

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days Study Guide

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days by Jeff Kinney

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Plot Summary

As summer vacation begins, Greg Heffley keeps a detailed account of his vacation. His parents are frustrated that he spends so much time indoors playing video games. His father is annoyed that he sleeps all through the day as well. Mrs. Heffley starts a book club for the neighborhood boys, but when she doesn't approve of the books selections the boys choose, the book club dwindles to just Greg and Rowley, and not long after, Rowley backs out of the book club as well. Greg and his friend Rowley begin their summer hanging out at the country club Rowley's family belong to. They order smoothies and charge them to Mr. Jefferson's, Rowley's father, account, but are unaware that they're racking up a sizeable bill. Eventually, Mr. Jefferson comes to collect the \$83 dollars the boys owe.

The boys must find a way to repay the money and decide to start a lawn care service, but have trouble sticking with their marketing strategy. When they finally get a client, the boys have a falling out and Rowley walks off the job, leaving Greg to finish. Greg doesn't do a good job and his father has to complete the job for him. As a result, Greg is still without the money he owes Mr. Jefferson. During his birthday party, Greg's mom collects all of his birthday money to pay Mr. Jefferson. Mrs. Heffley takes all three of her sons to the pet store and Greg and his older brother Rodrick both get a pet fish. During a family trip to the water park, Greg's fish dies. During a conversation with his dad and Grandpa, Mr. Heffley learns that how his dog died when he was a kid. Angry with his own father, Mr. Heffley decides to get the family a dog. The dog takes a liking to Greg, even if Greg is less-than-thrilled with it.

The Heffley family starts hanging out at the public pool and Greg juggles his disgust at the men's locker room showers and doting on his crush Heather Hills, a high-school aged lifeguard. Meanwhile, Mrs. Heffley and Mrs. Jefferson conspire to reunite their sons. Greg is invited to join the Jeffersons on their summer vacation. The boys reconnect, but the vacation doesn't go swimmingly. Greg is bored from the lack of television and video games and sends an email from Mr. Jefferson's laptop to his mother that he needs to get out of there. His mother thinks the email is from Mr. Jefferson and Greg is found out. Instead of getting angry, Mr. Jefferson takes the family to the boardwalk where Greg can finally fulfill his wish to ride the Cranium Shaker. After he spends all of his money on carnival games, Greg is able to go on the ride. It proves too much for him and nearly makes him sick. Afterwards, Greg and Rowley harass some teenagers and later some smaller kids with a dollar bill prank that Rodrick taught Greg. When Mr. Jefferson learns of their actions, he sends Greg home early from the vacation. Greg later mistakes a plan for Greg and his father to bond for the family trying to get rid of Greg. Father and son make amends over their mutual hatred of a comic and Greg's mother gives him a photo album showing Greg he had a better summer vacation than he might think.

Chapters 1-8

Summary

Chapter one opens at the beginning of Greg's summer vacation. He indicates that he feels guilty over the summer because the weather is nice and he just wants to stay in and play video games. His mother doesn't like and he tells her he's trying to protect his skin from the sun. He remembers going to the country club with his friend Rowley. They drank smoothies by the pool and charged Mr. Jefferson's account. When the waiter forgot Greg's umbrella for his drink, Greg complained to Mr. Jefferson. Later, Rowley tells Greg he can't go to the country club anymore.

In chapter two Greg describes the town pool that his family belongs to. He doesn't like it, especially the men's locker room. He gripes that his parents won't let him watch horror movies, but will let him see the disgusting men in the locker room shower, which he thinks is a thousand times worse.

Chapter three reveals that money is too tight for a vacation, so they won't be going to the beach. Greg doesn't like the ocean because fish and other animals relieve themselves in the water. He was looking forward to going because he's tall enough to go on the Cranium Shaker ride on the boardwalk. Mrs. Heffley tells them if they save their money, they might be able to go next year. Greg decides he has two things to look forward to: his birthday and the last Li'l Cutie comic. Greg and his dad hate the comic and bond over how bad it is. The comic is thought to be about the illustrator's son and that now that the son is grown, he's out of material. In chapter four, Greg reveals the difficulties he has in his relationship with his father. An issue is how much Greg sleeps during the day because he's up all night playing video games. He also thinks his dad is grumpy because Mrs. Heffley calls him at work to tell him about her day, which includes Manny going in the potty.

As chapter five begins, Greg reflects on his dad getting his mom a camera for Mother's Day and the amount of pictures she's been taking. When Rodrick, Greg's older brother, was a baby, his mother took lots of pictures, but didn't take as many of Greg. He understands that pictures aren't an accurate reflection of what happened. He gives the example of a picture of him with a seashell as a younger kid. When he learns that his mother buried purchased seashells in the sand for Manny, Greg's younger brother, to dig up. His mother takes him to her hair salon for a haircut. He's reluctant until he sees all the televisions. His Gramma buys tabloids, which his mother doesn't like. When Gramma wasn't answering her phone, Mrs. Heffley had to go check on her. Gramma tells her that cordless phones are bad for the elderly, which she read about in a tabloid. Greg reveals that Gramma's dog Henry died recently. Mrs. Heffley throws the tabloids away when she goes over to Gramma's house. Greg enjoys listening to the gossip in the beauty salon, and is disappointed when his mom picks him up in the middle of a story about someone's marriage to a much younger woman.



Chapter six reveals that Greg has started watching soap operas after the trip to the beauty salon. His mother isn't pleased and he invites Rowley over. They go to Rodrick's room and find a keychain with a picture of Rodrick and a girl if you look into it. They find a horror movie called "Hello, You're Dead" and Greg asks if Rowley can spend the night. During a sleepover last summer, they slept in the basement, with Rowley closest to the furnace closet because it scared Greg. A noise freaked them both out and they woke up Greg's parents. Mr. Heffley checked it out and found one of Manny's talking dolls in the closet. Now, they've decided to watch the horror movie. Rowley covers his eyes and ears and Greg watches it. It's about a muddy hand that kills people, and at the end of the movie it's revealed that the hand is after the viewer next. After the movie ends, Greg explains the movie to Rowley. They both get scared and go upstairs and fall asleep in the bathtub. Greg's dad finds them and they have to admit what they watched. Greg is more scared of the muddy hand than of whatever punishment he may get. He then realizes that the hand can only move so far, so he's probably okay.

In chapter seven, Greg's mother talks to him about violent movies and video games. She starts a Reading is Fun book club for the boys in the neighborhood to learn about real entertainment. He's relieved that his mother didn't invite the weird kid Fregley. The boys all have to bring their favorite book, but Mrs. Heffley deems them unworthy and assigns them classics. She tells Greg he can go to the library and get a different book if he doesn't like the ones she has. Greg is scared he'll get arrested if he goes to the library because he hid an overdue book in his room and forgot about it; he thinks he must have thousands of dollars in fines.

Chapter eight is the second meeting of the book club and only Rowley and Greg attend. Greg's mother doesn't like Greg's selection because the cover objectifies women, but Greg doesn't remember a woman being in the book. Ultimately, Mrs. Heffley chooses Charlotte's Web for them to read.

Analysis

Summer vacation is typically a time that children look forward and Greg Heffley is no different. What is different about Greg is the way in which he approaches his summer vacation. He likes to stay up all night playing video games. He's not an outdoorsy child and prefers to be inside. This frustrates his parents and establishes the conflict in Greg's relationship with them. Greg also reveals a level of self-awareness when he acknowledges the guilt he expects to feel over the summer. This opening chapter establishes the themes of family, relationships, and self-awareness.

Continuing with the themes of relationships and self-awareness, Greg's experience at the country club reinforces them. Greg and Rowley are clearly close friends and because Greg is invited to spend time at the country club with Rowley, it establishes how inclusive Rowley's parents are. They want their son to spend time with his friend and likely view this as an important relationship in Rowley's life. That's not to suggest that they are completely comfortable with Greg. Mr. Jefferson seems to recognize that Greg struggles with being aware of what he's doing and how it affects others. When

Greg complains about the wait staff forgetting about an umbrella in his drink, Mr. Jefferson is annoyed. Ultimately, this leads to Greg's invitation to the country club being rescinded.

It is in Greg's nature to complain about things he doesn't like. He seems to have a clearer picture about the things he doesn't like more than what he does like, although he offers some clear likes, such as playing video games. He doesn't want to go through the men's locker room at the public pool because he doesn't like what he sees. He's horrified by the older men. This indicates Greg's immaturity, but it also indicates that Greg is stuck in a place in his life where he doesn't want to confront that he's getting older. In addition to physically aging, he likely understands that the older he gets, the more responsibility he will have to take, and he isn't quite prepared for that.

