

# **Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules Study Guide**

**Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules by Jeff Kinney**

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# Plot Summary

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Roderick Rules by Jeff Kinney is the second book in the series and begins with Greg writing in his new journal. School is getting ready to start back for the year and Greg writes about how his summer has gone. He joined the swim team and enjoyed his summer break, with one exception. And only Rodrick knows that secret.

Now that school is about to start, Greg suddenly recalls with dread that at the end of school last year he had gotten the "cheese touch." He calms when he realizes that he passed the "cheese touch" on to Jeremy Pindle. Rowley went to South America for the summer so they did not spend any time together, which makes Greg sad. The only person he had to hang out with was Roderick and that didn't go so well.

During the summer, Greg's mother tried to get Greg and Rodrick to "bond" but Rodrick was too fond of shoving and pushing. But, Greg shares, Rodrick got away with it because of "the secret." Maybe if Greg were to find out some good dirt on Roderick, he'd be able to neutralize Rodrick's hold over him.

Greg's father took the summer to work on a Civil War replica in the laundry/furnace room and declared the entire space off limits to kids. Rowley returned from South America and was eager to tell Greg all about it. Greg didn't seem to hear what Rowley was saying and interrupted his friend to talk about his own life. Rowley left. That summed up his summer, Greg writes in his journal. School starts and Greg is assigned a pen pal in his French class.

Greg's father, Frank, takes Greg to the mall on Saturdays to escape Manny (the youngest) and diaper duty. Greg isn't too fond of Manny either since Manny broke one of Greg's gaming consoles. On the bright side, Greg states, he received his first actual letter from Mamadou Montpierre, his new French pen pal. Greg is disgusted and amazed by his brother Rodrick's ability to will his parents to do his bidding. Despite Susan (Greg's mother) demanding that Rodrick type his own research paper, later that night Greg sees Frank typing it for him.

Chirag Gupta is a boy in Greg's class. Greg likes him and decides to pull a welcome back to school prank on him. Greg ends up getting the entire classroom in on it, but Chirag doesn't take it well. He goes to the principal to complain, but the principal can't understand Chirag's English and gets the name wrong. Chirag tells his father and when Chirag comes to Rowley's birthday party, Mr. Gupta (Chirag's father) tells Susan about it. Greg is made to apologize. Chirag and Greg reconcile and renew their friendship.

Susan starts a program that she calls Mom Bucks. Her sons can do various jobs and tasks and earn "Mom Bucks" which will allow them to have money for purchasing miscellaneous items. Career day comes to the school and Greg watches in horror as Rowley talks to someone about nursing school. Since Rowley received a diary for his birthday, Greg is determined to read it to find out why Rowley would want to be a nurse. His plans are foiled, however, when he sees that Rowley's diary has a key.



Cashing in his Mom Bucks, he purchases a diary that is identical to Rowley's so that he can open his friend's diary. When he does he doesn't see anything out of the ordinary. He feels that he has wasted his money. That next weekend, Greg's mother and father go away for some alone time, and they leave Manny with Greg's grandparents. Rodrick makes sure his parents are gone, and then he calls his friends and invites them over for a party. Greg vows silence if he can come to the party. Rodrick agrees, but the night of the party, he locks Greg in the basement. However, since Rodrick has "the secret" on Greg he manages to blackmail him into helping him clean up the house before their parents come home.

Frank, their father, notices that something is wrong with the bathroom door, but can't figure out what. The lock that used to be on it is missing. Greg and Rodrick switched the door with one in the basement after Rodrick's party because one of the party-goers had drawn inappropriate pictures on it. Greg decides that this is the "dirt" he has been waiting for and threatening to tell their parents about it will make Rodrick drop his blackmail treatment.

Greg receives a letter from his pen pal, but it irritates him because writing letters is so old school. He doesn't know why the teachers won't let them email each other. It'd be so much easier. Susan, meanwhile, is determined to make her two older sons bond with one another. She learns that some of the kids are into a role playing game called Magick and Monsters. She buys some cheat books for the boys to learn to play better. Unfortunately, Rodrick seizes on the opportunity to annihilate Greg's characters, then shows no mercy when they play their games. Greg believes that his mother's quest to promote sibling bonding is a waste of time.

The school notifies Greg's family that the music education program has been cancelled. Susan arranges for Rodrick to give both Rowley and Greg drum lessons in exchange for some Mom Bucks. It does not go well and Rodrick uses the opportunity to make both Greg and Rowley feel like idiots. In the meanwhile, over at Rowley's house, Greg finds the same fake money that his mother uses for her Mom Bucks. He asks Rowley if he can have it, then takes the money home and stashes it away in his room.

Greg finds himself short on time to write a paper for his History class. Rodrick tells him that he has an old paper that he will sell Greg in exchange for some Mom Bucks. He agrees and takes the paper, but it is completely on the wrong topic and he gets an F. Meanwhile, Rodrick tries to use the Mom Bucks that he's gotten from Greg, but Susan suspects something. She knows that Rodrick hasn't done anything to have earned all of those Mom Bucks. She suspends the program summarily.

In December, Susan asks Frank to go down to the corner to pick up the pictures that she'd dropped off to be developed from Thanksgiving, but the pictures that Frank returns with are pictures from Rodrick's party. They punish both Rodrick and Greg, whom they assume was also in on it. Their parents no longer trust them to stay alone at the house, so when Susan and Frank have to both leave the house, they take the boys over to their Grandfather's apartment.



Meanwhile, the school announces a Winter Talent Show and Rowley and Greg think that they will do something for that as a way of becoming popular. Frank ends the boys' punishment early as the drum practice is driving him crazy. Rowley stays the night at Greg's house and Greg ends up hurting Rowley on accident. Manny witnesses it and tells his mother. She makes Greg agree to be Rowley's assistant for his magic act for the talent show. They try out for the show, but don't make it. Roderick's science fair project is finally completed and Roderick goes back to practicing with his band.

Roderick's science teacher, however, calls Susan and Frank and tells them that Roderick's project didn't meet the standards and that he'll have to resubmit. Roderick's parents make him stop practicing with his band and focus on his science fair project. Roderick defies his parents claiming that when his band wins they are going to go for a record contract and then they will be dropping out of school to go on tour. Susan and Frank start to argue but see that it is a losing battle. Susan agrees to film Roderick on stage during the talent show. The film doesn't turn out well and is unusable, mainly because Susan starts dancing and it is captured on film by the school's official photographer. Greg is embarrassed twice.

Roderick is furious and blames Greg for not shooting the film. He decides that it is time to unveil Greg's summertime secret to the general public. Greg shares what the big secret is. During the summer, Greg had accidentally walked into the women's bathroom when they had been visiting their grandfather at Leisure Towers apartments. He had tried to leave quickly, but had become trapped in a stall waiting for the women who had come in, to leave. Meanwhile, Roderick has gone to work and before the day is out, Greg's story is out. Devastated, Greg asks his mother if he can be transferred to another school.

