

# **Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Last Straw Study Guide**

**Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Last Straw by Jeff Kinney**

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# Plot Summary

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Last Straw by Jeff Kinney is the third book in the series for young readers. The diary opens with an entry dated for January. Since it is New Years, Greg figures that people should be creating resolutions lists. Since he can't think of anything that he needs to resolve for himself, he determines to help everyone else stick to or construct their own resolutions. Despite his best efforts, however, Rodrick, his older brother, refuses to make any changes (much to Greg's disappointment).

The reader meets Lenwood Heath, the neighborhood vandal, whom Greg's father detests. Greg shares that his father has called the police department fifty times over the last few years to report Lenwood. Finally, the entire situation is resolved when Greg learns that Lenwood is being sent to a military school. Greg's father decides that both Greg and Rodrick are out of shape and aren't measuring up to other kids in the neighborhood. Greg suspects that nothing good can come of this conclusion.

The next month is not much better as Greg's junk food snacks have failed to make an appearance in his lunch sack for many days. When he complains to his mother, she tells him that she has a set number of snacks to pack inside lunches. When they are all gone, they are all gone until the next grocery day. She insinuates that Greg has been sneaking into the laundry room and eating them, but Greg knows that it's most likely Rodrick.

Meanwhile, grade cards come out. Greg is not fast enough to get to the mailbox before his mother. She looks in horror at his report card to see that Greg is failing nearly every subject. Greg tells the reader that he is so tired from walking to and from school each day that he takes a long nap after school. Then, it's time for dinner. After dinner, there are great TV programs to watch.

The next day Greg falls asleep in class and is sent to detention where a bully, named Leon, torments him. However, Greg seizes upon the chance to make it look as if Leon has smacked him on the back of the head, and Leon gets several more days of detention. Meanwhile, when Greg returns home he learns that his mother has finally gone to the grocery store and restocked the snacks in the laundry room. Greg knows that it is just a matter of time before the real thief comes down to steal the snacks. Greg hides in some laundry in the hamper and waits. He falls asleep while waiting but is wakened by the sound of crinkling paper. When he springs out of the basket, he is shocked to see that the thief is his father.

Valentine's Day and the big dance arrive, and Greg is certain that this will be the perfect time to make his move on Holly Hills. However, when he gets up the nerve to go speak to her, Fregley, a nerdy kid that lives in Greg's neighborhood ruins his chance.

Greg's father has finally come to the conclusion that his children don't measure up and as a result he's taken it upon himself to enroll Rodrick in an SAT course and Greg on a soccer team. Greg is less than thrilled. Mr. Litch is Greg's coach. For most of the first



games, Greg and two other players warm the seats. But, when a new rule is passed, Greg is forced to play. It does not go well at all.

Greg's father takes him to the movies where they run into Lenwood Heath, who doesn't even look like himself any more. Lenwood talks to Greg's father and tells him that he's not only a star athlete at the military academy but that he's pulling high grades, too. Greg's father begins to get ideas, and his ideas worry Greg. When Greg hears his father talking to his mother about the benefits of military school, Greg tells his father that he would like to be in Boy Scouts instead of soccer. Greg's father agrees.

Boy Scouts is better than soccer because Greg and Rowley are able to join the easy troop. Nearly anything the boys do, regardless of skill or proficiency, they receive a badge. Greg's father is finally somewhat proud of him, and Greg is encouraged. He asks his father if he would like to go on a father son camping trip so that Greg can show him all that he's learned in scouts. Greg's father agrees, but Greg's mother insists that they also take Rodrick.

The camping trip does not happen because it rains. All three end up staying in a hotel for the weekend. While there, Rodrick tricks Greg into coming to the door. Greg, who is only wearing his underwear, is shoved out into the hallway. Rodrick locks the door. Greg hides by the vending machines because he knows that his father will eventually go there for junk food. When his father finds him there, Greg can tell that his father is disappointed in him.

June rolls around, and Greg watches as everyone talks about how wonderful their summer is going to be. Greg knows that his is going to be horrible because military school begins in the summer. To top things off, he has to use one of his last few days of freedom to go to their neighbor's party. Greg's dad has been ducking them for a while; but, he doesn't get out of it this time. He tells Greg that he will owe him a massive favor if he can come up with a way to go home early.

At the party that evening, Greg wracks his brain trying to think of things to free himself and his father from the embarrassment of party games. As he's thinking about it, he views Manny, who has made his way over to the gift table and has opened one of the gifts. Greg watches in horror as the gift Manny has pulled out of the box is none other than a blue blanket like the one that Manny was made to give up. Greg knows that things are going to become complicated really soon. He attempts to get the blanket away, but Manny throws it over the railing. Greg tries to reach it, climbs out on a limb, then ends up, upside down, with his pants pulled down to his ankles. Greg's father helps him get down and thanks him all the way home. The next day Greg's father tells him that he doesn't have to go to military school after all.

# January

## Summary

The first chapter of the book is Greg's diary entry from the month of January. Greg shares that since it is New Years, everyone should make their resolution list. However, he can't think of anything for himself to resolve to correct, so he is going to help others make their resolution lists. He states that he decided to do this because he witnessed his parents breaking their resolutions minutes after making them. Therefore, his New Year's resolution will be to help others stay on track. There's just one problem, Roderick. Roderick didn't make a list, but Greg is sure that he needs one badly. He will be Greg's special project.

Gregory laments that his Christmas did not go well. Since he is in middle school, the adults in his life think that he needs to only receive practical things, like laundry basketball hoops, clothes, or books. He grumbles that it is really unfair. He goes on to explain that the waves of unfairness continue to happen on the first day back to school after the holiday break. He and Rowley, his best friend, find out that their bus route has been rezoned and that from now on they will be required to walk to school. It's another unfair situation.

Gregory and Rowley barely make it to school on time. With the tons of books in their backpacks, they are sore and out of breath when they get there. Gregory tells about his father's archenemy on the street, an older kid named Lenwood Heath. He says that his father used to call the cops on Lenwood at least fifty times a year. Then, Lenwood's parents shipped him off to military school. Gregory wishes that his father would do the same with Roderick. He offers a case in point. His parents gave Roderick money to get a study guide for the SATs, but Roderick went out and got a tattoo instead.

Greg's father thinks that all of his sons are lazy, and Gregory can't deny the truth of that statement. However, he's dynamically opposed to doing anything about it. His father tells him on Saturday morning that he needs to go outside and get some exercise. Greg argues that having to walk to and from school every day with a big backpack is exercise enough. His father doesn't buy the excuse.

At first Gregory is at a loss as to what to do in the great outdoors, but then it occurs to him. The other day at school the guys had been talking about someone on YouTube who lived in China and had trained himself to jump phenomenally high. He'd done it by digging a hole approximately three feet deep. He jumped in and out of it. Then, he increased the depth ten-fold. Gregory decides that's what he needs to do, too.

