. For meaningful discussion, as students read they should note ideas they find interesting or that make them wonder, passages they don't understand, phrases or passages that they like, and things they question, predict, and conclude. Students can also use their notes to develop their own questions for discussion.

- *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* can be described as "a novel in cartoons", as seen on the front cover. How do the cartoons affect the story? Besides the cartoons, in what ways do you think the book is different from other novels you have read?



- With the title *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, what do you think the author is trying to tell you about Greg Heffley? How would you define wimpy?
- What characteristics and behaviors do you associate with Greg? What characteristics and behaviors do you want people to associate with you? Why?
- Greg writes "I'll be famous one day, but for now I'm stuck in middle school with a bunch of morons." Describe what you imagine Greg thinks he's going to be famous for.
- Do you agree or disagree with Greg's opinions about what makes someone popular? Why or why not? How can popularity affect someone's behavior?
- What are the characteristics of a good friend? How do you think Rowley feels about his friendship with Greg? If Rowley kept a journal how would he describe his interactions with Greg?
- Describe Greg's relationship with his family. How is your relationship with your parents or your siblings similar or different?
- Greg's brother, Manny, calls Greg "Bubby." Describe how Greg feels about this nickname. Does someone in your family have a nickname for you? What is it and how did the name come about? How do you feel when you are called by this name?
- Do you think this book is funny? Why or why not? Discuss a part of the book that made you laugh and explain why you thought it was funny. If something similar happened in your own life or to a friend what would your reaction be?
- Why do you think the Cheese Touch got started? If you got the Cheese Touch, how would you react?
- How would you describe bullying? Are all kinds of bullying the same? Why or why not? Who gets bullied in the book? Who does the bullying? Why?
- What form does bullying take in other books you have read? Discuss how a fictional character from a different book deals with bullying. Compare the

response of that character with a character in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*.

- The *Wimpy Kid* series has more than 150 million books in print and has been translated into 45 languages. What about these books makes them so popular internationally across cultures? What do you think kids in other countries love about the books that you love too?

ACTIVITIES

Get to know Greg. He's a character!

Understanding characterization helps students explore the feelings, thoughts, and motivations of characters. *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* provides a unique way to discuss and study characterization and point of view.

With your readers, discuss the author's choice of point of view. What does this technique offer the reader? Discuss the ways an author develop a character, including the use of direct and indirect characterization. How does the point of view affect your responses to the characters? Discuss the impact the author's use of first person point of view has on the reader's understanding of and reaction to Greg.

Get students focused on how the author brings Greg to life. Have them generate a list of things about Greg that provide a sense of who he is, including phrases, passages, and images that describe his physical appearance, personality traits, and behaviors. Then have them try one of the following activities to show just how well they know Greg.

Greg's Fictional Character Profile

Imagine that you are the author and write a profile for Greg if Greg were a blogger or on social media. Using supporting evidence from the book, write three paragraphs about Greg titled "About Me," make a list that describes Greg's family and relationships, and create a list of Greg's interests and favorites (hobbies, sports, music, television, books, games). Be sure to also include a picture of Greg!

How to Write a Biopoem

Biopoem: Writing as Greg, and using supporting evidence from the book, create a Biopoem that includes his first and last name, three or four traits, an important relationship, things he loves, feelings he has,



things he's afraid of, some of his accomplishments, things he wants to do or see, and where he lives. A Bio poem usually follows a standard format, but you can also include other items such as big moments, interests, and pet peeves.

Characterisation Bookmark

Have students further demonstrate how well they understand Greg's character. Ask them: How would Greg write about you, your teacher, your family, or your friends? As Greg, write a profile, poem or list about yourself or someone else in your life.



Greg the Writer

Greg is clear that he's not going to write down his "feelings" in his journal. But he does share a number of different types of writing, demonstrating that he's quite "well- rounded" when it comes to putting pen to paper!

With your readers, identify and discuss the types of writing found in the book— narrative, opinion, journal, letter, lists, comics, ads, etc. Discuss the characteristics of genre forms. How do they differ? What's the purpose or what questions do the various writing types help answer?

