

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Hard Luck Study Guide

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Hard Luck by Jeff Kinney

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Plot Summary

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Hard Luck tells the story of Greg Heffley, a middle school boy who can't seem to catch a break. Greg's luck begins to go downhill when his best friend, Rowley Jefferson, starts spending all his time with his new girlfriend, Abigail Brown. From there, Greg sees everything else as spiraling downward and it isn't until he starts making decisions for himself that Greg begins to see his luck change.

The main reason for this series of diary entries is because Greg's best friend Rowley has a girlfriend and is spending all his time with her. Aside from being a tad bit jealous and confused that Rowley has the girlfriend and not him, Greg is frustrated that he is left alone to face his walk to and from school by himself, carry his books by himself, blow chocolate milk bubbles by himself, and play with the snowballs he and Rowley froze for a later date, also by himself. The frustration Greg expresses is not only with not being able to spend time with Rowley playing and having fun, but also at being left to do things like look out for dog poop. Greg doesn't consider any of the boys at his lunch table his friend, so when Rowley and Abigail leave the table for the Couples Table, while Greg might still put up with the table's games such as French Fry Friday and Five-Second Rule, he doesn't have anyone to talk to, play with, or walk home with.

Greg decides to take on a boy named Fregley to see if he can mold Fregley into the kind of friend he wants. Greg teaches Fregley how to do what Rowley used to do: scout for dog poop so Greg doesn't step in it, carry his books, and play Five-Second Rule at the lunch table. Greg tries to turn Fregley into his funny sidekick, but his plan backfires when Fregley becomes so popular that Greg is crowded out.

With everything going on at school, Greg was looking forward to Spring break so that he could relax at home. However, his mom drops a bomb on the entire family: her family - Greg's aunts and cousins - are coming into town for Easter. Greg goes into great detail about his family, naming and describing many members of the family and the different reasons why they all drive him crazy. When Easter does finally come, there is even more family than he expected, since many of the extended family members came into town for the holiday. The family starts off getting along but ends up in a big to-do over Meemaw's missing diamond ring. Greg is relieved when his dad asks Aunt Gretchen and her twin boys to leave after only two days, since one of the boys called the cops when there was no more ketchup in the refrigerator. The shining moment during Greg's extended family's visit is when Greg finds a Magic 8 Ball under Rodrick's bed. He begins using the Magic 8 Ball to make all of his decisions that can be answered with a yes/no answer.

At school, Greg continues to use his Magic 8 Ball, though it is to his detriment. Greg uses the Magic 8 Ball to answer questions on a Social Studies test and is accused of cheating. When he lands in the Vice Principal's office, Vice Principal Roy lets Greg know that if he doesn't pull up his grades in the next couple weeks, he will have to attend summer school. Greg is willing to do anything he can to avoid that situation, so he buckles down and works hard to finish all of his missing homework assignments. The



biggest task Greg has to complete in order to ensure he doesn't go to summer school is the Science Fair project. Greg considers purchasing an old project from kids who are wrongfully selling them, but decides against it. Greg stays late at school and stays up until 11:30 p.m. the night before the project is due in order to complete it.

A further development at school is that Greg gets the job as Yearbook photographer. He enjoys the position since it pays \$5 for every photo used in the Yearbook, though he struggles to juggle his regular school work with the demand of taking candid photographs of his classmates. Greg has fun editing photos, however the way he edits them makes others look silly or even stupid. Ultimately, Greg resigns from the position after having to take a Cutest Couple photo of Rowley and Abigail.

One week after the photo shoot involving Rowley and Abigail, the two split up because Abigail decides to go back to her ex-boyfriend. Though it takes him a couple days, Greg reaches out to Rowley and the two become friends again. Though Greg began to take responsibility for his actions and see his luck change as soon as he started trying harder at school, it's after he regains his friendship with Rowley that Greg is once again a truly happy middle school boy.



March: Monday (week 1)

Summary

Main character Greg Heffley is upset about his best friend, Rowley, having a girlfriend. Greg's mom has told him that "friends come and go, but family is forever", but that doesn't make Greg feel better. The pictures Greg draws of him with his family all have him with a scowl on his face. Greg misses being able to blow bubbles in their chocolate milk at lunch. Abigail, Rowley's girlfriend, comments on how immature blowing bubbles is, and so Rowley thinks it's uncool to do it and stops. Greg also misses his sleepovers with Rowley because Rowley ends up calling Abigail and talking for a long time.

Greg writes in his diary about missing - and needing - Rowley to help him transcribe his English homework from print to cursive. Cursive hurts Greg's hand, so he would pay Rowley one peanut butter cracker for each page he would transcribe.

Greg writes and draws about how he recently showed up to Rowley's house to throw snowballs the two of them had kept frozen in Greg's freezer, but Rowley is spending time with Abigail and treats Greg rudely.

Greg's biggest issue with Abigail is that she has taken away his best friend to walk home from school with, mainly because of a Rottweiler named Rebel who likes to go after Rowley and Greg. Rebel wears an electric collar, but Greg counted on Rowley to watch out for dog poop so he didn't have to step in it. Now, Greg has to be careful all on his own. What's worse is that teachers have been giving more and more homework since it's getting toward the end of the school year, and Greg says he can't carry that kind of weight.

Greg thinks Abigail is purposely trying to separate him and Rowley and that she is using Rowley to get what she wants, which is help carrying her books home from school.

The drawings of Rowley with Abigail make Rowley look either happy (when he's holding Abigail's hand), embarrassed (when Abigail tells him he's being immature), or snobbish (when he's telling Greg he can't do whatever Greg is asking him to do).

Analysis

Greg is an average middle school boy who just wants his best friend back. Greg writes and illustrates in his diary what he misses about having Rowley as a best friend, and why he is frustrated that Abigail has taken all of his time and attention. Greg is feeling "kicked to the curb", and frustrated that he has been friends with Rowley for all these years, and in what feels like the blink of an eye, his best friend has ditched him for a girl. In Greg's illustrations, it is clear that Greg wants to be around Rowley and wants Rowley to spend his time with Greg. Friendship is a significant value for Greg, and being left out and replaced for a girl by his best friend is not something he was prepared to deal with.



Greg illustrates his memories of what he and Rowley used to do together before Abigail came around, blowing bubbles in their chocolate milk. But then Greg illustrates Abigail telling them how immature that is; both he and Rowley have their straws hanging out of their mouth as if they don't know what to say. And they probably didn't, because as best friends who would do everything together, they're not used to an outsider telling them what to do and what not to do. Another memory Greg illustrates is he and Rowley freezing snowballs so they could throw them on a nice day sometime in the near future. They're both smiling and having a great time, despite the fact that the food they've removed from the freezer is melting. In the next illustration, however, Greg approaches Rowley to follow through on their plan, and Rowley acts like he's too good for Greg, brushing him off to spend time with Abigail.

Greg also draws images of the two of them walking to school together, again having a great time with smiles on their faces. Even in the pictures where Rowley is doing his job to scout for dog poop and help him stay safe from Rebel the Rotweiler, it is clear that Greg views them as a team. Even though Greg seems to use Rowley for his own needs, e.g. scouting for dog poop, they are also running from Rebel together and doing more than just Rowley helping out Greg. His walks to school are a significant part of the story because as he's forced to walk by himself, Greg deals with much fear and frustration, since his partner-in-crime isn't there to help him with things like scary dogs and their poop. Plus, since Greg draws Rowley looking happy, it seems that he assumes Rowley likes their arrangement. In the illustrations of Rowley walking with Abigail, however, Rowley looks miserable and is sweating from carrying all of her books. Greg is already certain that Abigail is using him, and his illustrations drive that point home. The author may also be foreshadowing when Greg (and everyone else) finds out that Abigail was indeed using him, since his illustration shows Abigail happy as she walks freely to school and Rowley is dragged down with her books.

The only situation Greg illustrates where he and Rowley are together and they don't look like they're having fun is when Greg draws a picture of Rowley transcribing Greg's English homework from print to cursive, and Greg giving him a peanut butter cracker for every page he completes. They don't look mad, though. They look both bored and focused, and it is safe to assume that's because they're working on schoolwork. Though Greg later finds Fregley and tries to train him to be like Rowley, helping him with his homework is not something Greg offers Fregley. Greg doesn't trust others easily, and even though the illustrations and Greg's descriptions of the things Rowley would do for him seem to go in Greg's favor, he seems to only want his sidekick to be Rowley. He feels he's been loyal to Rowley, and he's frustrated that he's not getting that in return.

Greg's jealousy is evident in his words and in his drawings. He always thought he'd be the one to have a girl and Rowley would be the one kind of hanging around on the perimeter. In the illustration on page 3, Greg is with his family and Rowley is eagerly watching from the other side of the fence. On page 8, Greg illustrates him trying to tell Rowley that Abigail is just using him, but Rowley is shown covering his ears and yelling, "You're just jealous! You're just jealous!"



Discussion Question 1

What do you think is the biggest reason for Greg's frustration with Rowley?

Discussion Question 2

Given his circumstances, what are some of Greg's options to try and improve his situation of missing Rowley?

Discussion Question 3

Greg says he has tried with Abigail, but she is the one who doesn't like him. Do you think he has really tried with her? How can you tell?

Vocabulary

boyfriend, girlfriend, relationship, immature, guarantee, wedge, transcribe, scouting

March: Tuesday (week 1)

Summary

Greg figures out that he can use his dad's rolling suitcase to carry his books to school, so carrying his books to school on Tuesday morning was no problem at all. In his illustrations, he is mostly happy about this arrangement. It's only when he gets to some bumpy sidewalk that he's not sure if the bag can handle it. Greg makes it to school in good time, partially because of the roller bag, but also because he walks extra fast past Mr. Sandoval's house. When Greg and Rowley would walk to school together, they would stop at Mr. Sandoval's sometimes during the winter and play with the poles Mr. Sandoval used to mark the edge of his driveway for the snowplow. Once, they put the poles back in the wrong place and Mr. Sandoval's grass was mowed instead of the driveway. Greg is afraid Mr. Sandoval will ream him and Rowley out, but because he and Rowley aren't walking to school together, Greg is afraid to be yelled at when he's all by himself. Greg's illustrations of playing with Rowley go back to when the two of them would have a lot of fun spending time together. In the illustrations where Greg is on his own, his face is colored with fear.

Another scary part of Greg's walk to and from school is the Mingo clan. Run by a boy named Meckley, the Mingo clan is a group of boys always ready to cause trouble. The illustrations of the Mingo boys are unfavorable, as they all look mean and miserable. Meckley has a big belt buckle that Greg is afraid of, and the Mingo clan has threatened Rowley and Greg to not step foot in "their" woods. Greg has to cross to the opposite side of the street when he goes to walk by the Mingos' woods on his way to and from school, but he worries about what the lack of a sidewalk will do to his dad's roller bag.

Greg's mom has noticed that he and Rowley haven't been hanging out lately. She tells him to not worry about it because most friendships from childhood don't last anyway, but Greg doesn't want that to be the case. He wants to have Rowley far into adulthood. The illustration Greg draws to match his words shows him getting his paper while dressed in a fancy robe and holding a pipe, and Rowley planting flowers in a flower bed. But Greg doesn't think his mom can really give him sound advice because Greg says boy and girl friendships are totally different. Greg knows this because he has read almost every book in "The Slumber Party Pals" series. He knows they're normally for girls, but he had to read one when he forgot his own book for silent reading, and he felt like since it was a series he couldn't just read one and not the rest. Though he said after the first thirty books, he lost interest. Greg describes an argument between two girls in the series. He compares how complicated girls make their arguments to how guys can be okay after just five seconds. He's not sure which way is more sophisticated, but he knows that the way guys do it saves a lot of time and energy. He draws pictures of the book covers and then of a couple girls fighting, making it clear he's glad he's a boy.



Analysis

Greg continues to find reasons to be upset about his solo walk to school, which is completely understandable since he used to have someone to help him through the potentially dangerous parts of the walk. On Tuesday, Greg expresses more fear about his walk to school than he did on Monday. His words express his fear, but his drawings do so even more. Throughout the book, Greg is forced to face situations on his own and grow up a little bit. The fear that Greg feels and expresses during his walk to school is just one part of that. The author uses this time in Greg's day to show that Greg is growing up, and he's going to start facing tougher situations for which he'll have to make tougher choices than he's had to make in the past.

First, Greg draws him and Rowley facing the walk to school together. Instead of messing with a dog, this time Greg and Rowley play fencing with poles that were stuck on the sides of Mr. Sandoval's driveway. The drawing shows them having a great time, until Mr. Sandoval's lawn is plowed because Greg and Rowley replaced the poles in the wrong spots. Then, Mr. Sandoval gets mean and waits outside his house with a baseball bat. Greg draws a picture of himself walking by with a book over his face in order to avoid Mr. Sandoval, because he doesn't want to be chewed out by himself. Greg's lack of responsibility for his actions is illustrated here, but his desire for a sidekick is even more obvious. The reader can't tell yet, but the author is likely leading up to Greg finding a solution to his problem of walking to school by himself.

The next part of their walk to school is to walk by the Mingo clan. They are a group of boys who, according to Greg's drawings, look mean and miserable. The Mingo boys are even waiting for Greg and Rowley on the outside of their woods, one of them with a sling, one with a large stick, and one with a long piece of wood with a nail sticking out of it. The illustrations show Greg and Rowley looking scared, but at least they're together. Greg looks far more afraid when he is by himself. And why wouldn't he be? He now has to face a set of bullies all on his own. Bullying is one of the themes present in "Hard Luck", and Greg is dealing with it from the get-go.

The author uses anecdotes all throughout "Hard Luck" to help drive home Greg's points about various situations. When Greg is remembering good times with Rowley, Greg tells a story – including illustrations – about their time blowing milk bubbles, watching people avoid horse poop during a Fourth of July celebration, and also how the two of them used Mr. Sandoval's driveway poles to mock-fence each other. The anecdotal method is a powerful tool for telling this story because each anecdote gives the reader insight into what Greg is connecting to each situation, especially as he works through Rowley's betrayal.

Greg seems to know/think that if he and Rowley could just have a conversation to work out their issue, the whole thing would be done and over since he says boys can solve arguments a lot easier than girls. He illustrates some of the covers of the Slumber Party Pals series that he's been reading. It's a girl series, and he shows girls on the covers, but he also admits that once you read one it's kind of hard not to read them all. Greg



continues to show how much he values friendship and loyalty, and that he's glad he's a boy. Greg draws an example of two girls apologizing to one another, but then starting another round of arguing at the end of the apology. Then he shows himself and Rowley; one of them broke a television, so Greg offered a quick solution of watching TV at his house. Problem solved. Greg is clear that he prefers friendships to be the way boys are. His desire for loyalty and consistency are shown in his words and his drawings. He wants things back to the way they were, because that's what he understands. He doesn't see the need for things to change, because he thought they were perfect the way they were.

Discussion Question 1

Why did Greg feel stronger when he was walking with Rowley past the Mingo clan, as opposed to feeling scared to walk by the Mingos' woods on his own?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think Greg took to enjoying the Slumber Party Pal book series?

Discussion Question 3

Who do you think Greg is more afraid of, the Mingo clan or Mr. Sandoval?

Vocabulary

snowstorm, pavement, construction, friendship, appreciate



March: Friday (week 1)

Summary

Greg feels like his mom's prediction of he and Rowley growing apart is coming true, mainly because it seems like Abigail is completely taking over Rowley's life.

At Greg's lunch table, which used to be all boys, Abigail complains about the boys' Five Second Rule and French Fry Fridays. The Five Second Rule says that when someone drops food on the floor, all the other boys at the table have five seconds to grab it, and if they do, it's theirs. French Fry Friday is a tradition that was started when Nolan Tiago's mom started bringing Nolan a cheeseburger and fries from a local fast food restaurant since the meat and fries in the school cafeteria were so terrible. Nolan would let the rest of the lunch table eat whatever had fallen out of the bag, but the boys would dive and fight for the leftovers. The boys came up with a system to divide the french fries evenly. Once, when there were only three french fries to distribute among ten boys, some of the boys were paying Nolan a dime just to smell his french fry breath. Greg's illustrations of his time at the lunch table are all favorable, and it is clear that Greg enjoyed the way things were before Abigail came around. She didn't like the games being played at the table, so she found somewhere else for her and Rowley to sit. They land at the Couples Table, which Greg says is only a table because nobody else can stand to be around couples but other couples. Greg clearly illustrates that principal in his drawings of the Couples Table.

As soon as Abigail and Rowley leave the lunch table, two other boys slide right in to the empty spots. There is a line out the door because there aren't enough seats for kids during lunch. Some kids have been known to sell their spots for money and/or special treats, like an ice cream sandwich. The two boys who took Abigail and Rowley's seats are Earl and Andy Dremmel, twins who don't take showers after gym. Greg misses Rowley sitting at his table because Rowley was really the only one Greg considered to be his friend because all the other guys go their separate ways at recess.

Greg is worried about after lunch at recess because of some kids he has to watch out for, mainly because of a birthday invitation his mom sent out a few years ago that said Greg already had enough toys, so instead of a gift kids could bring books. Other moms in Greg's neighborhood thought it was a great idea, but the other kids in his neighborhood didn't think so. Greg draws a picture of him being pushed to the ground by a kid who has a new book. Greg is also worried about Leon Feast and Leon's friends. Greg and Rowley have a long-standing battle with Leon and Leon's friends because of both groups wanting to play on the basketball court. Greg thought that back then he was kind of getting pushed around, so he let his mom sign him up for Superhero Training Academy. Greg had high hopes for it, as illustrated in his drawings, but it ended up being a big farce and a big disappointment.



Aside from kids with new books and Leon Feast's gang of friends, Greg just doesn't see himself fitting in with the other groups on the playground: a group that plays a fantasy card game; a group that reads; a group that uses somebody's shoe as a ball since the school banned all games involving a ball; the girls who jumprope; and the girls who hopscotch. He draws all these groups favorably, he just doesn't feel like he fits in. The girls who gossip is a group Greg wishes he could join so he'll know what's going on, but he has tried and knows he's not welcome. He does, however, draw these girls favorably. He just knows he's not welcome by the way they turn their bodies away from him.

Boys and girls on the playground also play Girls Chase Boys, but Greg says that mostly the girls just want to chase the popular boys like Bryce Anderson. Sometimes the game switches and it's Boys Chase Girls. The game goes back and forth until the bell rings, then it's back inside. Greg tried playing in fifth grade, but wasn't sure what to do once he caught the girl. Greg's illustrations show him as having a good time, until the girl he was chasing, Cara, reported him to the playground monitor and Greg got in trouble.

Greg's school turns the Bully-reporting station into a Find a Friend station. It has a buzz button on it, and when someone presses it, a blue light flashes and someone is supposed to come be that person's friend. But the only person to come over when Greg presses the button is Mr. Nern with a box of checkers. Greg's illustration of himself at the Find a Friend station makes him look like he wants to press that button as quickly as he can so that he can get it over with and get some company with as few people seeing him as possible. When Mr. Nern comes over, Greg looks unamused and like he can't believe this is his life.

Analysis

The biggest focus on this diary entry is how isolated Greg feels now that Abigail has taken Rowley away from his lunch table and from recess. Greg's lunch table is full of boys who have certain lunch-time traditions, such as French Fry Friday and the Five-Second Rule. Greg is fond of these games; he appreciates that he can count on them; and he enjoys participating in them. However, once Rowley leaves the table for the Couples Table, Greg's interest in the traditions significantly decreases. His illustrations are incredibly detailed, though, so it's obvious that lunch time is a significant time of the day for Greg. Even though Greg claims that he doesn't consider any of the other guys his actual friends, he clearly likes to have the company, since the table, boys, and games are described and drawn in great detail. Not only is every boy at the table drawn, but Greg draws the scene of the french fries being doled out; he draws the boys fighting for whatever extra food has fallen to the floor; and he even draws the mom who brings in the fast food from an outside source.

On the social side, though, Greg is clearly frustrated that he really doesn't like anyone else in his school, and that it looks like the feeling is mutual. Not only does he not want to join other cliques, but he's not welcomed into the clique he's most prefer to join. Greg looks even desperate when he's standing next to the group of gossip girls, trying to get into their group. But, according to his drawing, the girls turn their backs and shun him



makes it obvious they don't want him in their group. The author is again using social situations to show that Greg just wants to find a person or a group of people that he can belong to, but how he is continually rejected. Greg's focus on his situation is that he is alone. However, since he passes up every group but one, it's clear that he's picky about his company and only wants friendship and companionship from very specific people, so the author is making it clear that some of Greg's loneliness and isolation is the result of his own choices.

Greg draws some of his playground/bullying situation in this diary entry, specifically the situation where his mom had asked kids to bring a book to his birthday party instead of a toy. Greg draws the invitation, as if the reader would not believe it unless they saw it. He then shows himself getting pushed to the ground because he says other moms in the neighborhood have copied his own mom's idea, and now the other kids blame him for getting books instead of toys at their birthday parties. Greg also draws and writes about how Leon Feast and his gang have threatened Greg and Rowley to stay off the basketball court. Greg's illustration of Leon Feast and Leon's friends is that they're all bigger and stronger-looking than Greg and Rowley. Because of that, and getting pushed on the playground, Greg and Rowley get to attend the Superhero Training Academy at the YMCA. Greg draws the flyer for it and makes it look amazing - fun, helpful, and like kids will really learn how to be as strong as a superhero. However, he and Rowley find out on their first day that it's a scam. Greg likely drew the flyer to be so incredible to show why he thought it was going to be the best thing he'd ever done. The author wanted the reader to go through the same emotions Greg went through of being excited for a way to stand up to bullies, only to be disappointed with a certificate for good manners at the end of the camp. Greg's illustration of this situation is another example of just one more thing Greg sees in his life that has not gone according to plan.

Still on the playground, Greg decides to hit the button at the Find a Friend station. When Greg hits the Find a Friend button, he is embarrassed that Mr. Nern is the only one who comes over to him. Mr. Nern ends up being a symbol of people wanting to help Greg but Greg not completely appreciating the help. Mr. Nern shows up later, too, when Greg needs a new pair of shoes and Mr. Nern offers Greg his spare pair. In this diary entry, though, all Greg wants is to not be alone. He feels isolated and is desperately trying to fill in that void any way he can. Greg seems to know that Mr. Nern's company is better than nothing, but he also has a frown on his face in the illustration of him playing checkers with Mr. Nern, likely wishing it could just be him and Rowley like it used to be.

Each situation that Greg writes and draws about in this entry points to the fact that Greg must endure each of his life situations on his own. He's not happy about it, in fact he's miserable. He doesn't understand why it has to be this way, he's frustrated and angry, and is stuck in a cycle of remembering past situations that may have been frustrating but weren't as bad because he had Rowley with him. The author is sure to make the reader feel sorry for Greg with his language and drawings, but the author is also putting Greg in a position where he'll have to make a choice to either work to change his situation, or stay miserable for the rest of the school year.



Discussion Question 1

Of all the groups Greg mentions at recess, which one might be good for Greg to join: the group that plays a fantasy card game; the group that reads; the group that uses somebody's shoe as a ball since the school banned all games involving a ball; the girls who jump rope; the girls who hopscotch; or the girls who gossip? Please explain your answer.

Discussion Question 2

Of everything Greg has to face by himself - French Fry Friday, Five Second Rule, recess, and the Find a Friend station - which do you think is the worst for him and why?

Discussion Question 3

What could Greg do to make some of his situation better?

Vocabulary

prediction, prevent, nibble, lucky, recess, classmates, compromise, bunker, errands, worthless, sketchy



March: Wednesday (week 2)

Summary

Greg is upset that his little brother, Manny, has a new best friend named Mikey who just moved in down the street. Greg writes (and draws) that Mikey looks like a 40-year-old man with a goatee, and the only thing Manny and Mikey do together is watch television.

Another person who has a girlfriend is Greg's grandpa. Greg didn't even realize people still dated at his grandpa's age, but what he finds even crazier is that his grandpa and Rowley have girlfriends at the same time, while Greg has nothing and nobody. Greg's illustration of his grandpa having a girlfriend shows Greg's disbelief, since he doesn't go into great detail and doesn't seem to be interested beyond the fact that Grandpa has a girlfriend and Rowley has a girlfriend, but Greg is still alone.

Greg opened up to his mom about what's been going on with Rowley, and now Greg says that his mom's new mission is to help Greg find friends. This leads to an awkward encounter with a boy who is about five years older than Greg, so they have nothing in common; the illustration shows Greg, the other boy, the other boy's mom, and Greg's mom eating lunch together, but Greg being embarrassed that his mom asks the other boy if he like "shrinky drinks" like Greg does. The name of the drink is childish, and Greg's frown indicates his embarrassment. Greg's mom has also been trying to give Greg tips on how to make new friends at school, but he insists that her advice will never work. Greg knows that kids these days only care about status and what kinds of clothes or cell phones other kids have. He draws a picture of what he thinks is his mom's fantasy, that starting a rumor about how nice Greg is will get him all sorts of friends.