Grabbing a shovel he heads to the front yard to begin digging, but his mother stops him. She tells him that it is dangerous to dig in the yard due to underground power lines. Gregory thinks it's just a bogus excuse, so he takes his shovel and goes to Rowley's



house to dig, instead. They both give up when they realize that the ground is too frozen to dig.

On Monday, Gregory talks his mother into taking him and Rowley to school in the car. However, he has her drop them off behind the school because his mother's car is plastered in embarrassing bumper stickers. Unfortunately, Greg leaves his backpack in the car. His mother returns it during fourth period, which is when Gregory has class with Holly Hills (a girl that every boy has a crush on). The fact that his mother was dressed in workout gear sincerely put him back socially about three weeks, he writes.

Walking to school is getting old, Gregory writes. He's so tired by the time he gets home that he has to take naps when he gets there. Unfortunately, his nap times are cutting into the time when he used to do his homework. Now his grades are suffering. He's been trying to fit the homework in during the commercials; but, it isn't working so well.

He writes that Mrs. Craig, one of his teachers at school, is on the warpath. Someone took the big dictionary from her desk, and she wants it back. She tells the class that she is going to step out of the room and that the culprit should return the book. There will be no questions asked. No one returns the dictionary. As a result, no one gets to go outside for break time (formerly known as recess). This is not good as Gregory has consumed two cartons of chocolate milk and could really use the break. No one is allowed to leave the room.

Alex Aruda, the class brain, is paid five dollars by the entire class to figure out who stole the dictionary. After being paid, Alex smiles and looks up from the book he's been studying out of for the state spelling bee finals. He hands them the dictionary that had been sitting in his lap all along. Everyone is furious, but they can't seem to get him to give their money back. Greg goes to put it back on the desk. About that time, in walks Mrs. Craig. She gives him 'the look'.

## Analysis

This first chapter of the book, which is an entry in the diary, covers several weeks in the life of Gregory Heffley. Gregory, who prefers the nickname Greg, is faced with the first of many themes in this section. The theme of Appearances is introduced after someone takes the dictionary from Mrs. Craig's desk. Mrs. Craig happens to step back into the classroom as Greg is placing the dictionary back on her desk. However, Greg is just trying to be helpful. Alex Aruda had the book all along and was actually paid by his classmates to hand it over.

The symbolism of the dictionary is also touched upon. It symbolizes the teacher's trust and respect, which Greg loses, albeit in error, when he tries to return the dictionary. Mrs. Craig does not believe him when he tries to tell her that it was Alex.

Next, there is the theme of Responsibility. The series of misadventures that occurs throughout the month of January indicate that Greg is still very immature. He is not willing to take on any responsibility for himself at all. He is confident that his parents will



do everything for him, such as his laundry and helping him with his homework. However, when his mother announces that he is old enough to know what to do about homework and old enough to do his own laundry, Greg reacts immaturely declaring that he won't do his own laundry because he's fine without having to do it. Then, he refuses to do his homework on the nights when there are good television shows to watch.

Greg desperately longs to be part of the 'in' crowd and is willing to do just about anything to make that happen. It becomes evident that the theme of *Fitting In* is demonstrated in this section in the way that Greg tends to view people. He does not see them as being friends, but they are more of a way to get what he wants. For example, he is interested in Holly Hills, not because she's pretty or interesting, but because she is the fourth most popular girl in school. Likewise, he treats Rowley as if he is inferior while they are at school. Then, after school they return to their normal friendship. Greg does not realize that he is using people and that this will ultimately backfire on him.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of *Fitting In*.

## Discussion Question 2

Who is Greg Heffley? What is his major problem with school?

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss the events surrounding the disappearance of the dictionary.

## Vocabulary

laundry, archenemy, academy, racket, yawning, fanatics, obvious, believable, levitate, practically, sewage, electrical, avoid, convince, ninjas



# February

## Summary

The month of February does not start out well as Gregory opens his lunch bag to find that his mother has not packed any junk food for him. No potato chips, no cookies, or sugar wafers. As a result, Gregory doesn't eat anything at all, and his energy is low the rest of the day. When he goes home, he confronts his mother, telling her that the 'no snacks' in his lunch bag is unacceptable. His mother tells him that she has a set number of snacks in the laundry room. If they are all gone, then someone must have eaten them ahead of time. Gregory says that he knows she's suggesting that he is the one that ate the snacks, but he knows who really did. It was Rodrick, his brother.

Gregory goes and hides in his room to see if he can discover what Rodrick is doing with the snacks. There is no way Gregory is going to try and make it through an entire school day, again, without his sugar fix. His mother's substitute sugar snacks are horrid. He watches as his brother calls his friend, Ward. They talk for a long time. Gregory takes the first chance he gets to bolt for the door. Getting caught in his brother's room could be hazardous to his health.

Mid-term reports cards go home, and Gregory's mother gets to the mail before Gregory. She's waiting for him when he gets home from school. His mother tells him to wait until his father comes home. Gregory decides to preempt the lecture he will get from his father and invites his Grandmother over for dinner. His father won't say anything to him while his Gran is there. However, the plan is almost foiled when, after dinner, Gran says that she's going to go to the bingo hall. Gregory volunteers to go with her, figuring that with his Gran's winning streak he could earn enough money to buy his snacks from the vending machines at school.

The old ladies at the bingo hall take their game seriously and do not like it that a kid is winning. Gregory feels intimidated by the stares that he seems to be getting. He loses the rest of the evening and goes home where his father has saved the lecture for him. Despondent, he goes over to Rowley's and digs up a time capsule that they buried the week before, takes the three dollars out of it, then goes to the convenience store and buys some snacks.

The snacks don't help him stay awake at school. As a result, he gets sent to detention. When he walks into detention, he is upset that he's being placed in the room with all of the future criminals of the world. Gregory ends up sitting in front of a boy named Leon Rickett, a notorious bully. Leon is in rare form this afternoon as when Mr. Ray, the teacher, looks away, Leon flicks Gregory's ear. Or, worse yet, gives him a Wet Willie. Luckily, the torture ends when Leon gets sloppy and Mr. Ray catches him with his finger, knuckle deep, in Gregory's ear.





Mr. Ray tells Leon that one more infraction and he will be in big trouble. Seizing on the opportunity, Gregory waits until Mr. Ray's back is turned and claps his hand together. As soon as Mr. Ray turns around, Gregory acts as if Leon has slapped him. Mr. Ray gives Leon another day of detention. Gregory is satisfied.

Gregory's mother goes to the grocery and restocks the snacks, which guarantees that the snack thief will strike that night. Gregory crawls into a laundry basket in the laundry room and waits for the culprit to make an appearance. It is warm and toasty in there. Gregory falls asleep. He is awakened by the sound of cellophane crinkling. He springs out of the basket to catch his father red-handed. He starts to have words with his father, but the two of them hear Gregory's mother coming down the stairs. They both grab as many snacks as they can and run.