Now, put your discussion into action. Provide prompts from the book as a springboard for students' own opinion pieces, informative/explanatory texts, or narratives. Allow students to choose the appropriate writing type for their task and audience.

Classroom Instructions

1. "Let me just say for the record that I think middle school is the dumbest idea ever invented." (page 3). Give an opinion of your own about school and offer strong support for it in writing.
2. "Me and Rowley spent most of the day coming up with an awesome plan for our haunted house." (page 53). Use text and illustrations to develop a concept for your own haunted house or other small business.
3. "I thought I could just crank out my thank-you cards in a half hour, but when it came to actually writing them, my mind went blank." (page 138). What are the most important elements of a thank-you note? Use your imagination to write a thank-you note for three different situations.

What's Your Point, Greg?

Analysing a story to come up with its themes takes higher-order thinking and good comprehension. With your readers, identify and discuss how characters are important in determining themes. Then talk specifically about the characters in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. How do characters react to situations and problems? How do characters solve problems? How do characters change emotionally over time? How are characters treated by other characters?

Following this review of the characters, the actions they take and the settings they are in, discuss with readers what big ideas or messages they think the author conveys. Then have students get creative with expressing one of those themes. Ask them to identify a theme from the book and get its point across using a different type of writing.

Classroom Instructions

What messages did you take away after finishing *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*? In finding those messages, or theme, you worked hard to discover the big ideas the author wanted to share in his book. Deliver his message in another way. Take a theme from *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and, writing as Greg, express it in:

1. A comic strip
2. Lyrics to Löded Diper/heavy metal song
3. A campaign poster
4. A letter to a friend or family member



After you have developed a product using Greg's voice and tone, use your own voice to create the same product.

Display or have students present or perform both works without sharing which is "Greg's" and which is their own. Can students distinguish Greg's voice from that of their classmates?

Greg the Cartoonist

In addition to drawing laughs from readers, Greg's graphics help students to draw inferences. Make time with your readers to study the illustrations in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. Students need to know that the images aren't just funny, but are an important way of conveying meaning. Discuss with students how to infer or make inferences and why it is important to do so. What clues do readers get from pictures that help them understand the story or the characters? Choose an image and walk through an example from the book.

Graphic information can also help students infer the meaning of idiomatic expressions.

Check students' familiarity with the expression "take one for the team" and share examples of how idioms work in daily life and culture. Discuss what other kinds of information can help readers infer the meaning of idiomatic expressions.

Look together for additional examples in the book including "take him under my wing" (page 19), "mopping the floor with him" (page 26), "caught red handed" (page 30), "take matters into my own hands" (page 89), "had this one in the bag" (page 93), and "get out of hand" (page 193). Then give them a chance to show what meaning they draw from your discussions on inference and idioms.

Classroom Instructions

Draw your own conclusion

When reading comics, you often have to infer the author's intentions by examining the illustrations. Keep this in mind as you create the first two panels of a comic. Without discussing your work, exchange comics with another student. Infer what is happening in the comic and try to finish the final panel as the original author intended. Then get your original comic back and discuss the final panel with the student who finished it. Does it make sense? Is it what you expected or was it a surprise? Share it with the class to see if others get it or have different ideas about what the final panel should be.

Back to the drawing board

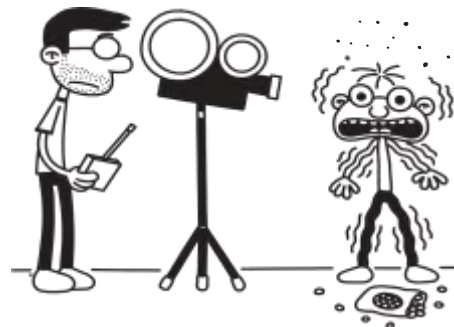
Idioms are expressions that have meanings beyond the actual words used in the phrase, such as "caught red handed." Literally interpret some of your favourite idioms used in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and illustrate them in a Wimpy Kid-style. Also, put each idiom and drawing on a separate page along with its figurative definition. All pages will be collected to create an illustrated book of idioms.

Greg the Actor

Luckily for Greg, everyone who tries out for the school play gets a part.

