

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Cabin Fever Study Guide

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Cabin Fever by Jeff Kinney

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Plot Summary

“Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Cabin Fever” is a young adult novel by Jeff Kinney. It is the sixth installment in Kinney’s “Wimpy Kid” series. “Cabin Fever” follows the misadventures of Greg Heffley as his attempt to earn money for Christmas gifts gets him in trouble at school just as a massive blizzard sets in. When the novel begins, Thanksgiving has just passed, and Greg is panicked about being as good as he can so that Santa Claus will bring him many gifts. Greg spends much of his free time playing the game Net Critterz online. Greg needs cash to buy his virtual pet Chihuahua various items, but his mom says she will not give him any money. Further, she reveals that Greg will have to earn his own money to buy gifts for others this year. Greg asks for money to be left behind the church in an envelope request on the church’s Giving Tree, where people help one another out anonymously.

Greg immediately sets to work trying to come up with ways to earn cash. His attempts at shoveling snow end in failure as he tries to use water to blast away the snow –which in turn causes a sheet of ice to build up instead. Greg and Rowley decide to have a Holiday Bazaar like the school does, and will sell concession snacks, offer games, and sell gifts. Greg and Rowley discover it is too expensive to advertise in the local paper, and the local paper won’t cover their Bazaar as they deem it to not be newsworthy. Greg and Rowley decide to then create their own paper to advertise their Bazaar, but Vice Principal Roy will not let them hand it out at school. Greg and Rowley decide to advertise for their Bazaar by creating signs and taping them to the school wall. When rain begins falling, it causes the signs to run – and green ink to stain the bricks. Greg and Rowley then flee when a teacher nearly catches them.

The newspaper carries a story about the vandalism. At school, Roy addresses the student body, demanding that the guilty parties, or anyone with any information, come forward. Rowley submits an anonymous note saying he and Greg are responsible for the vandalism. Greg refuses to identify Rowley as the co-conspirator, meaning that Greg must now clean the bricks alone. It takes him several hours, but he manages to do it. At home, Greg learns the police have paid his house a visit, but with no one home, have merely left a note. Greg is panicked and angered that Roy has brought in the police.

That night, a terrible blizzard sets in which rages all weekend and prevents the police from returning. Greg’s dad takes a hotel room near work since he cannot make it home. That leaves Greg, his mother, Rodrick, and Manny at home alone. Greg quickly gets bored, as there are only so many things that can be done. When Manny breaks their mom’s glasses, Greg is the one who must help his mom care for Manny. When the basement floods as a result of all the snow, Rodrick, whose bedroom is in the basement, must share Greg’s bedroom upstairs which annoys Greg even more. As Christmas Eve rolls around, Greg’s dad is able to return.

Greg is sent to drop off a toy donation at the Toy Drive bin outside the police station. Greg does this in a ski mask so the police do not identify him. He then swings by the



church to see if anyone has left cash for him, shoveling the entire parking lot to make sure, but there is nothing there. The newspaper carries a story the next morning of an anonymous do-gooder who shoveled the school parking lot, enabling the soup kitchen to open. Greg considers publishing a second edition of his own newspaper to name himself as the do-gooder.



Section 1: Pages 1 – 46

Summary

Greg Heffley does not look forward to the time between Thanksgiving and Christmas because it always makes him nervous as he struggles to be on his best behavior. He knows Santa is watching, and wants to receive as many presents as possible. Greg always takes great pains to see what gifts his parents have bought him, from opening them early to snooping around online. For Christmas this year, Greg hopes his parents will purchase Kritterz Kash, so Greg can take care of his online pet Chihuahua on Net Critterz. He doesn't know what else to ask for yet.

Greg's mom keeps an old elf doll out on a shelf, telling Greg the elf is a scout for Santa. It creeps Greg out, especially because the doll is always in a new place. He suspects it might be his older brother Rodrick constantly moving the doll to scare him, though. Greg's letters to Santa are meant to justify or deny bad behavior rather than to ask for things. Greg wonders about the truth of the Naughty-or-Nice List, since the mean kid up the block, Jared Pyle, received a dirt bike for Christmas the previous year.

There is an anti-bullying slogan contest at school that features a pizza party as a reward. In the past, Greg has dealt with a bully nicknamed "Nasty Pants", who would chase Greg and Rowley with a stick when they came through his section of the neighborhood. Greg and Rowley's dad intervened on their behalf –only to discover that Nasty Pants is five years old. The only real bully at school is Dennis Root. Worried about injuries and insurance costs, the school has removed all playground equipment. During recess, Rowley skips around, causing the other kids to clap and cheer. Rowley's skipping annoys Greg, because Greg thinks it looks stupid.

Analysis

"Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Cabin Fever" is a young adult novel by Jeff Kinney. It is the sixth installment in Kinney's "Wimpy Kid" series. "Cabin Fever" follows the misadventures of Greg Heffley as his attempt to earn money for Christmas gifts gets him in trouble at school just as a massive blizzard sets in. When the novel begins, Thanksgiving is over, and Greg is paranoid about being as good as he can so that Santa Claus will bring him lots of gifts. Here, the theme of good deeds becomes apparent as Greg commits to doing all the good things he can in the hopes of avoiding being on the Naughty List. However, Greg makes the observation that bad deeds done before Christmas always seem to be the worst – an ill-omen for Greg in the very near future.

As Greg considers ways to avoid being bad and ways to be good, he also contemplates whether or not the Naughty-or-Nice List is even real. He wonders about this because even the worst kid on the block, Jared Pyle, still got an amazing dirt bike for Christmas the previous year. Greg nevertheless doesn't want to take any chances, and decides to



do his best to be good. Greg's decision to try to be so good is ultimately what leads to his near-downfall by the end of the novel when the green splotches will come into play.

The novel also begins by revealing Greg's primary, overarching purpose that will come to guide him through the plot: he wants money. The initial reason for wanting money is to be able to spend it playing Net Kritterz online. In fact, Greg is so obsessed with receiving money for Christmas, he doesn't even know what else to ask Santa for. It is clear that Greg does not have a true appreciation for money, or for the work it takes to earn money, because he merely asks for it whenever he needs it without considering how his parents came into possession of the money. It is an area of responsibility that Greg needs to grow in.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Greg so paranoid about being on his best behavior after Christmas? What does he hope being good will accomplish?