The theme of responsibility is also demonstrated by Mrs. Heffley's revelation that the family can't go on a vacation this year. Money is tight and she indicates that if they save, the family may be able to go the following year. Greg thinks about how this affects him personally, but the family is making a responsible choice.

Greg is aware of the difficult relationship he has with his father. Neither is particularly warm nor readily shows affection. They are able to bond, and do so over a comic that is based on a father's experience with his son. It is ironic that they share distaste for a comic that sentimentalizes a father-son relationship.

The family pictures inform Greg's understanding of his role in the family. There are more pictures of Rodrick than him and it is possible that Greg feels dejected because of this. By recognizing that photos aren't necessarily an accurate representation of events, Greg hints at knowing that the amount of pictures taken isn't something he should worry about it; it's not an accurate reflection of how his family feels about him. Further, Greg possesses the knowledge to know that the pictures hold something artificial. When he references the seashell pictures with Manny, he now knows to be suspect of his own. It doesn't diminish his experience, but rather it puts the experience in the context of everything not being what it seems.

Watching the horror movie is an act of rebellion. Greg sneaks around to get the movie and then watches it without telling his parents. Rowley takes some responsibility in recognizing that he's too young to watch by hiding his eyes and covering his ears. Greg wants his friend to share the experience, however, and reveals the entirety of the movie to Rowley. They both become scared and both possess the knowledge after-the-fact that they weren't ready for that type of movie. The movie also enables him to accept whatever punishment that may come his way. Greg is prepared for whatever his mother can dish out because he's seen something worse. Later he realizes that the hand likely won't catch up to him any time soon and this puts him at ease. In effect he takes responsibility for his fear and finds a solution to better manage it.

Greg and his mother discuss the video games and the violent movies. While Greg continues to resist his mother's assertions that both are inappropriate, he does give in when his mother suggests a book club. It's not something he's outwardly interested in,

but he knows it's something he's going to have to endure; this demonstrates a moderate level of responsibility on his part. This isn't long-lived as the reader soon discovers why Greg is reluctant to even go to a library. He has an overdue library book. Instead of returning the book, he assumes the worst. He thinks he must have racked up thousands of dollars in fines and fears being arrested. If Greg had taken responsibility for the book when he first discovered it was overdue and returned it, his anxiety could have been alleviated. However, he chooses to avoid responsibility, indicating an immaturity about him.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Rowley tell Greg he can't go to the country club with him anymore?

Discussion Question 2

What does Mr. Heffley's frustration with Greg's sleep schedule reveal about their relationship?

Discussion Question 3

What does Mrs. Heffley's reaction to Greg watching a horror film and playing video games reveal about her character?

Vocabulary

sauna, traumatic, cranium, jealous, guilty, accurate, re-evaluate, tabloids, extinct, elderly, souvenir, trampled, fess, classic

Chapters 9-16

Summary

Chapter nine begins with Greg being the only member of the book club. Rowley went golfing with his dad and Greg didn't do the reading assignment. After his mom catches him playing instead of reading, she bans him from television. He continues to think about the muddy hand. Now he's frightened that the hand will crawl up in the bed with him, so he covers his entire body with the blanket.

In chapter ten, Greg still hasn't finished his reading. He's forced to stay at the table until he's finished, but is interrupted by Rowley and Mr. Jefferson. Mr. Jefferson is angry that Greg and Rowley charged \$83 worth of smoothies to his account. The parents decide that the boys need to pay off the tab.

Chapter eleven finds Greg and Rowley trying to figure out how to make money. Rowley suggests Greg go to the ATM because Rowley thinks Greg is rich. He believes this because he came over and they were out of toilet paper and using holiday napkins until they got more; Greg let him believe that they were rich. They decide to start a lawn care service. They call to place an ad in the Yellow Pages, but that proves too costly. They opt to make flyers by getting a card from the store with workmen on it and putting their faces over the men. They ask Mr. Jefferson if he'll buy the ink and paper for them to make flyers and he refuses. They go door-to-door to advertise and end up asking people to just pass the flyer along themselves.

At the start of chapter twelve, Greg and Rowley are waiting for calls about their business, but don't get any. Finally, they get a call from Mrs. Canfield, who lives down the street from Gramma, but she wants references. Greg asks Gramma to be his reference, but she refuses and complains about the work he did for her the previous year. Greg imitates his grandma on the phone and gives his own reference to Mrs. Canfield. She hires them and they tell her that they need her to come get them because they don't have transportation. They also don't have a lawn mower and have to stop at Gramma's house and borrow hers. Gramma isn't home, so it's easy to sneak the equipment out. The boys struggle to get the mower started and end up dumping the gas from the mower as well. Greg tells Rowley he can start, but Rowley insists it should be a partnership. After Greg decides they need someone to do the grunt work, Rowley walks away. Greg starts the mower and begins the job, but sees dog poop in the yard and begins making big circles around it to avoid it. He charges Mrs. Canfield \$30 and she refuses to pay because of the terrible job. Greg walks home and tells his dad what happened. They drive back to Mrs. Canfield's and Mr. Heffley finishes mowing the yard and doesn't charge her. Before they leave Mrs. Canfield's, Greg puts a sign advertising V.I.P. Lawn Service in her yard.

In chapter thirteen, Greg suspects Mrs. Canfield is bad-mouthing the business because there haven't been any calls. He modifies the flyer for snow removal and tries to figure



out how to get the money now instead of during the winter. Greg thinks about all the money Manny has because he gets a quarter for every time he uses the potty without being asked; Manny takes a gallon of water with him wherever he goes. His mother accuses Greg of being lazy, which Greg admits that he is, but feels like his parents should have intervened at an earlier age to prevent it from getting out of hand. He remembers being in pre-school and singing the “Cleanup Song”, but not actually cleaning.

Chapter fourteen begins on Sunday and the family goes to church. Greg considers how Gramma prays for things she wants and gets them, so he prays for Mr. Jefferson to forget that Greg owes him money. At church, he contemplates taking money from the donation basket, but his mother prevents him.

Chapter fifteen finds Greg thinking about his birthday. He’s still angry with Rowley, so he doesn’t want him coming over for cake. He explains that he doesn’t like friends birthday parties because the mothers buy the gifts that he thinks they are lame. Instead, he prefers family parties. His mom tells him he can have a family party as long as he doesn’t pull his card-opening stunt, which is where he opens the cards at once looking for money. Greg wants a dog and knows that his dad would like one as well because he had one as a boy. Greg’s Uncle Joe has a dog named Killer and thinks Mr. Heffley should get the boys a dog. He also wants a cell phone, but because Rodrick racked up a huge bill on his, he thinks it’s unlikely that he’ll get one. The other thing he wants is a recliner so he can have something to sleep in when he stays up all night watching television, but might wait for the next model that might have a toilet in it so that he never has to get up from the chair.

In chapter sixteen, Greg asks his mother to take him for a haircut; he wants to go to catch up on gossip. His hairstylist Annette tells Greg she heard he had a falling out with Rowley and that Rowley is upset. Greg doesn’t believe this because he only sees Rowley going out and doing things with his dad. Mrs. Heffley thinks that Greg and his dad should be spending more time together, but they don’t have that much in common. She insists that more affection be shared between father and sons, and Greg reveals that it’s resulted in awkward moments.

Analysis

That Greg’s book club ends up being just Greg and his mom is fitting in light of Rowley leaving the book club to spend time with his father. Greg doesn’t understand that Rowley wants to spend time with his parents, particularly his dad; this is in stark contrast to the way Greg feels about spending time with his family.

Mr. Jefferson comes to the Heffley house and speaks with Greg’s mother about the \$83 bill from the country club. The parents agree that the boys should pay off the debt in order to teach them responsibility. For boys their age, it’s not an easy task to make that kind of money and they’re both a bit overwhelmed by it. It’s clear that Greg prefers that Rowley thinks his family has money. Perhaps Greg is jealous of the money the

Jeffersons have. He may want to be viewed in better light by Rowley, which accounts for why he would let Rowley believe his family was rich because they could use holiday napkins as toilet paper. Learning that Greg doesn't have money puts Rowley in the position of having to help Greg earn the money to pay the bill. Rowley likely didn't want the responsibility of it and now he must.