Have your readers take center stage with retelling stories from *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. Retelling stories helps students order and summarize information, make inferences, better understand plot and characterization, and evaluate the story.

Use images from the book to prompt student retellings and help them share what they know about various scenes in the book, such as Halloween, wrestling, the winter play, etc. Let students know that this is rehearsal for some additional classroom drama!



Classroom Instructions

Diary Drama

Working in small groups, choose a scene from the book to dramatize and create a reader's theatre script. Plan to perform your scene for the class or record your performance to share with other classes.

You can also write and illustrate a poster announcing your performance or create a theatre program.

Reader's Theatre

Talk Show: Working in a small group, plan and put on a talk show. Each student portrays a different character, with one student serving as the host. Everyone in the group should be involved in developing questions—but not answers—for the characters.

The host will need to come up with a short biography to introduce each character. The characters need to come prepared to answer factual questions based on text evidence as well as questions that express their thoughts, feelings, personality, and values.

GET TO KNOW THE AUTHOR

In addition to having a good laugh, readers of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* often have a personal, fulfilling experience identifying with the main character. Your readers are sure to be curious about the person responsible for this.

Start them off with the information About the Author in this guide. Then brainstorm together good resources for finding credible information about Jeff Kinney. They can use the list of sources the class generates for these activities.

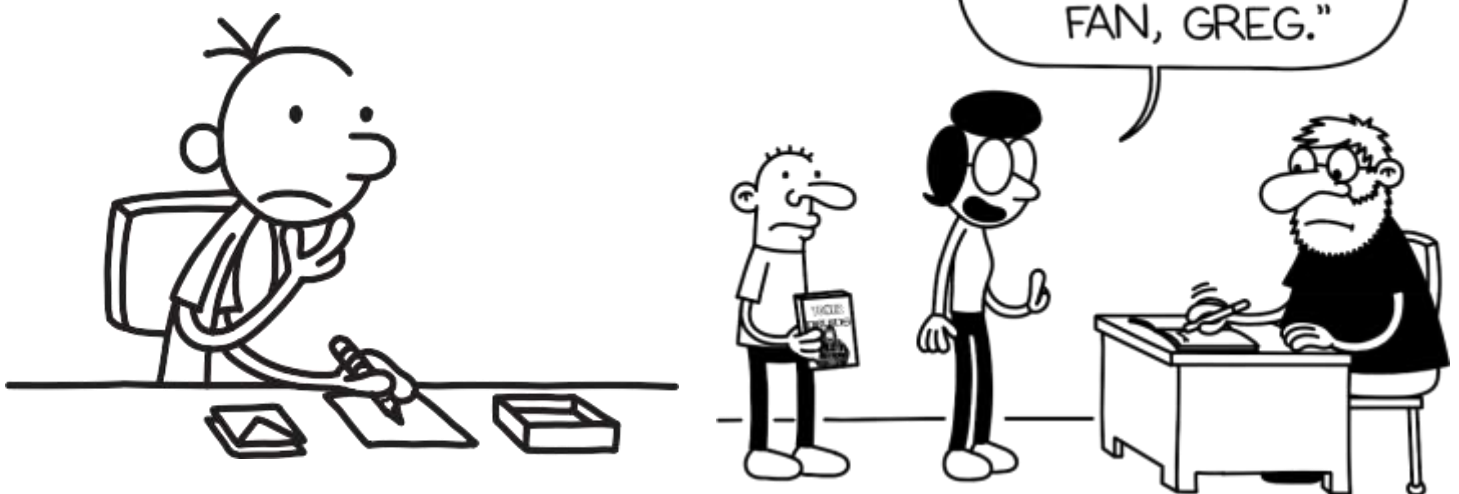
Classroom Instructions

"Interview" the Author

Imagine that you are writing an article for the school newspaper. Develop questions you'd really like to ask Jeff Kinney. We'll compile a complete list of questions and then work in small groups to research answers. Groups will present answers to the class so we can compare answers and discuss answer sources.