Discussion Question 2

What does Greg want most for Christmas this year? Why?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Greg begin to doubt the existence of the Naughty-or-Nice List? Does this affect Greg's own behavior? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

behavior, accurate, leverage, extinct, legitimate, inability, inappropriate, queasy, snazzy



Section 2: Pages 47 – 92

Summary

Greg decides to spend the weekend playing Net Critterz, but his mom insists he have real-life interaction instead. Greg decides to hang out with Rowley. Rowley annoys Greg by saying “LOL” instead of actually laughing. While playing a word phrase game that night, Rowley and Greg disagree on the spelling of “volleyball”, which Rowley insists begins with a “B”. To avoid an argument and settle the issue, they agree on the challenge of going into the woods to their summer tree fort to write their name on the wood. Whoever chickens out is wrong about volleyball, and must call the other person “sir” forever. Having written his name on the fort during the summer, Greg swings back to the house without Rowley seeing him, pretending there was a bear. It frightens Rowley into giving up.

Greg asks his mom for money for Net Critterz. She tells him he’ll have to earn it. That weekend, it snows. Greg heads out to shovel snow for money. He heads over to Prentice Lane to begin. He encounters Mrs. Melcher, a friend of Gramma’s from Bingo. He hopes to shovel her driveway. She invites him in to chat for an hour, only revealing later that her son is coming to handle her driveway for free. While shoveling another guy’s driveway, it begins snowing again. The guy won’t pay until his driveway is clear. Greg attempts use a mower, but the mower stops working. He then uses a sprinkler to clear the snow, but the water turns to ice. Greg’s dad must buy twenty bucks worth of rock salt for the guy’s driveway. Greg is then lectured for using poor judgment.

It is not the first time Greg has used poor judgment. In the past, he used a steel wool pad to remove a bumper sticker from his father’s new car, which also removed the paint. The car then had to be traded in for a used minivan, which his mom loved. In the present, Greg’s mom convinces Rodrick to join the church band. Instead of playing drums, Rodrick must play the maracas. Each year at church, Greg’s family participates in the Giving Tree, where people in need of items leave envelopes on the tree, and families like Greg’s purchase or provide what is needed. Greg sneaks an envelope on the tree requesting cash to be left in the parking lot.

Analysis

As the novel continues, Greg’s irresponsibility with money continues. His mother explains to Greg that if Greg wants money, he will have to earn it. Greg, knowing that it is almost Christmas and that he must be good, decides to commit to honest work to attempt to earn the money. It is the beginning of Greg’s coming to understand the hard work that goes into earning money. Greg decides to spend a snowy Saturday shoveling driveways rather than running around and playing with his friends. Greg only manages to handle one driveway, however, and it is disastrous.



It is disastrous because Greg exercises poor judgment in handling the driveway. Here, poor choices becomes an important theme. Greg cannot keep ahead of the snow, so he attempts to mow it – but the mower breaks down because of it. Greg then decides to use water to spray away the snow, exercising even worse judgment. As a result, the water used to spray away the snow ends up freezing in a sheet of ice. Greg’s dad must then buy rock salt for Greg to de-ice the driveway. The only thing Greg earns that day is a well-deserved lecture about using poor judgement.

The lecture Greg is given on poor judgment will come to have important bearings on Greg in coming chapters. Yet, it also causes Greg to look back on the past, on other ways he has exercised poor judgment. One such incident is when he used a steel wool Brillo pad to remove a bumper sticker from his father’s new car. Greg begins to wonder if any of his attempts to earn money or use better judgment will pan out – and so resorts to asking for money on the Giving Tree at Church. Though it is a greedy thing to do, the action will have unintended good consequences late in the novel.

Discussion Question 1

How does Greg attempt to earn money for Net Kritterz? Are his attempts successful? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

What is poor judgement? Choose one way Greg has exercised poor judgement. Describe it. Explain how he could have handled the situation differently with better judgment.

Discussion Question 3

What does Greg learn when he is forced to put down rock salt on the icy driveway?

Vocabulary

interact, ancestors, fundraisers, affectionate, judgment, duped, percussionist



Section 3: Pages 93 – 135

Summary

Greg's school has been on a health kick in preparation for the Presidential Fitness Test, getting rid of soda machines, and replacing cafeteria items like French Fries with things like sliced carrots, and chocolate chip cookies with oatmeal raisin cookies. Energy drinks such as Rowdy Riot are also banned. Leon Goodson sneaks a pack of Rowdy Riot to school and sells cans to the other kids for three bucks each, but is caught by recess monitor Mrs. Lahey. Greg doesn't think the school is helping kids stay in shape by having taken away the playground equipment.

Greg still needs money for Net Kritterz, but his mom refuses to give him any. She also says that he will have to use his own money to buy other people gifts this year so that the gifts "mean" something. Greg feels bad for people who have birthdays around Christmas, because they often get one gift for both days. This makes Greg think of Jesus. Greg considers selling his signed first edition of the graphic novel "Tower of Druids" for Christmas money, but his mom tells him not to do this. At the comic book store, Greg learns the autograph in "Tower of Druids" is a forgery, leading Greg to suspect his mother got tired of waiting for an autograph for Greg and signed it herself.

Each year, there is a concession stand at the school's Holiday Bazaar, where cheap Christmas gifts can be purchased and simple games like the bean bag toss can be played. The concession sells chicken sticks called "Drummies", which Greg finds are also available in the grocery store for a far lesser cost. Greg gets his mom to buy several boxes, and together with Rowley, plans to compete in business against the Bazaar. It is too expensive to put an ad in the newspaper, and the newspaper doesn't consider Greg's own Bazaar to be newsworthy, so Greg's mom suggests they create their own newspaper. They write a story about the Bazaar overcharging for Drummies, and about how there is now an alternative to the Bazaar. They include comics, an advice column, and even get Papa Tony's Pizza to buy an ad to cover the cost of ink cartridges for printing. But Vice Principal Roy won't let the paper be handed out in school. Greg and Rowley then tape signs advertising their Bazaar to the school wall in protest.