The big day for the Valentine's Day dance at school arrives. Greg is determined to get Holly Hills to notice him. He's not going to let last year's Valentine's Day cast a shadow over this year's dance. This year he is older and wiser, and he knows better than to hang with Rowley or Fregley at the dance. Unfortunately, when everyone goes to the dance, everyone sits in the bleachers and doesn't want to go down on the gymnasium floor to do any dancing. Greg says that it is because the music the teachers have chosen is lame. Also, the fact that the teachers are already down there dancing doesn't help either.

The principal gets on the microphone and tells all of them that participation is mandatory and will be 20% of their gym class grade. Everyone reluctantly gets out of the bleachers and stands awkwardly on the gym floor. To make it look like he's dancing Greg shakes one leg to the beat of the music and shoves his hands in his pocket. Apparently several of the guys standing near him think this is a great move for them. too. Before long it has become a new dance craze.

Suddenly, Greg spots Holly Hills near the refreshment table and goes to make his move. Before he can get to the table, Fregley shows up out of nowhere, pink icing all over his mouth, shouting 'booga booga booga'. After that, Greg doesn't even both going up to Holly. The moment is gone. He receives one Valentine card that day at home. He is excited to think of which girl might have sent it; but, when he tears it open, it is from Rowley. Greg wonders about that boy, shakes his head, and tosses it in the garbage.

## Analysis

The theme of Appearances is demonstrated a couple of times in this section. First, there is the accusation by Greg's mother. She is convinced that it is Greg who is sneaking down to the laundry room and eating the snacks. Despite his protestations to the contrary, his track record in this area is highly tarnished. Afterward, he just determines that he is going to have to catch the culprit himself. Surprisingly, even though it looks like Greg is the obvious snack thief, his father is the villain.



Then, there is the Appearance of wrongdoing that Greg, himself, perpetrates on Leon in detention. Leon has been bullying Greg and true to form, as in the previous novels, he uses his mind and his understanding of human nature to set Leon up to take a big fall. After the teacher warns Leon to leave Greg alone, Greg manages to make it look as if Leon has slapped him. Leon receives a longer detention sentence. Greg is pleased with himself, but he fails to understand that he's just done to Leon what his mother had done to him the previous day.

The theme of Responsibility is evident in the scene where Greg incriminates Leon. True, Leon is a bully and Greg needed to make him stop. However, he felt terrible when his mother accused him of taking the snacks, but he fails to make the connection when he, in turn, places Leon in the same situation. This indicates that Greg is still quite immature.

The Valentine's Day dance symbolizes, as does Holly Hills, the attainment of all of Greg's popularity dreams. Not only is Holly one of the more popular girls in school, but the Valentine's Day dance is the perfect place to make his move. He's sure he will be moving out of bachelor status very soon. Of course, this doesn't play out as Fregley interferes and Greg is embarrassed. When he returns home, he is excited to learn that he's received a Valentine's Day card in the mail. He fantasizes about which girl has sent it. His dreams are dashed when he opens it and it is from Rowley.

## Discussion Question 1

How does this section show that Greg is still immature?

## Discussion Question 2

Discuss the symbolism of the Valentine's Day Dance, Holly Hills, and the Valentine's Day card.

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Responsibility.

## Vocabulary

scraped, depressed, neighbors, weasled, bachelors, hygiene, awesome, personally, enthusiastic, exchange, scribbled, chaperones



# March

## Summary

Greg shares in his diary that Manny, his youngest brother, has been going through a rough time. First, his father took Manny's blinkies (pacifiers) away, cold turkey. Then, he inadvertently threw away Manny's threadbare blanket. Now, Greg writes, Manny is mean. Manny has developed a new word for Greg, "Ploopy." Greg isn't sure about what that means, but it can't be good.

On Easter Sunday Greg finds out just how mean Manny can be. Manny brings his chocolate Easter bunny with him in the backseat. One of the ears breaks off. Greg, unknowingly, sits on it. When they arrive at the church, there is a big brown stain on Greg's backside. There's no way he's going into church looking like he's pooped his pants. An argument ensues, and Greg's mother ends up giving him her sweater to tie around his waist. The sweater is pink. Greg doesn't know which would have been worse, the "poopy looking" pants, or wearing his mother's pink fuzzy sweater like a kilt. Holly Hills goes to the church, so it is potentially mortifying for Greg.

Luckily, he is able to slide into the pew before Holly spots him and waves. From the waist up he looks perfectly normal. Maybe the day isn't lost, he thinks. The service is very, very long; Greg is bored. Roderick picks on his scab, and Manny gets to play with all sorts of toys he's brought with him. This annoys Greg because he's sure he never was allowed toys when he was Manny's age. It seems like an opportune time to get some payback. So, Greg leans over and quietly whispers, "Ploopy." Manny starts screeching, wailing, and crying so hysterically that the family ends up having to leave early. There's no ducking from the stares that everyone gives them as they exit the church. Now, Greg knows for sure that his pink kilt has been spotted by Holly. He tries not to make eye contact as they quickly scurry from the church.

Greg shares that his father is tired of him and Roderick looking like losers in front of Mr. Warren, his father's boss. So, Greg's father has enrolled both boys in a SAT course. Greg was also forced to join Rec League soccer. Greg goes to try outs and doesn't do well. He's placed on a team with a coach named Mr. Litch, who Greg is pretty sure used to be a Marine Drill Sergeant. He tries to tell his father that the soccer thing isn't working out, but his father is adamant about him sticking it out. Greg decides he's going to have to figure out a better way to get out of the torture called soccer.

The next day at school Rowley invites him to come to his house the following weekend for a sleepover with a bunch of the guys. Greg is about to turn him down when he overhears that Holly, who lives in Rowley's neighborhood, is having a sleepover the same night. "Bingo!" thinks Greg. He quickly tells Rowley that he's all in.

The sleepover turns out to be a bust. The 'friends' that Rowley has invited are from his karate class and are all six years old at the most. Greg tries to call his mother to come



and get him, but she is out with Greg's father for the night. Greg is stranded. He tries to sneak off a couple of times to go over to Holly's house. But, he is always dragged back in by sweaty little six year olds, or Rowley, or both. Then, he ends up sleeping in the basement because little kids giggling in the dark were just the last straw.

The next day is Greg's first soccer game. He is the designated 'shag' boy, which means that he runs after the balls that go out of bounds. In other words, not a real position. Afterwards, the team goes to celebrate their win, and Greg's father sends Greg with the coach. He asks him to bring him home after the celebration. The coach agrees, but Greg wonders why no one asked him about it. His teammates pick on him, steal his food, and make him look even worse in the coach's eyes. Then, he is dropped off last for the evening. Greg hates his life.

## Analysis

The symbolism of Manny's blanket and pacifiers is featured in the beginning of this section. Manny is the baby of the family and is moving away from being an infant to being an older toddler. However, these items represent safety and security, as well as his babyhood. He is bereft without them, and Greg's father does not seem to understand the emotional toll that it will take on his youngest son when he takes them away "cold turkey." As a result, Greg writes, his brother becomes unpredictably cranky and mean.