Author Lunch

Imagine Jeff Kinney is coming to our school for lunch! We want the table to look nice so you are going to design a place mat to honor our guest. It should feature information and illustrations that describe the author and the characters he's created. Look to the book for ideas for styles and materials the author and/or his characters would appreciate. We'll pick a day to set the table for lunch and invite everyone to come dressed as their favourite *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* character. Everyone has to stay in character while we mu

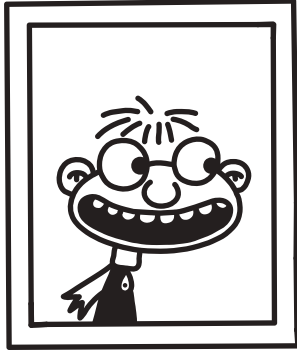


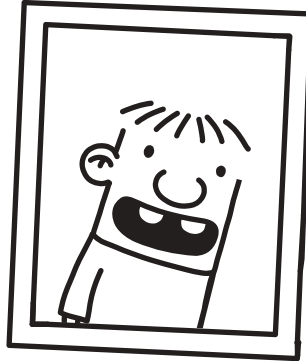
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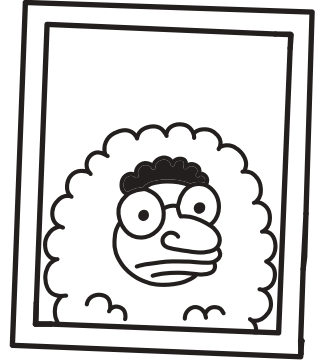
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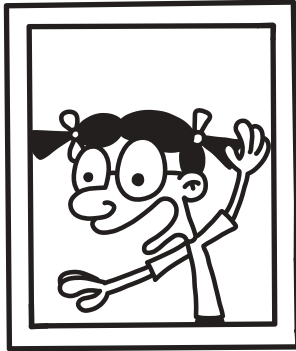
SIGN MY YEARBOOK GREG!

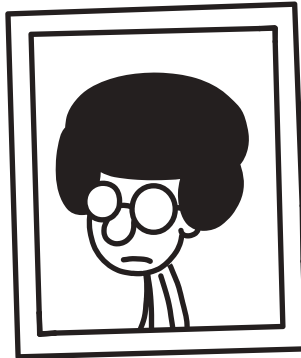
Under each picture, add information you learned about Greg and his classmates from reading *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. That might include a nickname, activities, clubs, or sports they participated in, and class awards such as "class clown." Then, imagining that you are Greg, add comments you think Greg might make in his classmates' yearbooks.