Analysis

Greg's continued obsession with money hits another snag when his mom refuses to give him any money. What's more, she reveals, she will not even give him money to buy Christmas gifts for other people. She does this because she knows Greg needs to learn not only greater responsibility, but the value of a dollar and the idea of gifts having real meaning. Greg looks for a quick way to make money, knowing that his previous attempts at work haven't gone over so well. This is when he attempts to sell his



autographed copy of “Tower of Druids”, only to learn the autograph is a forgery courtesy of his mom. Even here, Greg’s attempts at securing money backfire.

Greg’s decision to attempt to earn money with an even more elaborate plan – staging a Holiday Bazaar to compete with the school’s Holiday Bazaar – leads to the need to create a newspaper to both advertise and carry a story about it, because the real town newspaper will not do so. The initiative that Greg and Rowley show by seeking to stage their own Bazaar is commendable – but Rowley’s poor judgment quickly overtakes this. Passing out his newspapers at school leads to Vice Principal Roy calling them unauthorized, and taking them away. Greg and Rowley are not be outdone, and decide to tape signs to the school wall.

In this section of the novel, the reader should note the contemporary social commentary inserted into the novel by the author through Greg. Greg laments the fact that the newspapers control what information gets out to the public, considering his own Bazaar to be newsworthy. In the American tradition of competition and independence (and at the suggestion from his mom), Greg begins his own newspaper. Greg also notes amusingly that his school’s health kick to get kids to exercise more seems rather pointless given that the school has taken away the playground equipment – something indeed going on in many contemporary schools.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Greg think the school is not helping kids stay in shape by taking away the playground equipment?

Discussion Question 2

What does Greg’s mom hope will happen by requiring Greg to earn his own money not only for personal use, but for buying Christmas gifts for other people as well?

Discussion Question 3

When the town newspaper refuses to cover Greg’s Bazaar, what does Greg do in response? Is he successful? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

theory, practical joke, hyperactive, agitated, forgery, unauthorized, confiscated



Section 4: Pages 136 – 181

Summary

The rain ruins the signs Greg and Rowley have put up, causing them to bleed green ink onto the brick. The green ink cannot be removed. When someone sees them and shouts at them, they run. As they run, Greg realizes everything could probably have been sorted out if they had just stayed put instead. The local paper carries a story about the incident, with two inaccurate sketches of Greg and Rowley. Greg realizes he is essentially a criminal. At school, everyone is talking about the green splotches. An assembly is called for third period where Vice Principal Roy calls on the guilty party, or people with knowledge about the splotches, to come forward. An anonymous tip box will be left in the cafeteria.

After lunch, the police come to the school to interview the worst troublemaker, including Dennis Root. Greg and Rowley are terrified, but nothing comes of it. The next morning, Greg is called down to the office. Rowley has confessed to the splotches with an anonymous tip, though Rowley does not identify himself in the tip. Greg decides to come clean about the signs and nearly getting caught. Roy says Greg should have just come clean sooner. Greg will have to clean the wall by himself or name his co-conspirator. Greg decides to just clean the wall out of fear and friendship for Rowley. At home, Greg discovers Sergeant Peters of the police has been by, having left a note saying no one was home to meet with him. Greg is stunned, having thought he had already served his time.

Greg fears he will go to jail and will have to use toilets in the middle of the cells. Greg doesn't tell his parents about the note, mostly afraid of how his dad will react. That night, a bad blizzard comes through. Greg's dad spends the night in a hotel near his office. On Friday, school is canceled due to three feet of snow. Greg hopes to play Net Kritterz, but learns Manny has managed to ruin his account and change his password. Another foot and-a-half of snow comes down that night. Greg is thrilled, because it means the police will stay away. However, boredom quickly sets in. When Manny ruins their mother's glasses, Greg is volunteered to help their mother around the house – including to help take care of Manny. On Sunday morning, Greg is sent downstairs to wake Rodrick up – only to discover the basement has flooded.

Analysis

Once again, Greg exercises poor judgement. Not checking the weather forecast, rain pelts Greg, Rowley, and their signs on the wall. The walls are stained with green splotches from ink bleeding through the wet posters. When a member of the school faculty sees this, Greg and Rowley run. Here, Greg is exercising poor judgement, and is also shirking his responsibilities. Greg needs to own up to the problem he has caused, but his first instinct is to run. Ironically, as he runs, Greg realizes that things would have



probably gone easy on him if he had just stayed behind, taken responsibility, and explained everything.

Having exercised poor judgement, Greg must now deal with the consequences. In this situation, the incident is so serious that the police are called in, for the splotches are suspected of being intentional vandalism. Greg hopes to lie low and avoid being fingered for the crime. However, Rowley's sense of honesty and responsibility lead to Rowley submitting a note revealing himself and Greg as the culprits – though Rowley forgets to identify himself. Greg – out of friendship and concern for Rowley – refuses to name Rowley as his co-conspirator. Greg must then clean up the splotches by himself, and learns to his horror that the police are still involved in the case.

The blizzard is a blessing in disguise at first for Greg. The blizzard keeps the police away. However, the blizzard also keeps Greg trapped inside. While he loves his family, it is clear they quickly get on his nerves. However, Greg ends up performing a number of good deeds for his family. Here, the theme of good deeds emerges once again. When Manny breaks his mother's glasses, it is Greg who must end up caring for Manny when his mom's eyesight depends on glasses. Greg does this not only because it is a good deed, but because he loves his family, and his mother has asked him for help.

Discussion Question 1

Why do Greg and Rowley run away when the rain causes the signs to bleed onto the brick wall? What does Greg realize as he is running away? Why do you believe he refuses to turn back right away to explain himself?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Greg refuse to rat out Rowley? If you were in Greg's place, would you have told on Rowley? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

How does the blizzard – and being snowed in – help Greg when it comes to the green splotch incident? How does the blizzard negatively affect Greg?