The decision to start a lawn care service is a logical one and it should prove to be something the two of them can handle. Unfortunately, they cannot. Greg is too wrapped up in his head to do the work and Rowley knows Greg well enough to know that there's a genuine risk of Rowley getting stuck doing all the work. Rowley likely feels less obligated to pay the bill since it involves his dad's account, but since this point of view comes directly from Greg, there's no way to know for sure. One thing that is certain is that Rowley, who typically follows Greg along without question, takes the initiative to walk away, leaving Greg to finish the job. Greg, of course, doesn't really finish the job. Instead he does a partial job and decides he doesn't need to deal with something gross, like dog excrement. Had Rowley stayed on the job, the job might have gotten done properly. Left to his own devices, Greg chooses to just be done with the job. He's surprised when Mrs. Canfield refuses to pay. It's hard to believe that someone would actually think that the job was decent enough to earn the money, but Greg clearly has trouble accepting responsibility. It is possible that Greg knew better, but because of his previous actions, thought he could get away with it. Then again, Greg has established that he has difficulty concentrating, as with reading the chapters from "Charlotte's Web." Without his friend around, the temptation to move on to the next thing is likely higher.

It is also telling that Gramma refuses to give Greg a reference. Typically one would anticipate a grandparent wanting to help their grandchild. It's apparent that Gramma understands Greg's personality and she doesn't want to cause any problems with the neighbors. That Greg is surprised that his Gramma won't recommend him indicates a lapse in his self-awareness. Greg's self-awareness is on display when the family goes to church. He contemplates taking the money from the collection plate, but his mother intervenes. Greg knows doing so would be wrong and may feel guilt for considering it, but his mother removes the temptation. She takes responsibility for her son, so that Greg doesn't have to answer for possibly taking questionable action. One way in which Greg displays his self-awareness is in the way he admits to being lazy. There's not consequence to his laziness, however. It's much easier for him to deny responsibility for it and blame it on his parents and school for not stopping it earlier.

When Greg is thinking about his birthday, he thinks primarily about what he wants in the way of gifts. He also considers what type of celebration he wants. His gift ideas may be more than should be expected by someone his age, his party plans are modest. He doesn't want a friend party, but rather wants a family party. This indicates the theme of family, but it also reveals more about Greg's character. He isn't necessarily comfortable with people outside of his family. He appears self-aware enough to know that the family party is the easier option.

Mrs. Heffley takes Greg to get a haircut at her salon. Greg resists this at first, thinking that he doesn't belong in the salon, but this time he has asked to go. He likes the way



he's treated, the televisions, and the gossip. He wants to go back because it's a place he can feel comfortable. When Annette reveals that she knows Greg and Rowley had a falling out, this demonstrates how the boys' relationship is viewed by the community. It may also be a way for Mrs. Heffley to gain insight into how her son feels about the rift in the relationship.

More is revealed about the strain in the relationship between Greg and his father. While Greg is at the salon he doesn't believe that Rowley is upset about what happened because he sees that Rowley is spending time with his father. This may indicate that Greg is jealous of Rowley's relationship with his dad, especially given the distance between Greg and his father. Mrs. Heffley attempts to encourage more bonding between Mr. Heffley and all of her sons, but as Greg indicates, it typically leads to awkward moments. Does Rodrick feel similarly? It's unclear because of only having Greg's perspective, but it is likely. Greg doesn't indicate that Rodrick and their father spend more time together. Instead, Greg focuses on the strain in his relationship with his father. As for Manny, he's likely too young to demonstrate any evidence, but if the older sons are any indication, this is possible.

Discussion Question 1

What does the falling out between Greg and Rowley reveal about their friendship?

Discussion Question 2

What does Greg's list of possible birthday gifts reveal about his character?

Discussion Question 3

How does Greg's relationship with his father compare to Rowley's relationship with his father?

Vocabulary

alternative, pamper, references, exceptional, catered, grunt, lousy, suspicious, tweaks, brainstorming, paranoid, acknowledge, chummy

Chapters 17-24

Summary

In chapter seventeen, Fregley shows up at the door. Greg is shocked to see him and slams the door, but he finds that Fregley is still waiting outside. Greg's mom has arranged a playdate because Greg seems lonely without Rowley. Greg compares Fregley to inviting in a vampire; he now has to worry about Fregley and the muddy hand.

Chapter eighteen begins on Greg's birthday and relatives arrive for the party. He opens the cards slowly and when he's done, Mrs. Heffley collects all the money to give to Mr. Jefferson. He gets a Ladybug cellphone, which has two buttons: one for home and the other 911. He also gets some clothes. They go to have cake, but find that Uncle Joe's dog Killer has already eaten part of the cake.

Chapter nineteen is the day after the party and Greg's mom offers to take him to get a makeup gift. She tells Manny and Rodrick they can come and pick out something as well. They go the pet store in the mall and are all given five dollars to spend. Greg gets an angelfish and Rodrick gets an "aggressive" fish. Manny gets fish food and eats half the canister before he gets home.

In chapter twenty, Greg reflects on having his own pet. He feeds it and keeps the bowl clean and even journals the fish's behavior. Greg asks for an aquarium and his dad tells him to ask for one for Christmas. Greg is disappointed because the only times he has a chance to get what he wants is at Christmas or his birthday. He thinks about how he knows he'll be rich and famous one day, but is disappointed he doesn't already have his own reality show. He also collects personal mementos for his museum in the future. He considers how he'll have to have a private jet and deal with his siblings getting famous because of their relation to him. The closest Greg has come to fame is doing modeling after his mom signed him up. His picture was used on the cover of a book called "Your Child and Constipation."

Greg plays video games and reads comics in Chapter twenty-one. He finds an ad about the newspaper looking for a new cartoonist. They aren't accepting animal comics and Greg believes this is because "Precious Poochie" is still running repeats since the death of the cartoonist and people protest when the newspaper threatens to stop running it. Mrs. Heffley packs up the family in chapter twenty-two and heads out on a drive. That afternoon, Greg asks if they can stop for food, but his dad doesn't want to. Mrs. Heffley passes out pre-packed snacks and later they arrive at the Slipslide Water Park. A thunderstorm develops and the park is closed due to lightning before they got in the water. In traffic, Manny tells jokes that don't really make sense and the car is running low on gas. Greg's mom ends up with a headache and lies down in the back. They stop for gas and get home and discover that they inadvertently left Mrs. Heffley at the gas station. They go back and pick her up and she's none too thrilled.

Chapter twenty-three begins on Father's Day and it is revealed that Greg's fish has died. Mrs. Heffley dumped Rodrick's fish in with Greg's because his fish bowl was dirty; Rodrick's fish ate Greg's. Greg thinks about how when he's a father, he's just going to go off and be alone on Father's Day instead of wearing a tie and going to Leisure Towers for brunch. Greg's dad asks him what's wrong when he sees him picking at his food. He tells him that he's never lost a pet before; Mr. Heffley tells him he's never lost a pet either, even though he had a dog when he was a boy. Grandpa admits that sending the dog to the butterfly farm was a lie and that he accidentally ran over the dog. Grandpa thinks it's something to joke about now, but Mr. Heffley is angry. He takes the family home and leaves again. He leaves and returns with a dog. Mrs. Heffley isn't thrilled and the boys debate what to name it. They name the dog Sweetie, even though it's a boy and Rodrick gets a bowl with the dog's name on it, but spells it: Sweaty.

In chapter twenty-four, Greg starts to rethink wanting a dog. The dog barks at the television and the only thing that gets him to stop is when a gopher commercial comes on. The dog likes to sleep with Greg and this bothers him because he takes up so much of the bed. The dog also launches off of Greg's face when Mr. Heffley calls the dog to go outside in the morning.

Analysis

When Greg's mom invites Fregley over for a playdate, she probably expects Greg's reaction. She knows that Greg doesn't like Fregley and thinks he's weird. In doing so, Mrs. Heffley may be trying to motivate Greg to reach out to Rowley. If Fregley is all Greg has, then perhaps he can repair his relationship with Rowley. Mrs. Heffley's character has been established as working to repair relationships. Inviting Fregley over to play with Greg isn't any different than when she encouraged Mr. Heffley to spend more time with their sons. She wants to repair relationships.