To Greg's surprise all of the students at school view Greg as a hero. Greg is confused and gets to the bottom of it. Apparently the story that Roderick told was passed around so much that it changed. Instead of old women in the retirement apartments, the story has been changed to the story that Greg managed to get into the girl's locker room at Crossland high school. He is instantly popular...at least with the boys.

Meanwhile, Roderick's day is made when his band gets noticed because of his mother's antics on camera. The video goes viral and is called "Dancing Mom" on the internet. Roderick develops a reputation as being the drummer from the "Dancing Mom" video. Even though it does get Roderick noticed, and his band, he is still extremely embarrassed. Greg finds himself feeling actually sorry for Roderick. Later, the family receives word that if Roderick doesn't turn in a real science project that he will fail for the year. Greg tells Roderick that he will help him and the two brothers honestly work together to get it done. Roderick tells Greg that he's glad that he's his brother.



# September

## Summary

September

It is the start of a new school year and Greg's mother has bought him another journal. Greg tells her that he doesn't want to carry around a book that says "diary" on it because he will get beaten up. Rodrick validates that claim as he spies Greg with the diary and calls him a sissy, then flattens him to the ground. Greg writes that over the summer Rodrick had gotten hold of the last journal and that it had been horrible.

In fact, Greg shares, his entire summer was horrible. His family hadn't gone anywhere or done anything fun. He'd been forced to join the swim team and his father had not told him about the starter gun. When it went off at the first meet Greg was so worried about where the bullet would come down that he could barely make it to the other side. Greg shares that even after that, when his father explained that starter guns only fire blanks, he was still the worst swimmer on the team. To make matters worse Greg had to wear his brother's old swim trunks, and then Rodrick was saddled with picking him up in his band's van after practice every day. Rodrick was always late, and then he made Greg ride in the back with the equipment. So, as a result, Greg just opted to walk home all summer long.

Now, with it being the first day of school, Greg remembers that he's totally forgotten that he was the last one to get the "cheese touch" before school was out. The rules stipulate that you have the "touch" until you pass it along to someone else. Greg finds the most unsuspecting individual in Jeremy Pindle and passes it along. That problem taken care of, Greg proceeds to the rest of his classes.

Greg finds out in French class that they are supposed to get pen pals for the duration of the year. Greg remembers when Rodrick did this and that he had gotten a hot girl from Holland. Hoping for the best, Greg fills out his profile form. The teacher hands it back and tells him that the student will be French, and will be a boy about his own age. Greg is defeated.

Rowley talks about nothing but his summer trip that he made to South America, which Greg finds boring. He has a hard time being excited about someone else's trips and so he zones out. When he comes home he and Rodrick get into a huge fight in the front room over possession of the remote. Manny witnesses it and draws a picture which he puts in his preschool backpack. When Susan, Greg's mother, sees the drawing, she thinks that the picture is of her and her husband fighting and making Manny cry. Greg doesn't bother to correct her.

Greg's mother is determined that Rodrick and Greg bond and become better toward one another. Neither thinks that this is a great plan. Besides, Greg shares, right now



Rodrick is getting away with murder in the house because Greg doesn't tell their parents half of the stuff that he does. This is because Rodrick has a very large secret about something that happened to Greg over the summer. It was epically embarrassing and Rodrick threatens to spread it around school if Greg doesn't tow the line. Greg is pretty sure he hasn't ever hated someone as much as he hates Rodrick.

Rowley comes over and Greg tells him that his father's battlefield reenactment diorama is set up in the basement so they aren't allowed to go down there anymore. To Greg's delight, every Saturday has become movie day for him and his father. Greg knows that he's just doing this to avoid Rodrick's band practice, but he's okay with that. He thinks Rodrick's band is loud and lousy too.

Unfortunately, when Greg and his father return home, Rodrick's band is still going, and to make matters worse, there are a dozen teenagers gathered outside of the garage, blocking the driveway. Frank runs into the house to call the police, but Susan stops him. Not to be defeated, Frank races up to his bedroom, drags out a boom box and puts in a classical cd, then cranks the volume while he holds it outside of the window. The teens scatter.

Greg states that Manny is getting on his nerves. He's three and uses that as his preferred excuse. Greg cites the incident where Manny stuffed chocolate icing into Greg's gaming controller. Greg was furious, but Manny blinked and said, "I'm only three." So, from then on, Greg writes, he stays clear of Manny.

Rodrick has an English paper due and Greg overhears their mother telling Rodrick that she is not going to do it for him. He has to type it by himself. Rodrick doesn't seem to buy that and continues to put off doing the paper. In the meantime, Greg writes his first letter to his pen pal in France. It is a boy named Momadu. Greg writes that his teacher has told them that they must write in French, but he suggests to Momadu that they just both write in English to keep things simple.

Later that night Rodrick shows his paper to Frank who is appalled. Greg knows that Rodrick has done it on purpose so that Frank will help him. It works like a charm and late into the night Greg can hear Frank typing away at the paper. Sometimes Greg admires his brother's ability to control their parents.

## Analysis

In this initial section many of the inciting conflicts are presented. First, there is the fact that Greg and Rodrick do not get along with one another. It is also evident that their mother is concerned by their continual adversarial attitude towards one another. The symbolism of the diary is introduced, here, as well. It represents Greg as he truly is, and not as the person he tries to project to the world. As a result, Rodrick's attack on the diary shows how Rodrick systematically attacks who Greg is.

The theme of Brothers is introduced with many of the first incidents between Greg and Rodrick. Chief among them is the fact that Rodrick knows a secret, a very embarrassing



secret, about Greg. He uses this as blackmail throughout the novel in order to get Greg to do what he wants. This shows that Rodrick only views Greg as a pest and someone to be manipulated and used. This same attitude is reflected in Greg's feelings toward his younger brother, Manny.

Responsibility, as a theme, is introduced in this section, too, as Susan tells Rodrick that he will have to type his own English paper as she is not going to do it for him this time. Not only does this indicate that Greg's parents have enabled their children, and built in a dependency for school work, but that both of the boys are unwilling to tackle long term projects for school because they feel as if their parents will come through for them at the last minute. It is a scenario that has worked for them both so far.

The theme of Family is also touched upon as the reader sees Susan Heffley attempting to bring her family together in various ways. She wants to be supportive, but often does not manage to get it to work. When Rodrick is practicing with his band in the garage and some teens begin to gather on the driveway, it is Susan who dissuades Frank from calling the police.

The symbolism of the "cheese touch" is also introduced in this section. The "cheese touch" brings instant alienation to the toucher. As the last person to touch the cheese last year, Greg finds himself being avoided at all costs on the first day of school. As a result, Greg immediately finds someone else to transfer "the touch" to to rid himself of the social alienation.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Family in this section.