Vocabulary

splotches, vandalism, perpetrators, conspirator, fugitive, juvenile detention, blizzard, conserving, disputes, escalated, finicky, rugged



Section 5: Pages 182 – 217

Summary

Rodrick, who is sleeping, doesn't even realize the basement has flooded. He wakes up and helps his mom, Greg, and Manny to use sand pails to bail water out of the basement. Rodrick will have to share Greg's room for the night. Rodrick brings along his drum set, dirty clothes, and band posters. Food in the house is also beginning to run low by Monday. The power flashes and then goes out. Greg and his family huddle together under a blanket on the couch in the living room to stay warm. Rowley swings by to visit on Christmas Eve, wondering why the electricity is off. Everyone else has power, he explains. Greg checks the fuse box, and discovers that Manny has turned off the electricity in the house – except in his own bedroom.

Greg's dad then calls, saying he will now be able to make it home. He brings along fast food on the way. When Greg's dad brings out his mom for new glasses, she instructs Greg to bring a toy donation to the police station for their toy drive. Greg uses a ski mask to deliver the toy to the outdoor toy drive bin. On the way home, Greg swings by Church to see if anyone has delivered cash for him. He shovels the entire parking lot looking for the cash, but there is nothing. At home, the police arrive, terrifying Greg. They are not there for Greg, but for last-minute toy donations.

On Christmas morning, Greg and his brothers receive their gifts in trash bags since Santa had no time to wrap due to navigating the snow storm. Among Greg's gifts is a genuinely autographed copy of "Tower of Druids" from his mom. Unfortunately, the author, Kenny Centazzo signs the book incorrectly to "Criag" rather than "Greg". Greg plans to one day sell the book to a Centazzo fan named Craig for a pile of cash. After Church, Greg discovers the newspaper has a story about a masked do-gooder who cleared the church parking lot, allowing the soup kitchen to open. Greg thinks a new edition of his own paper may be necessary, revealing himself as the do-gooder.

Analysis

As the novel concludes, so too does the theme of family. Greg continues to help care for Manny through the end of the blizzard into Christmas Eve. When Manny flips the power in the house, Greg, his mother, and Rodrick huddle together on the couch under a blanket in the living room to stay warm, relying on one another to do so. When Rodrick's basement bedroom is flooded, although Greg is annoyed with it, he makes room in his own bedroom for Rodrick to move into temporarily. When Frank is finally able to come home, his family is thrilled to see him.

The theme of friendship also has important implications in the conclusion of the novel. Rowley wanders over to Greg's house, plodding through the snow to bring along Christmas cookies. He wonders why Greg's house has no power, when all the other



houses in the neighborhood do. Greg is stunned. Rowley's casual comment on electrical power leads Greg and his family to discover that Manny has turned off the electricity supply to all parts of the house except his bedroom. Power – and heat – are then restored.

Good deeds also play a role thematically toward the end of the novel. The good deed Greg performs on Christmas Eve is inadvertent, but ends up making him proud of having helped. Greg, seeking out the possibility that someone left him cash in the Church parking lot, ends up shoveling the entire parking lot to find out. While no one may have left him cash, Greg makes it possible for the soup kitchen to be opened the following morning. The shoveling is carried in the newspaper the following morning – something Greg never expected.

Discussion Question 1

How does Greg inadvertently do a good deed for the church on Christmas Eve? How does Greg feel when he learns the truth of what he has done?

Discussion Question 2

Why do Greg and his mother theorize that Manny turned off the electric to all rooms in the house except his own bedroom? Do you believe this, or do you believe there is another reason? If so, why? If not, what other reason could there be?

Discussion Question 3

By the end of the novel, do you believe Greg has a better sense for earning and spending money? Why or why not? Provide evidence from the novel to support your conclusion.

Vocabulary

practically, edible, prediction, civilization, ambushed, dignity, adapt, circumstances, desperate, donation



Characters

Greg Heffley

Greg Heffley is the main character and narrator of the novel “Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Ugly Truth”. Greg is the son of Frank and Susan, is the younger brother of Rodrick, and the older brother of Manny. He is best friends with Rowley. Greg is not looking forward to the time between Thanksgiving and Christmas when the novel begins, for he is always worried about being on his best behavior so Santa will bring him lots of presents. Greg begins the novel pressed for money. He needs money to buy accessories for his virtual Chihuahua on Net Kritterz, but his mom won’t give him any money. She is convinced he needs to learn the value of a dollar, and says he must work to earn the money he spends. Greg decides to ask for cash using the Giving Tree at Church.

Greg then goes through a series of attempts to earn money, including shoveling sidewalks and creating a Holiday Bazaar with Rowley to compete with the school’s Holiday Bazaar. When putting up signs to advertise for their Bazaar on the school wall, it begins to rain on Greg and Rowley. The green ink of the posters ruins the brick wall. At first trying to avoid punishment, Greg ultimately confesses to the truth after Rowley leaves an unsigned anonymous tip for the vice principal –but Greg refuses to rat Rowley out. As Christmas approaches, Greg and his family are snowed in, forced to spend time with one another and to rely on one another. Though they get on one another’s nerves, they also grow closer. When Greg goes to see if anyone has left him cash at Church, he digs out the parking lot to search but finds nothing. The newspapers carry a story the next morning of an anonymous do-gooder who shoveled out the parking lot to allow the soup kitchen to open on Christmas Day.

Susan Heffley

Susan Heffley is the mother of Greg, Rodrick, and Manny, and is the wife of Frank. Susan is a kind and patient woman who loves and cares deeply for her family. Susan is snowed in with her children during the blizzard the hits right before Christmas, while Frank is forced to stay in a hotel room. Susan does her best to keep the family together and sane as they deal with boredom, a flooded basement, and Manny turning off all the electricity in the house.

Frank Heffley

Frank Heffley is the father of Greg, Rodrick, and Manny, and is the husband of Susan. He is also the brother of Gary and Joe. Frank is a kind man who is very responsible, and very loving toward his family. He lectures Greg about Greg’s poor judgment when Greg uses water to clear away snow from a neighbor’s driveway, resulting in a sheet of ice. During the blizzard, Frank is forced to stay in a hotel for several nights near his office.