During the birthday party, Mrs. Heffley collects the money Greg's get to give to Mr. Jefferson. While she may have intervened on Greg's behalf in the church with the collection plate, she is now insisting that the matter be settled. Through his mother's insistence, the matter is settled. She may also think that this is another step in repairing the relationship between Greg and Rowley, but there is no immediate result.

The next day, Mrs. Heffley takes Greg and his brothers to get a make-up gift. Mrs. Heffley likely felt sorry for Greg having to give up his birthday money. It's a small gesture and it's shared with the other boys to maintain the appearance that Greg made a sacrifice to repay the debt. Greg doesn't recognize the responsibility, however, and thinks it's wrong that his brothers also get something. Where Greg does demonstrate some responsibility is when he gets his pet fish. He takes good care of the fish, feeding it, and keeping the bowl clean. This demonstrates how Greg is ready to accept responsibility for the things he chooses, as long as it doesn't require a big commitment. The fish is a baby step for Greg.

The theme of self-awareness, or rather Greg's lack of self-awareness, is reinforced by Greg's idea that he will one day be rich and famous. He even goes so far as to keep mementos for a museum in his honor. This isn't a completely outlandish fantasy for a boy of his age, but he also holds the expectation that he should at least have a reality show by this point in his life. This demonstrates Greg's need for attention. Perhaps much of his antics stem from wanting more attention than he's getting. This may be reflected in his relationship to his brothers. When Greg comments that sometimes siblings achieve fame because of someone else's fame, Greg is thinking about the attention his brothers might steal from him should he become famous.

The themes of family and responsibility are illustrated when the family goes to the water slide. Mrs. Heffley keeps the destination a secret, likely so that she won't have to listen to any complaints about where they're going. She's trying to do something nice for the family, but also do it economically by going on half-price day. She continues to show responsibility for the family money. The trip is cut short, however, when a storm shuts down the park. The family heads home and when they stop for gas, they inadvertently leave Mrs. Heffley behind. This demonstrates a family that has lost a connection to each other. Much as she wanted the family to have a nice trip, the group simply doesn't come together.

During the Father's Day brunch, Mr. Heffley finally learns what happened to his childhood dog. Grandpa tells him in part because he feels he has to, but also because he thinks it's funny. Mr. Heffley experiences a strong reaction and it's the most outward display of emotion he demonstrates in the book. He gets angry and leaves his father with the bill for brunch. He expresses himself through his actions rather than words. He gets a dog for the family immediately after. Now Greg has ended up getting something he really wanted for his birthday, but he begins to have regrets. The responsibility of a dog is much greater than that of a fish. Further, Greg is selfish with his time and the dog takes time (and his bed) from him. Greg doesn't seem comfortable with change. The dog is an opportunity for Greg and his father to bond, but it simply doesn't happen. It just adds a distraction. The two simply aren't ready for the connection. This reinforces the themes of relationships and responsibility.

It is important to note that Mr. Heffley notices Greg wasn't behaving normally and asks him what's wrong. This shows a genuine outreach by Greg's father to communicate with his son. While neither likely realized it, it shows some growth in their relationship. After it's revealed that Grandpa lied about what happened to the dog, Mr. Heffley is angry and likely left viewing his relationship with his father differently. It's peculiar however, that Mr. Heffley never questioned the story about what happened to the dog. Perhaps he just chose to believe what he wanted to believe, much like Greg seems to do.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Greg reject Fregley?

Discussion Question 2

What does Greg's declaration that he'll be rich and famous one day reveal about his character?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Greg have second thoughts about the dog?

Vocabulary

drastic, potential, confiscated, aggressive, canister, aquarium, retires, mementos, saliva, cloned, mooch, opportunity, phonograph, fuss, woodwork, precious, conserve, loudspeaker, realized, mystery, brunch, generations, confession, accidentally, errands, gophers, riled, launching, shivering

Chapters 25-32

Summary

In chapter twenty-five, Mr. Heffley isn't able to let the dog out, so Greg does and the dog runs off and he has to chase him. He determines that the dog is ruining his summer because he's interrupting sleep and television. The only person the dog really like is Mrs. Heffley and Mr. Heffley is jealous.

Chapter twenty-six finds Greg working on a replacement cartoon for Li'l Cutie called "Hey, People!" that's part cartoon, part advice, such as deciding on an order before getting in the fast food line. He learns that the family is going to the town pool the next day and he tries to get out of it to no avail.

Chapter twenty-seven is the 4th of July and the family is at the pool. Greg doesn't understand why the men in the locker room don't shower at home. The pool is crowded and the lifeguard clears the pool for a break. Greg thinks about going in the kiddie pool when he was younger, but won't go near it now because kids urinate in the pool. When he was eight, Rodrick convinced him to jump off the high dive and Greg hasn't been in the deep end of the pool since. The family goes to the picnic area for free watermelon, but Greg has an unreasonable fear of watermelon. Rodrick tells him that if he swallows a seed, a watermelon will grow in his stomach. The fireworks show is canceled because the fireworks got wet. Everyone is able to view part of the country club's fireworks from over the trees.

In chapter twenty-eight, Greg finds a back-to-school ad while flipping through the comics. He thinks it should be illegal to advertise two months before school starts. He doesn't want to go clothes shopping with his mom, so he asks if he can go with his dad. He then tells his dad to pick out whatever and his dad shops for the clothes at the pharmacy. Sweetie gets wet in the rain and crawls in bed with Greg. Mrs. Heffley prints out some pictures from the 4th of July. Greg spots Heather Hills, the lifeguard, in the background. Heather is a high school girl that Greg has a crush on, and now Greg wants to go to the public pool.

Chapter twenty-nine begins with Greg, his mother, and Manny all going to the pool. Greg puts on sunscreen and does some pushups to build up his muscles. Someone in a stall clears their throat and Greg is embarrassed, but thinks he can slip out before anyone sees him. Then his mother calls him by name to check on him. Greg stands under the lifeguard chair and tries to say witty things or instruct swimmers to be safe in order to impress Heather.

Chapter thirty picks up a week later and Greg has been following Heather around the pool all week. He tries to get his picture with her, but Mrs. Heffley has trouble with her camera. Greg thinks technology is wasted on adults.



Chapter thirty-one continues with Greg's trips to the pool. Since his mother doesn't want to go every day, Greg decides to find his own transportation. He finds a girl bike out by the curb and takes it.

In chapter thirty-two, Greg rides the bike to the pool and the front wheel pops off. His mom takes him to the pool and he has to take Manny through the locker room. He then finds his spot under Heather's lifeguard chair. A kid throws up behind the chair and Heather looks to Greg to be helpful and clean it up. Greg decides that's too much and that he's going to end his summer romance.

Analysis

The theme of relationships is evident in the way the family members interact with the dog. Greg doesn't want to be around the dog, but the dog stays around him. Mr. Heffley wants the dog to show him affection, but the dog instead prefers Mrs. Heffley. The dog may sense the personalities of each of them and reacts accordingly. The dog may recognize that Greg needs more attention, which is why he spends so much time with him.

Greg shows some initiative when he starts working on his comic "Hey, People!" This may be an attempt to achieve the fame Greg thinks he will have, but the underlying motivation may be to use his knowledge to create a comic that his dad will like. Since they've bonded over hating Li'l Cutie, it's a logical step that the two would be able to bond over a different comic. In fact, Greg may achieve more of his father's approval by creating it.

The themes of self-awareness and knowledge are demonstrated during the time the family spends at the pool on the 4th of July. Greg recognizes what he doesn't like about the public pool and it's not just the men's locker room showers. He has gained the knowledge that the kids in the kiddie pool will urinate in the water and he doesn't want to go in it. He's learned from experience. He also reflects on how Rodrick got him to climb the high-dive and how he ended up in the deep end of the pool. Greg is self-aware enough to know that he wasn't ready for that then, just as he still wouldn't be ready now.

The family is together, but Greg doesn't really interact with his family, particularly his father. When it comes times for the fireworks, they all watch the ones from the country club. Later, when Greg sees the back-to-school ad, he talks his way out of going shopping with his mom, and instead asks his dad to do the shopping for him. This demonstrates how removed Greg has become from his family and friends. He is isolated and this foreshadows the distance he will feel going forward in the book.

Greg's isolation likely leads him to project his romantic intentions on Heather Hills. It's fitting in that she is an unattainable girl for Greg. He likely feels safe thinking about her because if the relationship isn't real, he doesn't have to really lose anything, like his friendship with Rowley.