The theme of Family is demonstrated in this chapter as the reader sees Greg's family gathering to go to church together. It also focuses on Manny and his separation anxiety from his security items. The fact that Manny throws such a tantrum in church, embarrassing Greg, continues Greg's perception of his family as a group of people bent on destroying the cool factor that he's trying to generate and maintain.

The theme of Making Parents Proud is evident in this chapter as Greg learns that his father is very disappointed in both him and Roderick. Compared to other men's sons, Greg and Roderick don't stack up. They are neither athletic or scholars. They are just average kids, average students, and average video game players. They don't aspire to greatness, just to be liked and to be cool. This does not sit well with Greg's father who is living vicariously through his sons. He wants them to embrace activities in which other fathers' sons are involved. He does not have his children's wishes in mind at all, as evidence by Greg's reaction to his father signing him up for soccer. He goes along with it because he doesn't want to disappoint his father any further. He continues to try and find ways to make his father proud of him, but he continues to fail.

Soccer, itself, becomes symbolic of the false expectations that Greg's father has for him. It also represents Greg being someone he is not in order to please his father. This will continue to be a theme for many sections to come. It is only when Greg becomes determined to be who he is and to show his father that he's worth loving just as he is that father and son are able to see one another with clearer vision.



## **Discussion Question 1**

Discuss what Manny's pacifier and blanket represent to him.

## **Discussion Question 2**

Why does Greg's father sign Greg up for soccer?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Discuss Greg's father as a character.

## **Vocabulary**

accidentally, battlefield, play set, gabbing, interrupted, tattle, chimed, alongside, generous, regret, tantrum, bawling, aisle, circumstances



# April

## Summary

Thanks to Roderick, April Fool's Day is a dreaded day for Greg. Most days Roderick can't be bothered to get out of bed early, but he makes an exception for April Fool's Day. Greg writes in his diary that most of Roderick's tricks end with injury. Greg is glad when April Fool's Day passes fairly uneventfully except that he is shot in the rear with a paintball gun by Roderick. It could be worse, he writes.

There is another soccer game that night, but one of the adults volunteers to be the shag, so Greg sits on the bench. It is very cold, and he asks his dad if he can go to the car and get his coat. His father tells him no because he needs to be ready in case the coach wants to put him in the game. Greg knows that this is never going to happen.

Greg writes that he has come to realize that he needs to keep up with his laundry. He's officially tired of turning underwear inside out and front to back. Now, he shares, it's gotten so bad that he is wearing his swim trunks as underwear, which is not good. What's worse is that Greg forgets that he has them on when he goes to the locker room to change for gym. So, he ends up flashing everyone. This is the last straw, and he decides that doing laundry isn't so bad after all.

The next soccer game goes well because Greg and two other bench warmers named Manuel and Mackey bring their video games to play. But, before they can get through one level, the coach unbelievably calls all three of them to come onto the field to play. Greg is sure the coach must be joking. He isn't. Some parent complained that not all of the kids were getting equal playing time; so, the League passed a rule stating that everyone must play a few minutes each game. The three of them line up in front of the goal. When the other team runs to kick it, the ball heads straight for Greg's face. He dodges, and the other team scores. The coach pulls all three of them back out of the game again. Greg is totally fine with that and vows that if it comes down to being yelled at by the coach or taking a soccer ball to the face, he'll take the screaming any time.

The next practice, Greg thinks he has hit upon a glorious plan. He asks the coach to make him the backup goalie. The coach agrees. Greg doesn't have to run laps. Tucker Fox, the star goalie, plays the entire game most of the time. Life is good until Tucker breaks his hand and Greg has to stand in. The first game goes well as the ball never comes down on his end of the field. During the second game, Greg fails to block a goal, and the team's first loss is handed to them. They lost because Greg was away from the goal picking flowers. The local newspaper caught Greg in the act, and it was published in the paper that week. Greg's dad is humiliated.

Greg's dad takes Roderick and Greg to the movies the next day. They run into Lenwood Heath, who is a ticket taker at the theater. Greg's father asks him what he is up to, and Lenwood tells him that military school made a better man out of him. He says he's



getting great grades and is working hard to get into West Point. Greg has a sinking feeling that his father is getting ideas.

His suspicions are confirmed when his father spends the weekend looking up the military academy that Lenwood attends. He tells Greg that he is going to enroll him. Greg is terrified. He hopes to nip it in the bud and tells his father and mother that he wants to join the boy scouts. This works on two levels. First, they have a uniform, so his mother's requirement will have been met. Secondly, the boy scouts meet at the same time as soccer practice. That means that he would have to quit soccer. His dad agrees with the switch.

## Analysis

This section focuses exclusively on the theme of Making Parents Proud. Greg hates that his father is disappointed in him and tries to play soccer, even though he hates it with a passion. The one time that he does get a chance to play, he blows it. His father's assumptions about Greg have been proven true by the newspaper picture. Also, the coach and the rest of the team hate Greg.

Greg decides that he needs to come up with a plan to get out of soccer, but he needs to make it look like his father's idea. When he mentions the Boy Scouts his father jumps on the idea. This also fits into the image that his father wants Greg to project. After only one week, Greg and Rowley (who also joined Boy Scouts) have gotten their first merit badge. Greg enjoys the first glimmer of parental pride that he's experienced in a long while.

The trip to the movie theater proves to be a bad outing for Greg. His father runs into Lenwood Heath, a former neighborhood hoodlum, now turned super athlete and scholar. Greg's father takes one look at Lenwood, and Greg can see the wheels turning in his father's head. It isn't very long after that when Greg learns that his father is considering sending him away to military school. Any aspirations that Greg had of impressing his father or making him proud seem to vanish. However, Greg suspects that if he can show his father that he is macho and manly his father might not send him away. He is determined to learn all he can in Boy Scouts. Then, he'll impress his father by taking him on a camping trip, just the two of them. With this goal in mind, Greg satisfies himself with trying to pull his grades at school out of the tank.

## Discussion Question 1

Why is Greg's father so hard on him?

## Discussion Question 2

What does Greg's father think will happen if he sends Greg to military school?



## Discussion Question 3

What is Greg determined to do to impress his father?

## Vocabulary

convinced, practical, shag, volunteered, invisible, bench warmers, firsthand, speedo, wrapper, complained





# May

## Summary

As Greg begins writing in his diary for the month of May, he is hoping to get into Boy Scout Troop 133 because they do cool things and a lot of the cool kids are in it. The last troop that he wants to be a part of is Troop 24 because they are always doing outdoor service projects, and that is not for Greg. He does get into Troop 133, and Rowley joins him. It is very easy, and Mr. Barrett is an even easier instructor. By the end of the first week, Greg and Rowley have their whittling merit badge, even though they really only whittled soap.