## Discussion Question 2

Why does Greg care so much about the "cheese touch"?

## Discussion Question 3

How do all of the brothers at the Heffley house view one another?

## Vocabulary

ahold, lousy, umpire, banquet, potential, skimpy, crammed, hypothermia, damage, vacation, decent, miniature, romantic, klutzy, blurry





# October

## Summary

October

Greg talks about a boy named Chirag Gupta who is in his class at school. Greg likes Chirag but thinks he will have some fun with him. He and the rest of the class pretended that Chirag was still gone, despite Chirag's attempts to make them stop. Finally, Chirag realizes that Rowley doesn't understand practical jokes and begins working on him, getting him to acknowledge him.

The Principal is brought into the problem and Greg is called to his office. Unfortunately, Principal Roy got the name of the victim wrong, and Greg apologizes for picking on someone who didn't even really exist. Greg finds it completely hilarious and doesn't stop the gag when he returns to class.

Rowley's birthday party is coming up and Greg is interested in going. He has his mother take him to the mall to get a gift. When he finds a video game that he thinks Rowley will like, he hands it to his mother who hands it back to him and tells him that he has to buy it. Greg is flabbergasted. He doesn't have the money. Mom buys it but says that there are going to be some changes.

Later that night Greg's mother, Susan, calls a family meeting. She is instituting a process called Mom Bucks. She showed them some fake money, like from a game, and tells the boys that they can earn Mom Bucks by doing chores and good deeds. Then they can take their Mom Bucks and trade them in for real money. She handed both boys \$1000.00 each and Greg became really excited until Susan tells them that Mom Bucks are worth only a penny of real money. Rodrick cashed his in immediately and bought some Heavy Metal magazines.

Rowley's birthday party is held in the mall, which Greg finds horrifically infantile. To make matters worse, Rowley's parents give him a diary. Rowley shows Greg and says that they can be Diary Twins from now on. Greg wonders why they are still friends. At least Rowley's diary isn't as cool looking. Mr. Gupta, Chirag's father speaks with Susan and tells her what Greg has been doing in class. Greg denies it, so Mrs. Heffley asks Rowley who caves and rats out Greg. Greg is made to apologize in person to Chirag. In the end, Chirag lets him off the hook and they are good friends again.

His mother tells him that she's not as upset about the prank he played on Chirag as much as the fact that Greg lied to her about it. Greg determines that he will be better about things like that. Greg realizes that maybe there is something to the whole trustworthy aspect of growing up. He decides that from now on he will be 100% honest all of the time. He says that he finds it liberating but that not everyone is on board with



his brutal honesty. Later that day Greg's mother releases him from his vow of 100% honesty.

The next day is Career Day at Greg's school. Greg says that it doesn't really help him decide what he wants to be as much as what he knows he doesn't want to be. Rowley goes over to the Nursing table and Greg is mortified. Later, when he returns home, his mother sends him and Rodrick over to their grandmother's house to rake leaves. Mom promises to pay them in Mom Bucks upon their return. Rodrick tells Greg that since they are getting paid by the bag they needed to not fill the bags so full so that there will be a lot of them. Greg decides that on certain occasions, his brother is handy to have around.

Greg is upset with Rowley because he's taken to sitting with a bunch of girls at lunchtime. They giggle and laugh constantly making Greg think that they are talking about him. He determines to find out what Rowley is up to by reading his diary. The problem is that Rowley's diary has a lock on it. Greg uses his Mom Bucks and goes to the bookstore where he buys an identical diary so he can have the key. The next day Greg gets his chance as Rowley has left his diary lying on the bench in gym class. But, when he opens it up there is nothing in it about him, at all. Greg is miffed that he has used his Mom Bucks on a wild goose chase.

Several days later Greg is surprised when his Mom and Dad announce that they are going away for the weekend. What is the biggest surprise is that Greg and Rodrick will be staying at the house on their own. Manny will be staying with grandma and grandpa. Greg is astounded that they would trust Rodrick, but since he has been down with the flu, Greg reasons that they think he will be too sick to have a party.

Greg reports that the second day his parents are gone, Rodrick makes a spectacular recovery and starts calling all of his friends to come over for a massive party at his house. Greg doesn't rat him out because of the "secret" that Rodrick has on him, and secondly because Greg has never been to a high school party and he's eager to attend. The evening of the party, a few hours before, Rodrick sends Greg down the stairs to get some folding tables to hold refreshments. But, once Greg is halfway down the stairs he hears the door shut and the lock turn. He's been locked in the basement. He ends up spending the night down there while Rodrick has his party.

When Greg wakes up the next morning the door is unlocked. Greg goes into the main part of the house, and it looks like a tornado has gone off. Rodrick tells Greg that he's going to help him clean it all up, or else. Greg does, but he decides then and there that he's going to find a way to get out from under Rodrick's grip. He will find some dirt on his brother to hold over his head.

His parents return and are none the wiser, Greg thinks. The next day is Manny's first day of preschool and Greg says that it does not go so well. All of the kids were dressed up for Halloween and Manny became hysterical. Greg's mother had to go and pick him up.



## Analysis

The fact that Greg lacks empathy and is primarily only concerned with himself is exemplified in this section. The first indication of this tendency is in his treatment of Chirag Gupta who has returned to school after being gone for a year. Greg's grasp of what is funny and what isn't is indicated when he thinks that getting everyone to ignore Chirag would be the best prank ever. Unfortunately, it really upsets Chirag who reports it to the Principal and his father. When Susan learns what Greg has done at school she is angry, disappointed, and saddened. Greg doesn't like seeing his mother disappointed in him and he begins to rethink the way he does things. Unfortunately, it does not last long.

The symbolism of the Mom Bucks appears in this section. Susan has determined that in an effort to combat the habitual laziness in the house, that she will offer fake money rewards (which they can turn in for real cash) for those who do good deeds, and/or do chores. This works well for Greg, but not so much for Rodrick who cashes in his start up bucks almost instantly.

When the parents leave for the weekend, leaving Rodrick and Greg alone, it has disastrous consequences. The theme of Responsibility is demonstrated in this chapter. Rodrick locks Greg in the basement for most of the night, while he proceeds to break the rules by having a party. Afterwards, Rodrick demands that Greg help him clean, holding the "secret" over Greg's head. Throughout the novel both brothers struggle with taking responsibility for their own actions.

The theme of Friendship arises when Greg goes to Rowley's party and is angered to see that his friend has received a diary much like his own (only girlier, he says). He wishes that Rowley would stop copying him and live his own life. This is highly ironic given that Greg doesn't live an authentic life either given how obsessed he is with his own image. Also, Greg still seems insecure about his friendship with Rowley.

### Discussion Question 1

How does Greg treat Rowley, in general?

### Discussion Question 2

Why did Susan implement the Mom Bucks? What does she hope to accomplish?

### Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Responsibility as it is seen in this chapter.