At Greg's school, they've changed all the bullying posters to positive reinforcement messages. Greg's school created Hero points, which kids can score for being caught by a faculty member being kind to other kids. Hero points can be turned in to the office for various rewards. Greg's drawings of the policy have a positive tone to them. However, kids in Greg's school quickly learned how to make photocopies of the Hero Points, even when the school kept changing the color of the paper used to make the Hero Points, so that system ended pretty quickly. Greg draws kids copying the Hero Points over and over, and he lets the reader know that each time it's on a different color paper. (Since the drawings are in black and white, it's important that Greg pointed that out). Now that extra recess isn't an incentive for kids to do nice things, Greg says that nobody is willing to help anyone anymore.

Analysis

Greg remains jealous that other people are getting best friends and girlfriends while he remains alone. Greg's words and actions display how important he thinks friendship is, but also the fact that he blames many other people and various circumstances for his



life situation. In the drawing of his grandpa's situation of having a girlfriend, he makes it look so simple: the women are lined up at his grandpa's door in one illustration, and in the next his grandpa and Darlene are standing at Greg's front door. It's the same kind of thing for his drawing of Manny and Mikey; Greg makes the start of their friendship appear effortless. The fact that Greg makes it look so simple is an example of how he thinks everyone has it easier than he does. The author continues to foreshadow Greg growing so tired of his situation that he breaks down and finds a solution, but for now Greg is simply focusing on the fact that everyone has it easier than he does at the moment.

One example of Greg growing tired of his situation and trying to find a solution is the fact that he opens up to his mom. He doesn't draw himself actually telling his mom, but he draws an image of the advice that she gives him, which is that if everyone knew how nice he was, they'd want to be his friend. Greg tries to look on the bright side by noting that his mom's heart is in the right place when she gives him the advice about making friends, but he feels like he knows enough about middle school to know that her advice won't work. The illustration of the "Greg is nice" rumor spreading is drawn as an ideal situation and not as a realistic situation. It's important for Greg to dream and to have hope of those positive emotions, but ultimately Greg doesn't think that will work. He knows that kids care more about the clothes and cell phone a person has than how nice the person is. His attitude is yet another example of how he believes his situation to be full of bad luck with little chance of a turn-around.

Greg draws his school's Hero Point system in great detail. He draws an example of one, then shows what they're used for. Greg values friendship, and that seems to extend to kindness as Greg seems in favor of the theory of the Hero Point system. He liked the idea of kids being rewarded for doing good and kind things. His cynicism shows through, however, when he says that "of course people have to go and mess things up," (page 52). Greg then begins writing and drawing about Erick Glick's system of photocopying the Hero Points. Greg is frustrated when kids take advantage of the system and create counterfeits, because kids go back to not helping each other and being mean to one another. Greg already sees Erick Glick as a potential bully, so it's easy to see why Greg isn't surprised that he's the one to start the copying of Hero Points. It's also easy to see that he wishes the system had stayed. Greg already drew the one example of Hero Points, but to show the reader his point about the photocopying, there is an illustration of an entire sheet of Hero Points. Since the drawings are black and white, Greg points out in capital letters that the Points are made into different colors by the administration but then copied onto that same color by students within 24 hours.

Even though Greg wasn't all together surprised about the students copying the Hero Points, he is still experiencing a sense of loss of innocence in the situation. Greg wants people to be nice to one another. He wants the world to be a happy place, a kind place, and a place where he doesn't have to worry about people being mean or not helping each other. Instead, Greg experiences people taking advantage of a reward system and ruining said reward system. He is frustrated and simply wishes to have his life back to the way it was.



Discussion Question 1

Why do you think Greg finally told his mom what was going on between him and Rowley?

Discussion Question 2

Why is it such a big deal to Greg that his grandpa and Rowley have girlfriends at the same time?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Greg think it's bad if his little brother has a best friend and he doesn't?

Vocabulary

populate, generation, mission, awkward, positive reinforcement, punish, reward, photocopied, suspicious, invalidated, counterfeit, legitimately



March: Sunday (week 2)

Summary

Greg's mom takes him shopping for new clothes. Greg assumes it's because of what he said about kids these days caring so much about clothes and cell phones instead of how nice other kids are. Usually, Greg can't stand going clothes shopping because it is boring and he says nothing saps his energy quite like back-to-school clothes shopping. Plus, Greg draws a picture of his mom walking into the dressing room before he has finished putting his pants back on. His illustrations make it very clear that he hates shopping and wishes he never had to go.

One thing that Greg doesn't mind about clothes shopping, though, is that his mom usually takes him and Rodrick (Greg's older brother) to a place called Frugal Freddy's. Greg illustrates that Freddy's offers the guys a place to sit while the women shop, called The Dude Zone. There, boys and men read the newspaper and comics while women are shopping. However, last year Greg's mom left the store without him and Rodrick. She had to come back to get them, and when she did they were both fast asleep in The Dude Zone.

Today, Greg was excited to go shopping because not only did he get two new pairs of jeans and three new shirts, but he got to get his own pair of shoes. Normally Greg receives hand-me-down shoes from Rodrick, which require bubble gum be scraped off the bottom. The only other time Greg had gotten a new pair of shoes was in the fourth grade when his mom bought him a pair of shoes from a local dollar store. They fell apart at school the first day Greg wore them. Today, Greg steered his mom toward the brand-name shoes. He debates between hiking, running, jumping, and cross-training shoes, drawing an example of what he could do with each type, but he decides on a pair that is somewhere in the middle. Greg also illustrates that he was so happy to have a new pair of shoes, that he spent the ride home enjoying the "new shoe smell".

Analysis

Starting to look on the bright side, Greg is excited to have new clothes and shoes to wear to school the next day. Though Greg starts off by writing and drawing his distaste for shopping, Greg's attitude at the end of the chapter is one of gratitude and excitement. When Greg draws about his dislike of shopping with his mom, he shows that it's mainly because it's boring, it's always with Rodrick and Manny, and his mom comes into the dressing room before he's completely dressed. Greg likes his privacy and wants to be considered old enough that his mom doesn't come in while he's changing. He shows a little bit of favor toward shopping when he draws The Dude Zone, a place that he makes look quite manly with other grown men there and a fence as a background. The Dude Zone is another example of how he thinks guys are much simpler than girls, not just in relationships but in life in general.



However, his attitude toward shopping completely changes when he walks away from shopping with a bundle of new clothes and a new pair of shoes. Greg's illustrations show his facial expressions and how they go from frustrated or bored to excited. Greg's biggest prize in the shopping trip is his new pair of shoes. Since Greg believes he is unpopular at school, but believes that nice clothes and shoes can make a person popular, the joy on his face shows that he hopes that's what his new shoes do for him. The fact that Greg illustrates the shoe situation more than any other is how the reader can tell it's the most significant part of the shopping trip for Greg.

First, Greg draws how he used to get Rodrick's hand-me-downs, but he had to scrape gum off the bottom every time. Then, Greg draws the Sportzterz his mom got him for the first day of school. He was excited about them, and even drew a picture of himself happily walking along the buses in his new pair of shoes. But in the next drawing, Greg is holding up his shoes to his mom because they completely fell apart. Greg found out his mom got those sneakers from Dollar Shavers, a \$1 store; he even draws a picture of it, that's how significant the event was for him. He's drawing every stage of his shoe dilemma.

His next illustration is of him exploring the various types of shoes in the department store where Greg and his mom have been shopping that day. Greg draws a picture of him with every kind of shoe - cross trainer, shoes with JumpKick technology, and wheelies. Each illustration is a fantasy, since Greg doesn't buy any of those pairs, but it's important for Greg to think about why he wants and doesn't want the kinds of shoes he's looking at in the store. Plus, the positive emotions are good for Greg to experience, since he feels like he's been down on his luck lately. The fact that Greg decides on a middle-of-the-road shoe is a sign of maturity. He's thought about what he wants and why he wants it, and he doesn't go extreme in his choice. The illustration of him finally choosing a shoe then enjoying the "new shoe smell" on the ride home is the author's way of showing how Greg believes the shoes are really going to help turn his luck around.

Greg doesn't mention Rowley on Sunday, so the clothes shopping seemed to be enough of a distraction. Greg is excited to get his new clothes and shoes, seemingly for two reasons: one, this trip is just for him, and two, he doesn't have to worry about hand-me-down shoes or ones that will fall apart on his first day wearing them. What Greg doesn't mention, though, is how cool he thinks he will look Monday at school with his new shoes. It is clear that Greg hopes these new shoes will provide a jumpstart to his popularity and making friends, which is an attempt to fill the void Rowley created when he began hanging out with Abigail. The author is building up the importance of Greg's new shoes, which could be indication that the situation will not go as Greg is planning. Since that's been a recurrence - things not going the way Greg wants or plans them to go - it is likely that the reader will soon find out Greg's experience of a brand new pair of shoes does not live up to his expectations.



Discussion Question 1

Why do you think Greg's day of shopping is enough to distract him from his situation with Rowley?

Discussion Question 2

What do you think is worse for Greg, having to spend the time and energy scraping gum off the bottom of Rodrick's old shoes, or having to wear shoes that Rodrick's feet used to be in every day? Defend your answer.

Discussion Question 3

Do you think Greg's new clothes and shoes will make a difference for him Monday at school? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

popularity, ordinarily, saps, space-age technology, baloney, cross-training, pumped, nervous



March: Monday (week 3)

Summary

Greg walks to school in his new shoes and faces obstacles in keeping them clean, such as: grease, mud, puddles, and pebbles. He decides to put a plastic bag over each shoe to protect them from getting dirty, but the bags quickly rip to shreds. Greg walks on his tip-toes for some of the walk so that he doesn't get pebbles in the grooves on the bottom of his shoes, but it's so much effort that he gives up and walks in the grass. Greg's illustrations alternate between him concentrating on keep the shoes clean - he even has his tongue sticking out as he focuses - and him being ecstatic about his new pair of shoes.

Greg arrives to school twenty minutes late, but thinks it's totally worth it because he arrives in style. In his illustration, Greg is leaning up against the classroom door frame with a sly look on his face, as if to say, "Finally, I'm here. I know you've been waiting for me." He's late in starting his pop quiz, but it didn't matter because he couldn't concentrate anyway. Suddenly there is an awful smell in the classroom. Greg can't figure out where it's coming from, but when he gets up to move to the back of the room, the smell follows him. That's when Greg realizes that by walking on the grass on the way to school, he got dog poop on his shoe from Rebel the mean Rottweiler. Greg draws a picture to show that he remembers exactly where it happened.

Greg takes off his shoe to tell Mrs. Pope what's going on, but Mrs. Pope thinks he's just trying to skip out on a quiz. Greg shows himself bringing the smelly shoe to the front of the room, then walking to the back to put it in a plastic bag. The janitor comes a little bit later to clean up what Greg trekked all over the classroom, and, according to Greg's illustration seems pretty mad at Greg for making such a smelly mess.

Greg reminisces about how he usually thinks people stepping in dog poop is funny, but not when it happens to him. He remembers and illustrates one Fourth of July when Rowley's parents took them downtown to see fireworks. One of the police horses had gone to the bathroom on the main walking path. Greg and Rowley had spent that night watching people and their funny reactions as they tried to avoid the horse poop. This makes Greg think about how if everything was the way it used to be - him and Rowley best friends, walking to school together - Rowley could have spotted that dog poop and Greg could have avoided it.

Since he can't wear his shoes the rest of the day, Greg goes to the Lost and Found. His drawing shows him finding one winter boot amongst a hodgepodge of other kids' items. Mr. Nern offers Greg his extra pair of shoes, which are so big that they make a "flop flop" noise as Greg walks down the hallway, causing kids to point and stare at him. Greg's facial expression is a complete lack of amusement or gratitude, just as it was when Mr. Nern responded to Greg's Find a Friend button-pushing.



Analysis

Greg doesn't have a very good Monday, what with the dog poop on his shoe and having to wear adult shoes for most of the day. The new shoe situation did not play out as he had hoped, since they don't make him more popular. Greg's illustrations leading up him wearing his new shoes make it absolutely clear that Greg believes this will be what turns his luck around. He doesn't even mention Rowley in this diary entry, which is a sign that he might be distracted enough to look at some of the good things happening in his life.

However, as it has been happening for Greg lately, the new shoe situation doesn't go as planned. He walks to school, illustrating how careful he was to avoid rocks, puddles, mud, and dog poop. He even draws a picture of how he put a plastic bag around each shoe for protection. The next illustration, however, is Greg having to throw away the plastic bags because they were torn to shreds as Greg continued his walk to school. Greg shows himself again taking extra care as he walks to school, and then once he gets to school, though 20 minutes late, illustrates how cool he thinks himself to be: the drawing of him arriving to school with his new shoes is him leaning against the door frame of his classroom with an expression that says, "Aren't I cool?" His glory quickly fades when he finds out he's late for a pop quiz, and fades yet again when he realizes he got dog poop on his shoe. He draws a picture of Rebel and how Greg must have stepped in Rebel's poop that was in the grass, as Greg was avoiding the messy sidewalks in an effort to protect his new shoes.

Greg's facial expressions and body language, according to his sequence of drawings, go from excited and full of anticipated to completely defeated and deflated. Greg is clear in his drawings how much he thought new shoes would help his status at school, but once he gets there and has to take them off because of the dog poop Greg is equally clear on how upset he is that his status has not gone up at all. The fact that he is resigned to wearing Mr. Nern's extra shoes, which are adults shoes and therefore enormous on him, seems like one more way Greg keeps being knocked down. In the illustrations of Greg taking Mr. Nern's shoes and then walking down the hall in them, Greg's body is slumped and his face shows a frown.

On a regular basis, Greg seems to have a hard time looking on the bright side. Though Greg doesn't mention Rowley in this diary entry, Greg's frustration with that situation runs into everything else in his life. He is frustrated that things aren't the way he thinks they should be, like Rowley walking with him to school. All Greg wants is for everything to go back to the way it used to be. Even though he doesn't say it, he seems to think that if Rowley were back, everything would be better and life would be good again. What Greg is not acknowledging is that he might be able to find other friends to spend his time with. However, Greg values friendship from loyal friends. Up until now, Rowley has proved to be loyal. Greg has built his relationship with Rowley and would prefer that one to stay, because it is the one he trusts.



Discussion Question 1

Do you think Greg will act differently toward other people in embarrassing situations, such as stepping in dog poop now that he's had the experience with his new shoes? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Do you think Greg responded well to the situation with dog poop on his new shoes? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

How is it obvious that Greg is still blaming every bad thing that happens to him on the fact that Rowley has a girlfriend?

Vocabulary

sidewalk, minefield, grease, ninja, minimize, concentrate, replacement, spare, gigantic



March: Wednesday (week 3)

Summary

Greg starts going outside more after school just to avoid doing chores, because the last time he told his mom he was bored she had him clean the oven. His illustration shows his mom eager to have him help with the chore, and Greg really not wanting to. Instead, Greg tries to follow his mom's advice to find new friends. Unfortunately, the kids Greg writes and draws about aren't the kinds of kids he wants to be friends with. For example: the Lasky boys live a few doors down, but they like to wrestle in their underwear in their front yard; Mitchell Flemmer lives on his street but is always wearing a motorcycle helmet - Greg even draws Mitchell's dad looking dismayed at his son; and Aric Holbert is a trouble maker who has been suspended for breaking in and vandalizing the school - Greg draws a picture of the lockers being spraypainted. Greg also mentions Fregley, a boy who lives a few houses away from him. Greg is glad he doesn't have to see Fregley on his way up to Rowley's anymore because Fregley is always trying to be funny but in weird ways, like wriggling his toes.

Greg's illustration of Fregley shows Fregley as a skinny, weird-looking boy who looks weaker than Greg. In all of his drawings - Fregley in his front yard, Fregley at the Find a Friend station, Fregley in the cafeteria awkwardly trying to make other people laugh, and Fregley sitting in the back of the lunch line - all portray Fregley as a gangly, out-of-sync boy who is even less liked than Greg perceives himself to be.

Greg's mom would like for Fregley and Greg to be friends because she knows Fregley is lonely. At first, Greg feels guilty about not being friends with Fregley, but then realizes that he could turn Fregley into the kind of friend he wanted Fregley to be. Greg starts to get kind of excited about having Fregley as a friend because he thinks that not only could he teach Fregley to do the things Rowley used to do, but also that Fregley could be his funny sidekick, which he says is something that all the popular boys in class have.

Greg finds Fregley in the the back of the lunch line and invites Fregley to sit at his lunch table. Greg tries to explain Five Second Rule, but it backfires when Fregley goes for a potato chip in Greg's hand. Greg begins to regret inviting Fregley to sit at the lunch table because it seems like Fregley might not be able to learn how to behave properly. Greg threatens to send him back to the back of the line. Greg's illustration of his frustration is an image of Greg holding his head in his hands as if to say, "What have I done?"

Greg changes his mind again about Fregley when they begin to walk home together. Greg teaches Fregley to carry his roller bag full of books as well as how to watch out for dog poop on their path. Everything was going well until Greg realizes they didn't cross the street at the right time and have now entered the Mingo clan's territory. The Mingo boys chase Greg and Fregley, and even though Greg and Fregley get away, all of Greg's school books are missing. Greg finds out that Fregley threw the books at the



Mingo boys in an attempt to stop them from chasing Greg and Fregley. This makes Greg realize that Fregley will be a "long-term project", so he prepares himself for some challenges he is sure will arise in the process.

Analysis

The drawings of Greg's friend options work in Greg's favor: no one looking at Greg's drawings of the boys living on his street would want to be friends with those boys. Greg draws the Laskey boys all fighting in their underwear, which would not be appealing for other people to join in. He draws Mitchell Flemmer being looked at by his own dad with a strange expression, and his depiction of Aric is unflattering, as it shows him with the start of a beard and spray painting the lockers at school. Greg continues to view his friendless situation as hopeless, focusing only on the boys he doesn't want to befriend.

This attitude extends to Fregley, but only for a short time. At first, Greg draws Fregley as a gangly, awkward boy who has no friends. Greg's mom wants Greg to be friends with him, but Greg thinks he's too weird. Until he realizes that he might be able to turn Fregley into a kind of friend he can use for some help. Greg continues to draw Fregley as awkward and gangly, but Greg is clearly happy about finding a way to side-step not having a friend to help him with his books and keep him company on his walk home. Even though Greg knows he will have to mold Fregley in order for things to really work the way he wants them to work, Greg seems up for the challenge. In the drawings, Fregley is happy to not only be helping Greg, but just to have a friend to spend some time with. Greg portrays Fregley as happy to be helping Greg and learning about Greg's world - especially at the lunch table - but it's important to note that the drawings are strictly Greg's perspective and perception. Fregley may not be as excited to help Greg as Greg is showing him to be, but the drawings show him as the same happy-go-lucky kid Greg first drew him to be early in this diary entry. This might be a great example of Greg's selfishness, that he only sees his perspective and doesn't stop to consider how other people might feel about a given situation.

Training Fregley is Greg's attempt at solving his problem of no company and no help with his books, and also to have someone with whom he can face his bullies. However, he does not seem to be solving the having-a-friend problem; rather he is more looking for someone to be there for his needs of scouting for dog poop and carrying his books. Greg believes in the value of friendship, but it seems that only Rowley will do. With Fregley, Greg's selfish nature is most clear as he tries to teach Fregley - though Greg uses the term 'train' - how to behave and how to fit into Greg's world. Since the drawings of Greg training Fregley show Greg being frustrated with Fregley's impulses and awkwardness, it is obvious that Greg wishes he didn't even have to do this, but rather he's simply doing it out of desperation.

Even though today is the first day Fregley is helping Greg, Greg writes and draws as though he expects perfection from Fregley because Greg doesn't think the things he's teaching Fregley are overly complicated. However, he's more satisfied with Fregley's behavior at lunch than he is with Fregley's actions on their way home. Greg forgets to



cross the street and so they're chased by the Mingo clan. Fregley's decision to throw all of Greg's school books at the Mingo boys seems to leave Greg dumbfounded. This is a foreshadow to Greg's academic problems later in the story, since he won't be able to complete his work without his school books. It's also symbolic of how Greg sees nothing as going his way, but rather his life is just flying out of control.

In demonstration of how Greg only wants to be friends with Rowley, Greg doesn't mention or draw wanting to spend time with Fregley or do fun things with him at lunch.; it's strictly business. He teaches Fregley about the Five-Second Rule game and French Fry Friday, but he doesn't talk about playing outside, throwing snowballs together, building anything together, sleepovers, or summer activities. Again, it seems Greg really only wants the friendship that he's had for many years: Rowley's. He doesn't really seem to want to invest in anything new for friendship's sake. Right now, he's just looking for a short-term problem for his books being too heavy and having company on his way home.

Discussion Question 1

Does Greg's training of Fregley into a specific kind of friend seem to be going well? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Greg says friendship is very important to him. Yet, when he has the opportunity to go make new friends he is very picky, not wanting to befriend the Lasky boys, Mitchell Flemmer, or Aric Holbert. What seems to be the main reason for Greg's choosiness in not befriending any of those boys? How can you tell?

Discussion Question 3

What is it about Fregley pressing the button at the Find a Friend station that makes Greg feel so guilty? Please explain your answer.

Vocabulary

chores, suspended, vandalizing, playdate, mold, sidekick, guilty, nonsense



March: Thursday (week 3)

Summary

Greg shows up to Fregley's house so they can walk to school together, but Fregley has accidentally put his shirt on upside down. In a comical illustration, Greg must help him out of the shirt. At first Greg is annoyed, but then he wonders if this is the kind of material that can turn Fregley into Greg's funny sidekick. So, Greg draws a picture of Fregley doing the same shirt-stuck thing he did that morning, but this time for a table of girls at lunch. Greg's plan backfires, though, when they don't find it funny and Fregley doesn't turn into Greg's funny sidekick. Greg has Fregley try another trick. Fregley says he can blow a bubble gum bubble with his belly button, Greg even draws a short series of illustrations of Fregley with his shirt off but none of the girls being impressed with Fregley's trick. However, the boys were impressed. Greg gets pushed out of his lunch table because of the number of boys who want to see what else Fregley can chew with his belly button.

The last two illustrations show Greg being left out, miserable, and alone. Greg is upset that he has been nice to Fregley and offered his friendship, and Fregley seems to have just taken the limelight and left Greg in the dark.

Analysis

Greg seems hopeful that this day might be better than the last couple weeks, since he's got someone to walk to school with. However, when Greg shows up and Fregley is in an awkward situation with his shirt upside down, Greg is irritated. The reader can see the unpleasant look on Greg's face as he is irritated with Fregley for being so awkward. At this point, he just wants Rowley back. If he had Rowley back, he wouldn't have to deal with any of this; he could just walk to school with his best friend and everything be normal.

However, Greg quickly changes his tune when he realizes that Fregley's awkwardness might work out in his favor. Greg thinks that Fregley could become his funny sidekick. Greg draws Fregley getting stuck in his shirt again, but this time in front of a table of girls at lunch. The girls aren't amused by that, or by Fregley's trick of supposedly being able to blow a bubble gum bubble with his belly button, but the boys find it funny. The reader might think that the boys finding Fregley's trick funny would work out well for Greg, but the image of the boys finding Fregley funny is one where Greg is left out. All the boys that Greg doesn't consider friends anyway have now pushed him out of their lunch table so they can make room for Fregley and Fregley's tricks.

Greg illustrates himself as left out, miserable, and alone. His body remains slumped, his frown remains on his face, and he sees no way to make his situation better. Molding Fregley didn't work, and all Greg wanted was someone who would do what he asks and



needs him to do. Greg ends the chapter by saying that no matter how nice you are to some people they'll turn their back on you under an illustration that shows him eating in the back of the lunch line all by himself. It seems Greg is still upset about his situation with Rowley even though he didn't mention Rowley in this or the few previous entries. He is having trouble trusting new people, even ones whom he thought would be shoe-in for a good new best friend.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Greg trying to get Fregley to make the girls laugh?

Discussion Question 2

Does Fregley know that Greg is trying to change him? How can you tell?

Discussion Question 3

What is likely to happen to Greg's attitude toward making new friends now that Fregley, whom he took under his wing, has ditched him?

Vocabulary

accidentally, untangle, irritated, moment, spotlight



March: Friday (week 3)

Summary

It's the last day before Spring Break, and Greg is excited to be able to have some down time from everything that's been going on at school. But at dinner on Friday night Greg's mom breaks it to the family that her extended family is coming for a visit. It's common for Greg's mom to surprise Greg and his brothers and his dad that her family is coming into town because they are pretty rowdy.

Greg describes and draws all of his mom's family:

Aunt Cakey, which is his mom's oldest sister, doesn't have kids and doesn't seem to like kids. She watched Greg once when Greg was younger, but Greg ended up burning his hand on an iron so she was never allowed to watch him again. The illustrations of that situation make it seem like Greg had no choice but to go touch the iron, since that's what Aunt Cakey warned him not to do and then ignored him to watch a game show.

Aunt Gretchen is Greg's mom's youngest sister. Aunt Gretchen has two twin boys, Malvin and Malcolm, who are so wild that Gretchen used to keep them on child leashes. Greg describes and draws a picture of once when Aunt Gretchen brought the twins and their pets. Greg says it was like a zoo. On another visit, the twins played catch in the driveway with a small block of concrete. It hit Malvin in the forehead and so he had to go the emergency room for stitches. While Greg's mom was with Malvin at the ER, Malcolm had gotten into Greg's dad's shaving kit.