Rodrick Heffley

Rodrick is the older brother of Greg and Manny, and is the son of Frank and Sue. Rodrick is a moody teenager who would rather spend time with friends than family. Rodrick is a member of a local band, “Loded Diaper”. Rodrick’s bedroom is flooded during the blizzard, forcing him to sleep in Greg’s room. Rodrick brings along his drum set, posters, and dirty laundry with him – all of which annoy Greg.

Manny Heffley

Manny is the younger brother of Greg and Rodrick, and is the third child of Frank and Sue. Manny is a quiet toddler who causes immense trouble during the blizzard. Somehow he figures out how to flip the switches in the fuse box, cutting off power to the entire house except for his own bedroom.

Rowley Jefferson

Rowley Jefferson is the best friend of Greg. Rowley is a good-hearted, tall, but absent-minded kid. He agrees to help Greg with a Holiday Bazaar, and helps Greg to put up posters on the school wall. When it rains and the green ink from the posters gets on the bricks, Rowley panics. When Vice Principal Roy seeks information on the culprits responsible, Rowley submits a tip claiming responsibility with Greg – but doesn’t sign his own name. Greg covers for Rowley, refusing to name Rowley as his co-conspirator. When Manny switches off the electric in the house, it is Rowley who alerts Greg to the fact that the rest of the neighborhood has power, leading Greg to figure out what Manny did.

Vice Principal Roy

Vice Principal Roy is the vice principal of the middle school Greg and Rowley attend. Roy is a kind but strict vice principal, who stops Greg from handing out his newspaper, and punishes Greg for the wall incident by making Greg clean the wall. Greg comes to be angry with Roy for bringing the police into the wall affair.

Dennis Root

Dennis Root is the only real bully, and the worst troublemaker, in school. When the green splotches on the wall are discovered, Dennis is one of the primary suspects. He is later found to be innocent of the crime.



Sergeant Peters

Sergeant Peters is the police officer who speaks with Vice Principal Roy about the wall incident. It is Peters who goes to meet with Greg's parents, but finds only an empty house. Peters leaves a note behind saying he has stopped by, but Greg does not tell his parents about the note.

Nasty Pants

Nasty Pants is a five year-old bully who has long tormented Greg and Rowley as they walk to school by chasing them around with a stick. Greg and Rowley get their fathers to confront Nasty Pants's mother, but their fathers are annoyed when they learn how old Nasty Pants is. They tell Greg and Rowley to grow up.



Symbols and Symbolism

The Giving Tree

The Giving Tree is a custom at the Church Greg and his family attend whereby needy families and individuals ask for particular things or items in envelopes left on a tree, and anonymous families or individuals provide these things and items. Greg, hoping for cash, leaves a request for money on the giving tree, asking that the cash be dropped off in the parking lot behind the church.

Cash

Cash is something desperately sought by Greg throughout the novel. Greg's mother is convinced Greg needs to learn the value of a dollar, so she refuses to give him money to spend on Net Critterz, and declares Greg must use his own money to buy Christmas gifts for others. This plunges Greg into a series of failed get-rich-quick schemes, including one which will lead to the green splotch incident.

Rock salt

Rock salt is purchased by Greg's father and is used by Greg to de-ice the driveway of a neighbor. Greg, seeking to make money by shoveling driveways, decides to use a hose on one driveway to melt away the snow. The water then freezes, turning into ice. Greg's father must purchase twenty dollars' worth of rock salt to melt the ice.

Ski mask

A ski mask is worn by Greg in order to hide his identity when he goes to the police station. Having been told by his mother to drop off a toy for the Toy Drive at the station, Greg does not want to be identified or arrested for the green splotch wall incident. In so doing, he wears a mask, and inadvertently becomes front-page news when he shovels the church parking lot

Note from Sergeant Peters

A note from Sergeant Peters is left on the door of Greg's house. The note indicates that Peters has stopped by to speak with Greg's parents, but that nobody was home. Greg realizes this means Roy has tipped off the police, and Greg will more than likely get into even more trouble. Greg thus refuses to tell his parents about the note.



Tower of Druids

“Tower of Druids” is a graphic novel by Kenny Centazzo which is one of Greg’s favorites. He attempts to sell his autographed copy to make money, but learns the signature is a forgery. He realizes his mother must be responsible, having gotten tired of waiting in line to have the book signed. For Christmas, Greg receives a genuinely autographed copy, though Kenny apparently misunderstood Greg’s name by dedicating the book to “Craig”.

Shovel

A shovel is discovered by Greg leaning up against the back of his church. Having gone to see if anyone has left him cash in the parking lot, Greg uses the shovel to clear the snow away, but finds no cash. As a result, the soup kitchen is able to open in the morning, and the newspaper carries a story about an anonymous do-gooder who made it possible.

Holiday Bazaar posters

Posters advertising Greg and Rowley’s Holiday Bazaar are created and taped to the school building’s exterior wall. When rain comes down, it ruins the signs and causes green splotches to be left behind on the wall. Greg and Rowley grab the posters and run away when they are nearly caught by an unidentified employee of the school.

Green splotches

Green splotches stain the wall of the school when the posters Greg and Rowley make to advertise their Holiday Bazaar are wet in a rainstorm. The green splotches are taken to be intentional vandalism, and the newspaper, police, and school administration launch an investigation to find the guilty party. Greg is ultimately fingered, and must clean the green splotches from the wall.

The Neighborhood Tattler

The Neighborhood Tattler is the newspaper that Greg and Rowley make for the sole purpose of advertising their Holiday Bazaar. It is made when the real town newspaper refuses to cover their Bazaar. The Tattler is complete not only with a story about the Bazaar, but includes comics, an advice column, news stories, food reviews, and even an ad from a local pizza place. Over a hundred copies are printed, but Vice Principal Roy refuses to let it be handed out at school.