## Vocabulary

officially, invisible, basically, defense, hovering, decency, identity, apology, detention, lollipop, stiffed



# November

## Summary

November

Greg begins to relax as the week moves forward. Apparently his parents aren't even remotely aware of the party that went on in their absence. At one point Greg's father looks at the bathroom door thinking that it used to lock, but since no one comments on it, he chalks it up to his forgetfulness. Greg and Rodrick had ended up swapping the bathroom door for one in the basement because one of Rodrick's friends ended up writing on the door in a Sharpie.

Greg receives a letter from his pen pal, Mamadu. Greg likes getting the letters and thinks that he will give this whole thing his best shot. He writes to Mamadu that he thinks it is stupid that they can't use email. He also tells Mamadu that his English spelling is incorrect, when in fact it is correct.

Rowley calls Greg and tells him that his parents are going out and that he has a babysitter, Heather Hollis. Greg invites himself over because Heather is the most popular girl at Crossland High School. When Greg gets there, though, instead of Heather answering the door, Leland, Rowley's next door neighbor answers the door. He is about to leave when Rowley asks him if he wants to learn a new game called Magick and Monsters. Greg agrees but doubts that he'll like it.

Actually, Greg ends up liking it a lot, and he ends up liking Leland better as a babysitter. When Greg goes home he tells his Mom all about the game. For the next several days after school both Greg and Rowley head over to Leland's to play Magick and Monsters. Greg's mother asks to tag along. When she sees the game she comes up with the brilliant plan to get Greg and Rodrick to play the game together, so that they can bond as brothers. Rodrick is all in, which shocks Greg. Unfortunately, Rodrick is very good at the game and it doesn't take too long before Greg is being bullied in a role playing game as badly as in real life by Rodrick.

Greg says that sitting next to Alex Aruda in Pre-Algebra isn't working out like he thought it would. While Alex is very easy to cheat off of, Mrs. Lee, the teacher, watches Greg like a hawk. Greg thinks it is because she also had Rodrick a few years prior and his reputation preceded Greg. So far, Algebra is a bust.

A letter comes to the house for Greg and he's afraid it is something bad. As it turns out it is a letter from the school saying that they have shut down the music program. Seeing a win/win situation, Greg's mother enlists Rodrick's help in giving both Greg and Rowley drum lessons. That way Greg can continue his music lessons and Rodrick can earn some Mom Bucks. The lessons don't go well and after a while both Greg and Rowley give up.



Greg states that he has a history paper that will be due around Thanksgiving and he's not sure how he's even going to write it. The teachers have become stricter about the quality of the work that the students are turning in, Greg writes. He goes over to Rowley's thinking that they can maybe work on the papers together, but when he arrives they are sidetracked. When Rowley leaves the room Greg notices that some of the fake money that his mother uses for Mom Bucks is in Rowley's game drawer. When Rowley comes back he asks if he can have it. Rowley agrees.

Greg realizes a few days later that his History paper is due and he hasn't even started. He's banking on the fact that there will be a huge snow day coming. The forecasts have all said that it will be snowing and that they should expect a foot of snow. Greg feels as if he has it made.

The next morning he pushes back the curtains and it has not snowed. Greg goes into panic mode. Thinking that his father will bail him out because he's bailed out Rodrick, Greg tries to get his father to help him. His father turns him away. Rodrick overhears the conversation and tells Greg to follow him to the basement. Rodrick finds his old History paper for the same class and tells him that he'll sell it to him for some Mom Bucks. Greg agrees.

Unfortunately, Greg doesn't proofread the paper and realizes that it is not typed and is in Rodrick's handwriting. He knows that he is in trouble. He stuffs the paper back into his backpack and tells the teacher that he doesn't have a paper to turn in. Then, when he gets home his mother has figured out that someone has been cheating with the Mom Bucks. She cancels the entire program.

Thanksgiving arrives and Greg's Aunt Loretta shows up early, as usual. Greg and Rodrick fight over who has to entertain her until other relatives arrive. Uncle Joe and his family arrive and the eating commences. Later, Frank goes downstairs to work on his Civil War battlefield and Joe follows him. Frank is not happy that his brother has come down there and they go upstairs where Frank cranks up the thermostat to make it uncomfortable so everyone will go home. Greg writes that this is how Thanksgiving is every year at their house.

## Analysis

Greg begins to make a shift in his perspectives toward people and his expectations about them. When he goes over to Rowley's to meet the attractive babysitter, he is disappointed to find Leland there instead. At first he is angry about it, as the only reason he went over there was to see the babysitter, not spend time with Rowley. However, both Rowley and Leland talk him into staying and trying *Magick and Monsters*, which Greg ends up really liking. What Greg takes away from this is that he shouldn't always judge a situation based on its 'cool' factor. This entire scene demonstrates the theme of Friendship as Greg begins to realize that using people, especially those he calls friends isn't very nice.



The theme of Brothers arises again in this section. In an attempt to give the boys something to bond over, Susan has embraced all things Magick and Monsters. She purchases the game pieces and books and tells Rodrick to learn the game so that he can play with Greg. To Greg's shock, Rodrick agrees, only to use it to completely dominate and destroy Greg on the gameboard. It is just more proof, Greg thinks, of how mean and insufferable his brother is.

Personal Responsibility as a theme is exemplified in the scene surrounding Greg's decision to cheat in his Algebra class. He purposely sits next to a very smart student and works out a system for allowing Greg to cheat off of him. Mrs. Lee, however, has had Rodrick a few years previously and she watches Greg like a hawk, Greg reports. Later, when Greg sees some of Susan's fake money at Rowley's house, he acts irresponsibly by taking the money and pretending that it is earned Mom Bucks.

The theme of Responsibility continues as the reader sees Greg put off doing a History paper because he's sure school will be canceled due to a snow day. When the snow day doesn't happen, he is stuck without a paper to turn in. When he buys one from Rodrick, he realizes too late that the paper is substandard and that it would be better to turn in nothing as opposed to that bad work. It is at this point that he feels badly for letting Mr. Huff down. This is a first for Greg as he has always viewed teachers as 'the enemy'.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Responsibility.

## Discussion Question 2

Describe Rodrick and Greg's relationship.

## Discussion Question 3

What did Greg realize about his friendship with Rowley?

## Vocabulary

complaining, imagination, dork, eventually, ruined, loophole, Mead, brainy, academy, assignment, frustrated, extinct



# December

## Summary

December

December starts off with a bang as Greg's parents finally discover the truth about Roderick's party. They had learned about it because of a clerical error at the photomart. Greg's mother sent Greg's father to pick up pictures from Thanksgiving, but the clerk gave him the pictures that Rodrick dropped off from his party. When Greg's parents open the envelope and view the party pictures, Rodrick is in deep trouble, and so is Greg because they figure that he was in on it, too.