Aunt Veronica is another one of Greg's mom's sisters. She hasn't been to a family gathering in at least five years. Instead, she attends via video conferencing. Another relative has a mobile tablet device, and Aunt Veronica gets to see everyone from there. Greg describes and draws a picture of one summer when the family was together for an outdoor wedding. Greg could tell that Aunt Veronica was playing games on her computer because he could hear the game sounds.

Aunt Audra is the last of his mom's four sisters. She believes in crystal balls and horoscopes, which Greg's family doesn't believe in. Greg considers a career as a psychic if there isn't too much training involved, ever since Aunt Audra took him to her psychic a few summers ago.

Grandma is Greg's mom's mom. Greg wonders why his mom doesn't believe in fortune-telling since he's always saying that Grandma has ESP. Greg insists Grandma doesn't use her powers for good, though, since she doesn't predict lottery numbers, only that Greg will enjoy her cookies.

Greg is unsure about the truth in psychic and fortune-telling because once he bought a rabbit's foot for good luck, but all it brought him was food poisoning and his ankle getting sprained. He was okay with getting rid of the rabbit's foot because he thought that if it



did ever bring him good luck, like winning the lottery, he wouldn't be able to enjoy it. In a drawing he shows that if he won the lottery and had a lot of money and a nice car, he couldn't enjoy it because there would be a rabbit out there on crutches, missing a foot. Greg also talks about the uselessness of the daily horoscope in the newspaper as well as Chinese fortune cookies, neither of which give him information he can use.

Greg wishes there was something out there could just tell him what to do, because he is not confident in his own decision-making abilities as of late.

Analysis

Greg's depictions of his family do not work in their favor. Each family member is drawn with one extremely odd feature: Aunt Gretchen with a wide body and oddly shaped nose; Aunt Audra with an oddly shaped nose; Aunt Veronica with a carrot-shaped nose and wide, scary eyes; and Aunt Gretchen with an exceptional frown along with an uptight hairstyle and, again, an oddly shaped nose. Aunt Gretchen's twin boys are drawn to look like small gremlins, and the looks on Greg's immediate family's faces when their rabbits have bunnies is one of annoyance and anger.

This is the side of the family that Greg mentioned in the beginning drove his mom and their immediate family crazy because of their rowdiness and tendency to be weird. However, it is important to note that Greg spends an entire diary entry writing and drawing about his extended family, even though they drive him crazy. Greg's drawings of the various situations are detailed and significant, because they show not only why the extended family drives him and everyone in his house crazy, but they emphasize the fact that Greg seems to value friendship over family. There is no circumstance in this diary entry that involves Greg's extended family and Greg is smiling or happy about it. Greg is either stoic or frowning.

The only extended family member who looks pleasant in his drawings is his Gramma, and that might be because she's Gramma, and Grammas are usually looked at favorably because they spoil their grandchildren. Greg goes back to the concept of fortune-telling, though, as he wonders why his mom doesn't believe in that kind of thing since she is the one always telling Greg that Gramma has ESP. Greg draws himself trying to get that night's lottery numbers from his Gramma, but all she predicts is that he'll like her cookies. This isn't the kind of fortune-telling he was looking for, and again he is frustrated with his family.

The author uses this diary entry to set up two significant events that will soon happen: the family get-together for Easter. First, even more extended family comes into town and not only do his parents get to their wit's end, but the family discovers Meemaw's diamond ring is missing and they go crazy looking for it. The craziness that Greg describes about past times with his family is to prepare the reader for what's to come, which is even more madness, all of which supports Greg's initial thought that his spring break will be absolutely ruined by his family coming into town. The second significant event that was foreshadowed with the tellings and drawings of his family is the fact that



Greg soon finds a Magic 8 Ball. In this diary entry, Greg mentions Aunt Aundra's tendency toward the psychic and future-telling stuff, and then his own misfortune after purchasing a rabbit's foot. Greg ends the chapter with an illustration of him sitting against a brick wall at school, lonely and miserable, wishing for something to exist that just tells him what to do so he doesn't have to make his own decisions anymore. The illustration shows Abigail and Rowley walking by, hand-in-hand, lending to Greg's misery. Greg still hasn't seen his luck turn around, and though he seems to remain hopeless about the situation, the author is foreshadowing a turn of events to be coming in about a week.

As Greg reminisces about not having good luck with the psychic and other fortune-telling-related things in the past, Greg remains down in the dumps about his current situation. He is focusing on all the hard luck he's fallen on, and not just this school year, but even with his mom's family. His frustration and sadness over the situation with Rowley has extended into other areas of his life. It's been about three weeks since Greg started this diary, and he is still lonely and seems to be feeling worse and worse about his situation as time goes on. Greg's description of his extended family is less-than-pleasant, proving exactly what he said about making a run for it if he found out too far in advance that his mom's family was coming to visit. His sentiments also fit in with what he wrote about in the beginning, that maybe family is forever, but that doesn't mean that they have to be together all the time. He simply wants his friend back so that he can spend his spring break playing with Rowley, instead of dealing with the madness at his own house.

Discussion Question 1

What seems to bother Greg more about his mom's family coming in to town: the fact that they don't all get along, or the fact that he doesn't get any alone time? How can you tell?

Discussion Question 2

Does it seem like Greg has given his mom's family a fair chance before forming opinions? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

The words "NEED" and "TELLS" are capitalized in the last paragraph of this diary entry. Why does Greg feel like he would be doing better in life if he had something to tell him what to do every day?

Vocabulary

blindsided, relatives, obvious, fragile, stealth, second-degree burn, litter, stitches, responsible, video conference, horoscope, psychic, betrayed, souvenirs, trinkets



March: Wednesday (week 4)

Summary

Greg reminisces about how he used to make a lot of money when his mom's family came into town: he would have a stockpile of drawings ready and then sell them to relatives when they arrived. One year, he made \$80. But the older he's gotten, the less willing his family is to purchase his drawings. That privilege has gone to Manny, now that Manny is the youngest kid in the family. Though Greg isn't sure if his relatives stopped buying from him because he went back to the same people too often, of it it was because he doubled his prices.

Analysis

One of the shortest diary entries, Greg just wanted to vent his frustration about how once again, someone else is having better luck than he is. Since nobody is buying his drawings anymore, even though he's putting a lot of effort into them, Greg feels further frustrated. His jealous nature comes out not only in his writing but also in his drawings.

Greg's illustrations of his own drawings make them look quite artistic and appealing. When he gets to his relatives purchasing Manny's drawings, not only are his drawings scribbles, but Manny is drawn to look incredibly small. This is likely an indication of how little Greg thinks of Manny's drawings and how much he thinks of his own. Greg also insults Manny's drawings in his writing, saying nobody can tell what they are and that Manny puts no effort into them.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Greg feel slighted by his family?

Discussion Question 2

What themes do you see coming out in Greg's drawings when he writes and draws about his family buying Manny's drawings and not his? Please explain your answer.

Discussion Question 3

How has Greg's attitude changed from the beginning of the book until now?

Vocabulary

stockpile, amazing, wallet, doubles, scribbles, taste



March: Thursday (week 4)

Summary

Greg writes about how he and his family, including his mom's extended family, are having Easter at Gramma's house this year. The only thing that Gramma has for kids to play with is a stuffed elephant named Ellie, but its trunk, ears, and legs have been torn off by her dog Sweetie. Now it just looks like a bowling pin with eyes. There is a drawing of Greg, Rodrick, and Manny sitting at a table, looking bored and trying to figure out how to have fun with Ellie.

Greg does enjoy messing around with Sweetie, the very round dog that lives with Gramma. Though the kids can't play with Sweetie like they used to because Gramma has fed him so much food, Greg and Rodrick have found other ways to have fun with the dog. For example, making a raspberry sound from behind makes Sweetie's ears perk up. then she sniffs her behind for five minutes and goes back to sleep. Once, Greg's dad tried to get in on the fun but instead of Sweetie sniffing her backside, she farted in Greg's dad's face, which Rodrick and Greg found to be very funny. Greg illustrates each scenario: the boys looking at Sweetie and wishing they could play with her; the boys playing the fart game with her; and their dad trying but having it backfire.

Greg writes about how if he's ever a grandpa, he is going to choose what his grandkids call him. He seems to think that Meemaw and Peepaw are ridiculous names for grandparents. His illustration of Peepaw isn't flattering or unflattering. It is one drawing of Greg's mom asking Peepaw a question, and Peepaw asking "EH?" because he couldn't hear her.

Greg writes about how Gramma's house used to be a lot of fun, especially when Great Granny Meemaw was still alive. Greg's drawings of Meemaw are all positive in this diary entry, especially the one of her filling plastic Easter eggs. Greg's whole family used to have a huge Easter egg hunt with money and candy hidden in the eggs. Then the eggs were hidden inside Gramma's house and in the backyard. After Easter brunch, all the kids would go out to find eggs. There were always so many, that eggs would be found for years after the hunt would be over. The Easter Egg hunts stopped the year Great Granny Meemaw passed away. Before that, Meemaw wasn't as sharp and began putting random, useless objects in the eggs, such as: used tissues, green beans, dental floss, and bottle caps.

Greg writes and draws what happened at Meemaw's funeral: everyone realized that Meemaw was no longer wearing her diamond ring. Greg's mom's rowdy family tore Meemaw's old house up looking for the ring, but nobody found it. Easter that year ended with everyone at everyone else's throats. That's how things ended the last time everyone was together, and it was the last time everyone has been together in one place since.



Greg wonders if the ring situation shook up his mom, because she says she hopes nobody finds the ring. If the ring is found, she's afraid the whole family will be destroyed over it. Greg sees this as a good thing because he thinks that if the family breaks up then he never again has to see Aunt Gretchen with Malvin and Malcolm, which he illustrates with a drawing of the twins raiding the shower while Greg is in it and taking a picture.

Analysis

Again, Greg is wondering why things can't be the way he wants them to be. All he wants is a normal family, or at least one that isn't so rowdy. He misses the times when his family used to have fun at Meemaw's Easter Egg hunt. Greg's drawings of the Easter egg hunts and their games with Sweetie show a side of him that loves his family. They also show that there was a time in the past when his family didn't bother him as much as they do today. Though this doesn't match what Greg's typical feelings of friends being more important to his life than family, the fact that his family is no longer the way it used to be has probably contributed to that sentiment.

Greg also illustrates the point when his Meemaw started putting strange things in the Easter eggs as she got older, such as dental floss and a used tissue. This is around the time when his family dynamic started to change, because once Meemaw died and the family started looking for her diamond ring was when family members started not getting along as well. Thus, Greg started to be okay with there not being an Easter egg hunt anymore, and he also became okay with not seeing his extended family on a regular basis. Though the events Greg writes about in this diary entry are past events, it's important to note that they are the foundation of why Greg seems to value friendship over family. It's not like he expected his family to go awry, but once they did he stopped wanting to be around them. He seemed to trust more in his friendships than in his family relationships.

Greg doesn't mention Rowley in this diary entry, which was his biggest problem to begin with. However, he continues to snowball his problems and make them all roll into one big, sad situation. There is no opportunity for a display of responsibility here, and he doesn't really talk about his bad luck in having such a rowdy family. He does, however, begin to whine about the fact that his family is so nasty to one another. The image of his family erupting in a big argument when nobody could find the diamond ring is the biggest indicator of how Greg feels about his family. He had already not drawn them in a positive light in a previous diary entry, but now he has extended that by illustrating their fighting and their unpleasant natures.

One thing that his family displays that is similar to some of Greg's attitude is selfishness, though Greg doesn't see it. He sees his family's selfishness and their inability to be considerate of one another, but he doesn't realize that in the last six weeks he has behaved that same with with people in his life. His lack of self-awareness in this situation is a further indication of his selfishness and self-centeredness.



The fact that there are two sides to Greg's family descriptions in this diary entry - fond memories of the Easter egg hunt and Meemaw, but also irritation that there is nothing kid-friendly at Gramma's aside from Ellie - indicates that Greg doesn't think his situation is all bad. Sometimes he seems caught in the middle of things that he likes about his life, and everything that's going wrong. This is a normal human experience. It is common to have some things the way we want them, but to want other things in our life to be different.

Discussion Question 1

Why do you think Greg thought Meemaw and Peepaw were ridiculous names, especially since they were two people in his mom's family that he actually liked? Please explain your answer.

Discussion Question 2

Do you think any of Greg's frustration with his mom's family is related to his frustration with the situation with Rowley? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Based on what you know about Greg's mom's family, do you agree with Greg that if the family found the diamond ring, it would be a disaster for the family? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

entertainment, depressed, raspberry, backfired, disrespect, apparently, accused



March: Sunday (week 4)

Summary

It's Easter Sunday, and Greg writes and draws about how he prefers Christmas over Easter, because Christmas is a more relaxing holiday. Today, Greg has to stay in his church clothes even though his tie has already started to bother him. Greg's drawings of his extended family continue to be unfavorable, most of them looking strange and/or grumpy. In the illustration of Greg's immediate family walking to his Gramma's house for Easter dinner, the only person with a smile on her face is Greg's mom.

Greg is surprised to see that when everyone gets to Gramma's, including his mom's family, everyone seems to be getting along just fine. In fact, he's never felt so comfortable walking into a room that full of his relatives. He can't remember all of their names, but they sure remember his and what's been going on in his life. Greg tries to get through the crowd as quickly as possible, and is only stopped by a couple family members wondering about school. Greg wishes he thought to do what Manny does, which is to pretend he doesn't speak.

Some extra family was in town this year: Mom's cousin Gerald from California, who lived with Greg's family for a few months right after he was born; Mom's cousin Martina who struck it rich in Las Vegas by suing a hotel after falling and breaking her collar bone; Greg's Uncle Larry, who Greg thinks isn't actually an uncle but that he just shows up to family events because he was invited once and just never stopped. Uncle Larry always takes the best seat in Gramma's house, the recliner, and asks the kids to get him things; and Greg's Gramma's two sisters, who give each other insulting Christmas presents because they can't stand each other. Last year, one received five ketchup packets and the other, a used bar of deodorant.

Now that there's no Easter Egg hunt, Greg describes three choices of how to spend time at Gramma's house on Easter: watch golf with the men in the family room, talk with the women in the kitchen, or play with the all the kids in the basement. None of the choices appeal to Greg, so he spends time in the bathroom until it's time to eat.

Greg writes about brunch with his family, which Greg doesn't find too terrible. He likes that the kids and grown-ups sit at different tables now; they didn't used to. When they all sat together, Greg would end up next to a relative who wanted to know a lot about things in his life he didn't really want to talk about, like Social Studies class. Plus, Greg's mom would try to get him to eat food he didn't like, and sometimes that food would be served from the same bowl she used when the kids had the flu and needed to throw up. Plus, Greg thinks Gramma's dining room is far too formal, like when he got in trouble for laughing at Peepaw when Peepaw had a green-bean hanging from his lip until it fell into his water. Another year, Peepaw's dentures came out when Peepaw blew on his birthday cake. Greg tried so hard not to laugh that not only did he feel like he busted a



blood vessel, but the chocolate milk he had just swallowed spewed out all over the table.

Greg wonders how they figure out who belongs at which table, because Uncle Cecil, who was adopted by Great Aunt Marcie, is only four years old but sits at the grown-up table. Technically, he is Greg's uncle since he's his Great Aunt's son, but he's also four years old, which confuses Greg about who sits where. Greg thinks that there should be certain criteria for sitting at the kid and grown-up tables.

Greg tries hard this year to stay away from Malvin and Malcolm, but he ends up next to his cousin Georgia. Georgia has a loose tooth that's been hanging by a thread for years. She's been stalling for it to be pulled out, no matter how many family members try to convince her otherwise. Greg remembers that when his front tooth was loose, his mom spent weeks trying to convince him to pull it out. She tried to convince him that if he swallowed it in his sleep, he could choke and that would be dangerous. But Greg didn't buy that because Manny had recently swallowed one of Greg's toy cars and had been fine. Eventually, Greg's dad tied a string to a doorknob and Greg's loose tooth to get it out. Greg wanted to try that out with Georgia, but when he gets to Gramma's room, half the adults are in there looking at Gramma's photo albums.

Aunt Audra's psychic had told her that Meemaw's wedding ring was in a photo album, so the adults spent the rest of the afternoon shaking out the albums and looking at the pictures for any clue as to where the ring might be. Uncle Larry points out a set of pictures where Meemaw is wearing the ring in the first picture as she's filling Easter eggs, then not wearing it in the next picture when she's preparing applesauce. The family figures out the ring is in an Easter egg, and everyone fans out over Gramma's backyard, looking for the plastic egg that would contain Meemaw's ring. Greg looks for the ring inside, but when his mom catches him looking in Gramma's underwear drawer, Greg figures he had gone too far.

Greg's immediate family left while everyone was still looking for the ring because Greg's mom seemed to be pretty annoyed and tired of the whole ordeal.

Analysis

Greg's time with his mom's family exceeds his expectations. The descriptions Greg gives of the extended family aren't as negative as they were a few diary entries ago, though his illustrations continue to make them look strange and/or grumpy. The fact that Greg's Easter Sunday is not as dismal as he had planned on it being is a good sign for Greg; it means he has found one positive thing in his life on which to focus. Even though Greg is wearing a frown in all but one illustrations where he is interacting with his extended family, what he seems to care most about is that his surroundings aren't as chaotic as he had expected them to be. While this seems to do nothing for Greg's perspective on family vs. friendship and what he most values, at least Greg can take one situation and not be miserable about it.



What is important to note about his family descriptions and illustrations is the lengths to which Greg goes to explain why his family is so strange. For each family member, Greg has a detailed explanation as to why he doesn't think super highly of them. Again, this shows Greg's tendency toward valuing friendship over family. He obviously cares about his family in an obligatory manner, but he also makes it clear that they're not his first choice of company. Greg's last few illustrations and descriptions of his extended family are that of his family members madly looking for Meemaw's diamond ring. He has sympathy for his mom since she knows they were driving her crazy, leading her to bring her family home early, Greg calls their behavior disturbing, but also realizes when he gets too carried away. He seems thankful for his mom's early exit of their family.

One family member description that stands out is that of Uncle Cecil, who is a baby and was adopted by Greg's Great Aunt Marcie. Since Cecil was adopted by Greg's Great Aunt, the family makes Greg and the other kids call him Uncle Cecil, and Uncle Cecil gets to sit at the grown-up table. Greg is sure he doesn't want to sit at the grown-up table because he doesn't like answering questions about school, but he also doesn't think Cecil should be able to sit there, either, since he is in diapers. The significance of Greg's description and illustration of Uncle Cecil in the pool in his swim diapers is Greg's perception of how things should be. So much of "Hard Luck" is Greg upset that the order of how he thinks things should be are just not. Greg's belief that Cecil should be at the kids' table - since Rodrick is "practically a grown man" and can't even sit at the grown-up table - is an example of Greg wishing for his ideal world, as well as his desire for things to be a certain way.

Greg does some recalling of past situations with his immediate family as the situations relate to current happenings with his extended family. For example, his cousin Georgia won't give up her loose tooth. Greg remembers when his dad showed him a "trick" in order to get his loose tooth out. His memories are told and drawn with fondness. The only illustration in which he isn't wearing a smile is the one where he says he doesn't want to eat what Mom brought for Easter dinner because she put it in the bowl used for their vomit if one of the boys has the flu.

Again, Greg doesn't mention Rowley in this diary entry. He is being sufficiently distracted by other happenings in his life, even if they're not ideal. But the fact that Greg can focus on something else, even if just for a day, is good because it shows not only that he's not letting the situation with Rowley run or ruin his life, but also that he is able to notice positive aspects of some situations despite the emotions of sadness, loneliness, and frustration he's going through with Rowley ditching him for Abigail.

Discussion Question 1

What were Greg's favorite and least favorite parts about Easter with his family? How can you tell?



Discussion Question 2

Are there any relatives that Greg seems to like? How can you tell?

Discussion Question 3

Greg thinks his mom is fed up with her family at the end of the day, and that's why she decides to go home. Do you think Greg feels the same way? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

crowd, gatherings, jealous, buffet, beeline, exchange, occupy, brunch, dentures, blood vessel, convince, stalling, eventually, literally, greedy, riffling



March: Tuesday (week 5)

Summary

Greg is excited when Aunt Gretchen and her terror twins only stay for two days instead of their usual one week. Greg's dad had them leave because the night before, Malcolm called 911 when there was no more ketchup. It took Greg's parents about two hours to sort everything out with the cops. So Aunt Gretchen and the boys went to Gramma's to stay. Not only is Greg glad that Malvin and Malcolm aren't in the house anymore, but he also gets to go back to his bed. For the last two nights, Greg had been sleeping on a leaky air mattress in Rodrick's room. He was always flat on the floor by the morning.

One of the mornings when Greg woke up on the deflated air mattress, he spotted a Magic 8 Ball under Rodrick's bed. Greg gets pretty excited because he's always wanted to play with one but has never had the chance. Greg asks the Magic 8 Ball, "Am I the smartest person in the family" and when the Magic 8 Ball answers "IT IS CERTAIN" after Greg shakes it, Greg is impressed with the toy's accuracy. To test the Magic 8 Ball's ability, he asks another question: "Don't you think Rowley and Abigail are totally obnoxious?", and when it answers "IT IS DECIDEDLY SO", Greg is sure the Magic 8 Ball works.

Greg begins asking the Magic 8 Ball for advice, such as should he shower and should he finish the outline for his Science Fair project. Greg feels that the Magic 8 Ball will help him make all the little decisions, and so now he can focus on the big, important stuff. Greg wonders how he has gotten through life so far without the Magic 8 Ball.

Analysis

This is one of the most significant diary entries of the entire book. The author has foreshadowed some fortune-telling, and it comes to fruition in this diary entry. While sleeping on an air mattress on Rodrick's floor, Greg finds a Magic 8 Ball under Rodrick's bed. At first, Greg perceives his luck to be just the same as it's been most of the book, poor, since his air mattress continues to deflate each night. However, with the discovery of the Magic 8 Ball, Greg sees his luck start to turn around, and therefore so does his attitude.

Greg's perception of his hard luck thus far has been partly because that's what he has focused on. It's almost as though the bad luck has increased or expanded because that's all Greg has been able to see. Only recently has he chosen to see positive things happening in his life, such as Easter Sunday being better than he had anticipated. But now, his cousins are gone after just two days and he has found a toy that he has always wanted to try, thus beginning Greg's good fortune. The questions he asks the Magic 8 Ball in order to test its accuracy are completely self-serving: Am I the smartest person in my family?; Don't you think Rowley and Abigail are totally obnoxious?; What's the



grossest thing I've ever accidentally eaten?; and Should I finish the outline for my Science Fair project? The first two questions especially show that Greg continues to be focused on himself and how problems of his world impact him, not necessarily other people. He is excited to use this new-to-him device to not just answer simple questions, but also to offer advice. Here, the author is foreshadowing Greg's usage of the Magic 8 Ball as he tries to solve some of his major issues, such as bullying.

Greg even compares his using the Magic 8 Ball in order to make little decisions to Einstein's decision not to change clothes every day so he could focus on his science. Such a strong comparison would indicate that Greg sees this Magic 8 Ball find as a win for himself, and that Greg fancies himself to be exceptionally smart. Even though Greg asks the Magic 8 Ball questions that he has no control over, such as his dad telling him to do unload the dishwasher, just the feeling of having something on his side for once will make a difference in how Greg sees the situation with Rowley. It is an inanimate object, but the presence of the Magic 8 Ball has given Greg a boost of confidence.

The Magic 8 Ball, while a symbol of the beginning of Greg's good fortune, may also be a representation of how Greg has viewed the last couple months: based on pure luck. Greg seems to prefer having no actual control over a situation, since he doesn't like taking responsibility for situations that make him look bad or put him in a tough spot. The Magic 8 Ball is another way Greg can make choices but not take full responsibility for them, since he can pin them on the Magic 8 Ball.

In each illustration of Greg and the Magic 8 Ball, he is either concentrating - which he shows himself doing by having his tongue sticking a little bit out - or he is smiling. This is the largest collection of illustrations so far that take place in the present and have Greg being in a good mood, which is another indication that he sees his luck changing right before his eyes.

Discussion Question 1

This is the first time in a few diary entries that Greg has mentioned Rowley and Abigail. Do you think he's forgotten about the situation? Please explain your answer.

Discussion Question 2

Greg seems to have found a friend in the Magic 8 Ball. What do you think it is about the Magic 8 Ball that is so appealing to Greg?

Discussion Question 3

How is the Magic 8 Ball different from the rabbit's foot Greg had purchased years ago?

Vocabulary

inflated, impressed, obnoxious, reasonable, advice, hygiene, brainpower

April: Thursday (week 1)

Summary

Greg has been playing with the Magic 8 Ball for a few days and has found a few limitations. For example, it cannot answer math questions. Plus, Greg is disappointed when the Magic 8 Ball answered "CONCENTRATE AND ASK AGAIN" when Greg asked it if he should run or fight one of the Mingo kids. Later in the day, however, the Magic 8 Ball redeemed itself when it confirmed his choice to not take his mom's advice and go outside. Instead, he hid in his mom's closet.