Greg asks his father if he wants to go on a father-son camping outing. At first, Greg's dad isn't too keen on the idea; but, Greg's mother makes them go and take Roderick, too. Greg is confused by how things seem to simply go sideways out of his control in an instant. The next day all three pile into the car to go camping.

It rains. It rains a lot, and Greg's father decides that, rather than trying to set up the tent in the rain, they will stay in a hotel until it clears up. Roderick and Greg are in the hotel room alone while Greg's father goes downstairs to talk to management about the loud heater in their room. Roderick convinces Greg that Holly Hills and her family are staying across the hall from them. Greg rushes to the door, dressed only in his underwear. Roderick opens the door and shoves Greg outside, then locks the door.

Greg pounds on the door but realizes that this is drawing a lot of attention to him. He scurries off to look for his father. On his way down to the front desk, he realizes that the front desk is where everyone goes and that he'll be embarrassed even worse. He decides to go back to the room and keep pounding on the door. Unfortunately, he's forgotten the number of their room. Panicked, he goes to the vending machines, knowing that his father will come there to get a snack, eventually. When his father finally does show up to get a candy bar, there is Greg wedged between the drinks and the snacks. Greg says the look on his father's face made Greg wish he'd just gone to the front desk.

After returning from their washed out weekend, Greg knows that his bid to talk his father out of military school has been blown. He decides to make his peace with it. His first order of business is to speak to Holly Hills. He figures that he no longer has anything to lose. Greg decides he will approach her at church, since the competition is less there. He shakes her hand during the meet and greet time. This is step one of his plan. Step two involves him calling her to talk to her.

Step two goes haywire when he finally gets up the nerve to call her and Greg's mother picks up the extension in the other room. Holly's mother picks up, and Greg's mother is confused as to who is on the other end. When they realize who it is, they start a



conversation. Sighing, Greg hangs up on his end. He thinks that speaking with Holly just wasn't meant to be.

He gets another chance when he overhears Holly telling her friends to meet her at the roller rink that afternoon. Greg invites Rowley to go so that he will have a ride home, but he regrets inviting Rowley when he sees how Rowley is dressed with sparkly lip gloss, a cosmic collider costume, and spiky red hair. To make matters worse, Greg has lost his contact lens. He's forced to wear his very thick, very ugly back up glasses.

They get to the rink, and a couples skate is called. Holly is sitting by herself, and Greg thinks that this is his chance. He doesn't skate very well, but he manages to make it over to her in time. But, before he can get a word out, she asks if his name is Fregley. Greg is so upset that he just shakes his head and hangs out in the arcade the rest of the night. As they head back home, Greg tells Rowley that he's swearing off girls and welcomes military school.

## Analysis

In this section everything comes to a climax for Greg. His plans to impress his father, get the popular girl, and stay out of military school all come to a crashing halt. The theme of Making Parents Proud is featured in this section, as well. Greg has asked his father to go on the camping trip because he wants to show his father that he is capable of being 'macho' and 'manly' just like the other father's kids. He's found that he actually likes the wilderness survival lessons and is anxious to show off to his father what he's learned. Unfortunately, Greg's mother throws a wrench into the plans by insisting that Roderick be included.

Then, it rains. Greg does not have the chance to show off his wilderness and camping skills. To make matters worse, Roderick locks him outside of the hotel room in nothing but his underwear. When his father finally finds him huddled by the vending machines, Greg can tell that his father's suspicions about him are utterly well founded. In Greg's mind, he is a miserable failure as a son. It is one of the low points of the book. Greg makes his peace with being sent away. It is a testament to Greg's basic nature that he decides to make the best of it and take his best shot at impressing Holly. Unfortunately, when Greg wrangles a way to get to the rollerskating rink to meet Holly, she doesn't even remember his name. Mortified, he leaves with his dreams unrealized.

Greg has a crisis of conscience at this point and starts to reassess what has brought him to this point in his life. He begins to see that it is no one's fault but his own, and the theme of Responsibility is demonstrated. He is able to track everything back to his decisions, not to do his homework or his laundry. He also acknowledges that he hasn't been the best friend to Rowley, either.

## Discussion Question 1

What were the series of events that led Greg to embrace his own responsibilities?



## Discussion Question 2

What does Greg realize after Holly doesn't even know his name?

## Discussion Question 3

What gives Greg the courage to decide to speak with Holly one last time?

## Vocabulary

announced, congratulations, horsing, berserk, pry, homemade, situation, obligation, waterproof, peephole, wedged, officially



# June

## Summary

June has arrived. It is the last day of school, and everyone is extremely happy, except Greg. Military school starts on June 7th. While everyone else is going to be enjoying their summer vacation, he's going to be marching in the hot sun. Greg is miserable. The kids at school all pass around their yearbooks to get people to sign. Greg participates, but he isn't expecting much. However, when he opens his book, Holly Hills has signed his yearbook. She's told him to keep in touch. Greg is elated, thinking that maybe he had it all wrong. He excitedly shows Rowley, but then he sobers when he reads what she wrote in Rowley's book. It is much nicer and more personal. It indicates that she knows Rowley better than Greg. Greg is, once again, done with girls.

When he goes home, all of his family are obligated to attend the Snella family's birthday party for one of their children. They always play embarrassing and lame games. They expect everyone, even the adults, to take part. Greg thinks that this is a great way to spend his last day of freedom. A very embarrassing game is announced, and Greg can tell that his father wants nothing to do with it. His father confirms this suspicion when he tells Greg that if he can get him out of having to do it, he'll owe him big time. Greg frantically looks around for some excuse. Then, he sees it--Manny!

No one has been watching the toddler, and he's helped himself to the table full of gifts. He's located the gift that they brought from home and has unwrapped it entirely. What is inside of the box is the big problem, however. It is a baby blanket that looks identical to the one that Greg's father threw away. Greg knows that things are about to become quite complicated.

Greg walks over to Manny and tells him that he needs to put the blanket back, that it isn't his. Manny drops it over the railing, and it lands one floor down, snagged on a bush. Greg goes over the railing, holding onto a nearby tree. This works well until he loses his footing and slides half way down the tree. He goes upside down, and his pants snag on the tree limb. Unfortunately, he's wearing an old hand-me-down pair from his brother, and they slide right off of him, exposing him in the only clean underwear he has at the moment. It's his Wonder Woman underwear. Screaming and yelling, his father comes to the rescue, and the two of them 'have' to go home. Greg knows that his father thinks he did it on purpose to get him out of the game; but, in reality, it was just dumb luck and clumsiness.

The next day Greg dejectedly goes downstairs to have one last breakfast at home before leaving for military school. But, to his surprise, his father is calmly reading the paper and having coffee. He looks up at Greg and tells him that if Greg will just do a few push-ups now and again, they can forego the summer conditioning program at the academy. Greg is so excited that he rushes off to Rowley's house. While they are sitting out front eating ice cream, a new girl named Trista walks by. She's a new girl in the



neighborhood and really cute. Greg remembers that Rowley is allowed to invite two friends to his country club's swimming pool. Greg envisions his very cool summer and thinks that he deserves it.