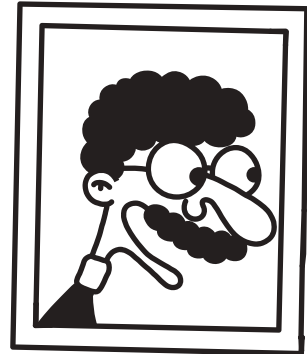


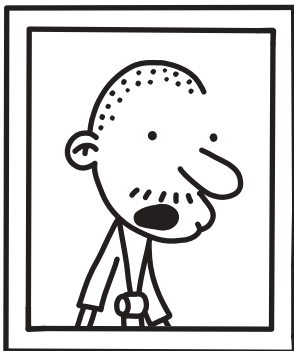


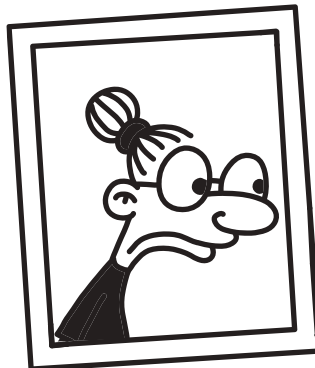


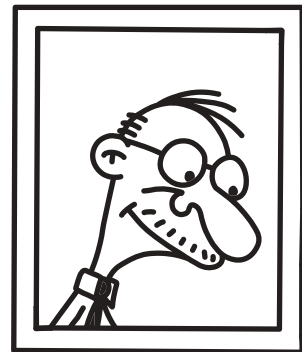












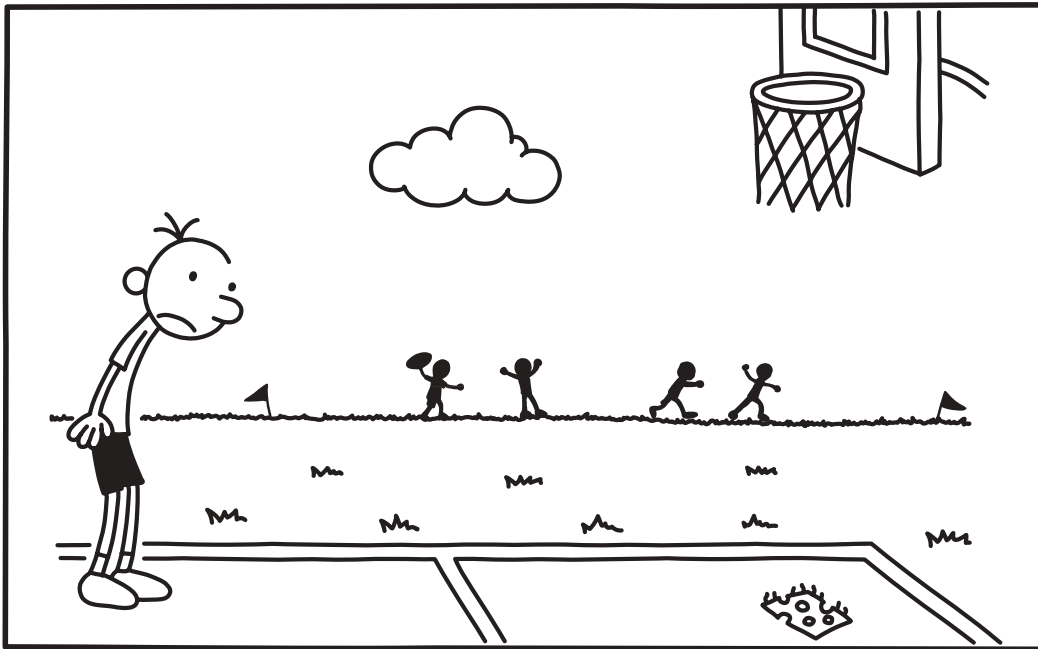
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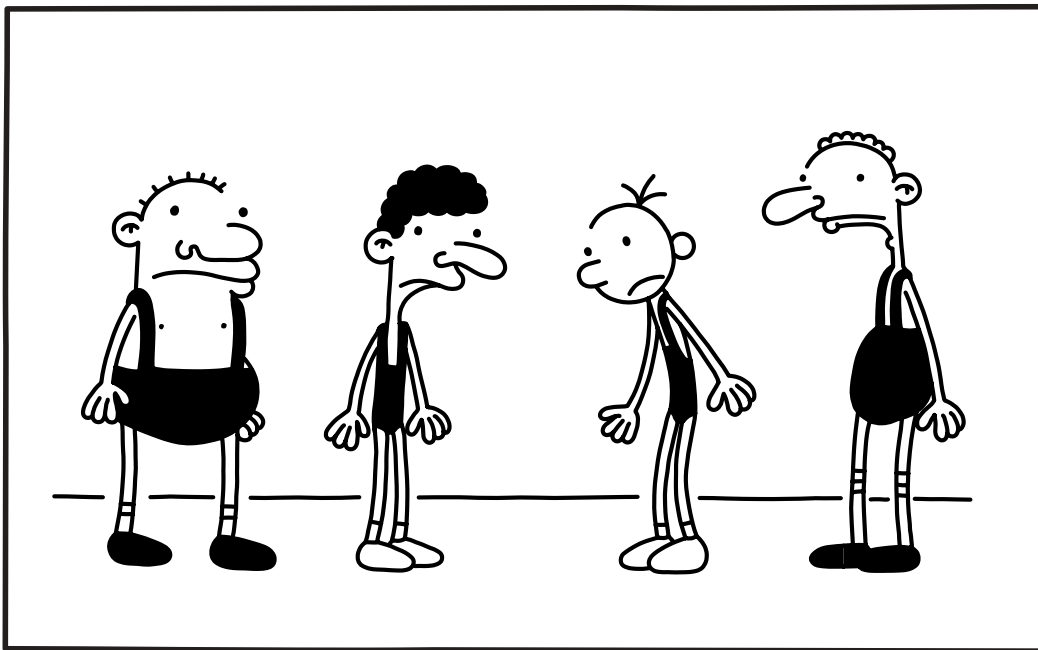
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CAPTION THE COMIC