In his mom's closet, Greg notices a bunch of parenting books. He considers the books to be his mom's secret weapon, since they have titles like, "Raising Decent Human Beings," "Parenting Picky Eaters", and "Ultra Parenting." In one of the books, Greg learns about reverse psychology, which he finds out is the idea that parents can get kids to do what they want by telling them the exact opposite of what the kid is supposed to do. Greg realizes that his parents have been using that technique on them for most or all of his life. For example, Greg tells and draws a story about how he wanted to help out with the dishes when he was younger but his parents told him he wasn't ready for the responsibility. Until his 8th birthday, when Greg's parents finally let him help. But now he sees that the whole thing might have been a reverse psychology trick.

Greg realizes these books must be where his mom gets all of her advice, especially from a book called "Helping Your Child Deal with Loss." He remembers when he had Squirm the Worm, a pet he kept in a jar with holes on the top. However, one of the times Greg had Squirm out for some exercise, Manny accidentally stepped on him. Greg's mom told him Squirm was in Inchworm Heaven, which Greg believed.

Another book Greg found in his mom's closet was one called "Making FRIENDS for your child", which Greg realizes is where most of his mom's recent advice about making friends has come from.

Greg also finds Tickle, a version of his favorite childhood sock monkey, up on his mom's closet shelf. Greg remembers that on a family vacation to the beach he lost his original Tickle. The family searched everywhere and even put up signs around the hotel. The family ended up having to leave the beach early because Greg was so bummed out, he kind of ruined the vacation for everyone. Yet, the morning after they returned home from the beach, Tickle was sitting on Greg's dresser. According to his mom, Tickle found his way home to Greg because he loved Greg so much. Now that he sees five stuffed monkeys that look exactly like Tickle up on his mom's shelf, Greg knows the truth. And now that he knows the truth, he remembers one time when his mom washed Tickle and upon opening the washing machine door, his stuffing was all over the place. But miraculously, Tickle was in one piece when Greg got out of his bath that night. Greg realizes this must be the reason Manny sleeps with ten stuffed dinosaurs every night; Greg thinks Manny discovered their mom's secret before he did.



Greg has to leave the closet because he can hear his mom coming up the stairs, but he plans to stay a step ahead of his parents from now on, now that he knows where his mom gets all of her parenting advice.

Analysis

Greg has a new understanding of his parents, especially of his mom, based on his finding of the parenting books. It's not really clear whether or not he appreciates his mom's methods of advice by way of parenting books, but his illustrations of him finding and reading the books have him with a smile on his face. The only time he appears unhappy about his parent's techniques as they've come from the book is if he has felt tricked with reverse psychology. However, he will eventually turn that around on them, and it ends up working, so he doesn't really stay mad. The good thing about him finding his parents' parenting books is that he can learn to better understand them and some of the decisions they've made. Since Greg is going through a transition time and becoming more mature as he goes through the eighth grade, this is a good situation for Greg to practice maturity.

Greg remembers when he lost an inchworm that he cared about. It was clearly a significant event for him, because there are five illustrations about it: Squirm the Worm in his jar, Greg exercising the worm, him being upset with Manny for stepping on Squirm, his mom consoling him, and finally the book he finds, "Helping Your Child Deal With Loss". To have five illustrations of a situation signifies that it was important to Greg. The fact that the situation he remembers and the book he now knows his mom used for advice has to do with loss matches up with Greg losing a sense of innocence. As he deals with his first big best friend betrayal, Greg is presently dealing with a different kind of loss. The fact that he can remember how his mom consoled him the first time he lost something he cared about and is now trying to help him deal with Rowley is an example of Greg associating the two events. Right after Greg writes and illustrates about the book about loss, he finds the parenting book about helping your child make friends, which is what his mom has been trying to help him do since Greg confided in her about the Rowley situation. Friendship is a strong value for Greg that is being tested right now with Rowley's betrayal, so writing about that directly after writing about loss is probably not a coincidence.

Greg also finds out about his parents having replacement Tickle, Greg's stuffed monkey. He doesn't complain about it, and he even seems to understand that the same principle is why Manny has ten stuffed dinosaurs. Rather, he wants to use this knowledge to his advantage to maybe get some things he's been wanting. So, even though Greg is demonstrating a higher level of maturity than he might have in the past, he is also being selfish as he thinks about how he can use this knowledge to his own advantage. He doesn't share the information with his brothers, either. He assumes Manny knows because he assumes that's how Manny got his ten stuffed dinosaurs in the first place, but Greg obviously wants to keep this bit of information to himself so he can do what he wants with it.



While some kids might feel manipulated to find out where their parents' advice comes from, and even the fact that there are extras of their favorite toys, Greg seems to think his parents are genius for their methods. This diary entry is fairly positive, which is a good sign. Even if Greg is showing some selfishness by keeping the contents of his mom's closet to himself, he's also demonstrating positivity and maturity.

Discussion Question 1

Greg says the Magic 8 Ball "redeems" itself by giving him a more favorable answer later, after it had given him an unclear answer about the Mingo kids. What does this say about Greg's reliance on the Magic 8 Ball, and his belief in its roll in his life? Please explain your answer.

Discussion Question 2

Is Greg upset with his parents for having parenting books hidden in their closet? How can you tell?

Discussion Question 3

How can the reader tell that Greg isn't too angry with his parents for having - then providing - extra versions of Ticklees?

Vocabulary

limitations, secret weapon, reverse psychology, technique, exercise, hysterical, replace, stash, exploring



April: Tuesday (week 2)

Summary

Greg decides to use one of his parents' parenting techniques, reverse psychology, on his mom and dad. Greg has been asking for a phone from his parents for what feels like forever. He tells them it's okay that he doesn't have a phone because he's probably not ready for that responsibility anyway. Almost immediately after Greg tells his parents that, his mom goes into Greg's room and tells him she is upgrading her phone and is giving her current phone to him. Greg is shocked that his experiment works as quickly as it does.

Greg's mom sets ground rules, such as sharing the phone with Manny and no texting with friends. Greg writes that texting with his friends won't be an issue because he doesn't have any friends at the moment. However, he is not happy about sharing the phone with Manny. But overall, Greg is pretty excited to have a phone of his own.

In the middle of Greg personalizing the phone with new wallpaper and ringtones, Greg's Gramma texted the phone, thinking it still belonged to Greg's mom. The text asked if Greg's dad Frank could stop by Gramma's house with Rodrick and Greg to move a piano to the basement. Since Greg's mom said Greg only couldn't text his friends and said nothing about family, Greg texts Gramma back, posing as his mom, and says they can't stop by because they're doing father/son stuff on the weekend. Greg draws the text and his response, indicating that he knows it was sneaky to respond to his grandma's text.

Greg started playing games on his phone. He was having a great time until Aunt Veronica called on a video chat. Because of the surprise call and when it happened - Greg was going to the bathroom - he ended up dropping the phone into the toilet. He managed to get the phone out of the toilet, but it wouldn't turn on after that. Greg feels bad about ruining the phone, but in his defense, he says, he did warn his parents that he wasn't ready for the responsibility.

Analysis

Greg is caught between wanting to be older and past the stuff middle school kids go through, like having your friend ditch you for a girl for the first time, and being old enough for some responsibility. Greg has dealt with losing a sense of innocence as he works through his best friend's betrayal, and he has also demonstrated a higher level of maturity, but the responsibility he wants isn't because he really wants more responsibility. What Greg really wants is just what Greg wants, which in this diary entry is a new cell phone. Using reverse psychology works on his parents and he gets his mom's old phone. However, it's important to note that Greg doesn't see this as a responsibility. He sees this as a victory in getting a toy that he's been wanting. Greg



only frames it as responsibility so that he parents will give in and let him have what he wants.

Greg writes and draws about his experience with the cell phone, which unfortunately doesn't last very long. Greg shows how happy he is with his new toy, and how much care he puts into personalizing it. Greg is relishing in his victory of a new toy, which is evident by Greg's illustrations of his parents giving him the phone, the text messages, and him playing on it. However, since he brings it everywhere, including the bathroom (which he illustrates), he receives an unexpected video conference call that causes him to drop the phone into the toilet. Greg illustrates his surprise and serious frustration. This happens just after Greg responds to a text message from him Gramma. While Greg's mom didn't say Greg couldn't text family, it is safe to assume that her instruction to not text his friends was likely a general instruction to not text anyone. Again, Greg is not taking responsibility for his actions.

Greg's lack of responsibility is evident in this diary entry, not only with not following his mom's no-texting rule but also after he drops the phone into the toilet. Greg doesn't take responsibility for texting when he's not supposed to, and he also blames Aunt Veronica for him dropping his phone into the toilet, since it was her surprise phone call that caused him to lose his grip. He doesn't acknowledge that he shouldn't have texted. He doesn't acknowledge that he could have been using the phone at a better time. Instead, he says that "in all fairness", he told his parents he wasn't ready for the responsibility. Based on that statement, he's correct. By saying that, he is confirming that he didn't really want more responsibility, he simply wanted a new toy that he thought would make him cooler.

All Greg wants is something to push him forward, since he feels like he's stuck in the mud: he has no friends; he has to watch out where he walks when he's going to and from school; he gets pushed around by bullies; and he can't keep a cell phone without ruining it. He still has the Magic 8 Ball, though he doesn't write or draw about it in this diary entry. Greg also doesn't mention Rowley in this entry, but he does mention in kind of a snarky way that he has no friends. While Greg might be distracted with things like finding versions of Tickles in his mom's closet and playing with his mom's old cell phone, he still misses his friend and wants his friend back. The last illustration in this diary entry is Greg showing his parents the wet cell phone. He has a frown, and his parents look disappointed.

Discussion Question 1

Of all of the responsibility Greg might have asked for, why does he choose a cell phone when using reverse psychology on his parents?



Discussion Question 2

Greg defensively says he wasn't ready for the responsibility for a phone anyway, after he drops his new phone (his mom's old phone) in the toilet. What does this say about Greg's maturity level? Please explain your answer.

Discussion Question 3

Say Greg did have friends to text, what do you think would have bothered him more: not being able to text his friends, or sharing the phone with Manny? Please explain your answer.

Vocabulary

responsibility, text, personalizing, wallpaper, ringtones, downloaded, fished



April: Wednesday (week 2)

Summary

Greg is tired of being afraid of the Mingo kids, so he decides to find an after-school club he can join. He thinks if he can walk home later, the Mingo kids won't be outside waiting for him. Greg has never joined a club before but he is willing to try something in order to avoid the Mingo kids.

When Greg stays after school to decide on a club to join, he passes up the Board Game Club because it's run by Mr. Nern, the Pillow-Fighting Club because he didn't think it was a good fit (the students were wearing masks and Vikings-style helmets), and the Free Hug Club because he thinks it's strange. Greg pulls out his trust Magic 8 Ball to decide which club to join. He asks about each club, and gets mostly No's, but gets a Yes when he asks about the Yearbook Club. The Editor-in-Chief, Betsy Buckles, said the yearbook was almost done but that she could use Greg to take some candid shots of students around the school. Since the yearbook will pay him \$5 for every photo that landed in the yearbook, he agrees.

Greg illustrates an example of each club. In each one, the other students don't look like they're having a very good time. Even in the Yearbook illustration, members don't have smiles on their faces.

Analysis

Greg is looking for ways to avoid the dangerous situation of the Mingo kids. He doesn't draw the Mingo clan this time, which is good. Possibly, by drawing each club instead of the Mingo boys Greg is focusing on a solution instead of the problem. He used to depend on Rowley for protection (or at least support, depending on the situation), and now that he doesn't have Rowley, he has to make his own decisions.

Greg's decisions, though, are still not being made solely on his own. To figure out which club to join, Greg is using the Magic 8 Ball. He continues to rely on luck and chance in order to make his day-to-day decisions, which shows two things: one, that he is still not wanting to take serious responsibility for his choices, and two, that he is unsure of whether or not his luck can really turn around. Greg chooses the Yearbook club because the Magic 8 Ball answers "YES", but he claims that he really only agrees to being in the club because they're going to pay him \$5 per photo he takes that they choose to include in the yearbook. Thus, even though Greg trusts the Magic 8 Ball, he doesn't trust it completely, since he's only fully convinced when there is money involved. Greg illustrates each club that he considers, which shows that he's at least putting in an effort. Even though he is relying on the Magic 8 Ball to give him his answer, at least he is giving the Magic 8 Ball a plethora of choices.



Greg is problem-solving on his own, which is progress, since he used to depend on Rowley. However, Greg is clearly not joining the club for extra friends, which could be something that helps turn his misery around on more of a long-term basis than a club that will end at the conclusion of the school year. His mom would certainly be happy if he made some more friends. However, Greg has already demonstrated that he is picky about who he is friends with. He sits at the same lunch table with the same boys every day and doesn't even consider them to be his friends. So making friends with new people in a club is probably not going to happen. Greg still doesn't trust other people, since he is currently working through his first best friend betrayal.

Discussion Question 1

Greg uses his Magic 8 Ball to determine which club he should join. He is satisfied with the result. What does this say about Greg's continued usage of the Magic 8 Ball? Please explain your answer.

Discussion Question 2

Greg agrees to take photos for the yearbook mainly because he can make \$5 per picture the editor chooses to include in the yearbook. Is this similar to any of Greg's past situations he has written/drawn about in previous entries? Please explain your answer.

Discussion Question 3

Does Greg seem interested in making new friends through the Yearbook Club? How can you tell?

Vocabulary

fringe, definitely, meeting, editor-in-chief, candid, win-win



April: Thursday (week 2)

Summary

During his first day as Yearbook photographer, Greg hits some obstacles. First, he finds that kids in his school don't do anything worth taking a photograph for. Greg even tries to coax a classmate into getting his head stuck in a chair, as the student did last year, so he could get something dumb and funny on camera, but the student didn't take the bait. Because he couldn't find anyone doing anything interesting, the captions he writes under the photos he turns in are fairly unkind. For example, one caption reads "Morons on the bus" under a drawing of some kids on the school bus. Another obstacle for Greg is that trying to also be a good student while taking a lot of candid photographs, which he illustrates by showing himself in a classroom trying to do an assignment and also take a candid of another student in his class.

One thing Greg did enjoy about being the Yearbook photographer was tweaking some photos on the computer. Greg edited one picture to make someone who blinked have his eyes wide open. He also edited a picture of a teacher, Mr. Blakely. He changed the words on the board from a definition of the word "synonym" to "ME NOT NO HOW TO SPEL". This power, along with the ability to decide who does and doesn't get in the yearbook, is appealing to Greg. He took a picture of Leon Feast and shrunk Leon's head by 75%. Greg illustrates - in detail - the photos that he edits, as he is proud of his work. He is also making it clear through the illustrations that he is still frustrated by certain situations, and this is how he's choosing to have a little fun.

Analysis

Greg has found some pros and cons of being the Yearbook photographer, however he seems to be using his power for evil. He is showing favoritism on kids he doesn't mind, and also seeking revenge on students who have been unkind to him in the past. Greg's illustrations of the yearbook photos that he edits are evidence that Greg is not dealing with the Rowley situation in a healthy manner. He still seems lonely, angry, and frustrated and sees no reason why he shouldn't let others in on his misery. The fact that Greg edits the photos to humiliate other people and thinks nothing of it is another sign that Greg continues to lack a sense of responsibility. It also shows his selfishness, and he is only thinking of how to amuse himself and is putting no consideration toward other people.

Greg sees nothing wrong with his edits. In fact, in all of his illustrations of his yearbook photo work - the captions and the edits - Greg does not include himself in any of the drawings, which is a metaphor for how he doesn't see himself as responsible. He even states that if the photos make it past the yearbook editors, he's giving all the credit to the Magic 8 Ball. Messing with yearbook photos to humiliate other people is an immature action. However, since Greg has difficulty accepting responsibility for his



situations, the fact that he's messing with photos seems fitting. Once again, Greg seems to be going back and forth with his attitude toward his life. He struggles to find a way to do his Yearbook Photographer job and keep up with being a full-time student, but he enjoys the freedom to edit and caption the photos. Even though this shows his selfishness and lack of responsibility, the fact that he's looking forward to at least something is a change for Greg.

Greg doesn't mention Rowley in this entry, either, but since he's embarrassing other people and not caring about it, the reader can assume that Greg is still upset about the situation.

Discussion Question 1

Greg edits two photos to make the subjects look bad: he shrinks Leon Feast's head, and he changes the teacher photo to make the teacher look stupid. Does he seem to think either will do any damage? How can you tell?

Discussion Question 2

Does Greg seem remorseful for his attitude toward his photo editing? How can you tell?

Discussion Question 3

What is Greg's motivation for his unkind captions under the photos on page 172?

Vocabulary

photographer, influence, nudge, caption, digital, tweak, revenge



April: Monday (week 3)

Summary

Greg went back into his mom's closet over the weekend and found his old Body Blankie, which is similar to the Snuggie. It's a full-body blanket that lets you keep your arms warm while you reach for a drink or the remote control. Greg remembers that when his parents gave it to him as a Christmas gift, he wasn't excited. But the moment he put the Body Blankie on, he changed his mind, calling the creator of the Body Blankie a "genius". Rodrick got one at the same time Greg did, and Greg remembers that Rodrick liked his even more than Greg. So much so, that Rodrick wouldn't take his off for about five days, until their mom made him take a shower. Rodrick would also fall asleep "whenever the mood struck," since he was so comfortable in his Body Blankie. Greg thinks this is why their Body Blankies ended up in their mom's closet, because Rodrick would fall asleep at the dinner table, and both he and Greg would fall asleep in church, all while in their Body Blankies.

Greg didn't want to just walk around the house in his Body Blankie, for fear his mom would find out he's been snooping around in her closet. He didn't want to wear it only in bed, because he thought the point was to be as comfortable as he was in bed, while not lying in bed. So Greg decides to wear the Body Blankie under his school clothes so he could be super comfortable all day while at school. Greg quickly regrets his decision, however, when he has to waddle to school since the leggings of the Body Blankie are so short. He couldn't open his locker with the mittens, and he could barely do jumping jacks in P.E. He also spent the day sweating, especially after P.E. He tried to take off the Body Blankie, but the zipper snapped. He blames the zipper breaking on it being such a cheap product, since it was advertised on TV. Greg spent some time trying to wriggle out of the Body Blankie, but to no avail.

In Social Studies class, Greg is relieved when the test he is unprepared for is a true/false test. He pulls out his Magic 8 Ball and gets to work. He realizes how much time it's taking to use the Magic 8 Ball, though, as students are handing in their tests and he's not even halfway through. He tries to go faster but shakes the ball too vigorously. The ball flies out of Greg's hand and lands near the teacher's desk, which lands Greg in Vice Principal Roy's office. Greg is busted for cheating, as the Vice Principal calls his mom to school. Greg's mom stuck up for him, believing her son wasn't using the toy to cheat. Vice Principal Roy pulled up Greg's grades on the computer, and let Greg know that if he didn't improve his grades he would be stuck in summer school. Greg knows it's been awhile since he turned in any homework assignments - three weeks to be exact - but he blames that on Fregley ditching his textbooks when he threw them at the Mingo kids.

The last two illustrations are what Greg thinks Summer school will be like. He wants to avoid summer school at all costs because of what he's heard about it: the fact that the school shuts off the air conditioning, that the classes are more like detention than real



school, and that none of the regular teachers teach summer school, but rather people like the janitor do. So, Greg decides to become a straight-A student so he doesn't have to attend summer school.

Analysis

This is a significant diary entry for Greg, since it contains the event that forces him into taking responsibility for himself. Up until now, most of Greg's actions have been blamed on other people, mostly Rowley. Greg continues to find objects in his mom's closet that are of interest to him. Today, it's the Body Blankie. Even at the beginning of this entry, Greg blames the fact that his parents took away his and Rodrick's Body Blankies because Rodrick wore it everywhere and therefore fell asleep everywhere, including at the dinner table and what looks like church, according to Greg's illustrations. Greg illustrates how he and Rodrick loved wearing them. He includes an illustration of Rodrick emitting an odor from not showering because of wearing his for five days straight. The Body Blankie wearing, falling asleep in it, and then having it taken away is in the past, but it is important to note that Greg blames Rodrick, even though he fell asleep in an inappropriate place, too.

Without consulting his Magic 8 Ball, Greg decides to wear the Body Blankie to school under his clothes. Greg makes this choice on his own. At no point did he mention the Magic 8 Ball; he simply decided. Greg illustrates what he thinks the day is going to look like by wearing his Body Blankie, which is a drawing of him relaxing in class, comfy in his Body Blankie. When he quickly discovers it wasn't the best idea - having to waddle to school because the leggings are short, not being able to open his locker because of the mittens, and over-heating in PE, all of which he illustrates - Greg really has nowhere to turn but to himself. Since it wasn't the Magic 8 Ball that confirmed this decision, Rowley, or Fregley who decided Greg should wear the Body Blankie, it seems that Greg has nobody to blame but himself. He's uncomfortably sweaty since he has to do jumping jacks in PE, but the zipper breaks and he can't get it off. Greg draws a picture of himself panicking, but then calming himself down. The illustrations and his accompanying words are significant because Greg is problem-solving on his own. Again, there's nobody to blame but himself since he was the sole decision-maker on wearing the Body Blankie to school. The fact that he doesn't use the Magic 8 Ball to make this choice is a small sign that Greg sees himself as ready to start making some decisions on his own.

When he gets to Social Studies and uses the Magic 8 Ball on his true/false test, he is sent to the Vice Principal for cheating. Neither he or his mother believes he was using the Magic 8 Ball to cheat, but since the Vice Principal breaks the news to him about needing to improve his grades or else go to Summer School, Greg is in another situation where he has nobody to blame but himself. Greg mentions that Fregley is the one who threw his books at the Mingo clan, but he also knows that his grades and his academic standing is up to him. He hasn't done his homework, and so his grades are suffering. He is told that completing his homework assignments and the Science Fair project will be what keeps him out of Summer School. Greg's growing sense of maturity



seems forced, but at least he immediately accepts it. Sometimes it's just one event that can jolt someone back into reality. Greg makes it clear that he is desperate to avoid Summer School at all costs. Though he doesn't take full responsibility for not doing his homework for three weeks and his grades slipping, he is willing to take responsibility now and fix his situation.

Greg's mom responds fairly kindly, considering Greg is far enough behind that Summer School is a possibility. She likely responds this way because she knows what a good kid Greg usually is, and that he's never been in this situation before. She also knows he's been going through a tough time the last couple weeks since Rowley ditched him for Abigail. The fact that his mom supports him in front of the principal means a lot to Greg. At least he knows he has her on his side, which is something he has been missing this entire book. Greg has felt lonely and afraid in many of his day-to-day situations; he was used to having a regular companion. Even though it's not his best friend Rowley, Greg thinks a lot of his mom and seems happy to have her on his side.

Discussion Question 1

What were the best and worst decisions Greg made in this diary entry? Defend your answers.

Discussion Question 2

Greg insists that using the Magic 8 Ball to answer true/false questions on his test wasn't cheating. His teacher and Vice Principal disagree, although his mom defends him. What is the reason for the different characters' opinions on the situation?

Discussion Question 3

How does the Body Blankie contribute to Greg's attitude in this diary entry? Please explain your answer.

Vocabulary

thrilled, invented, exposing, flannel, mysteriously, disappeared, parading, defeat, disadvantage, wriggle, ventilation, prepared, time-consuming, complaint, seriously, interrupt, rumors



April: Thursday (week 3)

Summary

Greg reflects on how his year started off so well, academically speaking. On his first report card Greg had all As and Bs. As a reward, Greg got ice cream. In Greg's illustration, though, the whole family got to go and Greg complains that Rodrick got some ice cream, too, even though his grades were poor. Greg thinks that proves that even when you work hard and try your best, someone will always try to mooch off of your success.

Greg has been doing everything he can to get his grades back on track in an effort to avoid summer school. Greg's mom got him a set of used textbooks, so he's been catching up on his missing assignments. She has been helping him with his most of his assignments, but she is having Greg do his Science Fair Project all on his own. In the classes where there is no homework and it's all participation, Greg makes an extra effort to participate. In Music class, Greg decides he'll be Mrs. Norton's best student. When she calls his name, he stands up and sings "Dear Liza", only to find out she was just calling roll. In his illustrations, though, Greg looks focused and engaged in the present activity.

When Greg starts to think about his Science Fair Project, he remembers last year's experiment on metamorphosis. Greg had worked hard on the project, hoping to show caterpillars that had metamorphosed into butterflies, but he accidentally had left the box of caterpillars on a heat vent overnight. The caterpillars were dead the next morning. Greg illustrates his creative process, including his disappointment when the caterpillars died. This year, Greg tries to figure out what to do for his project by spending some time at the library. He is interrupted by Betsy Buckles, the yearbook Editor-in-chief. She needs Greg to take pictures of the winners of the Class Favorites. Greg finds most of the winners fairly obvious choices, except for Liam Nelson, who won Best Looking, who, according to the drawing, is a funny-looking guy with a large nose. But Liam was in charge of counting up the votes, so Greg thinks the numbers were fudged a little bit. Fregley came in to have his picture taken, but Greg was confused because he wonders what Fregley could have won. Turns out Fregley was voted Most Popular, which Greg thinks he shouldn't be so surprised at with the way his own luck had been going.

Greg is in a pretty bad mood from taking the pictures, especially Fregley's picture, but then in walks the Cutest Couple: Abigail and Rowley. Greg finds this task to be completely unpleasant, and he shows it in his illustrations. He resigns immediately after finishing the photo shoot.