Settings

12 Surrey Street

12 Surrey Street is the address of Greg's house. It is located a few blocks from school, and is where Greg, his parents, and his two brothers live. Rodrick has a room in the basement which is flooded during the blizzard, causing Rodrick to sleep on Greg's floor until the basement can be handled. The family is trapped in their house during the blizzard, leading Greg to go stir-crazy. However, the blizzard that traps Greg in his house also prevents the police from coming to speak to Greg's parents about the green splotch incident.

The school wall

The school wall is the exterior part of the school building and is made of brick. The section of the wall where kids get dropped off for school is eyed by Greg and Rowley as the perfect place to put up signs for their Holiday Bazaar. Unfortunately, a rainstorm ruins the posters, causing green ink splotches to stain the brick wall and accusations of vandalism to be made. Greg must ultimately come to clean the brick wall as a punishment for not coming clean about the mistake immediately.

The police station

The police station is located a few blocks from Greg's house. It is where Greg believes he will be spending Christmas following the green splotch incident. On Christmas Eve, Greg is sent to drop off a toy donation in the Toy Drive Bin by his mother. To do so, he wears a ski mask so that his identity cannot be determined by the police inside.

The church parking lot

The church parking lot is where Greg has requested his Giving Tree gift of cash be left – but it is under snow following the blizzard. Greg clears the parking lot seeking his cash, but is dismayed to find none there. He inadvertently makes it possible for the soup kitchen to open on Christmas morning, and the newspaper praises the heroic efforts of the anonymous kid in the ski mask who shoveled the parking lot.

The woods

The woods are located behind Greg's house. The woods are where Greg and Rowley have constructed a tree fort. Rowley and Greg disagree on the spelling of "volleyball" during a word phrase game. Rowley insists "volleyball" begins with a "B". To avoid an argument and settle the issue, they agree to the challenge of going into the woods to

write their name on the tree fort Whoever chickens out is wrong about volleyball, and must call the other person “sir” for the rest of their lives. Having written his name on the fort during the summer, Greg swings back to the house without Rowley seeing him, pretending there was a bear chasing him. It scares Rowley into giving up.



Themes and Motifs

Poor Judgment

Poor judgment is an important theme in the novel “Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Cabin Fever” by Jeff Kinney. Poor judgment is when an action is taken without clearly thinking through the consequences. Poor judgment in turn usually results in bad consequences. Greg is lectured by his father about exercising poor judgment in the novel, but still continues to exercise it – only learning to exercise better judgement the hard way.

The previous year, Greg’s dad bought a brand new car at the same time Greg was named Student of the Week. Greg brought home a bumper sticker as a reward, but Frank didn’t want to put it on his new car. Greg exercised poor judgment then by giving the bumper sticker to Manny – who put it on Frank’s car. Greg then exercises even worse judgment when he tries to use a Brillo pad – steel wool – to remove the bumper sticker and other dirty patches. The bumper sticker comes off along with the paint. As a result, Greg’s father finds it cheaper to trade in the car than have the paint fixed.

In the present day, Greg again exercises poor judgment when shoveling a distant neighbor’s driveway. Unable to get ahead of the snow, Greg tries to mow the snow but breaks the mower. Greg then uses water from the hose to blast the snow away, but creates a sheet of ice as temperatures drop. As a result, Frank must buy twenty bucks’ worth of rock salt for Greg to put down to de-ice the neighbor’s driveway.

Greg also exercises poor judgment when he decides to advertise for his Holiday Bazaar using signs taped to the school wall in a rainstorm. The rain ruins the posters, and causes the ink on the posters to bleed onto the brick wall, this staining the brick wall with green splotches. Rather than owning up to the mistake, Greg exercises poor judgment by running away from the problem. Yet as he runs, he knows he should have just stayed behind, and that things would have been easier on him as a result. When Greg must confess, Vice Principal Roy indeed says that things could have been easier, but no longer. Roy makes Greg clean the splotches, and then contacts the police regarding Greg’s confession.

Responsibility

Responsibility is an important theme in the novel “Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Cabin Fever” by Jeff Kinney. Responsibility in the novel comes in two forms, and both influence the plot in important ways. First, there is responsibility of the self, where responsibility involves performing mature actions and activities. Second, there is responsibility taken for one’s actions as a consequence of those actions or activities.

When the novel begins, Greg is in need of money. He needs money for his Net Kritterz account online. His mom refuses to give him money, and says that she will also refuse to give him money to buy Christmas gifts for other people. She knows Greg has been



spending money irresponsibly, and that he needs to learn the value of a dollar. This means that Greg will grow more responsible in using money, and in earning money.

Greg commits to trying his hand at earning money responsibly, but the attempts do not work. For example, Greg exercises poor judgement in using water to blast away snow from a neighbor's driveway, leading the driveway to ice over instead. Greg is forced to take responsibility for his poor judgement by his father, who has Greg put down rock salt to melt the ice. As a result, Greg begins to realize that he will have to take responsibility for the bad choices that he makes.

This has great bearing on the green splotch incident. When rain damages the posters Greg and Rowley use to advertise for their Bazaar, green splotches are left on the brick wall of the school. Greg and Rowley refuse to take responsibility for the accident, running away when they are nearly caught. Interestingly enough, as Greg runs, he realizes he should have stayed behind to take responsibility for his actions, knowing that things would have probably gone easier for him. Honestly, he notes, is the best policy. Rowley pens a note claiming responsibility for the action with Greg, but forgets to sign his own name. As a result, Greg takes the responsibility for the green splotches, cleaning them himself.

Family

Family is an important theme in the novel "Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Cabin Fever" by Jeff Kinney. Family involves mutual love, compassion, loyalty towards, and emotional, spiritual, and physical support of individuals who may or may not be blood-related, but who still behave in the fashion of the traditional family unit. Family can be found consistently throughout the novel, and family affects the plot of the novel in various ways.

As the head of the family, and as the father, Frank serves not only as the only source of income for the family through work, but also attempts to give his sons a moral compass in life. He is strict but fair in dealing with his sons, especially Greg, when they mess up. Greg's father lectures him about using sound judgment, and warns him against using poor judgement, such as during the watering snow incident. Greg's mother likewise does her best to teach Greg the value of money by refusing to hand it to him left and right, and mandating that he earn his spending money.