## Analysis

The theme of Fitting In is touched upon when Greg gets his yearbook back and realizes that despite his best efforts, Holly has written something more personal and special in Rowley's yearbook than in his. He accepts it and decides that he might as well go to military school. Though it is clear that he hasn't learned the complete lesson about conformity, he has begun to realize that trying to be someone that you are not doesn't work.

The theme of Responsibility and Family are touched upon when the Heffley family goes to the Snella family's birthday party. Everyone is so busy mingling with the hosts that no one bothers to keep an eye on Manny. It is Greg who notices what is going on and realizes that things could go badly very soon. He makes his way over to the gift table in an attempt to diffuse the situation. In the meanwhile, his father tells him that if he can do anything to get him out of playing the party games he will owe him a favor. Greg wants to help his father out, but he doesn't really know how. All of the scenarios that run through his mind end badly.

Just at that moment, his attempts to dissuade Manny from the blanket and his father's request come together, enabling Greg to manage both. Though his father thinks, in the end, that Greg manufactured the entire event, the truth is that Greg was just being himself. The lesson about being who you are finally rings true for Greg, as does his adjustment to the parental pride issue. When he is true to himself and acts from a place of compassion, thinking of others rather than himself, then things go his way.

This rings true when Greg is told the next morning that he will not be going to military school. Then, later that same day, he meets a cute girl who has just moved into the neighborhood. With the new girl and Rowley, he can be himself. Both of them think that this is just fine.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Responsibility.

## Discussion Question 2

How does the relationship between Greg and his father improve?



## Discussion Question 3

Discuss how the yearbook incident taught Greg a lesson.

## Vocabulary

ridiculous, ditched, admission, squirm, complicated, chucked, attention, humiliating, faked, conditioning, clueless, popsicles, deserves, corny



# Characters

## Gregory Heffley

Gregory (Greg) Heffley is the protagonist of the story. He's in middle school (7th grade). He struggles with fitting in, looking cool, and meeting girls. Unfortunately, he's not very good at any of it, which causes him to spend a great deal of time trying to figure out what he's done wrong.

A large part of Greg's problems, or so he supposes, comes from his choice of long time friends. Rowley has been his friend since they were babies. Despite how embarrassing Rowley is at times, Greg doesn't want to give him up. Greg acts as if he only keeps Rowley around because of Rowley's connections and money; but, in reality, he really likes Rowley.

Gregory lives with his mother, father, and brothers Roderick (older) and Manny (younger). Most of Greg's problems at home stem from his continued sibling rivalry with his Roderick. Roderick is in high school and picks on Greg constantly. Manny, who is a toddler, garners all of the attention from their parents, upsetting Greg and making him feel as if he is overlooked a great deal of the time.

In this book, the third in the series, Greg has a crush on a girl named Holly Hills, but every time he gets a chance to speak with her or to be where she is going to be, something horrid happens to make the meeting less than flattering for Greg. At the end of the story, Greg has met another girl who seems nicer than Holly.

## Roderick

Roderick is Greg's brother. He's in high school and spends a good deal of his time sleeping or torturing Greg. He particularly enjoys playing pranks on his brother that make his brother look bad in front of their parents or Greg's friends. Roderick loves to play practical jokes, though they almost always result in Greg being injured in some way. Roderick is also irresponsible in that he took money that was given to him for SAT courses and purchased a tattoo instead.

## Manny

Manny is Greg's younger brother. Manny is being weaned off of all of his comfort items, such as his pacifiers and security blankets. With all of these gone, Manny becomes aggressive, especially towards Greg, whom he calls "Ploopy." Manny is spoiled and often chooses the most inopportune moments to scream and throw a tantrum.



## Mr. Heffley

Greg's father, who is left unnamed in this series, is shown to be a nice man, who is constantly embarrassed by his sons. Compared to the sons of his boss and neighbors, his sons aren't athletic, outgoing, or good students. He decides that he's going to send Greg to a military school because it will make Greg a better student and give him some physical skills.

Greg's father is embarrassed by Greg's antics on the soccer field and regrets that Greg joined the Boy Scouts as well. He is a junk food junkie, something that actually ends up working in Greg's favor when his father comes to the vending machines at the hotel and finds Greg there.

## Mrs. Heffley

Mrs. Heffley is Greg's mother. She decides to join a gym and get in shape for her New Year's resolution. She doesn't end up keeping that resolution long.

## Rowley

Rowley is Greg's best friend. He is rather overweight and, like Greg, is very into playing video games. He's a non-conforming middle school student. He is constantly, albeit innocently, embarrassing Greg by the way he dresses and acts.

Rowley's family are fairly well off as they have a country club membership, send Rowley to many after school activities, and often have many kids stay over at their very large house for sleepovers. Rowley is very loyal to Greg. He sticks up for Greg, even when Greg has been less than nice to him.

## Lenwood Heath

Lenwood is a kid that used to live in Greg's neighborhood until his family sent him away to military school. Greg's father had called the police on Lenwood at least fifty times over the past few years. Military school changes Lenwood for the better, giving Greg's father ideas about military school.

## Holly Hills

Holly is a girl in Greg's class that he likes. She doesn't even know his name, mistaking him for Fregley. At the end of the book, despite his best attempts, Holly is still indifferent. This causes Greg to consider swearing off girls permanently.





## **Fregley**

Fregley is a boy that lives in Greg's neighborhood. He and Rowley have known him forever, too. Unfortunately, Greg has never really liked him because he is awkward, gross, and acts in unpredictable ways.

## **Mr. Litch**

Mr. Litch is Greg's soccer coach. He doesn't care for Greg very much since Greg is such a poor player. When he is forced to let everyone play, it is evident that he is only complying with the rules. He takes Greg out as soon as he can.

## **Mr. Barrett**

Mr. Barrett is the name of Greg's Boy Scout troop leader. He lets both Rowley and Greg get away with anything during meetings and gives them merit badges for substandard work.

## **Mrs. Craig**

Mrs. Craig is the name of Greg's teacher. She becomes upset when someone takes her big dictionary from her desk. She puts the classroom into lock down until it is returned.

## **Alex Aruda**

Alex is the class genius. He is the one that took Mrs. Craig's dictionary so that he could study for the area wide spelling bee.

## **Tucker Fox**

He is the star goalie for Greg's soccer team. When he is injured, Greg fills in for him. It is a disaster.

## **Leon**

Leon is a bully in detention that picks on Greg. Greg teaches him a lesson when he makes it look as if Leon is doing something that he wasn't and Leon gets two extra days added to his detention.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Diary

The diary, itself, represents Greg's innermost thoughts. It is through the diary that the reader sees the insecurities, naive thoughts, and assumptions that Greg makes about people, his family, and life in general.