Analysis

Since Greg is at the point where he's taking responsibility for himself, it is natural that he would reflect on past successes. Greg thinks about and draws his process for last year's Science Fair project as he tries to figure out what he's going to do for this year's project. His illustrations show him putting in the extra effort in classes, especially in Music class. When Greg sings "Dear Liza" loud and proud during roll call, Greg is showing that he's not afraid to make a fool of himself if that's what it takes to keep his grades up and avoid summer school. His desperation in this instance is a positive thing, because it's keeping him engaged and improving his academic standing.

Up until now, Greg hasn't been committed to completing his Science Fair project. When he found the Magic 8 Ball on Easter Sunday under Rodrick's bed, one of his first questions to the toy was whether or not he should finish the outline for the project. The Magic 8 Ball said no, so Greg let it fall to the wayside. He's paying for it now, since he has to spend some time in the library doing research. However, that said, he's probably not too upset when he's interrupted by the Yearbook editor-in-chief to take pictures of the Class Favorites. Greg is committed now to getting good grades and doing well, but since this is a new experience for him, the fact that he's interrupted to do something he gets paid for probably didn't bother him too much. In his illustration, he is wearing the same expression as always, which is a slight frown. That could be due to being interrupted, but it could also be due to spending his recess in the library.

Unfortunately, taking the Class Favorite photos for the yearbook gets Greg back to focusing on his bad luck. Every picture Greg takes seems to remind him that a) he has no friends, and b) he tried to have friends but got ditched, big time, twice. Greg seems focused, but also kind of bored, especially since he wasn't surprised by most of the winners. In the illustration of him taking Fregley's photo, there is an exclamation above Greg's head, indicating his complete surprise that Fregley won MOST POPULAR and is still blowing bubbles out of his belly button, which is what Fregley does for the yearbook photo, according to Greg's illustration. By the end of the photo shoot Greg is in a pretty bad mood, but it gets worse when he ends up having to take the Cutest Couple photo and it's Rowley and Abigail. Greg's facial expression goes from concentration to anger; he appears to be growling, since his teeth are showing. Greg's situation would be frustrating for anyone, since he only wants his best friend back.

Greg quits the yearbook photographer position immediately after finishing the photo for Cutest Couple. Greg sees that event as the most unpleasant he's ever had to experience, which is saying a lot since he spent a considerable amount of time earlier in the book discussing how unpleasant his family gatherings are. This, again, shows Greg strong reliance on friendship and loyalty. To get stuck taking a picture of the two people who have caused most of his pain in the last two months is almost too much for him. Greg quitting the yearbook job is more of a self-preservation tactic than a selfish action; he's only trying to steer clear of the situations where he'll be reminded of his frustration and pain.



Discussion Question 1

What do you think was harder for Greg to take: the fact that Fregley was voted Most Popular, or the fact that Rowley and Abigail were voted Cutest Couple? How can you tell?

Discussion Question 2

Do you think that even though Greg accidentally sang during roll call, Mrs. Norton appreciated it? How can you tell?

Discussion Question 3

Does it seem to be helping Greg to look at his past successes as he compares them to his current failures? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

mooch, participate, belted, metamorphosis, cocoons, ballot, fudged, category, printout, scanned, unpleasant, resigned



April: Monday (week 4)

Summary

Greg gets his Magic 8 Ball back from Vice Principal Roy, but realizes that all the blue liquid fell out of it when he dropped it in class. The Magic 8 Ball is now useless to Greg, so he throws it over Gramma's fence on day on his way home from school. Greg only illustrates himself rattling the Magic 8 Ball to see if it will still work, he does not draw a picture of him throwing the ball over Gramma's fence.

Greg is caught up with his homework and other school assignments, but he is still stuck on an idea for his Science Fair Project, which is due on Thursday. Greg thinks of Erick Glick, the guy who sells old reports. Out of desperation, Greg approaches him against the brick wall where Erick is always standing. Erick takes Greg into what appears to be an old storage room, where old papers and reports were stacked in piles on long desks, according to Greg's illustrations. On the shelving units were old Science Fair Projects. Greg even sees one of Rodrick's old projects among the inventory. A boy named Dennis Denard seemed to be in charge. Dennis is supposed to be in tenth grade but has stayed back twice. Greg thinks Dennis has stayed in eighth grade because it's so profitable for him.

Greg's illustrations show him looking carefully at the offering of Science Fair Projects. He realizes that the better or more complicated the project, the more it costs. Rodrick's old project had to do with potted plants and whether or not they grow differently to different kinds of music. All the plants had died within two weeks. Rodrick thought it was because of the music. Their mom said it was because Rodrick didn't water them.

Greg's not sure why, but he has a sudden change of heart and decides not to purchase a recycled project. He begins to sweat from nervousness that Dennis and Erick will hurt him, but Greg tells the boys he has no money and will have to come back. Erick told Greg to turn his pockets inside out to prove he had no money. Still scared, Greg notices an opening in the door and bolts.

Analysis

Greg is again forced to take responsibility for himself. Since the Magic 8 Ball is broken, he again has nowhere to turn but to himself. Greg doesn't even draw a picture of him throwing the Magic 8 Ball over his Gramma's fence; he only draws himself shaking it to see if it would still be useful. At this point, Greg might be so tired of the Magic 8 Ball - especially since it got him in trouble the last time he used it - that he doesn't want to focus on it anymore. The author is showing Greg maturing and finally learning how to handle frustrations and disappointments in a healthier manner.

With the deadline for his Science Fair project approaching, Greg contemplates purchasing an old project from Erick Glick and Dennis Denard. He goes so far as



entering the storage facility where they're all kept. His moral compass kicks in, however, and he decides it's a bad idea to purchase an old project. Greg makes this decision on his own, just as he made the decision on his own to wear the Body Blankie. This decision, however, is a much more sound one than wearing a blanket under his clothes. By not purchasing a project, Greg is showing a growth in maturity and a growing sense of responsibility. Greg's desperation showed itself but only for a moment until his recent sense of hard work and responsibility kicked in.

Even though Greg is taking his time to do the right thing, his actions indicate that he's on the right track. His actions also indicate that he doesn't like facing situations alone, which is something Greg has dealt with this entire book. In the past when he was scared of someone or something, he'd have Rowley or Fregley to help him through it. Now, it's all up to him. He has to decide what situations to put himself in because he is on his own to get out of them, should they go awry. Greg is learning how to be responsible for his actions, and passing up an opportunity to purchase a recycled Science Fair project is a step in the right direction.

Greg is not yet starting to see his luck turn around, though he will soon. The fact that he's making one choice at a time on his own is the author's way of showing that Greg is growing and that he'll soon be out of the woods. Greg's illustrations show him going from the same frowned expression he's worn most of the book, to nervous with sweat coming from his head while debating whether or not to buy a project, to a look of determination when he bolts out of the storage facility after choosing to not buy a project. He likely nervous that Erick Glick and Dennis Denard will come after him, but he is also likely determined to stay out of trouble, since his last illustration is Greg in a jail cell with a speech bubble that says he's in there for passing off someone else's paper mache volcano as his own.

Discussion Question 1

How does Greg seem to feel about the fact that his Magic 8 ball is now useless? Please explain your answer.

Discussion Question 2

Greg thought about - and almost went through with - purchasing a recycled Science Fair Project. What were his motivations behind possibly buying one, then deciding not to?

Discussion Question 3

Do you think that if Greg still had the Magic 8 Ball to help him make decisions, he would have more quickly decided that it wasn't a good idea to purchase a recycle project?



Vocabulary

tricky, desperate, racket, familiar, decent, bolted



April: Wednesday (week 4)

Summary

Abigail and Rowley break up just one week after being named Cutest Couple. Greg is surprised by the news, but he finds out that he was right: Abigail was just using Rowley. She was trying to make her ex-boyfriend, Michael Sampson, jealous. Greg's illustrations of the situation shows him feeling bad for Rowley, and Rowley being upset at Abigail's betrayal.

Greg doesn't spend a lot of time thinking or worrying about Rowley, though, because it's Wednesday and his project is due tomorrow. He stayed after school on Tuesday to do his research. He found out that someone tipped off a teacher about Dennis Denard and Erick Glick's storage room of old projects, and some of the faculty "staged a raid" on the storage room, ruining the operation. The kids who were caught got detention for the rest of the year. Greg is sure that the punishment includes summer school, which makes him extra glad he didn't go that route. Greg is worried that his efforts won't be enough, but he knows he's trying his hardest to avoid summer school at all costs.

Analysis

This day's entry is a lot more upbeat than most of his previous entries, especially the most recent ones. Greg obviously feels bad for Rowley, given his surprised and slightly perturbed facial expression when he finds out that Abigail was only using Rowley to get her ex-boyfriend Michael jealous. Greg also shows how upset Rowley is. However, for that being the main event to get this whole book started, he barely spends any time on the Rowley/Abigail situation. This is a sign of maturity and personal growth, since he jumps right into writing and drawing about his Science Fair project. The fact that Greg can put aside a social situation and focused more on his own school work is a victory in terms of him taking responsibility for himself.

This diary entry is also quite short, indicating that Greg is spending most of his time on his Science Fair Project. Also, people tend to write in their journals more when they're in a sour mood than in a good mood. So, the short and sweet entry is a good sign that Greg is starting to see his luck change. Greg doesn't specifically mention that his luck changes, and in fact he says that he still has problems of his own since he has to stay late to work on his project, but his overall tone is upbeat. One reason for that could be that his decision to not purchase an old Science Fair project is confirmed, since the storage room is raided and Erick Glick, Dennis Denard, and anyone who purchased a project was promptly punished.

Even though there is no mention of reconciliation with Rowley, Greg is undoubtedly pleased that Rowley and Abigail are no longer together. Greg is surprised, of course, but since the main event that started his frustration and pain over the previous two



months has now shifted, it is natural that he would feel some relief. The fact that the author only mentions Rowley and Abigail's breakup briefly is likely a set-up for discussing it more in the future. The author wants the reader to know what is going on in the background of Greg's life, even though for now he is focused on his Science Fair project.

Discussion Question 1

Is Greg working as hard as he possibly can in order to avoid summer school? How can you tell?

Discussion Question 2

Greg receives confirmation on two situations: he was correct that Abigail had been using Rowley, and he avoided getting in trouble when a group of faculty members raided Erick Glick's project supply. How does Greg feel knowing he was right in his thoughts on two of his big situations from the last couple months?

Discussion Question 3

Greg mentions a few reasons for not wanting to be stuck in summer school. What seems to be his biggest motivation for avoiding summer school?

Vocabulary

voted, jealous, tipped, staged, raid, caught, detention, automatic



April: Thursday (week 4)

Summary

Greg worked on his Science Fair project the night before until 11:30 at night. He is proud of himself for completing the project; his illustration is him showing his mom the project with a beaming smile on his face. The next illustration, however, is Greg gritting his teeth after his mom read the requirements that his science teacher, Mrs. Abbington, had sent home. The report portion of the project had to be typed. The drawing of Greg shows him shaking and seeming very upset. His mom said there was no use complaining since it had to get done. Greg promises to get up extra early to type the report so that he can get a good night sleep. He felt like he was at his wit's end for the day and could do a better job in the morning.

Greg set his alarm for 6 a.m. but something went wrong because he didn't wake up until 8:10. He didn't even remember hitting the snooze button. With only twenty minutes before he had to leave for school, panic set in, which his illustrations show, with a fearful expression on his face and an exclamation point above his head. But when he got downstairs, he saw that his entire written report was typed. He realizes it's not a Science Report Fairy, but rather it was his mom. He wants to thank her, but she's sleeping.

Greg turns in his project and feels incredibly relieved. He even enjoys the rest of his school day.

Rowley has still not come to apologize to Greg, and Greg hasn't made any moves to become friends again with Rowley. During recess on Thursday, Rowley ended up near the Find a Friend station. And just as Greg was going to go talk to him, Mr. Nern beat Greg to it. The situation ends up being okay with Greg; he even thinks him and Rowley are better off not being friends. He thinks they've gone back and forth enough already, they might as well part ways. He changes his mind, though, when he sees Rowley playing checkers with Mr. Nern.

Since he can't make up his mind about Rowley, he stops by Grandma's house on his way home from school so he can consult the Magic 8 Ball. Even though he knows it's broken, he thinks maybe he can get one more good answer out of it. Greg finds the Magic 8 Ball next to a wood pile, but he also notices something much more interesting on the wood pile: a plastic egg that contains his Meemaw's diamond ring. In fact, in his illustration, Greg shows a laser focus from his eyes to the ring-bearing plastic egg.

Greg credits the Magic 8 Ball for leading him to the ring, believing the Magic 8 Ball knew it owed him for all the bad stuff that has recently happened. Greg dreamed of what could happen as a result of finding that diamond ring, the first of which involved a jet pack. But then he remembers what his mom said would probably happen if the ring was ever found, that her family would be completely destroyed. Greg doesn't want to be the



one who breaks up the family, so he takes it home and hides it where he thinks nobody will find it for quite a while: his mom's closet. At least he knows that if he ever needs a lot of cash, he can go between Tickles four and Tickles five.

Analysis

It is no coincidence that Greg starts to see his luck change after two things happen: Rowley and Abigail break up, and he gets his Science Fair project turned in. Though Greg credits his relief only to his turning in the project. He capitalizes "HUGE" and "ENJOYING" when he talks about the size of his relief and his feelings the rest of the day at school. Greg has started taking responsibility for himself, and this is truly when his attitude toward himself and his outlook on his life begin to shift. Greg is learning that other people can impact his situation but only he can impact how he feels and what he does about it.

Even though he is enjoying himself at school, Greg starts to feel guilty about Rowley. Since Abigail dumped him, Rowley hasn't had anyone to hang out with, just as Greg experienced when Rowley first ditched him. Greg illustrates Rowley at the Find a Friend station with Mr. Nern approaching with the same box of checkers that he originally approached Greg with. Greg has seen the situation come full circle, but since he a) has a hard time trusting people, and b) Rowley betrayed him big time, Greg isn't completely sure how to handle the situation. He's been maturing and learning how to make better decisions, but forgiving a friend hasn't ever been one of them.

Since he isn't sure what to do and isn't sure he can trust himself and his own feelings, Greg seeks out the Magic 8 Ball. It's still useless, but the good fortune that happens when Greg retrieves the Magic 8 Ball seems to make the quest work it: finding Meemaw's diamond ring in an errant Easter egg in Gramma's backyard, stashed against her wood pile. The illustration of Greg having a laser focus toward the Easter egg is an indication that he hadn't forgotten about everything that went down with his family a couple weeks prior.

Greg seems to also be on a streak of doing the right thing as far as he's concerned. He hasn't regretted any of his latest decisions, including not telling his mom about the diamond ring. While that decision isn't the best decision for such an expensive and precious object, he makes it in part to spare his family from the chaos he knows will ensue. However, it's also a selfish decision, since Greg comments that he can use it for cash if he's ever in tough spot. While this is a selfish and immature decision amongst Greg's other mature and wise decisions, it is natural for a growing boy to go back and forth between good and not-perfect decisions.

Greg seeing his luck turn around is likely directly related to the fact that Abigail and Rowley have broken up, even though Greg does not mention being sad for Rowley. Greg's guilt about Rowley being at the Find a Friend station is most likely because he has been in that exact position, and now someone who used to be his best friend is lonely just as he used to be. Although Greg doesn't fix the situation with him and Rowley



during this diary entry, the author is foreshadowing a reconciliation. Greg treasures his friend, but has also learned to take care of himself instead of expecting others to do things for him.

Discussion Question 1

If Rowley is the one who ditched Greg in the first place, why does Greg feel guilty when he seems Rowley having to play checkers with Mr. Nern? Please explain your answer.

Discussion Question 2

Does Greg credit the Magic 8 Ball for his luck turning around? What does that say about his maturity level at this point in the story? Please explain your answer.

Discussion Question 3

Why does Greg decide to hide his Meemaw's diamond ring in his mom's closet, instead of leaving it where it was in his Grandma's backyard? Please explain your answer.

Vocabulary

requirements, complaining, energy, freaked, weight, wandered, dazed, guilty,



April: Monday (week 5)

Summary

Greg thinks that the Magic 8 Ball might be good for small decisions, but he still has to make the big ones. So Greg goes to the back of the lunch line and asks Rowley if Rowley would like to join him at their lunch table. Immediately, Rowley and Greg are back to being best friends and everything is the way it used to be. Two out of Greg's three illustrations in this last diary entry are him and Rowley, one is the two of them blowing bubbles in their chocolate milk at school, and the other is them running away from the Mingo clan. Both events Greg draws were situations for which Greg greatly missed Rowley's presence earlier in the book.

Greg reflects on his mom's advice from March, that friends come and go but family is forever. He knows that might be true, but he also knows that it's Rowley who will stand/run next to him when you're being chased with a belt by Meckley Mingo on your way home from school.

Greg knows that he and Rowley will probably have another fight somewhere down the road, but for now they are good. They are best friends again, and Greg is happy about it. The only thing Greg can see in their future that they might have to work out is a yearbook photo Greg edited of Rowley and Abigail. Since Greg was still mad at Rowley when he took their picture for Cutest Couple, Greg edited Rowley's head to be a lot smaller than it is in real life, creating a goofy-looking picture. An illustration shows Rowley's head considerably smaller than Abigail's. But Greg figures they'll deal with that situation when it comes around.

Analysis

Without the help of his Magic 8 Ball, Greg has made the choice to forgive and re-friend Rowley. Greg is realistic in knowing that the two will likely get into another argument somewhere down the line, but at least they're gotten over their first major hurdle and are okay for now. This lesson in friendship is an important one because Greg is only in 8th grade; a betrayal by another friend - or maybe even Rowley again - is bound to happen, it is a part of life. Greg's loss of innocence from learning this lesson has turned out to make him better and more mature, since he has learned how to better take responsibility for himself and also how to forgive and move forward from a big argument.

Greg seems absolutely delighted that everything is back to normal - he is back at his lunch table with his best friend, they can blow chocolate milk bubbles again, and they can do things together like old times, all of which is all Greg has wanted throughout this entire diary. Greg's illustrations of him and Rowley blowing bubbles and running away from the Mingo clan are significant because those were two situations for which Greg



greatly missed Rowley. Even when he wasn't talking about it, Greg missed his best friend and simply wanted him back so he could go back to doing the things he enjoyed doing. Now that he's no longer lonely, Greg seems to feel complete again.

Discussion Question 1

How did Rowley feel when Greg came to the back of the lunch line to invite him to their old lunch table? How can you tell?

Discussion Question 2

Why did it take no time at all for Greg and Rowley to become friends again after Greg got Rowley from the back of the lunch line?

Discussion Question 3

Greg's last statement in *Hard Luck* is about dealing with the Yearbook photo of Rowley's shrunken head when the time comes. Does he seem worried that it will cause tension? How can you tell?

Vocabulary

decisions, fight, drama, cutest, couple



Characters

Greg Heffley

Greg Heffley is the middle school boy who is the author of the diary. Greg's main goal in this series of diary entries is to work through his best friend, Rowley, having a girlfriend and not hanging around anymore. Friendship and loyalty is very important to Greg, so the fact that his best friend has ditched him is an incredibly significant event in his life. It bleeds into every other area of his life. Greg writes and draws about things he and Rowley used to do together, lamenting the fact that they can't do any of those anymore because either Rowley is spending all his time with Abigail, or when Abigail is around she thinks what Greg and Rowley spend their time on is stupid or disgusting. He also finds a way to blame Rowley's absence for various situations, such as being late for school and not having any friends at the lunch table. Even though Greg doesn't mention Rowley for much of the middle of the book, the fact that Greg sees his life as one bad luck event after another, starting with Rowley's decision to spend time with Abigail, it is clear that Greg blames the situation with Rowley for the bad things that are happening in his 8th grade year.

Greg is a nervous boy who has trouble trusting new people and knows exactly what kind of people he does and does not want to hang around. He tries to expand his friendship horizons, but it backfires on him. He tries to train another boy, Fregley, on how exactly to be the kind of friend Greg is looking for. Specifically, Greg is looking for Fregley to scout for dog poop on the walk to and from school so Greg doesn't step in it, and also for Fregley to carry Greg's school books because Greg feels like he is physically too weak to do so. Fregley ends up becoming popular, leaving Greg to the wayside. Greg doesn't really try to befriend anyone else, but he does join the Yearbook club to avoid his walk home from school. Joining the club is a big move for Greg because most of the time Greg doesn't seem to enjoy new situations. However, he is willing to put himself in this new situation of being the Yearbook photographer because: a) it could make him a little bit of money, and b) he could avoid the Mingo clan on his way home from school. The other group of people that Greg toys with getting involved in is Erick Glick and Dennis Denard, two boys who sell old book reports and science projects. Though he debated it, Greg ultimately decides not to purchase a science project. This decision is an important one, since he states he doesn't want to get involved with the likes of these boys who are causing and getting into trouble.

Greg wants more responsibility from his parents, but has trouble convincing them that he can handle it. Greg's desire for more responsibility seems to stem from his desire to make good things happen again, since he feels like his life is one bad luck event after another. After Greg finds some parenting books in his mom's closet, he works on getting them to agree to letting him have a cell phone. It works, but Greg doesn't have the phone for long: he drops it in the toilet when one of his aunts surprises him with a video call when he's using his phone while going to the bathroom. Ultimately, Greg concedes that he wasn't ready for the responsibility, although he says it in a defensive manner,



which is a good example of how Greg accepts responsibility when he does something wrong but most of the time finds a way to blame his situations on outside influences.

Greg likes his immediate family but gets frustrated with his mom's side of the family. His aunts and cousins drive him crazy because most of them are rowdy and upset his parents. Greg spends a lot of time explaining different members of his family and how and why they're strange, and why his mom doesn't get along with them. In the beginning and at the end of *Hard Luck*, Greg repeats what his mom tells him, that friends will come and go but family is forever. Both times he admits that might be true, but his descriptions of his family are quite negative compared to his description of Rowley and the couple boys at his lunch table that he doesn't mind (though he doesn't consider them actual friends). Thus, Greg makes it abundantly clear throughout his diary entries how much he values friendship and just wishes Rowley was around to spend time with.

Greg is a typical middle school boy who is trying his best to navigate friend, family, and personal growth situations.

Greg's mom

Greg's mom is always trying to take care of her middle son. She takes Greg clothes and shoe shopping when he needs it, she tries to give him advice on making new friends, she tries to encourage Greg when he's upset about Rowley, and she helps him type his Science Fair project at the last minute so that Greg can get some sleep. Greg's mom is attentive and realistic. She seems to favor Greg, unless he just doesn't write in his journal about what she does for Rodrick and Manny. Greg's mom doesn't get along with her own family and much prefers her husband and three sons.

Rowley Jefferson

Even though Rowley is not mentioned throughout much of Greg's diary, he is a central character because he is the reason Greg is frustrated in the first place. Rowley is Greg's best friend. He is the one who watches out for dog poop so that Greg doesn't step in it on their way to and from school. He also carried Greg's books for him since the books are so heavy and Greg feels physically incapable of carrying the books. As for homework help, Greg pays Rowley one peanut butter cracker for every page of Greg's homework Rowley can transcribe. It would seem Greg treats Rowley as his servant, since about half of the time Greg mentions Rowley it is in reference to the various things Rowley does for him. However, the other half is Greg talking about what he and Rowley used to do together.

Rowley has a girlfriend now, causing tension between him and Greg. Rowley has taken on the responsibility of being Abigail's boyfriend, and is helping her carry her books, is sitting with her at lunch at the couples table, and is spending all his extra out-of-school time with her. They even win Cutest Class Couple. When he and Abigail break up a week later, though, he goes back to spending all his time with Greg. Rowley is depicted



as the type of boy who would likely not get a girlfriend. If this is the case, and this is how Rowley sees himself, then getting a girlfriend would be a significant life event for him. It is natural that he would want to spend all his time with Abigail, because he may have previously felt like he would never be able to have a girlfriend since he's just Greg's goofy, funny-looking sidekick.

In the pictures Greg draws of Rowley, he is a goofy-looking character with two large front teeth, which are separated by a decent gap. Rowley is also depicted as oddly-shaped. He is also usually smiling in the images Greg draws of Rowley, indicating Rowley is a happy-go-lucky friend who Greg thinks doesn't mind being his sidekick. Since Rowley accepts Greg's invitation to eat lunch a few days after Abigail broke up with him, it seems Rowley doesn't mind his role as Greg's helper and sidekick. Rowley is happy in Greg's drawings, indicating Rowley's agreement with the situation. It is likely Rowley wants to continue being Greg's best friend after Abigail breaks up with him, especially since he and Greg did everything together before. After Abigail breaks up with him, Rowley mopes around the playground by himself for a period of time and eventually hits the Find a Friend button. The fact that he doesn't immediately go to Greg and ask for forgiveness or for their friendship back is a sign that he knows he did something wrong, and that he's not sure Greg wants him back as a friend. His response to the break-up also indicates that he still wants friends. His and Greg's quick reunion is a sign that Rowley values friendship as Greg does, and that he is grateful for Greg's forgiveness.