The patience of Greg's family is severely tested during the blizzard. Forced to stay in a hotel near work due to the snow, Greg's father feels horrible about not being able to make it home to help care for his family. Greg's mother takes the lead, doing everything she can to keep her children safe and happy during the storm. She organizes board games and brings up old toys from the basement, such as a magic set. However, when Manny ruins Sue's glasses, Greg must help fill in for his mom to do things that she cannot see clearly enough to do herself, such as caring for Manny. Though Greg is annoyed by having to help, he loves his family deeply and knows how important it is that he help out.



When the basement floods, Rodrick moves into Greg's room temporarily. While Greg knows this is necessary, and though Greg loves Rodrick, it still tests his patience. When power to the house mysteriously goes out, Greg, his mother, and Rodrick huddle together to stay warm, relying on one another physically to get by without freezing. It is later discovered that the electric has gone out because Manny has shut off the electric to all parts of the house except his own bedroom. When Greg's father is able to make it home for Christmas Eve, his family is thrilled to see him. It makes Christmas complete.

Friendship

Friendship is an important theme in the novel "Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Cabin Fever" by Jeff Kinney. Friendship proves to be very important to Greg through being best friends with Rowley. Rowley serves as Greg's sidekick and accomplice through numerous adventures and misadventures during the novel, including the green splotch incident.

Greg and Rowley have a friendship that often goes well, and is at other times rocky. For example, Rowley and Greg disagree on the spelling of the word "volleyball" during a word phrase game they play. Rowley incorrectly insists that "volleyball" begins with a "B". To avoid an argument, they agree to the challenge of going into the woods to write their name on their summertime tree fort. Whoever chickens out is to be declared wrong about the spelling of volleyball, and must call the other person "sir" for the rest of their lives. Rowley, who becomes frightened when Greg says there is a bear in the woods, gives up.

When Greg decides to create a Holiday Bazaar to compete with the school's Holiday Bazaar, Rowley willingly agrees to help. When they advertise using posters, and the rain causes the poster ink to bleed onto the brick wall, Greg and Rowley flee together. Rowley suffers from a guilty conscience, and pens a tip surrendering himself and Greg – though Rowley doesn't sign the note. Hoping to protect Rowley's future, and out of honor for his friendship with Rowley, Greg does not reveal Rowley's identity.

When the blizzard hits, and the power in Greg's house goes out, Rowley becomes an unexpected source of salvation. Trekking over through the snow with Christmas cookies for Greg and his family out of friendship, Rowley learns that there is no electricity in Greg's house. Rowley reports that electricity is working everywhere else in the neighborhood. This leads Greg and his family to learn that Manny has shut off the electric to all rooms in the house except his own. As such, the power is restored along with the heat –all thanks to Rowley.

Good Deeds

Good deeds form an important theme in the novel "Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Cabin Fever" by Jeff Kinney. In the novel, Greg attempts to do several different good deeds. Some are successful and some are failures. And one specific good deed is inadvertently done, but comes to give Greg a source of pride in the end. Greg hopes these good deeds will all be seen by Santa.



Greg's biggest failed attempt at doing something good comes through his desire to earn money. Although he traverses the neighborhood to earn money from shoveling snowy driveways, Greg is performing a good service for people who might not otherwise be able to, or have the time to shovel their own driveways. This particular good deed fails, however, as the only driveway Greg is able to shovel he exercises poor judgment while tending to. Unable to keep up with the snow, Greg turns a mower and then a hose on the driveway, leading to the driveway icing over. Greg must then spend more time putting down rock salt to melt the ice, and ends up owing his dad twenty bucks for the rock salt.

A successful attempt at doing a good deed comes through Greg helping his mother care for Manny when Manny breaks her glasses. Unable to properly care for Manny without being able to see, Sue relies on her son, Greg, to take charge of things. Greg begins to do everything he can for Manny, from entertaining him to making food for Manny. While Greg is annoyed at having to help out with Manny, he deeply loves his family and comes to understand he is doing a good thing.

An inadvertent good deed comes through Greg's shoveling of the church parking lot. Greg, hoping his anonymous request for a stash of cash to be dropped off behind the church may have been granted, shovels the entire parking lot to seek the cash. He doesn't find any. However, his actions mean the soup kitchen can be opened the next morning, meaning that hungry and poor people will be fed. Greg has no idea at the time what shoveling the parking lot will mean, but the paper carries a story, thanking and praising the ski-masked anonymous do-gooder who made the soup kitchen possible for Christmas Day.



Styles

Point of View

Jeff Kinney tells his novel “Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Cabin Fever” in the first-person reflective perspective. The entire novel is composed as if to resemble a diary. It is full of written entries and drawings pertaining to the entries. Because Greg himself is meant to be writing the entries, the narration is that of first-person. The experiences described happened to Greg directly, and Greg himself is committing them to paper. The reflective aspect of the narration comes from the fact that Greg is writing after the events which he is describing, and so is reflecting on them, recalling them, and thinking back about them as he is writing.

Language and Meaning

Jeff Kinney tells his novel “Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Cabin Fever” in language that is simple and straightforward. This is done for at least two primary reasons. First, the language used in the novel is reflective of the target audience of the book – young adults. The language used is therein reflective of their age and level of education. Second, the language used in the novel is simple and straightforward because it is meant to be written by Greg, a boy of about eleven or twelve. As a result, the language employed reflects not only his age, but his level of education as well.

Structure

Jeff Kinney divides his novel “Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Cabin Fever” into numerous entries noted by day of the week, and sometimes by the month. The diary essentially becomes one long, continuous story full of numerous events, reflecting a normal human life. The diary is host to not only written entries, but dozens of drawings and sketches depicting events, thoughts, and ideas that Greg has as he writes. For example, the entries on page 199 deal with the power to the house being out, and Greg and Rodrick huddled beneath their blankets for warmth. An illustration accompanies this entry, showing Greg shivering under blankets, and Rodrick shivering in a sleep bag.



Quotes

If you make a mistake in the first eleven months of the year, it's no big deal. But if you do something wrong during the holiday season, you're gonna pay for it.