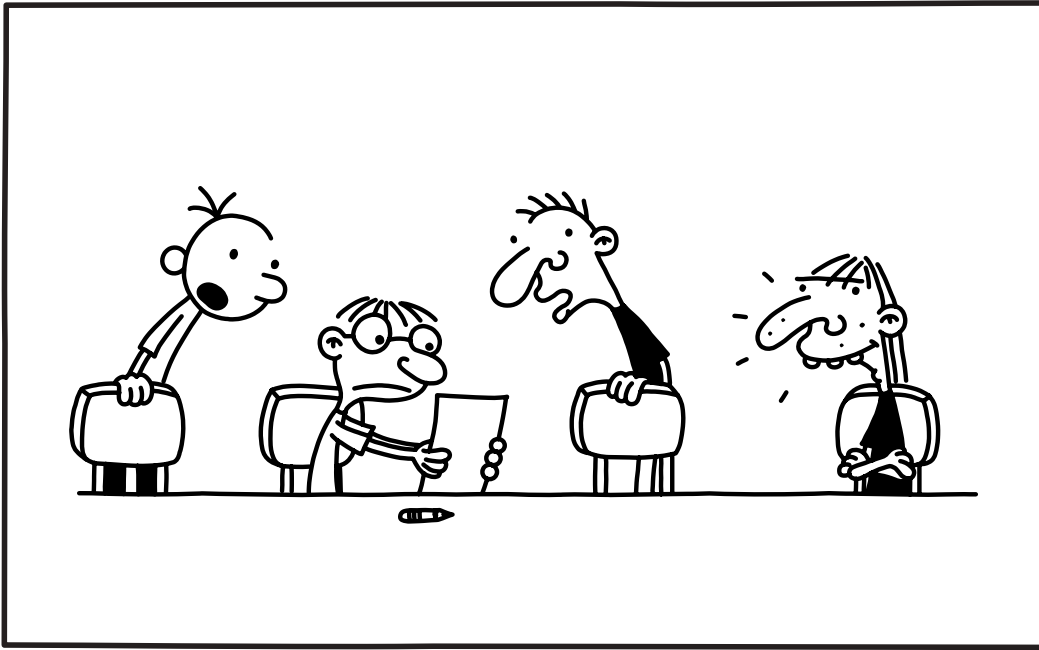
What's going on here? You read the book, so you should know!

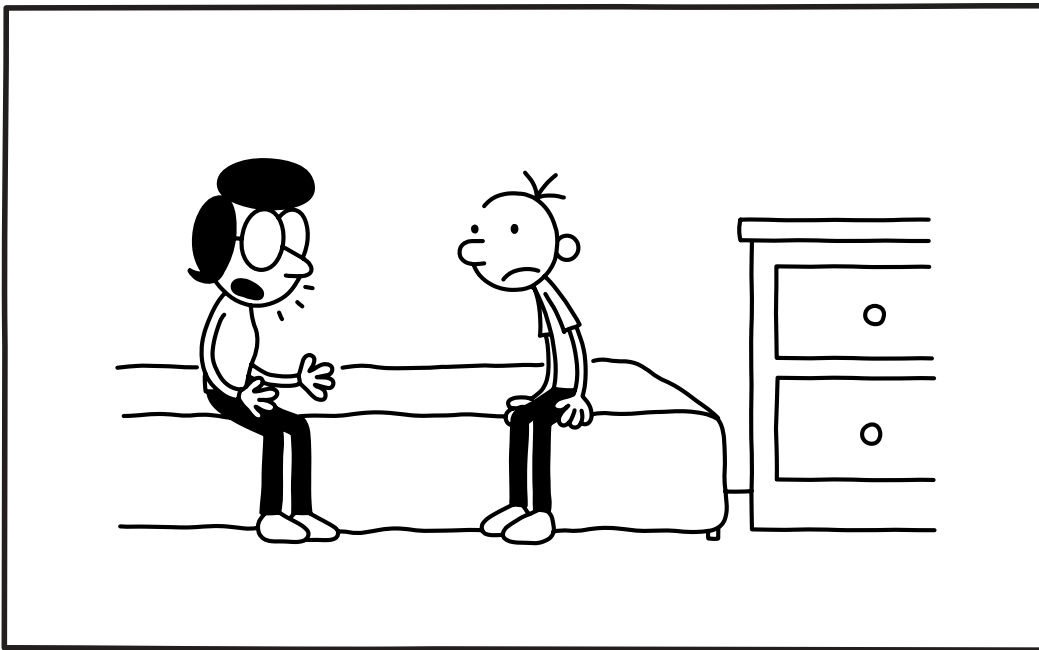
A caption is text that helps you understand the message of a picture. For each picture below, add a caption that explains the picture. You can also add thought bubbles to explain what you think the characters are thinking about in these situations.