## Valentine's Day Card

Each year Greg makes Valentine cards for everyone in the class. He'd hoped that when he went to middle school this would be a practice that would go by the wayside. Unfortunately, it didn't. When he has to create a card for everyone, he decides to write Valentine cards that are sincere and truthful, even if they are hurtful. In an ironic turn of events, he only receives one card in his mailbox at home. It isn't from a girl.

## The blanket 'Tingy'

Manny has a tattered and threadbare security blanket named Tingy. It is mistakenly thrown away by the father. This represents Manny moving away from being an infant.

## Snella Parties

The neighbors next door, the Snellas, throw birthday parties and half birthday parties hoping that they will film adults or children doing something funny and they can send it to America's Funniest Home Videos and make ten thousand dollars. These Snella parties represent an obstacle and an embarrassment to Greg's father, who has been trying to find a way to get out of them for years.

## Dictionary

Mrs. Craig's dictionary is on her desk. When it goes missing she accuses the students of stealing it, when in reality a very bright student took it to study for the spelling bee. The missing dictionary represent a false appearance that often leads to a false accusation.

## Snacks

To Greg, the sugary snacks that he has in his lunch bag each day help him have the energy to complete a school day. Without them, he is lost. When he finds out that someone else has been taking the snacks at his home, he is upset and vows to find



who has been taking them all. He finds out that his father has been sneaking down and eating them after everyone goes to bed. The snacks represent Greg's view of his father shifting. His father now has a weakness.

## Holly Hills

Holly is a character in the book, but she is also a symbol as well. She represents the unobtainable for Greg. She is the idealized version of the perfect girl. More than that, she is part of the popular and cool group that Greg is determined to be a part of.

## Military School

Lenwood Heath, a neighborhood hoodlum, was sent to military school. It changed him for the better. For Greg, however, military school is viewed as a separation from his family and a violation of his freedom and personal rights.

## Laundry

In February Greg's mother declares that everyone, except Manny, is old enough to start doing their own laundry. Greg refuses to do his own laundry for many weeks, believing that he can get by without doing it. However, eventually, even he caves in and does his laundry. Thus, the laundry represents responsibility and maturity, which are concepts that he'd rather not have to deal with or acknowledge.

## Soccer

Soccer represents the image Greg's father has of him, but it not who Greg sees himself as being. When Greg's father allows him to quit soccer, it is a step closer to seeing his son for who he is instead of who his father wants him to be.



# Settings

## Heffley House

This is Greg's home where a majority of the action takes place. It is a two story suburban type home with a basement. Greg and his two brothers all have their own rooms. It is set in a nice neighborhood where everyone knows everyone else. They have block parties and frequently visit with other neighbors for the evening.

## School

Greg attends a middle school in the area. This is where another large portion of the book takes place. The reader sees Greg as he tries to fit in and act cool in front of his peers.

## Roller Rink

Greg goes to the roller rink hoping to skate with Holly Hills, his crush. It turns out badly as Greg doesn't skate well, and Holly doesn't even remember who he is.

## Church

Greg and his family attend a local church. Greg doesn't mind going since Holly attends as well. He uses the church as a chance to speak with her, but it doesn't end up well when he accidentally sits on some chocolate before coming into the church.

## Hotel

Greg, Roderick, and their father go on a camping trip, but it is rained out. They stay in a hotel for the weekend, instead. Greg is embarrassed by Roderick, who shoves him out into the hall wearing only his underwear.



# Themes and Motifs

## Fitting In

A major theme that runs through most of the Wimpy Kid series is the need for most of the characters to fit in. Sticking out or acting like an individual is something that none of them want at this juncture because it invites ridicule, alienation, and bullying.

Greg tries many things to try and fit in at school. First, he fixates on Holly Hills because she is one of the most popular girls. Greg thinks that by going with her he will be vaulted into the cool group. The trouble with this is that she doesn't know who he is and barely acknowledges his presence.

Greg also tries to fit in by wearing the same type of clothing as everyone else. On a daily basis he worries that he doesn't have the right shirt, pants, or shoes, and often complains to his parents that they are the cause of his lack of popularity at school.

Later, when school is out for the summer and Greg is acting like himself with Rowley, a new girl from the neighborhood comes by. She is cute and seems like she would be a popular girl. She likes Greg for who he is. It is then that he realizes that maybe being a 'little bit' like yourself is important, too.

## Making Parents Proud

Throughout the novel, Greg tries to make his parents, especially his father, proud of him. This is touched off by his father comparing him and Roderick to a neighbor's children, who are big athletes. Neither Roderick or Greg is athletically inclined. However, Greg is willing to try soccer when his father signs him up because he wants his father to be proud. However, this fails miserably when a local reporter takes a picture of Greg picking flowers when a goal is being scored.

Later, when Greg, Roderick, and Greg's father go on a camping trip, Greg hopes to show his father all of the cool Boy Scout camping lessons that he has learned. He wants to show his father that he's as manly as the neighbor's boys. This is ruined when it rains and Roderick shoves Greg out into the hall of the hotel.

Greg's parents are also upset at his grades. He sleeps after school, then refuses to do his homework in the evenings because it will cut into his TV time. Greg wants to do his homework and please his parents, but he wants to please himself as well. He hates it when his parents give him that disappointed look.

Finally, in an odd and unexpected way, Greg earns his father's esteem by getting his father out of playing an embarrassing party game at the neighbor's house. Though it was completely random on Greg's part, he's glad that his father is proud of his quick thinking.



## Responsibility

Throughout the novel there are references to responsibility. One of the first instances is when Greg's mother decides that everyone needs to do their own laundry. Greg refuses to accept that his mother will no longer be picking up after him and refuses to do his laundry.

Greg's lack of responsibility causes him to suffer. Several times he is faced with the very real fact that he has no clean clothes to wear. He finds himself digging into his dirty clothes to decide which of them might suffice. Finally, he can no longer avoid doing his laundry. He takes responsibility for himself and his actions.

It is when Greg begins to take responsibility for his laundry that other responsibility issues arise to be dealt with. All along he has refused to put his attention on his homework, choosing to watch television instead. As a result his grades plummeted and his parents were embarrassed and disappointed. Greg does not like how that feels. Toward the end of the novel, he starts doing his homework after school like he used to do.

Greg also realizes, when his parents talk about sending him to military school, that he has so disappointed his family that they are worried about him. He knows that he can be a better human being. He begins to find ways to demonstrate his maturity.

His parents don't see the last great act of maturity. While at the Snella's half birthday party, Greg sees that Manny has ripped open one of the presents to reveal a security blanket just like the one that was taken from him at the house. Greg knows that things are going to get ugly. So, he goes over and takes care of the problem without interrupting the party or his parents (except to give his father an excuse to leave).

## Family

Greg has a loving family, even if his brother Roderick tests that theory on occasion. Like most middle- school kids, Greg views his family as an embarrassing irritation. He constantly views their concerns and their nagging as stemming from a place of their complete lack of intelligence about the situation. In other words, they are too old to get it.