Greg shows some determination in attempting to spend time with Heather. While he doesn't really talk to her, he follows her from lifeguard station to lifeguard station. He tries to keep the swimmers in line and he refills her drink. This is about the extent of a relationship Greg could handle. If Heather is annoyed by his actions, it's unclear because of Greg's point of view. When Heather does interact with Greg by turning to him when another kid gets sick, it demonstrates Greg's self-awareness. He recognizes the relationship isn't real, and like beforehand with the Mrs. Canfield's lawn, Greg isn't going to deal with something that's gross.

Mrs. Heffley has difficulty with the camera when Greg wants his picture taken with Heather. She may or may not realize what Greg is doing, but she is in charge of the camera. Much as Greg indicated earlier in the book, pictures don't tell the whole truth. Greg likely wants the picture because he can manipulate the truth. It's possible that Mrs. Heffley flubbed the picture so that the truth wouldn't be manipulated; she may simply be protecting her son.

Discussion Question 1

What do Rodrick's comments about watermelon reveal about his relationship with his brother Greg?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Greg think technology is wasted on adults?

Discussion Question 3

What does Greg's summer romance with Heather reveal about his character?

Vocabulary

mutual, wriggle, competition, recent, refrain, specifically, concentrate, automatic, chatty, patrons, baloney, dungarees, pleated, affair, saddle shoes, managed, stewing, league, perspective, privacy, witty, predicted, maximize, solution, curious, urinal, nervous, shriek, noble

Chapters 33-41

Summary

In chapter thirty-three, Greg and his mother are at the grocery store and see the Jeffersons. Mrs. Jefferson invites Greg to join them on their vacation. Mrs. Heffley says Greg would love to go. Greg wonders if his mom and Mrs. Jefferson are in cahoots. He doesn't want to spend time with Rowley, but he does want to go on the Cranium Shaker.

In chapter thirty-four, Greg and the Jeffersons arrive at a log cabin. There's no television or computer. Mrs. Jefferson brings them books to read until dinner. After dinner they play a game called "I Love You Because" and then charades and then bedtime. Greg and Rowley have to share a room and it has one bed. They share the bed and Rowley snores. Rowley has a nightmare and his parents try to calm him down.

Chapter thirty-five opens with Greg trying to get the Jeffersons to take them to the boardwalk. When Mr. Jefferson leaves his work laptop on the table to use the bathroom, Greg sends an email to his mom telling her he's going crazy, but he sends the email from Mr. Jefferson's work account and Greg's mom replies by asking if Greg isn't behaving. Mr. Jefferson takes them to the boardwalk.

Chapter thirty-five starts with Greg home from vacation two days early. After going to the boardwalk, Greg has spent most of his money on a carnival game while waiting for the line to decrease for the Cranium Shaker ride. Rowley gets his dad to buy him the giant caterpillar at a shop next to the game where Greg was trying to win the same caterpillar. Rowley thinks he's won something and Greg disagrees. Greg thinks back to a swim meet that was made up of all the kids who hadn't won a ribbon. Everyone got 1st place ribbons and Rodrick later explained that the parents do it to make all the kids feel like winners. Back on the boardwalk, Greg spots a cardboard cutout of the girl with Rodrick in the keychain picture. He takes his picture with the cardboard cutout, and the Jeffersons pile into the shot with him. Greg goes on the Cranium Shaker and regrets it. They go to the arcade and Greg checks to see if he still has the high score on a game called Thunder Volt. He does and someone earned the second highest score and now the high score reads: Greg Heffley is an idiot. He unplugs the machine to reset it with no luck. With a dollar in hand, Greg and Rowley go outside to play a trick Rodrick taught Greg. He puts the bill through the slot and waits for someone to grab and then pulls it at the last second. The teenagers eventually get mad and chase after them. They hide under Kiddie Land and they start to pull the dollar bill trick again. One of the kids pulled the dollar quickly and gets the money. Greg tries getting it back, but the kid refuses. Rowley's parents show up and Mr. Jefferson gets mad because they've been looking for Rowley and Greg. They go back to the cabin and the boys are sent to bed early. Greg snaps a rubber band on Rowley and Rowley tells his parents on him. A few hours later, Mr. Heffley comes and picks Greg up.



In chapter thirty-seven Greg's mother thinks the whole incident with Rowley was horseplay, but Mr. Heffley is in a bad mood. Greg reads that Li'l Cutie is going to continue, but the son is going to draw it instead of the dad. Later Mr. Heffley talks to Greg about doing something on Sunday and Greg overhears him being secretive on the phone. Greg talks to Rodrick and Rodrick tells him that he thinks their dad is trying to get rid of Greg.

Chapter thirty-eight takes place on Sunday and Mr. Heffley tells Greg they're going to the city for a surprise. Greg sees the destination on the map when his dad goes in to pay for gas. Greg uses his Ladybug phone and makes an emergency call. By the time they arrive at the baseball stadium and Greg figures out what's going on, the police have arrived. After Mr. Heffley clears things up with the police, they go home.

In chapter thirty-nine, Greg learns about the secretive phone call. Mr. Heffley gave the dog to Gramma. Greg and his dad haven't spoken since the incident with the police. Greg sees a commercial for a video game competition at Game Hut. Greg calls Rowley to meet him at the store so they can camp out until it opens. Rowley tells him that his parents have banned him from seeing Greg, but they make arrangements to meet anyway.

In chapter forty, Rowley meets Greg with the camping equipment and they get to the Game hut and are the only people there. Rowley falls asleep. Greg eats some chocolate energy bars and gets chocolate on his hands. He decides to prank Rowley by pretending to be the muddy hand. Rowley smashes Greg's hand with a mallet. In the morning, the Game Hut guy wants to know why they're camping out and Greg explains about the competition. The guy doesn't know anything about it, but agrees to let them play each other in the back room. They play Twisted Wizard and Greg thinks he can beat Rowley easily, but his hand is swollen and Rowley wins. The guy offers to fill out the paperwork to send Rowley to the national tournament or he could have a box of chocolate-covered raisins; Rowley chooses the candy.

In chapter forty-one, Greg reflects that he should have just stayed inside all summer. He hasn't seen Rowley or talked to his dad. Greg sees the first Li'l Cutie cartoon by the son and shows it to his dad. They agree that the new cartoon is ridiculous. Greg admits that he doesn't have the best relationship with his dad, but they hate a lot of the same things and that works for them. His mother gives him a photo album of the summer and Greg sees how whoever takes the pictures can tell the story. In the end, the photos reveal that Greg had the best summer ever.

Analysis

At the start of chapter thirty-three, Greg suspects that his mother and Mrs. Jefferson are trying to intervene in his relationship with Rowley. Since Mrs. Heffley has been previously seen to intervene on her son's behalf, this is a fair assumption on Greg's part. Greg insists that he doesn't want to see Rowley and that his incentive for going is actually getting to go the Cranium Shaker ride. While this isn't entirely out of character



for Greg, it doesn't really ring true. It's doubtful that Greg would be willing to go away for three days with Rowley on the off chance he would get to go on the ride. Instead, Greg's comments reveal how much he's missed Rowley, but he is too proud to admit it.

By going to the cabin with the Jeffersons, Greg is immersed in the experience of a family different from his own. Greg isn't comfortable with outward displays of affection or encouragement for what he doesn't think is worthy. He is likely uncomfortable with these displays because he wants them for himself, but doesn't know how to express them. Like his father, Greg tends to keep things bottled up inside. While the reader knows what Greg thinks and sometimes feels about things, it's important to remember that Greg is expressing these things via a diary, which by design is meant only for him.

The differences in the Heffley and the Jefferson family are to be expected. Not every family is the same or has the same experience. It's important for Greg to see the Jefferson family in action. He may not seek out the same kind of attention when he returns home, but he may appreciate the comfort of what he knows at home.

The theme of self-awareness is explored in Greg's memory of the swim meet for kids who never medaled. Greg was able to see the meet for what it was. While Greg may frequently shirk responsibility, he does recognize the benefit of having earned something. He doesn't just want acknowledgement for being a participant. Greg may be physically lazy and prefer playing video games, but he does demonstrate a propensity for competition. He plays the video games for hours on end, and is proud that he still holds the top score on the Thunder Volt game at the arcade. This is further demonstrated when Greg and Rowley participate in the video game tournament, although that does not end as well as he would have hoped.