Abigail Brown

Similar to Rowley, even though she is not mentioned very often, Abigail is one of the main reasons for Greg's frustration. Abigail is Rowley's girlfriend, and Greg feels like she has completely stolen Rowley from him. Abigail doesn't find their lunch table antics funny, such as blowing chocolate milk bubbles, French Fry Friday, or Five Second Rule. She makes Rowley sit at a different table, furthering the distance between Rowley and Greg. Greg thinks Abigail is the reason Rowley combs his hair differently and doesn't have his own opinions anymore. Abigail ends up dumping Rowley to get back with her old boyfriend, which apparently was her entire goal in the first place. Which means that Greg was right in the beginning: she was just using him.

Rebel the Rottweiler

Rebel the Rottweiler is a dog who lives between Greg's house and school. Greg and Rowley encounter Rebel on their walk to school each morning. Before Rowley began walking to school with Abigail, he would watch out for Rebel's poop so Greg wouldn't step in it. Rebel used to chase after Greg and Rowley until his owner got him a shock collar. Now, Rebel just tries to leave dog poop right at the edge of his yard in the hopes that Greg and Rowley will step in it. Rebel is one of the reasons Greg doesn't like to walk to school without Rowley.



Mr. Sandoval

Mr. Sandoval lives in one of the houses on the path between Greg's house and school. He has poles stuck on either side of his driveway so the plowman will know where to plow when the driveway is covered. Once, Greg and Rowley took out the sticks from the ground to play swords with them. They accidentally put them in the wrong place, so the plow truck got Mr. Sandoval's yard instead of his driveway. Because of this, Mr. Sandoval is always on the lookout for Greg and Rowley so he can "let them have it", as Greg says. Mr. Sandoval is another reason Greg misses having Rowley to walk with in the mornings.

Mingo kids

The Mingo kids are one of the biggest reasons Greg doesn't want to walk to school by himself. They are a group of boys who like to mess with kids on their walks home from school, especially Greg and Rowley. The Mingo kids have their own set of woods that they told Greg and Rowley never to set foot in. Greg has to remember to cross the street so he doesn't walk next to the Mingo woods. In March: Wednesday, week 2, Greg is walking with Fregley and forgets to cross the street. The two have to run to get away from the Mingo kids and Fregley throws all of Greg's books at them to try and make them stop.

Nolan Tiago

Nolan Tiago is one of the boys who sits at Greg's lunch table. Nolan's mom brings him a burger and french fries from a fast food place every Friday for lunch. Nolan lets the rest of the boys eat whatever falls to the table. He is the reason for the lunch table's tradition of French Fry Friday.

Leon Feast

Leon Feast is a boy who has threatened Greg and Rowley in the past. Greg has to watch out for him on the playground because of a dispute a few summers ago over who should be allowed to use the basketball court. Greg considers there to be "bad blood" between himself and Rowley, and Leon Feast and his gang.

Erick Glick

Erick Glick is an eighth grader who hangs out in the back of the school against a brick wall with his friends, one of whom is Dennis Denard, an eighth grader who has been held back twice. Erick sells old book reports, homework assignments, and Science Fair projects. Out of desperation Greg thinks about buying an old Science Fair project, but



ultimately decides against it. Erick Flick and his friends end up getting busted by a faculty raid in April: Wednesday, week 3.

The janitor

The janitor is the one who busts the kids making duplicate Hero Points and has to clean up the dog poop in Greg's Geography classroom. The janitor isn't mentioned by name, but Greg does hear a rumor that the janitor supposedly teaches English during Summer School.

Mrs. Pope

Mrs. Pope is Greg's Geography teacher. In March: Monday, week 2, Mrs. Pope gives a pop quiz. Greg is late because he took his time walking to school with his new shoes, but ends up having dog poop on his shoe. Mrs. Pope gives Greg a plastic bag for his soiled shoe and tells him to return to his seat and finish his quiz.

Mr. Nern

Mr. Nern is a kind teacher who doesn't like to see students lonely or in distress. On the playground, Mr. Nern is always the one to approach a student who presses the button at the Find a Friend Station. He brings a box of checkers to play with the student who pressed the button. Mr. Nern also offers his extra pair of shoes to Greg when Greg steps in dog poop in March: Monday, week 2.

Fregley

Fregley is a student in Greg and Rowley's grade whom Greg thinks is strange. In March: Wednesday, week 2, Greg is happy that he hasn't had to walk by Fregley's house in a while, ever since Greg and Rowley stopped walking to school together. At first, Greg doesn't want to be friends with Fregley, even though Greg's mom insists they should be. But then Greg starts to wonder if he could train Fregley into being the kind of friend Rowley used to be, specifically with carrying Greg's books and being on the lookout for dog poop. Fregley readily helps Greg with both of those things, though he throws Greg's books at the Mingo kids when the Mingo kids go to chase Greg and Fregley one day after school. However, once Fregley starts getting popular by being funny, he ditches Greg.

Aunt Cakey

Aunt Cakey is one of Greg's aunts and one of his mom's sisters. She lives alone and doesn't like children. Greg remembers the one time Aunt Cakey watched him. Under



Aunt Cakey's care, Greg burned his hand on a clothes iron. She wears her hair in a high bun and has a negative expression on her face.

Aunt Gretchen

Aunt Gretchen is another one of Greg's aunts and another one of his mom's sisters. She has twin boys, Malvin and Malcolm. Aunt Gretchen also has a lot of animals. Greg doesn't like when Aunt Gretchen comes to visit with the boys (or the animals) because the boys are rowdy and Aunt Gretchen doesn't do anything to discipline them. She even used to keep the boys on child leashes.

Malvin

Malvin is one of Aunt Gretchen's twin boys and one of Greg's cousins. He is rowdy and destructive. Once, when Greg's mom watched the twins for Aunt Gretchen, Malvin had to get stitches in his forehead because the twins were playing catch with a small piece of brick.

Malcolm

Malcolm is Aunt Gretchen's other twin. He is also rowdy and destructive. While Malvin was getting his stitches, Malcolm got into Greg's dad's shaving kit, making a big mess in the bathroom. Malcolm is also the one to call the cops when Greg's family ran out of ketchup.

Aunt Veronica

Aunt Veronica is another one of Greg's aunts and his mom's sisters. She has not made an in-person appearance at a family function in many years. Aunt Veronica prefers video conferencing. Even at a wedding the family was together for a few summers ago, Aunt Veronica was in attendance only on a tablet screen.

Aunt Audra

Aunt Audra is the last of Greg's mom's sisters. She believes in psychics and the power they have to predict the future. She took Greg to a psychic once, but Greg's mom wasn't pleased.

Gramma

Greg's Gramma seems like a pleasant person. Greg doesn't complain about her, except for the fact that she acts like she has good ESP (when she says "I predict you'll like



these cookies") but Greg thinks she doesn't use her powers for good, like for predicting the lottery numbers. Gramma's house is where everyone goes for Easter after Meemaw passes away.

Meemaw

Meemaw is Gramma's mom. When she was alive she loved to hide fun candy and toys inside plastic Easter eggs, then hide the eggs all over the inside and outside of her house. Meemaw was a good baker and a cool lady until she got a little too old. The last couple years she was alive, Meemaw put things like dental floss and used tissues inside the plastic Easter eggs. Meemaw has a diamond ring that her entire family fights over - even though they can't find it - as soon as she passes away.

Other relatives

Greg has other relatives that he doesn't list by name. These relatives used to purchase Greg's drawings for \$5 a piece a few years ago, which was one of the only reasons Greg enjoyed them all being in town. Eventually they stop buying his drawings in favor of buying Manny's.

Sweetie

Sweetie is Gramma's dog. She is a very round dog who can't really play too much, but Greg and Rodrick like to make her sniff her bottom by making a raspberry sound in her ears. Sweetie looks like a weiner dog, but again she is very round because of how much Gramma feeds her.

Rodrick

Rodrick doesn't have a big role in *Hard Luck*. Greg writes about Rodrick only to describe situations past. Rodrick is a typical older brother, getting in the good stuff even if he didn't earn it, like when Greg was taken out for ice cream for his good grades. Rodrick tagged along, even though his grades were poor. Rodrick and Greg seem to have similar interests. Rodrick loves his Body Blankie just like Greg, and he also seems to appreciate *The Dude Zone* inside *Frugal Freddy's*.

Manny

Manny is Greg's younger brother. He also has a small roll in *Hard Luck*. Manny's drawings replace Greg's drawings of being purchased by their relatives. Greg is jealous of Manny when Manny becomes friends with a new kid on their block, because Greg still doesn't have a friend at that point.



Gerald

Gerald is Greg's mom's cousin. He lived with Greg's family right after Greg was born and uncomfortably reminds Greg that he has seen Greg in diapers.

Martina

Martina is another one of Greg's mom's cousins. She made a lot of money in Las Vegas when she sued a hotel after breaking her collar bone on their property. She drives a Porsche.

Uncle Larry

Greg doesn't think Uncle Larry is actually related to anyone, but that someone invited him to a family function once and he just keeps showing up. The drawing of him on page 123 makes Uncle Larry look like a little big of a goofball. Uncle Larry likes to sit in the recliner and ask Greg to retrieve food for him.

Jamar Law

Jamar Law is a minor character. He is a schoolmate of Greg's who last year got his head stuck in a chair. The photographer for the yearbook had caught it on camera last year, and Greg wants to duplicate the picture. In April: Thursday, week 2, Greg tries to get Jamar to do the same thing, but doesn't succeed.



Symbols and Symbolism

Snowballs

In March: Monday, week 1, Greg brings snowballs to Rowley's house that the two of them had frozen in Greg's freezer so they could later have a snowball fight. Rowley doesn't want to have a snowball fight because he's hanging out with Abigail. The snowballs are one representation of how Greg wants his and Rowley's friendship to be like it was before Rowley began dating Abigail.

Greg's School Books

Greg's school books are usually carried to school by Rowley. However, since Rowley has started dating Abigail he walks with her to school, leaving Greg to carry his books. Greg ends up putting them in his dad's roller bag, but the school books are sort of a source of tension for Greg because he feels too weak to carry them to and from school. When Greg has Fregley help him with his school books on the way to and from school, the books end up being thrown at the Mingo kids when they chase Fregley and Greg on their way home from school.

Roller Bag

The roller bag that Greg uses to transport his school books to and from school belongs to his dad. The roller bag works well for Greg at first, but once he starts crossing the street to avoid the Mingo clan, the roller bag takes a little bit of a beating.

Hero Points

Hero Points are what Greg's school gives out in order to reinforce positive behavior. The Hero Points end up being counterfeited by students, and the program quickly goes away.

Greg's New Shoes

Greg's mom buys him some new sneakers. After debating between all different kinds of shoes, Greg decides on semi-sporty shoes that aren't too fancy. Greg enjoys the new-shoe smell on his way home from the store. The next day Greg wears his shoes to school for the first time. However, Greg's walk to school takes twenty minutes longer than usual because Greg is extra careful about where he steps with his new shoes. He tries to cover them in plastic bags, but the bags get shredded, so Greg becomes extra mindful of where he steps. The shoes are part of Greg feeling better about himself since he has no friends, is having trouble at school, and is missing his best friend, Rowley.



Mr. Nern's Shoes

Mr. Nern, the teacher who befriends students who press the button at the Find a Friend station, lends Greg his shoes in March: Monday, week 2. They are quite large for Greg's feet, and make a 'flop flop' noise as Greg walks down the hall.

Fregley's Belly Button

Fregley is the boy Greg befriends to try and train him to be like Rowley. Fregley tries to be funny by showing that he can blow bubbles and chew things with his belly button. This makes Fregley unpopular with the girls but very popular with the boys at the lunch table. In March: Thursday, week 2, Greg is crowded out of his lunch table because Fregley and his belly button have become so popular with the other boys.

Ellie

Ellie is a stuffed elephant at Greg's Gramma's house. Ellie is the only kid toy that Gramma keeps at her house, but it looks more like a stuffed bowling pin than an elephant because Gramma's dog Sweetie tore off its ears, trunk, and legs.

Easter Eggs

Before Meemaw died, she used to stuff Easter eggs and hide them all over Gramma's house, inside and outside, for the family to find. There would be candy, change, and once in a while a \$5 bill. The last couple years before Meemaw died, she started to put strange things in the Easter eggs, such as dental floss and used tissues. Greg ends up finding Meemaw's missing diamond ring in a lone Easter egg that had never been found in Gramma's yard, but he keeps that to himself. Greg leaves the ring in the Easter egg and hides it in his mom's closet.

Meemaw's Diamond Ring

Meemaw's diamond ring is a source of tension in Greg's extended family. Once the family realizes the diamond ring is missing after Meemaw dies, they go on an all-out search for it. Aunt Audra's psychic told her the ring was in a photo album, and Uncle Larry pointed out that one picture has Meemaw wearing the ring and the next doesn't. The family realizes the diamond ring had been accidentally put into an Easter egg. They go on an all-out search for the ring, but to no avail. Greg ends up finding the ring in a lone Easter egg, but tells no one. He hides the egg - with the ring still in it - in his mom's closet.



Magic 8 Ball

In March: Tuesday, week 4, Greg finds the Magic 8 Ball under Rodrick's bed. From that point forward, Greg relies on the Magic 8 Ball for much of his decision-making. Greg asks the Magic 8 Ball to answer any question he has, including: should he go outside like his mom said to, should he run from or fight the Mingo kids, how much homework should he work on, which chores should he do, and even true/false questions on a Social Studies test. The Magic 8 Ball ends up breaking when it accidentally flings out of his hand during the true/false test. He gets in trouble for cheating, but also is upset that the Magic 8 Ball is useless now that all the liquid has leaked out of it. Greg ends up throwing the toy into his Gramma's back yard. He goes back to it when he's trying to decide what to do about his friendship with Rowley, and it ends up being near the Easter egg that contains his Meemaw's diamond ring.

Greg sees the Magic 8 Ball as a turning point for himself. When he finds it, he has been running up on some bad luck, having to sleep on his brother's floor, being bothered by rowdy family members, being ditched by his best friend, and not having great luck finding other friends in school. The Magic 8 ball helps Greg make decisions, most of which he's very happy about. When the ball breaks at the end and he realizes he can't use it for all of his decisions, Greg understands that the big decisions - like forgiving your best friend for ditching you for a girl - are up to him.

The Magic 8 Ball can also be considered a representation of Greg's reliance on luck, as well as his lack of responsibility. For most of the book, Greg blames other people for his misfortune; he doesn't see that sometimes, it's his own choices that create a bad situation for him. The Magic 8 Ball is a symbol of Greg's tendency to not take responsibility for his choices and his actions.

Greg's Cell Phone

Greg's cell phone is his mom's old one, and it is a symbol of responsibility. Greg is excited to finally have a cell phone, even though he's not allowed to text his friends on it. Greg spends time personalizing it with his preferred wallpaper and ringtones. He also responds to a text message from his Gramma, acting as his own mom while doing so. However, the fun doesn't last too long for Greg because when Aunt Veronica calls unexpectedly on a video conference call while Greg is going to the bathroom, Greg drops the phone into the toilet. He concludes that he warned his parents that he wasn't really ready for the responsibility, anyway.

Parenting Books

Greg finds his mom's parenting books when he hides out in her closet. Greg realizes these books are where his mom gets all of her parenting advice. Finding these parenting books is an eye-opener for Greg about his parents, yet he demonstrates



maturity when he understands the situation rather than feeling manipulated that his parents get advice from books.

Tickles

Tickles is Greg's favorite stuffed monkey. He finds five of them in his mom's closet when he hides out there after not wanting to go outside. Greg realizes that the ones in the closet are back-ups for when he loses or ruins one. Greg remembers a vacation when Tickles was lost, probably due to the cleaning lady accidentally throwing it out or scooping it up with laundry. The morning after the Heffley's returned from vacation, Tickles was sitting in Greg's room. Another time, Tickles had to be washed because Greg spilled chocolate milk on him. Greg saw that when his mom opened the washer, Tickles' stuffing was all over the inside of the washer. Yet, soon after, Tickles was in one piece. As with the parenting books, Greg seems happy to have solved a mystery.

Body Blankie

The Body Blankie is an old Christmas gift that Greg finds in his mom's closet. The Body Blankie was one of his favorite old Christmas gifts because he says he feels like he's cozy in bed no matter where he's at. Unlike Tickles, Greg takes out the Body Blankie and wears it under his clothes to school, though that is a decision he later regrets.

Science Fair Project

One of the things Greg has to do to make sure he doesn't have to attend summer school is complete a Science Fair project. Just three days before the project is due, Greg still doesn't have an idea for a project. He ends up approaching Erick Glick and Dennis Denard to see if he can purchase a recycled project and just pass it off as his own. Greg decides not to do that, and is glad for his decision, since some of the kids who do are caught and end up getting detention. Greg spends two days at the library doing research for his project and finishes it at 11:30 p.m. the night before it's due. However, his mom reviews the instructions for the project and breaks the news to Greg that the report must be typed. He's too tired to finish it that night and promises to do it the next morning. He accidentally oversleeps, though, and has only twenty minutes to type the report and get ready for school. Yet, when he goes downstairs, he sees that his mom has typed the report for him. Greg is extremely relieved later that day when he can finally turn in the project and not worry about it anymore.

Yearbook

The Yearbook is significant for Greg, as it is part of what brings him out of his funk. When Greg gets the job as Yearbook Photographer, it stresses him out a little bit but it also distracts him from his situation with Rowley. At the end of Hard Luck, the page with Cutest Couple has Rowley's face shrunken to about 75% of its real size. Greg edits a



few other photos like that in an effort to embarrass people who make him mad, and/or to make people laugh.

Greg having to wear a teacher's shoes

In the diary entry dated March: Monday, week 3, Greg gets dog poop on his shoe during his walk to school. He was trying so hard not to get anything on his brand new shoes, avoiding anything that might possibly mess them up. As a result, Greg has to wear Mr. Nern's shoes. They are huge on him, probably very uncomfortable, and embarrassing, since they make a flop-flop noise as he walks through the hallway. This situation could be symbolic of Greg being forced into more grown-up situations, yet no matter how uncomfortable they are Greg keeps moving forward anyway. Greg is dealing with a betrayal from his best friend, he has to step up his level of responsibility in order to avoid Summer School, and he has to decide whether or not to cheat on his Science Fair project, all of which are more mature decisions than Greg is used to making.

Lunch Line (as a symbol)

The lunch line, while a setting in the book, is also a symbol of loneliness and isolation. When Greg describes the lunch line, he does so with an air of superiority, since he has a spot to sit and doesn't have to eat alone in the line. However, after Greg's plan with Fregley goes awry and Greg is pushed out of his own lunch table, he ends up eating in the lunch line for a period of time. Later, the lunch line is where Greg retrieves Rowley when he and Rowley reconcile. In each illustration that involves the lunch line, the students sitting in it do not look happy. They look lonely and as though they're longing for a lunch table at which to sit.

Greg getting stuck in his Body Blankie

When Greg gets stuck in his Body Blankie in April: Monday, week 3, it's his own bad choice that puts him there. Him getting stuck inside of it when the zipper breaks is a metaphor for the fact that no matter how Greg tries to change his situation and get out of his current misery, he just keeps circling back around to some hard luck. Being stuck and uncomfortable in the Body Blankie is like being stuck and uncomfortable in his current situation of no friends, being ditched twice, dealing with his extended family, and getting in trouble at school. Eventually he gets out of the Body Blankie, just as he comes out of all of his uncomfortable situations at school.



Settings

Greg's walk to school

Between his house and school is the setting of much of Greg's current life struggles. On the walk to and from school is where Greg encounters the Mingo kids, Rebel the Rottweiler, and Mr. Sandoval, all of whom have something against Greg and Rowley. Greg dreads the walk now, though, since Rowley isn't with him. On the walk, Greg also faces dog poop and mud puddles, both of which Rowley and Fregley used to warn Greg about. There is no time in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Hard Luck* when the walk to or from school is easy for Greg.

Mingo Woods

The Mingo Woods are next to the sidewalk on Greg's walk home from school. The Mingo kids like to terrorize the after-school crowd, especially Greg and Rowley. However, since Greg is now by himself on his walk home, the Mingo Woods are a source of fear for Greg. Greg crosses the street when he comes upon the Mingo Woods, since the Mingo kids threatened that if he stepped foot in or near their woods, Greg would be sorry.

The boys' lunch table

Aside from his walk to and from school, the lunch table is where Greg misses Rowley the most. It is an all-boys lunch table where they have traditions such as Five Second Rule and French Fry Fridays. In Five Second Rule, any food that is dropped on the floor is up for grabs for five seconds from the moment of the drop. On French Fry Fridays, Nolan Tiago's mom brings in french fries from a fast food restaurant. They are way better than the cafeteria's french fries, and Nolan lets the other boys have whatever he drops on the table. The lunch table is also the setting of Greg and Rowley blowing bubbles in their chocolate milk. The lunch table is also a coveted spot in the cafeteria because there are such limited spaces in the cafeteria, that some kids eat in line every day. Unfortunately, Greg doesn't consider anyone at his lunch table his actual friend now that Rowley has left for the Couples Table.

The Couples Table

The Couples Table is where Rowley and Abigail go sit after Abigail decides she doesn't want to sit at Greg and Rowley's table. Greg thinks there's a couples table because they're the only ones who can stand to be around each other.



The playground

The playground is the setting of recess. It is also a source of fear for Greg because of some people he has to look out for while on the playground because of a birthday party invitation his mom sent out a few years ago asking for books instead of toys; other moms in the neighborhood copied her idea and now Greg gets pushed around sometimes when kids receive books instead of toys. Greg also has to watch out for Leon Feast while on the playground because of some bad blood that started a few years prior over some basketball court dispute.

The playground has some different friend groups that Greg could join, but he doesn't really feel like he fits in with any of them. Sometimes the kids on the playground play Girls Chase Boys/Boys Chase Girls, but Greg doesn't like the game because he got in trouble once for being unclear on what to do after actually catching the girl. The playground has a Find a Friend station, which the school put in as an anti-bullying effort. Greg presses the button at the station once and Mr. Nern comes over to spend time with him. Later, Rowley has the same experience.

Brick wall in the back of the school

Erick Glick and his gang hang out against the brick wall in the back of the school. This is where they sell old reports, papers, and science projects. When Hero Points existed, Erick Glick and his gang would also sell Hero Points from their wall.

Frugal Freddy's

Frugal Freddy's is where Greg's mom takes the boys back-to-school shopping. Normally Greg hates to go shopping because he finds it so boring. This time, he gets two new pairs of jeans, three shirts, and a new pair of shoes.

The Dude Zone

The Dude Zone is inside Frugal Freddy's. It is a place where boys and men can go while the women shop. A drawing on page 58 shows Greg reading a magazine while older men talk and Rodrick watches/listens. A drawing on page 59 shows Greg and Rodrick falling asleep in The Dude Zone; their mom had forgotten about them and had left the store without her boys. When she came back, they were sleeping.

Geography classroom

Greg's Geography classroom is where Greg realizes that he has stepped in dog poop with his new shoes. Greg starts his pop quiz at his desk but moves to the back to try and get away from the smell. When the smell follows him, Greg looks at his shoe and



realizes there is dog poop on it. Greg has tracked the substance all over the classroom and the janitor has to come clean it up.

Greg's street

In March: Wednesday, week 2, Greg describes the other kids who live on his block. The Laskey boys live a few houses down, but they like to wrestle in their underwear in their front yard. Mitchell Flemmer lives diagonally across the street from Greg; he has a motorcycle helmet on at all times while outside. Aric Holbert lives a few houses to the right of Greg's family. He was suspended in February for breaking in and vandalizing the school. Fregley lives a few houses up from Greg.

The lunch line

The lunch line is where kids who haven't found a place to sit normally eat their lunch. The lunch line is where Greg finds Fregley when he begins "training" Fregley. Two boys who replace Abigail and Rowley come from the lunch line. Greg even ends up sitting in the lunch line at one point after all the boys at his table crowded him out when Fregley was showing all the different items he could chew with his belly button.

Gramma's house

Gramma's house is the site of Easter dinner. It's also where Meemaw would hide the eggs, inside and outside. The drawings of Gramma's backyard show some trees and a wood pile.

Rodrick's bedroom

Rodrick's bedroom is mentioned only one time, but it is where Greg finds the Magic 8 Ball. The Magic 8 Ball is a pivotal object in *Hard Luck*, and so Rodrick's room is an important setting. Greg finds the Magic 8 Ball under Rodrick's bed after the inflatable mattress he was sleeping on completely deflated.

Mom's closet

In Greg's first April diary entry, he hides out in his mom's closet when he doesn't want to go outside. Over the next couple weeks, Greg solves a few mysteries, based on the objects he finds in his mom's closet. He first finds parenting books, which solve for him the mystery of where his mom gets all her advice. Later, he finds five Tickles, his favorite stuffed monkey. He realizes that when one Tickles is lost or ruined, his mom simply replaces it. Greg also finds his old Body Blankie, one of his favorite Christmas gifts from a few years ago. Ultimately, Greg hides his Meemaw's diamond ring in his mom's closet so that nobody in his family finds it.



Yearbook office

The Yearbook office is where Greg gets the job of Yearbook Photographer. He joins the Yearbook Club when he doesn't want to have to walk by the Mingo kids after school. In the Yearbook office is where Greg edits photos that have the potential of embarrassing people. It's also the site of the Class Favorites photo shoot, after which Greg resigns as Yearbook Photographer because he had to take photos of Abigail and Rowley.