Greg's family dynamic seems to suggest that he's closer to his father than his mother. He wants to be closer to his father because they share some similarities, Greg discovers. They both have a big sweet tooth and crave junk food. When Greg and his father catch each other with the snacks in the laundry room, neither of them turns the other in. Instead, they grab the snacks and run.

Another statement about family is made in regards to the Snella family. This is a family that celebrates half birthdays as well as birthdays. Birthdays are not the main reason for the parties. The main reason is to capture on video adults acting silly. The videos are



sent to a television show where the winning video can win thousands of dollars. Greg sees and understands the hypocritical nature of this and develops some appreciation for his own family, who only celebrate real birthdays and don't film it.

In the end, Greg is often annoyed by his family; but, he understands that as families come, his isn't so bad. He often wishes that they had more money so that he could have more things (because he still thinks that this will make him popular). However, when it comes down to it, he very much loves his mother and father, and even Roderick and Manny.

## Appearances

In the novel there are many examples of appearances leading to wrong accusations. For example, Greg appears to be the obvious snack thief when his mother notices that all of the counted snacks for the week are missing before scheduled grocery trips. Since Greg loves to eat and he's always the one who is trying to wheedle more snacks from his mom, she accuses Greg. Greg decides to catch the culprit. It turns out that the culprit is Greg's dad!

Another instance where appearances cause a false accusation happens when Alex (an aspiring spelling bee champ) takes the dictionary from Mrs. Craig's desk and doesn't return it. When Mrs. Craig steps out of the classroom, the class finds out that Alex is responsible only after he makes the students pay him a "ransom." Greg gets the book from Alex. He is in the process of putting it back on Mrs. Craig's desk, when she walks in. She doesn't listen to Greg's explanation. As a result, he goes to detention.

While he is in detention Greg turns the tables on a bully who keeps flicking his ear and giving him wet willies. After the teacher warns the bully, Greg smacks his hands together making it seem as if the bully has just smacked him. The bully gets two more days as a result.

Later, Greg creates what he calls 'true' Valentine's Day cards which are distributed to everyone in class. He does not sign them and makes sure to give himself one as well to disguise the fact that he created them. The teacher singles out another student as the culprit.

When Greg's father accuses Greg of not living up to expectations, it really hurts Greg's feelings. He knows his father wants him to be a certain way, but trying to be that way just isn't Greg, no matter how much he tries. It isn't that Greg is unintelligent or uncaring, but is more a matter of maturity and priorities. Once Greg gains some perspective, his father begins to see him differently.

# Styles

## Point of View

The Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Last Straw features Greg Heffley as he struggles to deal with middle school. It is told from his point of view, first person, limited view. The entire book is written as a diary entry. Therefore, it recounts Greg's innermost thoughts and actions that occur during the school year.

## Language and Meaning

Most of the vocabulary in the book is easily accessible for a reluctant reader. The Lexile places it at about the 5th grade level. Language is kept simple and conversational as the book is supposed to be the written diary of an 8th grader.

## Structure

The book does not have chapters. It is divided according to months: January through June. Each section spans the four weeks or so within the month and details the events that were of importance to Greg during that time. It is written in first person, present tense. It follows a linear progression with a few flashbacks along the way. Illustrations, doodle-like in nature, are used throughout the book.





## Quotes

Now if it's one thing I know about Rowley's parents, it's that they NEVER like my ideas."  
-- Greg (January)

**Importance:** This shows how close Greg and Rowley are and that Greg is often the one that comes up with the ideas for what the boys will do. Often this ends up not being the best or the safest thing. In this instance, Greg wants to dig a hole so that they can practice jumping in and out of it, in order to increase their vertical jump.

I'm sure that mom thinks that I'm the one stealing the snacks, but believe me, I already learned my lesson from doing THAT.  
-- Greg (February)

**Importance:** This is when the snacks begin to disappear and Greg's mother thinks that he's the thief. However, the culprit is Greg's father. This demonstrates the theme of Appearances.

Man, waiting for Dad to come home when you're in trouble is the worst."  
-- Greg (February)

**Importance:** Greg is in trouble for his report card being so bad. He has been too tired from walking to school to study in the evening, and he refuses to give up his TV time to do it. He knows that his father is going to be very upset.

Me and Rowley are both bachelors at the moment, but that's not going to stop us from arriving in style.  
-- Greg (February)

**Importance:** Greg envisions arriving at the Valentine's Day dance looking suave and cool. Of course, when he learns how much a limosine costs, he opts for Rowley's parents' car.

The other day Dad found Manny's blanket, Tingy, on the couch. I don't think Dad knew what it was, so he threw it away.  
-- Greg (March)

**Importance:** Greg's father is often clueless when it comes to his children's day to day habits. As a result, he is often the cause of the upset that occurs in the family. This event, throwing the blanket away, comes back to haunt everyone when Manny seizes another blanket that looks like his at a party.

I knew that Holly Hills and her family were probably already there, and I really didn't need her wondering if I'd pooped in my pants.  
-- Greg (March)



**Importance:** This happened on Easter Sunday. Greg had dressed to impress Holly. However, with a big chocolate stain on his rear end, he's embarrassed to go into the church.

I tried my best, but I got ranked 'Pre-Alpha Minus,' which I'm sure is just adult code words for 'You Stink'.

-- Greg (March)

**Importance:** Greg tries out for the soccer team at his father's insistence. Greg has no interest in soccer, and it shows by his lack of ability or energy during tryouts.

Every other day of the year, you couldn't DRAG Roderick out of bed before 8:00am. But on April 1st Roderick always wakes up early so he can get his licks in.

-- Greg (April)

**Importance:** This shows the dynamic between the two brothers and that Roderick goes out of his way to torment his brother. Roderick's pranks are not intentionally mean, but playful. However, Greg always gets the worst end of it.

Dad seemed REALLY impressed with Lenwood's new look, and the two of them struck up a conversation."

-- Greg (April)

**Importance:** Greg's father gets the idea for military school after they run into Lenwood at the movies. Before leaving for military school, Lenwood had been a thorn in Greg's father's side. After seeing the improvement in Lenwood's looks and personality, Greg's father is very impressed. He decides that military school is a good place for Greg to learn responsibility.

I was pretty surprised with how easy it was to impress Dad with that one little merit badge, so I figured a whole WEEKEND of him seeing me do macho stuff would totally blow him away.

-- Greg (May)

**Importance:** This is Greg's attempt to prove to his father that he's manly enough without having to go to military school.

Roderick locked the door behind me, and I was stuck in the hallway wearing nothing by my tighty whities."

-- Greg (May)

**Importance:** This shows the level of degradation that Roderick puts Greg through on a regular basis. It also shows how gullible and naive Greg still is.

It looks like things are finally going my way, and you know, it's about time. I don't know anyone who deserves to catch a break more than me, because like I said before, I'm pretty much one of the best people I know.



-- Greg (June)

**Importance:** Greg says this after he's learned that his father is not going to send him to military school and he's just met a cute girl that has moved into the neighborhood. He closes the book feeling optimistic about his summer.