Greg tends to get under Mr. Jefferson's skin. While Greg must notice this, given that he's writing about it in his diary, he doesn't make an effort to do any better. Perhaps he doesn't think there's a point in doing so, since he has accepted that his own relationship with his father is strained. It's fitting that Mr. Heffley is who must come and pick Greg up after Greg's prank with the dollar at the boardwalk and the rubber band snap. Mr. Heffley remains mad, even after Mrs. Heffley admits that she thinks it was just horseplay. In this way, Mr. Heffley becomes a stand in for Mr. Jefferson's anger. Both men are angry and frustrated and Greg lacks the self-awareness to accept responsibility for his actions.

When Greg finally crosses the line by calling the police, he must face the reality of his relationship with his father. Mr. Heffley was trying to surprise his son and have a bonding experience, and Greg overreacted, panicked, and made a rash decision. Mr. Heffley suffers the embarrassment and frustration of his son's actions when he explains his side of the story to the police. The reader isn't privy to the extent of this exchange, given that Greg wouldn't know and/or fully understand it. Ultimately, Greg learns a valuable lesson about jumping to conclusions, but there isn't any indication that he won't do it again. He learns that the secretive phone conversation was about the dog and not about Greg. It's a wake-up call for Greg to recognize that not everything is about him. It should incite him to think outwardly. While this will likely be a slow process, Greg does

demonstrate some personal growth when he reaches out to his father. He doesn't reach out immediately, however. A couple of days go by and both father and son don't speak to one another. When he does, Greg reaches out via the Li'l Cutie comic. It's symbolic that the comic has been turned over to the creator's son to draw and that it is Greg that approaches his dad with the comic.

Greg also learns a lesson about his friendship with Rowley. By nature, Rowley isn't competitive. He doesn't react much to Greg's antics either. Throughout the book, Rowley has walked away or endured whatever happened with Greg, such as the incident with Mrs. Canfield's lawn and with Greg telling him all about the horror film after he tried to protect himself from it. When Rowley hits Greg's hand when he thinks it's the muddy hand coming after him, it demonstrates how Rowley is now taking responsibility for himself. His actions also lead to his being able to win the video game tournament. In doing so, Rowley takes charge in the relationship. He would much rather just be friends and enjoy things instead of it being something bigger. This is why he chooses candy over a spot in the national tournament. It's equally important that Rowley go on his own way afterwards. While it's likely that the boys will stay friends, there has been a shift in their relationship and this may result in personal growth on both of their parts.

Finally, when Mrs. Heffley presents Greg with the photo album of his summer, he is able to see the stark contrast between what he's put in his diary versus what the photos reveal. How Greg chooses to remember his summer is something that he will have to take responsibility for in the long run.

Discussion Question 1

Will Greg and Rowley ultimately be able to salvage their friendship?

Discussion Question 2

What does the decision to give Gramma the dog reveal about Mr. Heffley's character?

Discussion Question 3

What kind of relationship can Greg and his father have?

Vocabulary

awkward, irritated, incident, conspiring, boardwalk, confirmed, charades, bothered, desperate, glimpse, risky, rigged, exact, experience, disqualify, confused, scoop, impress, worthless, operator, nauseous, arcade, slat, reaction, budging, concept, frustrated, static, stunning, enduring, secretive, theories, unpredictable, orphanage, fortune, excuses, loitering, banned, equipment, alert, defend, smithereens, mallet, ignore, tournament, expert, arrested, flimsy

Characters

Greg Heffley

Greg Heffley is the main character in the book. The book is told entirely through his perspective. He's in middle school, has a crush on a high school girl, and his best friend is Rowley. Greg and Rowley get into trouble, from charging drinks to Mr. Jefferson's account at the country club, to watching a horror movie without permission.

Greg thinks he'll be famous one day. Because of this, he collects things to be included in the museum that will be dedicated to his life. He has a crush on a high school girl and follows her around at the public pool where she works.

He starts a business with his best friend Rowley after they are tasked with re-paying Mr. Jefferson for the drinks they charged at the country club. The business goes nowhere, and Greg fails to complete the first job of the lawn care service. The first job also results in Greg's falling out with Rowley.

Greg has a difficult relationship with his father. They don't appear to have anything outwardly in common. However, they do bond over their mutual hatred of a comic called Li'l Cutie.

Rowley Jefferson

Rowley Jefferson is Greg's best friend. They go to school together and spend a lot of time together. Rowley is more timid than Greg and often follows along, sometimes to his detriment. He can't bring himself to watch or listen to the horror movie, but after Greg explains the movie in its entirety, Rowley becomes afraid. Later, when Greg tries to make him think the muddy hand is coming to get him, he beats Greg's hand with a mallet.

Rowley has a supportive, affectionate relationship with his parents. He doesn't like video games as much as Greg. He wins the video game tournament because of Greg's hand injury. Instead of participating in the next level of the tournament, he opts to take candy as a prize.

Rowley walks off the lawn service job after it looks like Greg is going to make him do all the work and just manage the business. This causes their falling out. When they're reunited during the vacation, Rowley continues to go along with Greg's antics. Once Greg gets them into trouble on vacation, Rowley's parents try to keep the boys separate. It's unclear how their relationship will hold up once they see each other in school again.



Mr. Heffley

Mr. Heffley is Greg's father. They have a strained relationship, in large part to their similar personalities. Mr. Heffley isn't an outwardly affectionate man. Mrs. Heffley tries to get him to show more affection toward his sons, but this ends in awkward encounters.

After learning that his father lied to him as a child about what happened to the family dog, Mr. Heffley decides to get a dog for the family. He wants the dog to like him and offers the dog more affection than he does his sons. The dog doesn't reciprocate, and instead favors Mrs. Heffley. He ultimately gives the dog to Gramma for her to take care of.

Mr. Heffley is frustrated by Greg's antics, his laziness, and how he sleeps for the majority of the day. He tries to strengthen the bond between him and Greg, but it ends badly when Greg convinces himself that his father is trying to get rid of him and calls the police.

Mr. Heffley and Greg share a common interest in hating the comic Li'l Cutie. This is enough to build a connection between the two of them.

Mrs. Heffley

Mrs. Heffley is Greg's mom. She wants Greg to have a good summer and thinks he should do more than play video games all night and sleep all day. In an effort to get Greg to spend more time reading, she starts a book club for the boys in the neighborhood. The book club falls apart after the revelation that Greg and Rowley racked up a drink bill at the country club. Mrs. Heffley takes Greg's birthday money to repay Mr. Jefferson, but the next day takes all three boys to get a make-up gift. She's caring and optimistic and wants her sons to have a strong relationship with their father.

Mr. Jefferson

Mr. Jefferson is Rowley's father. He is angered by the money Greg and Rowley's spend at the country club and wants the boys to repay the money. He doesn't think Greg is a good influence on Rowley.

Mrs. Jefferson

Mrs. Jefferson is Rowley's mother. She invites Greg along on the Jefferson family vacation in an effort to get Greg and Rowley back together.



Rodrick Heffley

Rodrick is Greg's older brother. Greg looks up to him, but Rodrick consistently plays tricks on Greg. He convinces him to go on the high-dive, makes him think that if he swallows a watermelon seed, it will grow the fruit in his stomach, and makes Greg think that his parents are going to get rid of Greg.

Grandpa

Grandpa is Mr. Heffley's father. He lied to his son when the dog died when Mr. Heffley was boy. This angers Mr. Heffley and prompts him to get a dog for the family.

Fregley

Fregley is the weird kid who lives down the street. Greg doesn't want to be friends with him, but Mrs. Heffley invites him over for a playdate when Greg and Rowley have their falling out.

Heather Hills

Heather Hills is the older, high-school aged sister of one of Greg's classmates. Greg has a crush on her and follows her around while she works as a lifeguard.

Gramma

Gramma is Mrs. Heffley's mother. She goes to the beauty parlor where Mrs. Heffley takes Greg. Her dog Henry has recently died and she enjoys, and believes, gossip magazines. Mr. Heffley gives Sweetie to her.

Manny

Manny is Greg's younger brother. He is rewarded for going on the potty without being asked and has collected his money. Greg considers asking him for a loan.

Symbols and Symbolism

The Fish

The fish symbolizes that Greg can be responsible, but is easily influenced or distracted as when Rodrick's fish is dumped in with his and Greg's fish is consumed.

The Muddy Hand

The muddy hand from the horror film symbolizes Greg's fear of the irrational and he tempers it with rational thought.

The Smoothies

The smoothies at the country club symbolize Greg's lack of understanding of money and consequence.