Rodrick is grounded from leaving the house and he has to give up his car keys. Greg's father won't let him sleep in on the weekends either. Greg figures he has gotten off easy since all they did was give him a two week ban on playing his video games. To make matters worse, Greg's parents are going away again for the weekend, but this time, since they believe the boys are not trustworthy, Rodrick and Greg will be spending some quality time with Grandpa at Leisure Towers apartments. Manny will stay with Gammie, who lives by herself and has all sorts of good food in her 'fridge. Greg is upset.

They watch boring television programs they figure only old people like and have to eat healthy salads during the time they spend at their Grandfather's house. Afterwards, when they've returned home, Greg states that he is never covering for Rodrick ever again. Spending any length of time with Grandpa is punishment enough.

Greg learns that Rodrick has a science fair project due. True to form, Rodrick isn't interested in doing it at all. Greg's parents set up due dates for Rodrick to follow so that he can do a little bit of work on the project each night. It doesn't go so well and things become very tense around the house for a while.

The next day at school it is announced that there will be tryouts for the school's talent show. Both Rowley and Greg think that they will try out for it. Greg wants to do a comedy routine, and Rowley thinks he will do a magic show. Rodrick plans to audition with his band, The Loaded Diapers. Rowley had asked Greg to be his assistant in the magic show, but he changes his mind when Greg casts him as the dog-boy in his comedy skit. Since Rodrick is still grounded and can't leave the house, he has his band come over every night to practice. This prompts Greg's father to lift the ban on leaving the house.

Since the basement is free again, Greg invites Rowley to come over to sleep over. They plan to watch horror movies but then Mrs. Heffley brings Manny down to hang with the big boys. This effectively makes it a Disney movie night. Rowley has a habit of kicking Greg's sleeping bag, so Greg thinks he'll teach him a lesson and shoves a dumbbell





into the sleeping bag, along with a pillow. When Rowley comes back from the bathroom he hauls off and kicks Greg's sleeping bag. Rowley hurts his foot so badly that Greg's mother comes down to check on them. It is so bad that Mrs. Heffley takes Rowley home.

While his mother is gone taking Rowley home, Greg turns to Manny, who is a big tattler. He tries to trick his brother into not saying anything. He even lets him eat his candy. Unfortunately, the next morning the look on Greg's mother's face says it all. Manny sold him out.

Greg's mother calls Rowley's mother and learns that Rowley's big toe is actually broken and Rowley is upset because he won't be able to do the magic show. Susan tells Rowley's mother that Greg will fill in for Rowley at the tryouts. However, Greg and the new assistant don't do so well and they don't make it into the talent show. Greg is relieved. Greg doesn't make it in with his stand-up comedy act, either. However, Rodrick's group do make the final cut.

Rodrick turns in his science fair project a day early so that he will have time to practice for the talent show. Unfortunately, his teacher tells him the next day that it is unacceptable and that he will have to redo the project. Their father tells Rodrick that he's just going to have to skip the Talent Show so he can do a new experiment. Rodrick tells them he's not going to do that. He says he doesn't care about school and that he is going to win the talent show and use the tape of the performance so that they can get a recording contract. After that he'll have to quit school and do the band thing full time. Greg says that his father just smiled and didn't say anything. That always makes Greg nervous.

The night of the talent show neither Greg nor his father want to go. Susan makes them both go, but Greg refuses to film Rodrick's band for him. Susan volunteers instead. The show goes on forever and in the end, Rodrick's band doesn't win anything. The grand prize goes to Leland and his ventriloquist dummy.

Back at the house Rodrick eagerly sits down to watch the video that Susan shot for him. It doesn't take too long before he realizes that it is utterly useless. Susan talks through the entire thing. Rodrick's bandmates are upset by the poor quality, but then one of them remembers that the school also tapes the event. They learn that the recording has been put up on the Internet, so they tune in to see themselves. Unfortunately, what they see is Greg's mother dancing and the camera is pointed at her instead of the band for the rest of their song. The tape is worthless, again.

Rodrick blames Greg, saying that if he'd filmed it that this wouldn't have happened. Greg yells back saying that if Rodrick weren't such a jerk to him all of the time that maybe he would have. Later, he sees Rodrick and there is a smug smile on his face. Greg knows that his secret is out. Sure enough, when he looks at Rodrick's phone he sees that he's called everyone he knows that is Greg's age.



Before the secret hits the air waves Greg states that he wants to tell the story like it really happened and not what Rodrick is likely to tell everyone. First of all, he had been staying with his Grandpa at Leisure Towers. When he went to write in his journal, Rodrick made a grab for it. Greg grabbed it and ran down the stairwell. When he'd reached the lobby he'd run into the first bathroom on the bottom floor and locked the stall door. Unfortunately he hadn't read the sign on the door and found himself locked in the women's restroom. He started to sneak out when he heard some women coming into the room. He kept his feet off of the ground so no one would seem him. He was stuck in there for an hour and a half. Someone finally heard him in there and reported him to the front desk who declared him a "peeping tom." Security was called and he was removed.

Greg doesn't want to go to school the next day. He asks his Mom if she can transfer him to another school and he tells her why. His mother tells him that his friends will understand once he tells them that it was just a mistake. Clearly she doesn't understand middle school mentality, Greg thinks.

The next day comes and Greg can feel his legs shaking as he enters the school. But, instead of people laughing at him or making fun, a large group of boys rush him and start shaking his hand and thumping him on the back. Apparently when Rodrick told his friends, they passed it along and the story changed from its original form. The final version stated that Greg sneaked into the girl's locker room at Crosshill High school. This has made him an instant rock star at the school.

Greg states that Rodrick got his wish as well. His band did get noticed as the "Dancing Mom" video went viral. He became known as the drummer on the "Dancing Mom" video, which continues to embarrass him. Plus, he never did get his science fair project turned in. Greg feels badly for him and offers to help him complete the project. Rodrick is shocked that Greg has offered. Greg writes that at the end of a very long night, Rodrick says that he's glad Greg is his brother.

## Analysis

The theme of Responsibility is prevalent in this chapter as Greg's parents find out about Rodrick's party. As a result, Rodrick is grounded, and Greg is implicated as well. This ends up with Greg also receiving a slight punishment for his silence on the matter. The consequences of their actions means that their parents don't trust them and when their parents go out of town the next weekend they leave the boys with their grandfather at Leisure Towers. They have a terrible time.

In an attempt to force responsibility onto Rodrick, their parents create a due date timeline for Rodrick so that he can get his science project done. Rodrick rolls his eyes and does whatever he can to get out of it. Meanwhile, they've heard that there is a talent show at school. Rodrick is certain that he will win and instant stardom will be conferred upon him. Likewise, Greg is similarly delusional as he believes that his comedy routine will "knock 'em dead." The symbolism of the Talent Show emerges in this section as the



reader sees that both boys have unrealistic expectations for themselves in regards to the ability of the talent show to do anything for them.