-- Greg (Section 1, Page 1 paragraph 1)

Importance: When the novel begins, Greg is worried about behaving between Thanksgiving and Christmas so that Santa will bring lots of presents. His statement that wrong actions during the holidays are the worst is a prediction of ill-omens for future events. The green splotch incident that will occur later in the novel gets Greg in trouble with far more than Santa or his parents – but with the school and the police.

I'm still trying to figure out what to put on the REST of my wish list.

-- Greg (Section 1, Page 46 paragraph 3)

Importance: Greg's primary concern in the novel is having enough tokens to play Net Kritterz online. Greg therefore wants money for Christmas. Ordinarily, he would want other things as well, but in the present time, he is obsessed with making money. This will ultimately lead to the misadventure of the green splotches as Greg attempts to make money.

It snowed last night just like Mom said it would, and while all the other kids in the neighborhood were enjoying their day off from school, I was pounding the pavement looking for work.

-- Greg (Section 2, Page 67 paragraph 1)

Importance: Greg's mom refuses to continue to hand Greg money left and right. Convinced he must learn the value of a dollar the meaning of spending money, Greg's mom insists he earn the money. Greg thus takes to the streets after a snowstorm in order to shovel driveways for money. The venture fails spectacularly.

Dad wasn't too happy that I turned somebody's driveway into an ice-skating rink yesterday, and he said he was disappointed in me for using 'poor judgment'.

-- Greg (Section 2, Page 79 paragraph 2)

Importance: Greg's snow shoveling venture fails spectacularly because he decides that using a hose to wash away snow would be easier than shoveling it. The water he uses quickly turns to ice, resulting in his father needing to purchase rock salt for Greg to put down to melt the ice. Greg then earns a lecture about using poor judgment, and how he needs to make smarter choices in the future.

Grown-ups say there's a big problem with kids in our generation being out of shape because they don't exercise enough, but I don't think taking away our playground equipment is really helping matters.

-- Greg (Section 3, Page 99 paragraph 3)



Importance: In a brief aside on contemporary social matters, Greg notes that his school has taken away the playground equipment due to insurance costs. Greg explains that his school is also doing away with snack foods and healthier foods for better alternatives, worried about kids being out of shape. Yet Greg humorously notes that taking away ways for kids to exercise isn't improving their chances of exercise.

Then she said I couldn't expect her to give me money to buy Christmas presents for the family this year, either. She said I'm at the age where I need to be spending my own money so that my gifts 'mean' something.

-- Greg (Section 3, Page 105 paragraph 2)

Importance: Greg continues in his quest for money, asking his mother repeatedly. At last, his mother lays down the law. Greg will not be given any more money, and must instead earn the money he wishes to use – even to buy Christmas gifts for other people. His mother correctly believes Greg needs to learn the value of a dollar. By the end of the novel, Greg has a far better understanding of the value of earning money.

I think it stinks that the newspaper basically gets to control the information people are getting.

-- Greg (Section 3, Page 129 paragraph 2)

Importance: Greg and Rowley decide to host a Holiday Bazaar to earn money, and are annoyed when the town's paper will not cover the Bazaar, finding it to be un-newsworthy. Greg, in a statement speaking both to his particular concerns and having deeper contemporary social meaning, laments that the newspapers decide what information gets out to the public and what doesn't. Greg finds this to be unjust, and so decides to begin his own newspaper.

Wish we didn't run, because if we had just stayed and explained ourselves it probably would have been fine.

-- Greg (Section 4, Page 138 paragraph 2)

Importance: When the rain causes Greg and Rowley's posters to bleed green splotches on the school wall, they flee the scene of the crime. As Greg and Rowley run, Greg realizes that things would have probably gone much easier on them. It is a sign of Greg's recognition of the need to be responsible for his actions, and to exercise better judgment like his father has said he needs to do.

So now I'm basically a criminal.

-- Greg (Section 4, Page 139 paragraph 1)

Importance: Having run from the school faculty member who almost caught him, and having refused to turn himself in at first, Greg realizes he is now essentially a criminal. This is especially true when Greg sees even the newspapers are carrying the story of the green splotches, and how the police have now become involved in the investigation. Greg's decision to run has allowed the incident to escalate into a very serious situation.



I couldn't BELIEVE Vice Principal Roy gave me up to the police.
-- Greg (Section 4, Page 151 paragraph 3)

Importance: After Greg hands himself in to Vice Principal Roy, Roy has Greg clean up the green splotches on the wall. It takes Greg several hours to do, but he believes the situation is now settled. When Greg gets home, the police have left a note saying they have been by to talk to Greg's parents, but no one was home. Greg is stunned, having thought that the situation with the splotches was settled. Greg now believes he is going to be arrested or that the police will show up to talk to his parents, leading him to get in trouble all over again at home. Greg is only saved by the blizzard which prevents the police from coming back.

After twelve hours of sharing a room with Rodrick, I'm thinking of marching down to the police station and turning myself in. Because there's no punishment they can dream up that could be worse than what I'm dealing with at home.
-- Greg (Section 5, Page 186 paragraph 1)

Importance: During the blizzard, the basement of Greg's house floods. This includes Rodrick's bedroom, which is located in the basement. As a result, Rodrick must share Greg's bedroom. Rodrick brings along his drum set, posters, and dirty clothes. The experience is so annoying to Greg that Greg considers going to the police of his own free will to turn himself in. It demonstrates just how bad staying with Rodrick is for Greg. Though Greg loves Rodrick, too much is just too much.

Unidentified Do-Gooder Clears the Way: Unselfish Act Allows Soup Kitchen to Open Up.
-- The Daily Herald (Section 5, Page 217 paragraph 1)

Importance: The local paper carries news of the parking lot at Church being shoveled, allowing the soup kitchen to open up on Christmas Day. Greg is responsible for the act, having inadvertently done a good thing while looking for cash that ay have been left in the parking lot as a result of the Giving Tree. His selfishness has turned into an act of selflessness. Greg realizes what his actions have led to, and he becomes proud of himself as a result.