The High Dive

The high dive symbolizes how Greg gets thrust into situations he might not be ready for.

The Photographs

The photographs symbolize perspective and that Greg may eventually choose to see the good things that happened to him over the summer instead of focusing on the bad.

The Dog

The dog symbolizes affection, which both Greg and his father have trouble expressing.

Mrs. Canfield's Lawn

Mrs. Canfield's lawn symbolizes Greg immaturity and his inability to take responsibility for his actions.

The Cranium Shaker

The Cranium Shaker symbolizes how Greg wants things he isn't quite ready for.

Fregley

Fregley symbolizes Greg and how he doesn't want to be seen as the weird kid.

The Shower Room

The shower room symbolizes Greg's immaturity and that while he sees himself as grown up, he isn't ready for it.

Settings

The Heffley House

The Heffley House is Greg's childhood home. It's a modest, middle-class home. He has his own room. There is a basement with a furnace closet that frightens Greg and his friend Rowley.

The Country Club

The Country Club is where the Jefferson family belongs. Greg and Rowley spend the early part of their summer vacation there. It has a pool and they order smoothies and charge them to Mr. Jefferson's account. Mr. Jefferson later demands Greg reimbursement the \$83 for the smoothies.

The Vacation Cabin

The Vacation Cabin is modest cabin where the Jefferson family takes their summer vacation. Greg is invited to join them in an effort to repair the boys' relationship. The boys have to share the bed because neither is willing to sleep on the dirty floor.

The Public Pool

The Public Pool is where the Heffley's go during the summer. Greg's crush, Heather Hills, is a lifeguard there. Greg is revolted by the men's locker room room where the men must shower before getting in the pool.

The Game Hut

The Game Hut is the video game store where Greg and Rowley go for the video game competition. They camp outside the store to be there when it opens, but the store doesn't know about the competition. Rowley wins after Greg's hand gets hurt.

The Boardwalk

The Boardwalk is where the ride the Cranium Shaker is located. Greg rides the ride. Rowley and Greg tease other children with a dollar sticking up through the slats in the boardwalk and Greg ultimately loses the dollar.

Themes and Motifs

Family

The theme of family can be traced throughout the novel. Greg is the middle child in a middle-class family. He has a younger and an older brother. He also has difficulty relating to his parents, most notably his father.

Greg's relationship with each of his brothers is different. He looks up to Rodrick in spite of Rodrick misleading him, as he does when Greg thinks his dad might send him to an orphanage. Rodrick enjoys tormenting his brother and their relationship is a familiar dynamic between an older and younger brother. Greg's relationship with Manny differs greatly from Rodrick. Greg doesn't antagonize Manny the way Rodrick does Greg. This is primarily because of Manny's young age and this may be something that develops as they grow older. Of the three brothers, Manny appears to show some responsibility and cleverness, as is evidenced by how he goes around with water to increase his chance at earning money from his parents from the reward system they established.

The relationship Greg has with his mom is primarily one of annoyance. He views her as inept when it comes to technology. Similarly, he views her stance on video games and horror films as antiquated. He thinks she doesn't understand in much the same way she likely thinks Greg doesn't understand. When his mom starts the book club, Greg doesn't want to be a part of it, especially when she begins to insist on reading the classics. This leads Greg to admit to himself, and the reader, that he has trouble concentrating. He can tell his mom about the problems he's having with Rowley, but doesn't articulate his problem with concentrating.

The most complex relationship Greg has is with his father. The two do not relate well to each other; there is a clear distance between them and they can go days without speaking to one another. Likely the distance between them stems from the similarities in personality. While Greg may appear more playful and ornery, the reader only sees Mr. Heffley through Greg's lens. In doing so, the reader must infer the similarities between the two. Greg's reluctance to show affection is reminiscent to his father's. Similarly, the way they bond over the criticizing the Li'l Cutie comic reveals their sense of humor. It is likely that the trouble they experience stems from their inability to understand their selves via emotional development. It is fitting, and ironic, then, that the two bond over Li'l Cutie, which is a comic a father draws about the silly things his son does.

Rowley's family differs markedly from the Heffley's. They appear to have more financial stability, considering their country club membership and ability to take a family vacation. The Jeffersons are supportive and protective of Rowley. They encourage him even when he fails and openly tell him they love him. After Rowley has a nightmare, both parents comfort him and even let him sleep in their room. They appear to be overprotective. Mrs. Jefferson invites Greg to join the family vacation in an effort to

repair the relationship between the two boys, but after the incident at the boardwalk, both parents agree that Rowley shouldn't be hanging out with Greg.

Relationships

The theme of relationships is evident throughout the book. One of the primary conflicts in the book is the broken friendship between Greg and Rowley. The two are clearly close friends. They begin the summer together hanging out at the country club. Greg is the dominant of the two boys. He gets Rowley to go along with his antics, but it's not until Rowley takes initiative and walks away from Greg during the lawn care episode that the friendship flounders.

As with Greg's relationship with his father, Greg struggles with relationships with others. When Greg gets a fish, he cares for it, keeps its bowl clean, and feeds it. He demonstrates that he is able to take care of something, but it's a pet that is kept at a distance. When the fish dies, Greg doesn't understand how to express what he feels. When the dog arrives, Greg pushes the dog away even though the dog inserts himself in his life. The dog sleeps in Greg's room, which annoys him.

Greg rejects Fregley because he is seen as different from the other children. He doesn't want to invite Fregley in when Mrs. Heffley arranged the playdate and compares him to a vampire. Granted, Fregley may exhibit some unusual behavior; one of the illustrations suggests that Fregley may be naked behind a tree, and Greg hints at Fregley rarely leaving the yard. Greg may reject Fregley because Fregley reminds him of his insecurities about how he's viewed by others. If he rejects Fregley's strangeness, by extension he rejects the strange parts of himself.

Greg also chooses to have a family birthday party instead of a friend birthday party. He claims that this stems from the quality of gifts, but it may be that he feels more comfortable around his family. His family likely accepts him more readily, and this is comforting to him.

Knowledge

The theme of knowledge is apparent in the book. Greg's mother starts a book club for the neighborhood boys. Greg doesn't see the point and doesn't want to partake. There must be some initial interest in it, however, as several boys come to the first meeting. When Mrs. Heffley dismisses the boys' books, however, including a Sudoku book, the boys stop coming. This leaves Rowley and Greg as the lone members. Mrs. Heffley recommends classic literature and assigns "Charlotte's Web". Further, she bristles at the objectification of women portrayed on one of Greg's books and tries to convey this to Greg.

Rowley only returns one more time, and Greg feels as though Rowley has abandoned him. He doesn't possess the knowledge to understand why Rowley would prefer to spend time with his father. The two boys must figure out their own business, but lack



realistic expectations. They don't know enough about running a business to best meet the needs of their potential clientele. Further, when they do get a client, Rowley walks off the job and Greg ends up doing a terrible, mostly incomplete job.

Greg knows quite a lot about video games and enjoys playing them. Mrs. Heffley doesn't approve of the games, stating that they're too violent. She feels similarly about horror films. While Mrs. Heffley and Greg both may have valid points, the generational divide keeps them from fully understanding one another. Greg also comments about his mother's inability to use technology properly, like her camera phone, and insists that it's wasted on adults.

It is clear that Greg also lacks a certain amount of knowledge on how to interact with others. He struggles to connect with his father, so he avoids conversation. He thinks he should run the lawn care service, and this leads to his falling out with Rowley.

Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is an important theme in the book. The diary structure of the book lends itself toward understanding the self. Greg is young and going through an awkward phase in his life. Through his diary entries, he can see – and sometimes deny – the things that are happening to him. The book is record of this point in his life.

Greg can trace his interactions with others through the book. He maintains challenging relationships, which he is, on some level, aware of. He is aware that he probably can't trust his brother Rodrick, but does so anyway. This is likely because he doesn't have the self-assuredness to fully understand his brother's actions or intent.

A way in which Greg remains unaware is in his perceived relationship with Heather Hills. He doesn't know how to interact directly with his crush, and on some level must know that Heather would never been interested in him romantically. There is a significant age difference after all. Yet, he wants to interact with her, and perceives their interactions as a substitute for a relationship. Once Heather turns to Greg with expectation, Greg becomes much more aware of the reality of the relationship and back away. He may have a crush on Heather, but he isn't going to clean up after a sick kid so that she doesn't have to. It's at this point that Greg determines that their relationship needs to stop.