Rowley's toe is also a turning point of sorts. It indicates just how horrible a friend Greg really is, which he finally faces when he learns that Rowley's toe is actually broken and he won't be able to make the talent show try outs. Greg's irresponsibility and impulsiveness have caused harm to the one person that was loyal to him no matter what, and now he finally realizes the depth of his disregard for his true friend.

The night of the talent show Rodrick asks Greg to film the event, but Greg tells him that there's no way he will do that given that Rodrick is always so mean to him. Susan tells Rodrick that she will do it. Unfortunately, while at the talent show Susan really gets into the music and starts dancing while she's filming. Another videographer catches her in the act and it goes viral, meaning it becomes extremely popular especially online. The significance of the "dancing mom" video is that it launches Rodrick into dubious stardom as the drummer on "that" video.

However, it changes something between the brothers. Greg knows that if he had filmed that concert that none of this would have happened. And, on top of it all, Rodrick is going to flunk science because he still hasn't done his project. Greg tells Rodrick that he will help him and Rodrick tells him that he's glad he is his brother. The resolution comes as they both work on the project together.

The symbolism of the "secret" emerges in this section as the reader finally learns what the secret was and sees Rodrick try to spread it around school. However, this backfires on him and he is launched into instant stardom among the boys as the new version of the tale has him infiltrating the girls locker room at a rival high school. In the end, both boys and Susan have gotten what they wanted: recognition and family harmony.

## **Discussion Question 1**

What was the "secret" and how did it turn out when it was leaked?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Discuss the symbolism of Rowley's broken toe.

## **Discussion Question 3**

What happens between Greg and Rodrick as a result of the talent show?

## Vocabulary

accidentally, captured, accomplice, watercress, accomplished, experiment, benefit, gravity, impressed, blubbering



# Characters

## Greg Heffley

Greg is in middle school for the second year and he hopes that it will be a better experience than the last. At the beginning of the novel, the reader sees that Greg is still incredibly immature, lazy, and views people in terms of what he can get from them, or by association. He lacks the ability to have any empathy. This is especially true where Rowley is concerned, and his family members.

When Rowley returns from his summer vacation he is excited to tell Greg about the trip. Greg doesn't want to hear it because he finds it boring and doesn't understand why anyone would want to leave their house. He lacks the ability to see things through anyone else's eyes than his own.

Additionally, Greg is gullible. Many times Rodrick is able to pull pranks and tricks on Greg simply because Greg is willing to believe anything that seems to be too good to be true. He acts without thinking and Rodrick capitalizes on this. As a result, this tendency gets Greg into a lot of trouble throughout the book.

## Rodrick Heffley

Rodrick Heffley is Greg's older brother. He is three or four years older and enjoys taking advantage of Greg. He is completely unmotivated to do anything other than be a famous heavy metal rock star and does not see the point of doing school work. This is why he leaves his science project to the last minute and then does it completely wrong making him have to redo it.

Rodrick loves to make Greg look bad in front of their parents and he's very accomplished at doing so. Most often he sets Greg up to look guilty for something that he hasn't really done, and their parents don't believe Greg when he tries to explain.

Rodrick, however, does care for Greg. This is evident when they are working for their grandmother raking leaves and Rodrick tells him to only half fill the bags of leaves so they will make more money. Later, Greg makes a major breakthrough in his relationship with Rodrick when he offers to help him with his science project.

## Manny Heffley

Manny is three years old and is the other cause of Greg's disquiet at home. Manny is allowed to get away with a lot, in Greg's opinion. When Manny destroys Greg's game controller, nothing is done, and the controller is not replaced. Greg resents having to look after his little brother, and he thinks he is a wimp.



## Rowley Jefferson

Rowley is Greg's best friend. His family are well off and they often take expensive summer vacations. Rowley is a unique character in that he does not care about peer pressure or acting cool. He finds it easier just to be his own quirky self. Greg envies him that tendency, though Greg would never try to be like Rowley.

Rowley, as a result, actually has more friends than Greg does, though Greg doesn't see that. Rowley is in many ways Greg's foil and is everything that Greg is not. His grades are good, his parents aren't embarrassed by him, and the people around school like him.

## Susan Heffley

This is Greg's mother. In the December portion of the book she is filmed dancing at her son's talent show concert. The video goes viral, embarrassing Rodrick. Greg's mother is shown to be very involved in her children's lives, much to Greg's dismay. She goes with him to his Magick and Monsters games to see what it is all about. Then, she buys \$200 worth of books about the game so that Rodrick and Greg can play together. She wants the two of them to be closer.

## Frank Heffley

Frank Heffley is Greg's middle-aged father. It is clear to see that his children embarrass him to no end. He wants his children to be like other people's children are. In this regard, he is very much like Greg in that it matters to him what others think. He's taken up the hobby of creating Civil War dioramas in the basement.

## Grandpa Heffley

Grandpa Heffley lives in a different place than Grandma. Grandpa lives in a place called Leisure Towers. This is where Greg visits and becomes stuck in the women's restroom. Grandpa feeds them kale salads and makes them watch old people game shows on TV. Greg loves his grandpa, but hates going over there to stay.

## Chirag Gupta

Chirag Gupta is an Indian boy who moved away at the end of the school year last year. This year, he and his family have returned. However, instead of the warm welcome that he envisioned, Greg plays a prank on him whereby everyone pretends that Chirag is still gone. This goes on for a long time and it really upsets Chirag.



## **Jeremy Prindle**

Jeremy Prindle is the dubious recipient of the "cheese touch" that Greg bestows upon him the first day of school.

## **Alex Aruda**

Alex Aruda is the boy that Greg purposely sits next to in Algebra class. Greg does this so he can cheat off of Alex.

## **Mr. Huff**

Mr. Huff is Greg's History teacher. Mr. Huff also had Rodrick and so does not expect much out of Greg. In fact, he watches Greg like a hawk.

## **Principal Ray**

This is the principal of the school where Greg attends. When Greg is called to Ray's office in regards to the prank that Greg was pulling on Chirag, Ray gets Chirag's name wrong and makes Greg apologize to someone that didn't exist. He is shown to be ineffectual with discipline or meeting out rules and punishments fairly.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Talent Show

The talent show that is held at the school features students performing some sort of talent. Greg and Rowley both wish to be part of that, but when Rowley gets hurt at Greg's house, which is Greg's fault, Rowley isn't able to do his magic act. Greg, who thinks his comedy routine will win for sure, doesn't make the cut either. However, Rodrick's band makes the cut and as a result Rodrick thinks that this is just the break that he and his band needs to rocket them to instant stardom. The talent show represents unrealistic expectations for all of the characters in that Greg thinks he's funny...and he's not, and Rodrick thinks that his band is good....and they aren't.

## Journal

The journal represents Greg's innermost thoughts. It is through the diary that he is able to communicate with himself, to reason out why things happen, and to determine a course of action.