Phys Ed class

Greg has to go to Phys Ed the day he wears his Body Blankie under his clothes. He had been looking forward to wearing the Body Blankie, but now that he has to do jumping jacks in it he is not so happy with his decision. Greg tries to take off the Body Blankie at the end of P.E. when he's in the locker room to change, but the zipper breaks and he is stuck in it the rest of the day.

Social Studies class

Greg is late to Social Studies because of trying to get off his Body Blankie, and when he gets there he realizes there is a test he is unprepared for. It is a true/false test, so Greg uses his Magic 8 Ball to answer the questions. However, in the middle of the test Greg shakes the ball too hard and it flies out of his hands and rolls over to the teacher's desk. He is accused of cheating and is sent to Vice Principal Roy's office.

Vice Principal Roy's office

Greg is sent to Vice Principal Roy's office for cheating with the Magic 8 Ball in Social Studies. In Vice Principal Roy's office is where Greg finds out that he's falling so far behind that if he doesn't catch up, he'll have to attend summer school. Vice Principal Roy had called Greg's mom, so she is present when Vice Principal Roy breaks this news to Greg.



Themes and Motifs

Friendship

Main character and narrator of the diary Greg writes this set of diary entries as a way to get out his frustration of being totally ditched by his best friend, Rowley. For Greg, middle school is a time of needing his friends for things like protection against bullies like the Mingo kids, and to have company on his walk to and school. Before Rowley starts dating Abigail Brown, Greg and Rowley do everything together: eating lunch and playing games, walking to and from school, outside school activities, such as freezing snowballs to throw at each other on nice snow days, and having sleepovers. Greg sees Rowley's choice to spend time with Abigail instead of him as a gross betrayal of friendship and trust.

Friendship is one of the most important elements of life for a middle schooler, which is why Greg is so upset over losing his best friend. Though Rowley is not mentioned in every diary entry, much of Greg's Hard Luck seems to stem from his frustration over being ditched. Greg's mom tries to tell Greg that friends will come and go, but that family is forever. Greg doesn't want to accept that just yet, because he wants to keep his friends long into adulthood so he can see how far he's come in life. Greg is thinking long-term with his friendships. He knows his family will be around for most or all of his life, but he wants to be able to have someone that doesn't drive him totally crazy. He wants someone in on the day-to-day adventures of growing up and growing old, and he wants that to be the same person from childhood all the way through adulthood.

In most of Greg's descriptions of his family, Greg is not so complimentary. He knows that he'll always have to see them, and he has some good times with them once in awhile, but he would rather rely on Rowley for his good times. In most of Greg's descriptions of Rowley, Greg is quite complimentary. He is clearly upset with Rowley, but Greg's memories of their long-ago activities make it clear that he's had the best times with Rowley and he wants that to continue. They're also an indication of some hope that their friendship is not lost forever. Underneath, Greg hopes it's temporary. He thinks it will be, since he thinks Abigail is just using Rowley and so their relationship won't last. But more than that, Greg hopes he and Rowley can just go back to the way everything was before.

Greg is incredibly choosy about who he wants to be friends with. Greg has ample opportunity to choose new friends: joining an after-school club, befriending one or more of the boys in his neighborhood, and getting to know the boys at his lunch table. However, Greg chooses not to. He is both afraid and unwilling to create new friendships. He is afraid to create new friendships for two apparent reasons: one, because of how Rowley was his absolute best friend, yet ditched him; and two, because when he did try to befriend Fregley, Fregley ended up ditching him, too. Why would Greg want to build new friendships if he is just going to be continue to be ditched?



Greg often recalls fun times he had with Rowley, like a Fourth of July when he at Rowley people-watched as passers-by tried avoiding police horse droppings and playing swords with Mr. Sandoval's driveway poles. Rowley's friendship is one of the few things in the book that Greg remembers with extreme fondness and joy. Though Greg remembers some family situations when he used to have fun, it is clear that the most fun he's ever had has been with Rowley. Greg wants his friend back. He values their relationship, their quality time together, Rowley's support, and Rowley's presence.

Family

At the beginning, Greg talks about how Greg's mom tells him that friends will come and go but family is forever. There are two sides to Greg's family in *Hard Luck*: his mom's side that drives him and everyone else absolutely crazy, and his immediate family of Rodrick, Manny, his mom, and dad. His views on the two different sets of families are completely different, meaning his view on family might tend to fluctuate and change with time.

A typical middle schooler, Greg seems to view his immediate family as a necessary nuisance. Though Greg values friendship more than family at this stage in his life, he notes that when his family is all older he hopes they still see each other regularly. He mentions Rodrick and Manny with slight annoyance, but nothing major. Greg talks about his mom mostly with fondness, especially since she buys him new clothes, helps him with his missing homework assignments, types his Science Fair report for him, and responds in a calm way when he is accused of cheating in Social Studies with his Magic 8 Ball. Greg treats most of his immediate family as being more in the background of his life than the forefront. Even his mom, who gives him advice and helps him with homework and his Science Fair project, he writes about her mostly as a helper. This isn't because Greg doesn't like his family or he doesn't like being part of a family. Greg can enjoy other parts of his life because he has a stable family background. Instead, Greg's feelings on family are that they exist because they have to exist, but you don't have to be with them 24/7 in order to appreciate them.

Greg writes about his parents quite differently. The few times he writes about his dad, his dad is setting a rule or a discipline of some kind to either him or someone else. Greg doesn't seem to feel negatively toward his dad, but since Greg's issue in this set of diary entries is more of a social-emotional concern, he might be depending more on his mom's help this time around. When Greg writes about his mom, she is usually in a helping role: buying him new clothes and shoes, helping him make up his missing assignments, typing his Science Fair project, giving him friendship advice. Even though he doesn't prefer his mom's unsolicited advice, Greg does reveal the trouble he's having with Rowley, indicating that he trusts her judgment and relies on her to support him.

When Greg discusses his mom's extended family, Greg's belief about family changes. While there are a few members of the family he likes, such as Meemaw (who is now passed away) and his Gramma, most of his mom's extended family Greg simply tolerates, as his mom does. In fact, when Greg's mom tells him that that friends come



and go but family is forever, Greg is confused because he knows his mom's family drives her (and everyone else in his immediate family) crazy. Most of the drawings and descriptions of his extended family are unkind and unflattering, leaving the reader to assume that even if the extended family provides some entertainment, he could do without seeing them. The two family situations that Greg recalls with fondness are when his extended family would purchase his drawings at holiday get-togethers, and when they used to all participate in an Easter Egg hunt. However, now that both of those situations have changed - the family buys Manny's drawings instead, and there hasn't been an Easter egg hunt since Meemaw died - Greg doesn't see the need for the family to all get together.

Because Greg spends so much time, energy, and drawings describing his family and talking about his various experiences with members of his family, it is obvious that family occupies a decent chunk of his brain power. However, most of the writing about his extended family is about events that have happened in the past. The topic of family seems to be occupying his time simply because it's a situation that has come up, since his mom's extended family is visiting during Greg's spring break. And since Greg was hoping to have his spring break to himself, he's not happy about his mom's family coming in to town and disrupting his quiet time. The few events he does mention that are happening in the present, i.e., the twins calling the cops because Greg's family ran out of ketchup, continue to paint extended family in a negative light.

Responsibility

The theme of responsibility shows itself throughout *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Hard Luck*, but mostly at the end. Greg Heffley is a middle-schooler who often portrays his problems as the fault of other people: it's Rowley's fault that he can't face some of the characters on his walk to and from school, because if Rowley would just walk with him instead of walking with Abigail, then Greg would have the courage; it's Rowley's fault that Greg steps in dog poop; it's Rowley's fault that he doesn't enjoy lunch anymore; it's Fregley's fault that he's by himself again since Fregley went and got popular; it's the Magic 8 Ball's fault that he didn't run from the Mingo kids; it's his mom's family's fault that he can't enjoy his Easter or his spring break; he blames his parents for his phone dropping in the toilet because he says he told them he wasn't ready for the responsibility anyway, even though that statement was made in the spirit of reverse psychology; and it's Rowley's fault that he can't stay on the Yearbook club because he had to photograph Rowley and Abigail as Cutest Couple. Each example shows how, throughout the book, Greg doesn't take responsibility for himself or his actions. Everything is external and the concept of responsibility is not something Greg is willing to accept.

The result of Greg not taking responsibility for his actions and for his situations is mainly Greg staying miserable. Greg views his life as one bad-luck event after another, and part of that is his outlook. By focusing on the fact that only bad things are happening to him and it's everybody else's fault, Greg has given up any responsibility he could take to turn his situations around. His bad-luck situation seems to be expanding, in part because that's all Greg can see. For example, by blaming Rowley for fearing his walk to



school, Greg automatically puts himself in a place where he thinks he can't muster the courage himself. By blaming Rowley and Fregley for him not enjoying lunch, Greg is putting himself in a place where he thinks it's impossible to make any more friends. He's also assuming that every day at lunch will be terrible and that he can't do anything about that fact. Similarly, when he blames Rowley for having to quit the Yearbook Club, Greg is assuming that any avenue in which he tries to be happy and have fun will be blocked by someone else. When he blames the Magic 8 Ball for some bad answers, Greg isn't allowing himself to make any decisions. He is simply relying on a toy. When he drops his cell phone in the toilet, he blames his parents for allowing him to have a cell phone in the first place.

Greg learns to take responsibility for himself and his actions a little more as time goes on. It takes time and some situations where he can only rely on himself and his thought process, but Greg ultimately proves he can be responsible for his actions. Proof of this can be seen when Greg doesn't get upset at his parents for hiding replacement Ticklees, his Body Blankie, and parenting books from which his parents seem to get most of their parenting advice. At this point, Greg is still relying on the Magic 8 Ball; that's how he ends up in the closet in the first place. However, he seems to realize that his parents are only trying to help him with the advice they get from the books, as well as by having replacement Ticklees readily available. He blames Rodrick for the Body Blankie being taken away, but he doesn't do so in an accusatory manner, more in a matter-of-fact way. Greg tries reverse psychology on his parents, and though it ultimately backfires, Greg is starting to see the responsibility he can take in his own situations. Even with the Body Blankie, when his decision to wear it to school under his clothes turns into a terrible choice, he doesn't blame anyone. He simply tries to problem solve and see what he can do to make his day better.

Another indication of Greg taking responsibility for himself is when he finds out that he is close to having to attend summer school because of his grades. He doesn't blame anyone for his bad grades except for himself. He knows that it was Fregley who lost his books, but he also knows it's completely his own responsibility to improve his grades. He doesn't know how his grades got as bad as they are, but he knows he has to work hard to improve them, which he does. Greg is finding out that the Magic 8 Ball, Rowley, Fregley, his brother, nor his parents can do his work for him. It's on his shoulders as to whether or not he passes the 8th grade.

While he's catching up on his homework, Greg is still on the fence with his decision to remain responsible for his own actions. He doesn't say as much, but his actions indicate that he's still seeing how much he can get away with not doing himself. He thinks about purchasing a recycled Science Fair project from students who run a side business in the back of the school. Greg even goes so far as entering the storage facility where the projects are kept. However, Greg knows in his gut that it's not right, so even without the Magic 8 Ball to steer him in the right direction, Greg flees the scene and works late three nights in a row to complete his project. The gut-feeling Greg had about the right thing to do has come in time. He had nothing else to rely on, and he had two paths to choose from. Something told him that if he chose to purchase the project, he would regret it.



What seems to help Greg take responsibility for himself are the situations that are him and him alone. Through trial and time, Greg learns to take responsibility for himself and his actions. Once he does, his outlook begins to change and life seems to get better from there. It isn't Rowley coming back that first changes Greg's outlook. Rather, it's when he begins working hard on his homework and turning in his Science Fair project. He feels accomplished, which can only come from having a true sense and understanding of responsibility.

Decision-making

Though *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Hard Luck* only takes place over the course of two months, they are two pivotal months for Greg Heffley. Greg has been betrayed by his best friend, and therefore has to make some major life overhauls without anyone there to push him forward. Greg lets his mom help some, but it is clear that he is determined to make his decisions on his own. As discussed under the Responsibility theme, Greg struggles with making decisions on his own. It is only when he is left to himself and himself alone that he finally learns how to make decisions for himself.

Greg has the tools to properly solve his problems, especially since his mom tries to give him good advice. When he is upset about not having Rowley anymore, she gives him suggestions on where to find other friends. When he thinks he can't find any friends, his mom tells him that someone needs to start a rumor that he's a nice kid, and then everyone will want to be his friend. Since Greg is still in middle school, it's appropriate that his mom would still be trying to help him make good decisions. Yet, Greg insists on having other people do and decide things for him.

Greg's main method of decision making throughout much of the book is by way of a Magic 8 Ball. He depends on this Magic 8 Ball to answer true/false questions on a Social Studies test, help him decide what to do about bullies, confirm his decision to not play outside, and to help him decide which after-school club he should join. By using this external mode of decision-making, Greg isn't learning how to rely on his own internal sense of right and wrong. This also means that Greg's sense of responsibility is lagging, since his decisions aren't being made by him. Furthermore, this lack of decision-making is keeping Greg in the mindset that he is unlucky. He sees his situation as dire and unlucky, but doesn't put any responsibility on his own decision-making to change his situation.

When Greg finally starts making his own decisions is when Greg sees his luck start to turn around. First, he decides to wear his Body Blankie to school. It doesn't work out for him, as he ends up extremely warm and stuck in it since he can't get it off, but he doesn't blame anyone but himself. It was his decision to wear it under his clothes. The same day, Greg is told by the Vice Principal that he is in danger of having to attend summer school because of his poor grades. Though he knows he hasn't done homework in about three weeks because of Fregley throwing his books at the Mingo clan, Greg knows it's up to him and only him to turn it around. His Magic 8 Ball can't make this choice. His mom can't do his homework for him. Rowley and Fregley can't do



the homework for him. Greg decides to avoid summer school at all costs, and works hard to make that the case. Greg also uses his own decision-making abilities to reject buying a recycled Science Fair project. Instead, he completes one on his own. His mom helps him type the report, but only after she sees how hard he has worked. Plus, Greg doesn't even ask his mom to help; she does it on his own after seeing his increase in responsibility. Greg's decisions have been getting better and better, and when he turns in his own work, Greg feels relieved. His choices are making a difference in him having better days at school.

Greg's last decision in the book is whether or not to befriend Rowley after Abigail dumps him. At this point, Greg is mature enough to recognize that he's been in Rowley's lonely place before, and there's no reason why the two of them can't be friends. He sees Rowley at the Find a Friend station with Mr. Nern and feels sorry for him, but it isn't until a few days later - after he realizes he can't use the Magic 8 Ball - that he realizes that the most important thing right then is that he get his best friend back. He reaches out to Rowley and the two go back to the way they were, all because Greg knew what the right thing to do was and he chose to do it. Greg's decision-making abilities have always been present, but it's only when he chooses to use them does his hard luck turn around for the better.

Luck

Greg Heffley views his current situation as one of bad luck. His best friend has ditched him for a girl, and therefore everything bad is happening to him: he steps in dog poop, he can't face the people on his walk to and from school, he has no friends at his lunch table, his new "friend" doesn't even stick around after getting popular, his new shoes are dirty, he has nobody to play outside with, and his spring break is ruined.

Greg's perception of his life being one bad luck event after another is just that: one of perception. By focusing on the frustrating situations as bad luck that happens to him, he can't figure out a way to make them events that just plain happen, because life is life and bad things happen. He thinks everything is related and it's all bad luck, starting with Rowley ditching him for a girl. However, this attitude of everything going on his life being bad luck is keeping Greg from taking responsibility, making good choices, and changing his situation and day-to-day attitude.

For a time, Greg relies on the Magic 8 Ball, which is a toy that is all about luck, to make all of his decisions. Greg uses the Magic 8 Ball to decide if he should run from or fight the Mingo twins; if he should stay inside or go play outside; what he should answer on a true/false test in Social Studies; and which after-school club he should join. Greg relies on luck of the draw - or roll of the Magic 8 Ball - in order to decide his day-to-day fate. However, this only gets him so far. For one, the Magic 8 Ball cannot answer math questions. Too, the Magic 8 Ball gives a non-distinct answer when Greg asks if he should run from or fight the Mingo boys. Math homework and deciding how to deal with bullies are big decisions that Greg is deferring to pure chance. Greg enjoys relying on the Magic 8 Ball, but when it breaks he has nowhere to turn but inward. Greg realizes



that the Magic 8 Ball was helpful in some situations, but ultimately he has to be responsible for his own life and his own decisions.

Luck of the draw can only get him so far. When Greg starts working harder at school, taking responsibility for himself, and making decisions based on what he knows is right, is all when Greg begins to see his "luck" turn around. His tough situations get easier, he seems happier, and he is satisfied and relieved when he works hard and it pays off. Greg's belief that his life is all about bad luck is a major reason for Greg stalling his own progress on his friend situations, which is the primary reason for this set of diary entries in the first place. If Greg would have seen that luck had nothing to do with his situations, that he was in control of his days all along, Greg's attitude, sense of responsibility, and problem-solving skills might have improved much sooner than they did.

At the conclusion of *Hard Luck*, Greg realizes that life's big decisions are up to him. He knows he can't rely on a Magic 8 Ball and leave every decision in his life to chance. Though Greg does not specifically point out that luck has nothing to do with his situation improving, he seems to realize that it's his rapid succession of good decisions - making up his homework assignments, not purchasing a recycled Science Fair project but working hard to complete his own, and befriending Rowley again - that cause his life in middle school to go back to being great.

Bullying

Bullying is something that Greg is on the receiving end of as he writes about it in his diary entries. One of the biggest reasons Greg is afraid to walk to and from school is because of various bullies on his route. For this topic, a bully is defined as a person or group of people who is/are overbearing, and who habitually exert power via intimidation over smaller or weaker persons or people.

On his way to school, Greg views Mr. Sandoval and Rebel the Rottweiler as bullies. Though Mr. Sandoval has a reason for wanting to bring Greg and Rowley to justice, the fact that he is an older - and therefore stronger - man makes him look like a bully to Greg. Simply his presence intimidates Greg enough to be afraid to walk by Mr. Sandoval's residence by himself. Rebel the Rottweiler, while a dog, is shown to continually harass Greg and Rowley on their way to school by attempting to drop dog poop in their path. Though Rebel is not a human, the fact that he knows he can intimidate and badger Greg and Rowley and continues to do so makes him a bullying character.

Bullying is mainly shown with the Mingo clan. Run by Meckley Mingo, this set of boys have their own portion of the woods of which they've blocked. In fact, Greg and Rowley have been threatened that they will face physical harm if they ever go near or inside those woods. In Greg's drawings, the Mingo boys are all bigger and stronger than Greg and Rowley. They increase their Bully status each time they harass Greg, especially the one time Greg forgets to cross the street when he gets to their woods. Fregley threw all



of Greg's school books at the Mingo clan to get them to stop; they had chased Fregley and Greg simply because the two had walked too close to the Mingo's woods.

Greg faces bullies at school, too, when he is trying to decide whether or not to purchase a recycled Science Fair project. Erick Glick and Dennis Denard are students who appear to enjoy exerting their power over other students. Greg things Dennis Denard stayed back twice just so he could run the storage room filled with old homework assignments, book reports, and Science Fair projects. Though Erick and Dennis don't overtly exert their power over others, when students step into their storage room of old school work, they try to intimidate students into purchasing at least one thing. The intimidation factor is what makes them fall under the Bully category. At school, Greg also faces bullies on the playground when other students physically harm him for ruining their birthday parties. He takes it. He doesn't ask or tell them to stop; he just gets pushed to the ground and sadly accepts the situation.

Greg does not deal with bullying in a healthy way. In all situations, he avoids the bully at all costs. At no point does he tell a grown-up. At no point does he try to stand up for himself. He either runs away or avoids the situation. Greg's general perspective on his life seems to be that he is weak and can't control any of the bad things that happens to him. Unfortunately, this extends to bullying. By continuing to believe that he is weak and can't control any of his current situations, Greg is letting the bullies win. He lets the Mingo clan win when he avoids them and doesn't stand up to them. He lets Mr. Sandoval and Rebel win by running as fast as he can past them on his walk to school. Erick Glick and Dennis Denard are worse off at the end of the story, but it has nothing to do with Greg. He bolts from the storage room instead of telling them the truth, that their business of selling old reports is not right.

Selfishness

The theme of selfishness shows itself throughout Greg's diary entries. Similar to Greg's lack of responsibility for much of the book, Greg's selfishness infiltrates everything he does and every perspective he has, whether it's in regards to his family, friends, or school.

The main situation fueling Greg's frustration is the fact that his best friend Rowley has a girlfriend now and is spending all of his time with her. Greg doesn't once stop to think what a good thing this is for Rowley. He isn't happy for Rowley, he isn't happy that Rowley's happy. He is simply frustrated because the fact that Rowley has a girlfriend is interrupting his own life, and it means that Rowley can no longer meet his own needs, such as a dog poop scout, a homework transcriber, and a schoolbook carrier. Greg's selfish outlook means that he stays frustrated longer than he might have to, because his perspective on the situation is focused solely inward. Instead of being happy for his friend and seeing the positives in the situation, Greg is stuck on everything that is wrong because of Rowley's decision.



Greg doesn't view anyone but Rowley as an actual friend; he considers the other boys at his lunch table simply table mates and acquaintances. Greg finds a boy named Fregley whom he would like to "train" as a friend. Right off the bat, Greg is finding a "friend" for selfish reasons. He isn't thinking about a two-way friendship, only what someone else could do for him. Greg chooses Fregley because he thinks Fregley is trainable, since Fregley doesn't seem to have any friends. Greg shows Fregley how to scout for dog poop, and he lets Fregley carry his schoolbooks. Fregley doesn't seem to mind, likely because he doesn't have anyone else to hang out with. Once he is satisfied with Fregley's abilities, he tries to make Fregley into his funny sidekick in order to make himself more popular. Again, Greg is selfishly wondering what Fregley can do for him rather than finding a companion that he can do things for, too. Fregley gets popular and Greg ends up getting left out, but Greg once again sees only how the situation impacts him. He isn't happy for Fregley that Fregley now has friends. Instead, he is upset about the fact that he doesn't have anyone to scout for dog poop, carry his books, or be his funny sidekick.

Greg is not as overtly selfish when it comes to his family, but he shows his selfishness on a few occasions. When Greg recalls that he used to sell his drawings to his family for \$5 a piece, he jealousy and selfishly comments on the fact that everyone is buying Manny's drawings now and nobody is buying his. Greg doesn't take into consideration that Manny is only 5 years old and that his family is probably showing Manny a courtesy. Greg doesn't think about the fact that Manny deserves some attention, too. All Greg worries about is the fact that they don't buy his drawings anymore. Greg's largest display of selfishness is when he finds Meemaw's diamond ring, but chooses not to tell anyone. He thinks about the fact that his mom said that finding the ring might destroy her family, but he also comments on the fact that if he keeps it in a place where only he would find it, he can use it in the future if he's ever in need of some serious cash. Instead of telling his mom, he keeps the secret to himself in case he ever needs to benefit from it in the future.

At school, Greg's selfishness comes out when he gets the job as yearbook photographer. Not only does Greg add unkind captions to his photos, but he edits them in such a way that makes the subject look bad. His selfishness runs into his lack of responsibility, as Greg doesn't think about the consequences, or how other people might feel. He only thinks about himself, the fun that he wants to have, and the people he wants to make fun of. He is mainly thinking of himself. The book ends before we see the consequences of Greg's photo editing, but if the photos do make it past the editor and are included in the yearbook, it is safe to assume that the people whose photos were edited will be embarrassed. Therefore, Greg's selfishness will have hurt other people, including his best friend, in a public forum.

Similar to Greg's lack of responsibility and his perspective on luck's role in his current situation, Greg's selfishness leads Greg to being frustrated and down on his "luck" for an extended period of time. It's as though Greg is on a one-way street, and anything that doesn't go his way doesn't count. The way he looks at every situation is how it negatively affects him. It isn't until Greg is forced to take responsibility when he is threatened with summer school that his selfishness goes to the wayside. Along with



taking responsibility for his actions, Greg is forced to care about others. After turning in his Science Fair project and being relieved and feeling accomplished, Greg ends up feeling sad for Rowley, whose girlfriend just dumped him and who is standing at the Find a Friend station. Greg is forced to realize that bad things happen to other people, and when it's someone you care about, you can't just stay focused on yourself. Greg learns that eventually, if you care about other people, you'll find a way to understand what they're going through and help them out. Greg ends up befriending Rowley and they go back to being best friends, but it is only after kind of being forced into it does he come to that place.

Jealousy

Greg's jealousy toward other people in his life is written throughout his diary entries. It is directed at his best friend Rowley, his brother Manny, and even Fregley, the boy he trains to be his friend. While Greg's jealousy doesn't outwardly hurt the people to whom it's directed, Greg's jealousy keeps him from having a positive attitude. He doesn't learn to look on the bright side. Instead, he gets it in his head that someone else is getting something he deserves, and he stays upset.