Greg possesses a strong sense of self-importance, but is self-aware enough to understand some of his shortcomings. While he is able to recognize them, he isn't ready to take full responsibility for them. When he is accused of being lazy, Greg readily admits that he is, but blames his parents and the education system for not intervening earlier to prevent his laziness from fully taking hold.

Responsibility

The theme of responsibility can be traced throughout the book. Early on in the book, Greg orders the smoothies at the country club without thinking about the cost. When he is later confronted with the bill, he doesn't think he should have to take responsibility for it. Greg isn't invited back to the country club and feels that Rowley shouldn't be either, even though it's Rowley's family that belongs to the club.

When Greg is forced to take responsibility for paying the bill, he and Rowley start a lawn care service. While the intention is right, the way in which they go about it doesn't quite work. Instead of focusing on the task at hand, Greg would rather daydream about how successful the business is going to be, how many people he will have working for him, and how they will expand into snow removal in the winter. Yet, Greg and Rowley bore easily when going door-to-door and ask the neighbors to pass along the good word.

Once they finally get a job, the job is mismanaged. When Rowley walks off the job at Mrs. Canfield's, Greg cheats the job because he doesn't want to have to deal with the dog excrement. When Greg and his dad return, Mr. Heffley completes the job, which keeps Greg from fully accepting responsibility for what he's done, or rather hasn't done.

After Greg is sent home from vacation with the Jeffersons, Greg's parents try to better relate with their son. Greg thinks that the impending surprise is his father's way of getting rid of him. He doesn't know that his father is taking him to a baseball game, and it's not the typical father-son interaction they have. After speaking with Rodrick, Greg's paranoia increases and it leads him to making the decision to call the police. Afterwards, Greg may feel bad about what he's done, but he doesn't truly take responsibility for his actions. He does, however, reach out to his father after the two have gone an extended period of time not speaking to one another.

Styles

Point of View

The point of view for *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days* is from that of a middle-school aged boy: Greg Heffley. The book is told from a first-person narrative, via diary entries. Greg is the middle child and has both an older and a younger brother.

Greg is frequently frustrated by his relationships with other people, but in particular with his parents. He doesn't relate well with his mother, but his relationship with his father is notably distant. They are similar in personality which likely contributes to their difficulty in connecting with each other. Greg doesn't have a lot of friends. His relationship with Rowley is strained repeatedly throughout the book, and Greg fails to recognize any culpability he might have in the strained relationship.

Greg tends to be a selfish and self-centered character. He doesn't always make choices that endear him to the reader, but because of his failures, he is relatable. His use of humor, which isn't always intentional, such as when Greg announces he's going to cool his summer romance with Heather Hills, makes him likable. While Greg may be selfish, he is also self-aware. He can recognize some of his shortcomings, like being lazy.

Part of what makes Greg's perspective important is that his voice is one that is easily marginalized. He's a middle child, in middle school, and has trouble relating to others. It is easy to recognize that much of what Greg does is in an effort to be noticed. He has a desire for fame because he wants to be recognized. If at times his point of view gives the impression of an inflated sense of self, it is Greg's way of being noticed.

Language and Meaning

The vocabulary used in *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days* is on par with what an average middle-aged student would possess. Greg's reluctance to participate in his mother's book club indicates that while he is literate, he isn't interested in expanding his vocabulary. Thus, the vocabulary presented in the book is appropriate.

There is some social commentary offered throughout the book. Greg has a desire to be rich and famous. He comments on how differently he expects to be treated when this happens and, in his mind, plans accordingly. He holds the opinion that technology is wasted on adults and observes how his mother, in particular, has difficulty with technology. Most notably she struggles with operating her camera phone and disapproves of Greg's passion for video games.

Greg has a reluctant personality. He isn't keen to try things out of his comfort zone or do something he doesn't want to do. This is evidenced by his admitted laziness and inability to follow through on the lawn care service.

A lot of how Greg relates to the world around him is centered on unrealistic expectations, which is likely normal for someone his age. He considers following a girl around a romance. He thinks about how expanding his business before completing one mowing job. And he also thinks about the future museum in his name and how he will be rich and famous, yet he doesn't strategize as to how any of these things will come to fruition. Greg is more talk than action.

Structure

The structure of *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days* takes the form of a diary. There isn't an entry for each day of his summer vacation, but rather focuses on days of note. No chapter numbers are given, but the book notes the shift from June to July to August. Each entry begins with the day of the week. Other than noting the 4th of July, the particular dates are not given.

The type-face is made to look as though the pages are hand-written. The pages are lined, making them look more like notebook paper. The print is easily legible. The larger font makes the book readily accessible for young readers.

Also included are illustrations on each page. It is made to look as though Greg has drawn them. While they illustrate what is happening in the particular chapters, the illustrations actually serve to further develop the story, often to comical results. Many of the books punchlines are included in the drawings.

The time frame of the novel is Greg's summer vacation. Holidays are noted. Greg attends a Father's Day brunch. The family goes to the pool on the 4th of July. The family comes together for Greg's birthday. Other holidays are referenced, such as Christmas and Mother's Day. While Greg doesn't attend school over the summer, the Back-to-School sales are referenced, much to Greg's displeasure.

Quotes

For me, summer vacation is basically a three-month guilt trip."

-- Greg (Chapter 1, Friday paragraph 1)

Importance: The quote reveals Greg's mindset as summer begins; it indicates his level of self-awareness.

I can't stop myself from reading it, and Dad can't, either. I guess we just like seeing how bad it is."

-- Greg (Chapter 3, Sunday paragraph 7)

Importance: This quote establishes the bond Greg and his father have; they may have difficulty relating to one another, but they share common ground.

Mom told me I had to read in my bedroom for twenty minutes yesterday, but the truth is, I just have trouble concentrating for long periods of time."

-- Greg (Chapter 9, Friday paragraph 3)

Importance: This quote reveals why Greg is reluctant to be involved in his mom's book club.

Rowley thought the holiday napkins were some kind of really fancy toilet paper, and he asked me if my family was rich."

-- Greg (Chapter 11, Tuesday paragraph 3)

Importance: The quote demonstrates the humor used in the novel, but also shows the differences in the families. Rowley assumes the family is rich, but Greg knows that the napkins were used out of necessity.

As long as I don't stop to read anything, I can get through a pile of twenty cards in under a minute."

-- Greg (Chapter 15, Monday paragraph 8)

Importance: The quote explains Greg's pride at the efficiency with which he opens his birthday cards, but also indicates his selfishness because he's only interested in the money.

Mom won't let it go, though. She says she wants to see more "affection" between Dad and us boys. And that's created some really awkward moments."

-- Greg (Chapter 16, Thursday paragraph 8)

Importance: The quote indicates the expectation and reality of the relationship Mrs. Heffley would like to see between her husband and her sons.



See, this is what stinks about being a kid. You only get two shots at getting stuff you want, and that's on Christmas and your birthday."

-- Greg (Chapter 20, Monday paragraph 4)

Importance: The quote reveals Greg's sometimes selfish nature.

I thought you had to be forty-eight years old to ride, but it turns out the two little lines next to the number meant "inches".

-- Greg (Chapter 22, Saturday paragraph 16)

Importance: The quote reveals how Greg doesn't follow through on questions he should ask and how his insecurities are holding him back.

Grandpa said he made up the butterfly farm story so he didn't have to tell Dad the truth, but that now they could have a good laugh over it."

-- Greg (Chapter 23, Sunday paragraph 12)

Importance: The quote reveals the similarity in personality between Greg and his grandpa.

I can't believe it's actually LEGAL to run a back-to-school ad two months before school starts."

-- Greg (Chapter 28, Tuesday paragraph 3)

Importance: The quote indicates that while Greg may feel that summer vacation is a long guilt trip for him, he prefers to be on vacation than at school.

Anyway, I've been doing a lot of thinking lately, and I've realized that I need to let this summer romance cool off a little."

-- Greg (Chapter 32, Monday paragraph 13)

Importance: The quote reveals how Greg terminates his relationship with Heather Hills in his mind. Heather isn't even aware of him, and instead of acknowledging this, Greg opts to end the romance.

But I guess the person who takes the pictures is the one who gets to tell the story."

-- Greg (Chapter 41, Sunday paragraph 9)

Importance: The quote reveals how the photographs can distort the reality of the summer, in this case making it look more like a perfect summer.