## Mom Bucks

These are the fake money items that Susan employs as a way to motivate her sons to help out around the house. This backfires however when both Greg and Rodrick find a way to cheat.

## The Secret

The secret is something that happened to Greg over the summer and is the one thing that Rodrick holds over him for most of the story. It represents the information and history that family members have on one another, and how that can be used for good or bad within a family group. In the end, the secret doesn't end up having as big an impact on Greg's life as he thought it would.

## Science Fair Project

The science fair project represents Rodrick's unwillingness to view life as it really exists. He would rather dream about being a rockstar than focus on doing projects for science class.





## **Magick and Monsters**

Magick and Monsters is a game that Rodrick and Greg play. It represent a potential way for the brothers to bond.

## **Rowley's broken toe**

Rowley's broken toe symbolizes the damaged relationship that the boys have with one another, due in large part to Greg not accepting Rowley for who he is.

## **Greg's Game Controller**

This indicates how Greg feels that his family don't value him as they do the other siblings. When Manny destroys Greg's controller, there is no punishment for Manny.

## **The Bathroom Door**

When Rodrick has his wild party and locks Greg in the basement, the bathroom door is damaged. It is Greg that discovers it and helps Rodrick switch the doors with one from the basement. This represents one of the first partnerships that Greg and Rodrick have with one another.

## **Party Pictures**

The party pictures prove that Rodrick was irresponsible when their parents were away. This brings up the theme of Responsibility as Rodrick does not take responsibility for his actions.

## **Thanksgiving Dinner**

This indicates how Greg's parents feel about their relatives. They love them, but tire from being around them soon enough. They have the same type of loving tolerance for one another that Greg does with his family.

## **Cheese Touch**

This is a tradition at Greg's school. An old piece of cheese, molding on the ground has the "ability" to bestow "the touch" to anyone who comes into contact with it. At the end of the previous school year, Greg was the last one to touch it, thereby giving him the "cheese touch." Anyone having the cheese touch is automatically a pariah and excluded from everything. Where Greg is concerned this is intolerable. He passes along the cheese touch to Jeremy Prindle as soon as he can.



# Settings

## Heffley House

Greg Heffley's home is where a good deal of the action takes place. This is because Greg and Rodrick, and sometimes Manny, all interact there and are the largest cause of Greg's irritation throughout the novel. This is where Rodrick's party takes place, where family come for Thanksgiving, where Greg hurts Rowley's toe, and where Frank keeps his Civil War diorama.

## School

The second most prevalent setting in the book, Greg's school is where Greg feels the least accepted for who he is. He tries to fit in, even sacrificing his good friends in order to make himself look cool. His interaction with the teachers is also part of the problem, as well as his laziness when it comes to doing homework. This is also where the talent show takes place.

## Rowley's House

Sometimes Greg and Rowley go to Rowley Jefferson's house. The Jefferson's are very well off and often travel outside of the country during the summer. Rowley's father doesn't care for Greg.

## The Basement

The basement in Greg's house is a setting unto itself because a number of events are specific to it. First, Greg's dad keeps his diorama down there. Then, the basement is where Greg is locked in while Rodrick has his party. Later, the basement door is the one that is swapped for the damaged bathroom door upstairs. Later, the basement is where Greg and Rowley spend the night and Rowley's toe is broken.

## Talent Show

The Talent Show takes place at the school and nearly an entire chapter is devoted to the tryouts, the practices, and the actual show. Neither Greg nor Rowley make the cut for the show, but Rodrick's band does. This is where the video is made of Rodrick's mother dancing and it goes viral, meaning it catches on in social media and is shared and viewed by many people.



# Themes and Motifs

## Friendship

Throughout the novel the reader sees that friendship is very important to Greg. However, Greg's definition of friendship seems to shift and to sometimes change with who he's around and the situation he is in. His longtime friend, Rowley, is still his go-to friend. At school he sometimes walks with him, but for the most part, they go their separate ways.

At one point, Greg is jealous of Rowley because he has been invited to sit with the popular girls at their table. Greg can't understand how Rowley is more popular than he is. Greg considers himself to be vastly superior to Rowley and he treats Rowley like this.

So, initially, the idea of friendship for Greg includes being with someone because of what they can potentially do for you. This is true when Greg needs a ride somewhere and his parents or Rodrick aren't around. He asks Rowley and Rowley's parents to take him places. Rowley is so easy going and so loyal that he agrees with nearly everything Greg wants to do.

Later, Greg's definition changes in regards to friendship. When he puts the dumbbell into the sleeping bag and Rowley ends up getting seriously hurt, Greg reassesses the way he's been treating Rowley and decides that friendship means that you like a person even if there's nothing in it for you. He realizes that you like a person because you have much in common and you enjoy each other's company.

Greg also learns that friendship can be extended to family members, as in the end of the book Greg makes friends with his brother, Rodrick. He helps his brother finish his science fair project.

## Family

Within the context of the novel, the definition of Family shifts as Greg's understanding of Family expands. Initially, he finds his own family to be boring, irritating, and embarrassing. He doesn't understand them and he's more than certain that they don't understand him. The worst one of the bunch, of course, is Rodrick, his older brother.

The dynamic between the two brothers sets the tone for the entire novel as their continued rivalry spurs them both on to new heights of indignities. Part of the problem is that Rodrick takes advantage of Greg's immaturity and impulsive behavior. Greg, conversely, stays angry and frustrated with his brother most of the time, and is motivated by getting him back for all of the pranks.

Mid-way through the novel the reader sees a subtle shift beginning to take place as Greg begins to mature. The reader sees how he interacts with his grandparents, and



the tolerance that he shows for them. For example, he eats the watercress salad that his grandfather fixes for him even though it is the most vile thing he's ever eaten. He doesn't want to hurt his grandfather's feelings. This indicates that Greg has begun to have sympathy and compassion for his family. It is this empathy for family members that will eventually expand to include others outside of the family, especially Rowley.

Greg's feelings toward his family change from his initial point of view at the beginning of the book. At the beginning he sees them as embarrassing and wonders what he did to upset God so much that he would place him in the family he has. However, as the novel wears on, Greg is finally able to start to appreciate some of his parent's decisions, preferences, and procedures.

## Responsibility

In this novel, the idea of personal responsibility (or lack thereof) is exemplified. Because of his age Greg still believes that it is his parents' responsibility to help him do everything, from laundry to homework, to providing him with entertainment and money whenever he asks for it. This is a highly immature viewpoint, one that begins to change and expand almost immediately.

One example of this is in the section titled, September. Greg is upset because his summer has been boring. He states that it is his father's fault that they didn't do anything fun. Greg doesn't have the life experience, or forethought, to understand that not all families have the same ability to travel like others might have (like Rowley's family). Greg just thinks that it is yet another example of how mean and lame his family is.