The main situation, the fact that Rowley has a girlfriend and has ditched Greg, is the first place the reader can see Greg's jealousy. Without saying it, the reader can tell Greg is jealous of Rowley's relationship with Abigail by the way Greg describes Abigail and that she gets all of Rowley's time now. Greg writes that he doesn't like Abigail because she doesn't find anything that Greg and Rowley like to do together interesting or fun. He says that he has tried to be friends with her, but it's Abigail that doesn't want anything to do with him. By blaming the fact that he and Abigail don't get along on Abigail, Greg is expressing his jealousy in the form of anger and dislike for Abigail. Greg also writes that he always thought he would be the one with a girl - and eventually a family - and Rowley would be the fun family friend who came over for birthdays and cookouts. Greg's admission that he thought he would be the one with a girlfriend and now Rowley is, is the first indication that Greg is jealous of Rowley and his relationship with Abigail. Greg wanted to be the first - and only - one with a girlfriend. Greg wanted Rowley to be the third wheel instead of himself. Further evidence of this attitude is when Greg later writes about his frustration that his grandfather and Rowley have a girlfriend at the same time. Again, Greg thinks that out of everyone, he should be one with the girlfriend.

With Fregley, Greg's jealous attitude is a little harder to detect, but it is there. Greg chooses Fregley to be his "friend" because he wants to train Fregley to be what he needs - someone to scout for dog poop, someone to carry his schoolbooks, and someone to be a funny sidekick so that Greg can be popular. Greg's plan works at the beginning; Fregley learns how to scout for dog poop and carries his books for him on their way home from school. Fregley also provides company on the walk home from school so Greg doesn't have to face the Mingo clan bullies on his own. Greg is fine with everything so far. However, when Fregley starts being funny, the boys at his lunch table end up liking him more than they like Greg. So much so that Greg gets pushed out of the table; there's no room for him after Fregley's tricks bring a crowd. Greg says, "It just



goes to show you that no matter how nice you are to people, they'll turn their backs on you when they get the chance." That statement along with the drawing of Greg moping in the cafeteria while Fregley and the other boys have a good time are both good clues that Greg is jealous that he doesn't get a funny sidekick, because his funny sidekick just became more popular than him. Greg wants to be the popular one, because then he gets the friends and the girls. But Fregley got the friends and Rowley got the girls.

Greg displays his jealous nature with Manny, too. Greg writes and draws about how he used to create drawings for when his family came into town. He would sell them for \$5. Obviously, this was a positive situation for Greg because he could make some money. It was also a way to tolerate his family coming into town. However, over the course of one year Greg says they stopped buying his drawings and began buying Manny's. Greg insults Manny's drawings by calling them scribbles, and the drawing Greg does of Manny's drawings is equally insulting, as it is literally just a scribble line on a blank piece of paper. Greg whines about the fact that his extended family is buying Manny's drawings. He doesn't consider the fact that Manny is younger, and that his family is probably being nice to the youngest kid in the family. Greg does comment that maybe they aren't buying his drawings because he doubled his prices, but this says nothing about Manny. Greg wants to be the one who sells his drawings, he wants to be the one who gets money. He doesn't want to share the wealth, and he doesn't want to have to compete.

Greg's jealousy is similar to his selfishness and his view of luck in that his jealousy is keeping him from seeing any positives in any of his situations. Since he is so upset with Rowley for getting a girlfriend, he can't be happy for his friend. He doesn't once comment on why it might be good for Rowley to have a girlfriend. He doesn't really try with Abigail. All Greg can think about is how he wants either what Rowley has, or he wants things to go back to the way they were before Rowley got a girlfriend. Since that's his focus, that's all he can see. Nothing will get better for him so long as he focuses on his jealousy. Similarly, with Fregley, Greg's jealousy is keeping him from finding a true friend. All Greg wants is for Fregley to do what he needs Fregley to do, and when Fregley becomes more popular, Greg can't handle it. Instead of laughing along with Fregley and enjoying the company, he lets his jealousy get the best of him, thus becoming angry, cranky, lonely, and unpleasant. With Manny, Greg doesn't focus too much on the fact that his family purchases Manny's drawings. However, it is just one more instance that Greg focuses on his negative emotions instead of possibly positive ones. All together, this keeps Greg in a state of misery and prevents him from bettering his situation.

Loss of Innocence

This installment of Diary of a Wimpy Kid show Greg facing some problems that come with growing up, problems that offer a loss of innocence for those involved. A loss of innocence happens when someone has thought something positive of the world, and then is proved wrong by a life event. The main event that started this series of diary entries was the fact that Greg's best friend Rowley got a girlfriend, and therefore started



spending all of his time with her. Greg felt a wide range of emotions, and let all the negative ones stick around and color his perspective of everything that happened in his life from that point on.

In middle school, students want to know that they have a best friend. For Greg, that was Rowley. Greg trusted Rowley, he had fun with Rowley, and he knew what to expect with Rowley. Greg expresses that he wants to have Rowley as his best friend all the way into adulthood so that he can have someone who has grown with him and knows how far he's come. The innocence of childhood is that friends will always stick around, that they'll never desert you, and that if an argument occurs it will be solved within a couple of minutes. However, with maturity comes more complicated problems. In *Hard Luck*, some of Greg's innocence is lost when Rowley ditches him to spend time with his girlfriend. Greg learns that sometimes friends will change their minds, sometimes they'll choose other people, and sometimes arguments will not be solved within a couple minutes.

The effect of this loss of innocence on Greg is a wide range of emotions, including: jealousy, frustration, anger, sadness, loneliness, fear, and desperation. Though these emotions are natural for anyone who has lost a bit of their ideal view of life, Greg doesn't deal with all of these emotions in a healthy manner; but, he does think he's doing the best he can. It would be natural for Greg to feel jealous, since he thought he would be the one with a girlfriend and Rowley would be the third wheel, though in Greg's drawings he treats Rowley as a member of the family instead of an uncomfortable third wheel. Frustration, anger, and sadness are understandable, too, because when you are stuck in between what you think should be happening and what is actually happening, it is confusing, and confusion leads to frustration, anger, and sadness when the situation cannot be worked out. As Greg deals with his first best friend betrayal, he takes his frustration, anger, and sadness out in various ways, including editing Rowley's Cutest Couple yearbook photo to make Rowley have a small head, blaming Rowley for everything bad that happens to him, and even by not going to play outside when it's perfectly nice out. Greg also deals with feeling lonely and afraid as a result of his best friend's betrayal, which are emotions he would not have felt had Rowley not ditched him for Abigail. Greg discusses how boys fight, and his view is that the argument should be over in five minutes max. This disagreement with Rowley lasts almost two months, leaving Greg lonely on his walks to and from school and at the playground, as well as afraid, since he feels like he can't face certain people without Rowley by his side.

One of the more complex emotions Greg works through as a result of losing a sense of innocence in regards to his friendships is desperation. In his quest for something that he can always rely on and that will help him make decisions, Greg uses a Magic 8 Ball, a toy that is pure chance and cannot give real solutions to real problems. But Greg is so desperate for something to rely on, that when the Magic 8 Ball answers one or two questions he likes, he sticks to it for as long as he can, which happens to be when the toy breaks after he shakes it too vigorously and it falls on the ground, causing all of the blue liquid to fall out. Later, Greg is so desperate for friends that he tries to train a boy in his grade to be the kind of friend he's looking for. Greg doesn't care that it's not exactly



the right thing to try and train a person to be what he needs, he's just so desperate for a dog poop scout, a book carrier, and a funny sidekick that he'll do anything to get what he needs/wants. Toward the end of "Hard Luck", Greg becomes desperate for a Science Fair project and almost buys an old one from two students who are wrongfully selling them in the back of the school. After finding out that he's on his way to summer school, Greg is desperate to do anything to avoid it. Greg ends up making the right choice and not purchasing an old project, but his desperation is obvious.

The emotions Greg feels from experiencing his first best friend betrayal offer Greg somewhat of a loss of innocence. Before this experience, Greg had assumed he and Rowley would go through life together as best friends, that Greg would get the girlfriend and Rowley would be the family friend present for cookouts, and that the two of them would just always be how they've always been. After realizing that's not the case, Greg is forced to grow up a little bit and rearrange his view of friendship and of the world in general.

Power over self and others

The theme of power over one's self and others is present throughout "Hard Luck". In terms of power over self, Greg acts as though he has no power over himself and he can't help the things that are happening in his life. It starts with the main situation: Greg's best friend Rowley ditching him to spend time with his new - and first - girlfriend, Abigail. Greg lets this betrayal set the tone for him for the next two months of his life. Greg places a lot of value on friendship, but he has also placed a lot of pressure on Rowley to be everything Greg needs, including dog poop scout, book carrier, and friend with whom to hang out. Greg doesn't say that Rowley expresses any of the pressure, but the fact that Greg blames everything going wrong in his life on Rowley ditching him for Abigail is evidence of how much Greg relied on Rowley to provide for his emotional needs. Every unfortunate thing that happens to Greg from this point on is basically blamed on Rowley's betrayal, including having no friends at school, being left out of his lunch table, getting dog poop on his shoe, Fregley ditching him once he gets popular, his Spring break being taken over by his mom's family, getting a cell phone then ruining the cell phone, and having to avoid the Mingo clan. In each of these situations, Greg sees himself as having no power over himself.

The turning point of Greg realizing that he does have power over himself was when he wore the Body Blankie to school, but the only reason is because he finds out that if he doesn't work hard to improve his grades, he'll get caught in summer school. The Magic 8 Ball has broken at this point, so Greg has nowhere to turn but himself. He does partially blame Fregley for having no homework assignments turned in for the last three weeks since Fregley is the one who threw the books at the Mingo boys, and he doesn't acknowledge that he was training Fregley for selfish reasons, but he also knows he has to go from this point forward. He can't focus on blaming Fregley or Rowley or anyone else; it's up to him and him only to correct his situation, which ultimately he does. It just takes him awhile.



When Greg does take responsibility for himself and realize that he does have control over himself and his actions, Greg starts to see his situation improve. He completes all of his missing homework assignments, turns in his Science Fair project on time and feels quite relieved when he does so, and he ends up befriending Rowley after Abigail breaks up with him. When Greg decides to befriend Rowley, it is after deciding that the Magic 8 Ball can only do so much, and that it is up to him to make the big decisions. He puts the power of decision back in his hands, instead of leaving it up to the Magic 8 Ball or pure luck.

In terms of power over others, Greg demonstrates on multiple occasions that he prefers to have the upper hand in his relationships with other people. First, with Rowley: Greg has Rowley scouting for dog poop, carrying his school books, and transcribing his homework into cursive. Though Greg seems to reciprocate by providing a loyal friendship, Greg certainly seems to have no problem exerting power over Rowley. Then, with Fregley, Greg tries to "train" Fregley to be the kind of friend he needs, which is one to scout for dog poop, provide company on the walk to and from school, carry his school books, and be his funny sidekick. It works for a day, then Fregley becomes so popular that Greg is left out. For that day, though, Greg exerts his power over Fregley and feels no guilt about it. The next day, when he loses that power, Greg is back to feeling isolated and also frustrated that Fregley will no longer be catering to his needs.

A further example of Greg's attempt to exert power over others is when he edits the yearbook photos. Greg claims he is doing so for entertainment, but he also recognizes that with this power he can get revenge on people who bully him, which he attempts by shrinking the heads of Leon Feast and Rowley. Greg sees no issue with what he's done, and in fact states that he hopes they make it past the yearbook editor. Then, he says if the photos do make it past the editor, he'll give the credit - not the blame, but the credit - to the Magic 8 Ball, since it was the toy that convinced him to join the Yearbook club anyway.

The bullies present in the story - Leon Feast and his gang, as well as Erick Glick and Dennis Denard - are other characters who attempt to exert their power over others. While Greg uses mental games to do so, the other boys use their size to intimidate others into doing what they want. Greg illustrates Leon Feast and his gang as much larger than Greg and Rowley, and the same goes for Erick Glick and Dennis Denard. In each illustration of the bullies, they are leaning toward their victim with a scowl on their face, obviously attempting to influence the victim to do whatever they currently want the victim to do. Even though Erick Glick and Dennis Denard get busted for their operation of selling old projects, the only revenge Greg seeks on Leon Feast is shrinking his head in a yearbook photo. Again, Greg is attempting to use alternative methods to exert power over others since he doesn't have a physical stature to do so. Others who attempt to intimidate weaker subjects are Mr. Sandoval, the Mingo clan, and Rebel, all of whom use whatever strength they have to exert their power over Greg.



Isolation

A major theme throughout "Hard Luck" is that of isolation. Greg spends most of his time feeling lonely and isolated ever since his best friend Rowley ditches him for a girlfriend. Friendship is a strong value for Greg, and the fact that Rowley has completely disregarded that fact leaves Greg feeling lonely and isolated from the person he once trusted the most.

At school, Greg states that he has no friends. Even though he illustrates and writes about the boys at his lunch table and some of the classmates whom he's played on the playground with, Greg maintains that they aren't his friends, they're just at school and he happens to spend time with them. When Greg describes the traditions at his lunch table - French Fry Friday and Five-Second Rule - he doesn't do so with enthusiasm, since he seemed to really only enjoy the games when Rowley was there to participate with him. Greg tries to fix his problem of feeling so isolated by trying to train Fregley to be what he needs, but Fregley quickly turns in to the most popular kid at school, once again leaving Greg isolated and alone. Greg illustrates himself sitting at the back of the lunch line, which is a representation of how extreme he views his loneliness and isolation, since the lunch line is where Greg said kids go when they don't have anywhere to sit. And since he tried to fix the situation by taking on Fregley but was ditched a second time, Greg's sense of isolation likely grew after that situation backfired on him.

Greg's isolation continues with other people in school, too. Greg illustrates various groups of people that he could be friends with, just doesn't want to be. In this case, Greg is choosing his isolation. He is being picky about his company and is therefore prolonging his loneliness. However, Greg does want to be included in the gossip group. He tries, but is rejected, as shown in his illustration of the girls in said group turning their backs on Greg. Social situations that involve rejection can only further one's sense of isolation.

Greg's sense of isolation is never so evident as when he is standing at the Find a Friend station on the playground. No one his age comes over, but Mr. Nern does. Greg is partially grateful that he doesn't have to be completely alone, relieving his sense of isolation. However, he is also embarrassed that Mr. Nern is the only one to befriend him. Greg really only wants his best friend back, but he feels isolated enough to try anything. Unfortunately, it doesn't work out like he thinks it will.

One of the most significant areas in which Greg feels isolated is his walk to/from school. There are people and animals on his walk that he would rather not face alone, but he has no choice since Rowley ditched him and Fregley is only his "friend" for a day. Greg is scared on his walk to and from school, mainly because he has no companion with whom to walk. The only time Greg is happy on his way to school is when he wears his new shoes. He's not focused on anything or anyone, but just getting to school with his shoes clean and still brand-new looking. Unfortunately, he steps in dog poop and ends up having to take off his new shoes - the only bright spot in his life at the moment - and



he ends up wearing Mr. Nern's shoes. Thus, Greg's isolation from his peers continues. In Middle School, there is probably almost nothing worse than having to wear a teacher's shoes because you stepped in dog poop, especially when your shoes were brand new and now your replacements make a loud flop-flop noise because of how big they are.

Greg ends up focusing other things aside from his isolation, especially after finding out that he needs to significantly improve his grades if he wants to avoid summer school. Rowley ends up being the one who is isolated after Abigail breaks up with him. Though Greg doesn't take pity immediately, he recognizes Rowley's loneliness and isolation and befriends him, ending the story on a happy note.



Styles

Point of View

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Hard Luck is told in the first person. This is the only point of view that makes sense for this novel because it is written in diary form. One's diary is only effective as a storytelling tool if told by the owner of said diary. From the first-person perspective, the reader can know everything that is important to the author because only that which is important to the diary author's dilemma will be written about.

Along with first-person writing is a collection of drawings Greg includes in his diary. The drawings help the reader to better understand Greg's perspective, since they visually depict the short stories he tells in his diary entries.

Language and Meaning

The language of Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Hard Luck is informal and completely relaxed. Since the novel is written as a diary, main character Greg doesn't hold anything back. He assumes the diary is for him and, therefore, shares all of his thoughts and feelings about any situation he feels is worth writing about. This style makes Hard Luck easy to get through, since it reads more as a conversation than a story.

Hard Luck's pace is comfortable and easy. Finishing a diary entry before setting the book down is easy, since most of the entries are fairly short. The only thing that might be difficult to keep track of is all the characters, since Greg names and describes almost every member of his mom's family. He also names a lot of kids from school, some of whom are important to the story but some of whom aren't. Greg offers some flashbacks in the form of memories, but it's easy to follow what's a memory and what's currently happening.

Structure

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Hard Luck is split up into 23 diary entries, which act as chapters. Some are only a page or two long, some are considerably longer. Even so, the structure of the novel as a diary reads as such, so the label of which day Greg is writing on makes it easy to follow.

The catalyst for this set of Greg's diary entries is the fact that his best friend Rowley has ditched him for a girlfriend. Greg starts off by writing about what they used to do together, why he's so upset that Rowley has chosen Abigail, why he doesn't like Abigail, and all the things that have changed since Rowley started hanging out with Abigail instead of him. However, those stories are only in the beginning of the book. Most of this novel is about Greg's various happenings around his house, at school, and in the neighborhood. While most things seem to come back to the fact that Rowley has



ditched him, Rowley is not mentioned as often as you'd think, given he is the main reason for Greg's frustration. It isn't until the end of the book that Rowley is mentioned again, after he breaks up with Abigail and Greg asks him to be friends again.

The author uses imagery quite literally, as he includes illustrations all throughout Greg's diary entries. Greg describes his situations when illustrates them as he see them. The drawings throughout the novel are important because they amplify Greg's point of view. Since "Hard Luck" is written in first person, the illustrations are essential to the reader thoroughly understanding Greg's thought processes. Without the illustrations, the reader would be left guessing Greg's facial expressions and how he perceives situations involving other people. Imagery is one of the most important literary devices used in "Hard Luck", as they are used right alongside the text to make all of Greg's points. Sometimes they are used to garner sympathy, like when Greg is describing and illustrating his family. Other times, the images are used to express his excitement, like when Greg draws his shoe options during his and his mom's shopping trip. The images drawn by the author as Greg's diary illustrations are used to guide the reader further into Greg's thought processes, his feelings, and his motives.



Quotes

I think it's important for me to keep my childhood friends so that later on someone can appreciate how far I've come.

-- Greg (March: Tuesday, week 1 paragraph Page 19, Paragraph 2)

Importance: Greg says this toward the beginning of his diary when he's starting to work through the fact that Rowley has ditched him for a girl. This quote shows how important friendship is to Greg. It is a strong value for Greg, and it is shown throughout all of *Hard Luck*. If friendship wasn't important to Greg, he wouldn't care if he had the same friends from childhood all the way up to adulthood.

For boys, things are just a lot less complicated. For example, let's say one guy breaks something that belongs to another guy, but it's totally an accident. Well, five seconds later everybody's moved and things are pretty much back to normal.

-- Greg (March: Tuesday, week 1 paragraph Page 22, Paragraph 2)

Importance: Greg's short discussion of how much easier guy friendships are than girl friendships is another indication of how much he misses Rowley. He continues to either state or demonstrate how he thinks if he and Rowley can just go back to the way things were, everything would be solved. Greg's friendship with Rowley is very important to him, no matter how Greg tries to hide it.

Ok, you KNOW things are bad when even your little brother has more friends than you.

-- Greg (March: Wednesday, week 2 paragraph Page 45, Paragraph 1)

Importance: This quote shows Greg's woe-is-me attitude that occurs throughout much of the book. Greg displays jealousy toward Rowley and his grandpa for having girlfriends, and also toward his younger brother for having a best friend when he doesn't.

But today I had a really crazy thought: I realized that if I became friends with Fregley, I could mold him into EXACTLY the type of friend I wanted.

-- Greg (March: Wednesday, week 3 paragraph Page 77, Paragraph 3)

Importance: This quote shows that Greg isn't super interested in being friends with Fregley the same way he was friends with Rowley. Greg does not indicate that he wants to spend quality time with Fregley, only that he wants Fregley to carry his school books and warn him about dog poop on their walk to school. Greg is only interested in training Fregley to meet his own needs. Greg values loyalty and friendship, but it seems he is picky about who provides that for him.

This just goes to show you that no matter how nice you are to some people, they'll turn their back on you the second they get the chance.

-- Greg (March: Friday, week 3 paragraph Page 88, Paragraph 2)



Importance: Greg's statement that people will turn their backs on you is an indication that he has trouble trusting people. Already having been ditched by his best friend Rowley for a girlfriend, Greg is then ditched by Fregley when Fregley gets popular. In this statement, Greg implies a basic belief that people will let you down. It is likely temporary and a result of his situation with Rowley, but at this point in the book, the sentiment is a reality for Greg.

This all just goes to show that some people have no taste when it comes to art.
-- Greg (March: Wednesday, week 3 paragraph Page 108, Paragraph 1)

Importance: When Greg says this, he is upset that his little brother Manny is getting paid by relatives for what Greg considers scribbles, yet Greg's "drawings" aren't getting any attention. The quote is significant because it is another example of Greg's irritation with his current situation, as well as his jealousy over people who are having an easier time than he is.

See, THIS is what's been missing my whole life. Now that I've got something to help me make all the LITTLE decisions, I'm free to focus on the IMPORTANT stuff.
-- Greg (March: Tuesday, week 4 paragraph Page 143, Paragraph 2)

Importance: Greg's statement here concerning the Magic 8 Ball is significant because it shows the importance Greg is about to place on the object. Greg uses the Magic 8 Ball for a variety of decisions, including to answer questions on a true/false test in Social Studies. When Greg makes this statement, he recalls Albert Einstein and how Greg once learned that Albert Einstein went a period of time wearing the same clothes every day so he didn't waste his time on small decisions, he could focus on his work. Greg compares Einstein's decision of saving mental energy by wearing the same clothes, to him saving mental energy by using the Magic 8 Ball.

That taught me that even if you try your best, someone's just gonna mooch off your hard work.
-- Greg (April: Thursday, week 3 paragraph Page 189, Paragraph 3)

Importance: Greg's statement about someone mooching off your hard work is another example of Greg's woe-is-me attitude. He continues to believe that bad things happen to him and that he can't control that fact. He also believes that everyone else has better luck than he does. In this statement, Greg has just finished recalling a time when he got great grades and was rewarded with an ice cream sundae. His brother Rodrick "got in on the action", even though his grades were lousy. Greg sees the situation as unfair because he and Rodrick received the same reward, even though Greg had to work a lot harder for it.

But still, I didn't know if I wanted to get involved with a shady character like Erick. This was just the kind of decision I'd ordinarily leave up to the Magic 8 Ball, but today I was totally on my own.
-- Greg (April: Monday, week 4 paragraph Page 199, Paragraph 2)



Importance: At this point, Greg has abandoned the Magic 8 Ball because all of the blue liquid leaked out after he dropped it in Social Studies class. Now, Greg is forced to face his day-to-day decisions on his own. This statement shows that Greg is prepared to do just that. While he doesn't start out making the right decision (he thinks about buying a Science Fair project from Erick Glick), he ends up making the right decision, which is a good sign of maturity.

I'm not sure I'm ready to get involved with the Dennis Denards and Erick Glicks of the world anyway. Because once you take that first step, there's no turning back.

-- Greg (April: Monday, week 4 paragraph Page 205, Paragraph 2)

Importance: Similar to the previous quote, this one show Greg's maturity and good decision-making skills, even though he is no longer using his Magic 8 Ball. By not involving himself with students who are wrongfully selling old projects, Greg is taking responsibility for himself and his schoolwork.

The Magic 8 Ball might be good for helping out with the little decisions, but I figure the BIG ones are up to me.

-- Greg (April: Monday, week 5 paragraph Page 216, Paragraph 1)

Importance: In his last diary entry of the book, Greg makes it clear that he has grown up enough in the last couple months to make some important decisions on his own. Specifically, he is writing about Rowley and inviting Rowley to be friends with him again. Greg knows that if he wants things to go back to the way they were, he has to make the first step. It's clear that Greg is happy with his choice because in the next paragraph he says that just five seconds after picking up Rowley from the long lunch line, everything was back to normal.

I know Mom's always saying friends come and go and family is forever, and maybe that's true. But your family isn't gonna be there when Mickley Mingo chases you with his belt on your way home from school.

-- Greg (Monday: April, week 5 paragraph Page 216, Paragraphs 3-4)

Importance: One of Greg's last statements in the diary, this quote is a perfect example of how much Greg values friendship. Even though he knows Rodrick, Manny, and his parents will be in his life forever, it's Rowley that Greg wants standing by his side when the tough stuff comes along. Greg obviously sees friendship as one of the most important things in life, and the fact that he has Rowley back to help him with situations like the Mingo kids has made all the difference in Greg's world.

But Rowley had to go and get himself a girlfriend, and now I guess I'M the one who has to suffer.

-- Greg (March: Monday (week 3) paragraph Page 71, Paragraph 3)

Importance: Greg's statement that he is suffering simply because Rowley got a girlfriend is a great example of how Greg thinks everything bad is happening to him, and how he's not taking responsibility for any of his current situations. Specifically, Greg is



talking about the dog poop he got on the bottom of his shoe because he wasn't watching exactly where he was going. Since Greg used to rely on Rowley to scout ahead for dog poop, Greg had yet to learn how to scout for himself. He sees the situation as woe-is-me and takes no responsibility for stepping in the dog poop.