CAPTION THE COMIC, CONTINUED





NAME _____

DATE _____

SOLUTIONS FOR TOUGH SITUATIONS

Greg has to deal with a lot of problems. Even when he causes some of them himself, he still has to fix things . . . though sometimes that just results in more problems! If you had Greg's problems, how would you solve them?

For each problem on the chart, write Greg's solution and a solution of your own.

GREG'S PROBLEM	HIS SOLUTION	YOUR SOLUTION
PROTECTING HIMSELF FROM THE CHEESE TOUCH		
MAKING SURE NO ONE KNOWS HIS NICKNAME "BUBBY"		
WANTING TO GAIN WEIGHT AND GET TOTALLY BULKED UP		
HAVING TO AUDITION AND PERFORM IN THE SCHOOL PLAY		
FORGETTING TO GET A CHRISTMAS GIFT FOR ROWLEY		
GETTING DISMISSED FROM THE SAFETY PATROLS		
DEFENDING HIMSELF FROM THE TEENAGE BULLIES		

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

This guide describes a number of approaches to reading *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* that can help support students who have difficulty with comprehension or lack appropriate vocabulary, background knowledge, or English language skills. These approaches can also provide good modeling for interpretive reading and critical listening practice for learners at all levels.

To further differentiate instruction for reading:

- Focus on visual scaffolding of the graphic images to facilitate reading and comprehension for below-level students and English language learners.
- Give English language learners explicit explanations of unknown words and idiomatic expressions using real objects, pictures, gestures, or demonstrations.
- Plan discussion around cultural differences and culturally based assumptions to build background knowledge and support comprehension for English language learners.
- Watch and discuss the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* movie after reading the book to support comprehension and provide students with higher levels of mastery with opportunities to evaluate and analyze the book-to-film transformation.

The activities in this guide give students options for expressing what they learn about characterization, types of writing, theme, inference, sequencing, and idioms, and provide a variety of different product options to choose from. The activities are also designed for students to work alone or in small groups on their products and encourage students to choose their own product assignments.

FURTHER RESOURCES

If your students loved the lessons you planned based on *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, check out these other Teaching Guides, activity packets, and event guides available at www.wimpykid.com for more reading and learning fun.

Diary of a Wimpy Kid series Teaching Guide

Kids can keep up with Greg as he continues to chronicle his adventures with friends, foes and family. A free series-wide Teaching Guide and series Activity Kit are available and have great ideas for classroom games, projects, and activities.

The Wimpy Kid Movie Diary Teaching Guide

Students will learn the story of how Greg Heffley went Hollywood and, with the help of the free Teaching Guide, get schooled in media literacy and film/media production.

The Wimpy Kid series Event Guide

If your students are clamoring for more Wimpy Kid after including these lessons in your curriculum, consider having a Wimpy Kid-themed day or party in your classroom or school! For decoration, food, costume, trivia, and game suggestions, check out the Wimpy Kid series Event Guide, incorporating elements from all nine books.

The Wimpy Kid Movie Event Guide

If you'd prefer to teach to *The Wimpy Kid Movie Diary*, this guide will help you host a party or event focusing on the book to movie transition. This guide is the perfect tool to encourage your students to express themselves through improv and other interactive games and activities.