Greg refuses to accept responsibility, initially, for doing his own homework. Several times he has papers due, he either puts them off, doesn't do them, or cheats to get by. When something happens and he is not able to employ any of those methods he begins to realize that it is his fault, not Rodrick's, not the weatherman, but himself.

Toward the end of the novel, Greg has started to take on more responsibility for his actions and his grades. He understands that he has to focus more on doing his work, and he is able to apply this towards helping his brother with his project.

## Laziness

Greg's entire family, with the exception of Manny, tend toward laziness. Both of Greg's parents stop and start various projects constantly (according to Greg). Most often, Greg states that his mother and father are lying on the couch watching television, reading, or working on a diorama. Neither of his parents are given to physical activity if they can help it. As a result, neither are their children.

This proclivity for inaction spills over into both Rodrick and Greg's attitude toward school. In November, Rodrick declares that he doesn't see what good school is going to



be when he becomes a famous heavy metal rock star. The same attitude resonates with Greg when he buys an old History paper from Rodrick to turn in to his History teacher. Additionally, Rodrick's so-called science fair project is based around being lazy and ends up being unacceptable to the teacher.

Laziness is also part of Greg's summer in that he takes every opportunity to hide from his swim team practices. Once at the morning workout sessions, his typical procedure would be to ask the coach for a bathroom break. Then, Greg would stay in there the entire practice, wrapping himself in toilet paper to stay warm.

His laziness shows up again when Greg discovers that Rowley has some of the fake money that Greg's mother uses as Mom Bucks. He gets Rowley to give it to him, and with the cash hidden beneath his bed, he doesn't have to do any chores, or be helpful, or do any of the things his mother is trying to motivate him to do.

## Brothers

This is one of the larger themes of the novel. At the beginning of the novel it is apparent that the brothers do not get along. They love each other because they are related, but that seems to be the extent of their regard for one another. Greg states that his brother is despicable and conniving, mean, and uncaring. Interestingly, Greg tends toward those same characteristics.

Susan Heffley wants her boys to be true brothers, to care for one another, to protect one another, and to help one another. She attempts many times to facilitate opportunities for the boys to 'bond'. One of those examples is when she becomes involved in Greg's games of Magick and Monsters. She buys the books and game pieces, then tells Rodrick to learn how to play so that he can play with Greg. Unfortunately, Rodrick uses it as another way to embarrass Greg and dominate him once again.

Much of Rodrick's aggression toward Greg most likely stems from the fact that he knows that Greg is more gifted intellectually. Rodrick believes that perhaps his talent lies in the musical arena, so when he has the opportunity to show that part of himself off, he throws himself into it wholeheartedly. When Greg won't help film the band, because of the way Rodrick has treated him, the filming has disastrous consequences. It is at this point that Greg begins to feel sorry for his brother.

When Rodrick's science fair project is rejected and it looks as if he may receive a failing grade for the year in science because of it. Greg pitches in and helps his brother. There are several instances, through the novel, where both brothers begin to acknowledge that maybe their brother isn't so bad after all.

# Styles

## Point of View

The point of view is that of a young boy of about 13, told in first person limited. He is a fairly unreliable narrator as he views things in an immature way, and is often naive about what it is that he has observed. His presumptions and ego often interpret actions and ideas in a completely unrealistic manner.

## Language and Meaning

The language used is consistent with slang terms and language used by a middle school student. The AR level is rated at a 5.1 which makes it suitable for reluctant readers. It is written in large print.

## Structure

The book is written in journal style, as if the entire thing is someone's journal entry. There are cartoon pictures scattered throughout the novel which lend to the understanding of what is being discussed in the journal. There are four sections that each cover the months of September to December.



## Quotes

I guess Mom was pretty proud of herself for making me write in that journal last year, because now she went and bought me another one.

-- Greg (September paragraph 1)

**Importance:** This shows how Greg has continued to write in his journal, and despite his protestations, he actually enjoys it. His mother knows this and is encouraging it.

Our family didn't go anywhere or do anything fun, and that's Dad's fault."

-- Greg (September paragraph 4)

**Importance:** This indicates Greg's immaturity and lack of understanding about things. He thinks that they haven't gone anywhere because his parents have no interest, rather than considering that his parents couldn't get time off from work, or that they didn't have the money to go.

Then I remembered: I still had the Cheese Touch from last year."

-- Greg (September paragraph 30)

**Importance:** This refers back to book one where Greg touched the cursed piece of cheese. Once he "hands" off the "touch" to another student, he's relieved of the curse.

See, Rodrick is the only one who knows about this really embarrassing thing that happened to me over the summer, and he's been holding it over my head ever since.

-- Greg (September paragraph 71)

**Importance:** This is one of the key reasons that Greg continues to do many of the things he does throughout the novel, because he is afraid that Rodrick will tell people his secret. He does not want the truth coming out. This motivates some of the central conflicts of the story.

Everyone was happy to see Chirag again, but a couple of us decided to have a little fun with him before officially welcoming him back.

-- Greg (October paragraph 2)

**Importance:** This quote indicates Greg's immaturity and his lack of ability to have empathy for anyone. He totally doesn't understand how hurtful his actions are going to be to Chirag.

Then Rowley's parents gave him their present. And guess what? It was a Diary!

-- Greg (October paragraph 57)

**Importance:** This shows that Greg hates how Rowley is constantly copying him so he can be just like him. The diary was something that he had come to believe was something unique to his own life, and now with Rowley jumping on the bandwagon it



isn't special anymore. Greg becomes paranoid about Rowley writing about him and is so obsessed with and worried about this that he buys another diary with the same key so he can unlock it.

I know EXACTLY where I'll be in fifteen years: in my pool, at my mansion, counting my money.

-- Greg (October paragraph 101)

**Importance:** This quote indicates the immaturity of Greg's thinking in regards to his future and how the real world works.

See, now this is the kind of advice you're supposed to get from your older brother.

-- Greg (October paragraph 112)

**Importance:** This is a turning point because Greg has a moment where he's actually glad Rodrick is his brother.

Mom was serious about me and Rodrick playing together, so I knew I was gonna have to go through with it.

-- Greg (November paragraph 40)

**Importance:** This quote indicates and emphasizes the main conflict, which is that Greg's mother wants them to bond and be good brothers to one another.

I guess I learned my lesson about buying a paper off someone.

-- Greg (November paragraph 52)

**Importance:** This indicates that Greg is starting to take some responsibility for the decisions he makes.

You remember how I said Mom and Dad were going to eventually find out about Rodrick's Party? Well, it finally happened today.

-- Greg (December paragraph 1)

**Importance:** This is one of the major conflicts of the story and it comes to a climax in this last section as Rodrick faces the consequences of his actions.

All of the sudden, I was the hero at school.

-- Greg (December paragraph 74)

**Importance:** This happens after Rodrick's attempt to embarrass Greg fails and the story that Rodrick tries to spread around gets changed to the point that it makes Greg look like a hero to the boys in the school.