

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Long Haul Study Guide

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Long Haul by Jeff Kinney

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Long Haul Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Section 1: Pages 1 – 45.....	5
Section 2: Pages 46 – 91.....	7
Section 3: Pages 92 – 137.....	9
Section 4: Pages 138 – 187.....	12
Section 5: Pages 190 – 217.....	14
Characters.....	16
Symbols and Symbolism.....	19
Settings.....	21
Themes and Motifs.....	23
Styles.....	27
Quotes.....	28



Plot Summary

“Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Long Haul” is a young adult novel by Jeff Kinney which recounts the misadventure-prone summer road trip of Greg Heffley and his family. “The Long Haul” is the ninth installment in Kinney’s “Wimpy Kid” series. When the novel begins, summer vacation has just gotten underway. Greg looks forward to a long summer of relaxing and doing nothing important. But his mother, Sue, after reading an article about family vacations in Family Frolic Magazine, decides the family will go on such a vacation.

Sue determines they will use the Family Frolic article as a guide to their own vacation. Greg, his father Frank, and his brothers Rodrick and Manny are uncertain about the trip. The family packs up their minivan, and attaches Frank’s old boat to the back. They then get on their way. The family misses several sightseeing opportunities because Manny is napping, and they do not want to wake him up. The motel the family takes for the first night is run-down and dirty. Greg and Rodrick go to use the hot tub, but a large, hairy, bearded man and his annoying family are using it and won’t get out. Greg nicknames the family “The Beardos”. Trying to sleep, Greg later hears loud sounds outside. There, he discovers the Beardo children ramming a janitorial cart into the wall. Greg yells at them, but must rush back inside when the Beardo father comes out to yell at him.

The family next heads to the annual county fair. There, Greg narrowly avoids running into the Beardos. Manny guesses the weight of a pig at a weight-guessing contest, and wins a baby pig as a result. The baby pig causes numerous problems, from eating out of the minibar at the next hotel to scrambling around the minivan and causing Frank to swerve over to the side of the road. Frank puts his foot down and demands the pig be given up to a petting zoo. Manny is very unhappy with this. After the minivan’s sunroof breaks, rain floods everyone inside, causing Sue to declare that the family still has a chance to have a good vacation, and will stop following the Family Frolic guidelines. By taking random turns, Greg and his family end up in a small town diner with amazing apple pie. When leaving, they interrupt a funeral procession. The mourners are not happy.

Greg’s family then decides to head to the beach. Stuck on the bridge to the beach, Greg decides to feed a seagull through the sunroof, leading to the minivan being flooded with seagulls, and causing a fender-bender. The minivan must then be repaired, so Greg and his family decide to spend the next few hours at Soak Central, a crowded water amusement park. They put their personal possessions away in a locker, and then manage to find a lawn chair to put their clothes on to go swimming. Greg discovers the Beardo family has taken their chair, left their clothes on the ground – and has taken their locker key. Greg and his family have the staff open up their locker, only to discover it is empty.

Greg and his family decide enough is enough, and head home. As they head home, they discover which motel the Beardos are staying at, and sneak into the Beardos’ room to see if their personal possessions can be found. Frank is caught using the bathroom,



and throws the Beardos' keys into the bushes to have a chance at escape without being followed. The minivan's radiator breaks, and then gets a flat tire. A passing Hispanic father and son stop to help. Manny surprises everyone by speaking Spanish.

Manny directs the father and son to the petting zoo, where Frank and Susan agree to bring the baby pig back home as a pet. The boat is given to the father and son as a gift. Back at home, Frank must spend days canceling his credit cards, ordering new ones, and getting things back in order. Greg later finds out he had the locker key all along, and that the number on the key was different than the locker the staff opened up. Greg wonders whether he will tell his parents or not about the key – and if so, what story he will invent to use.

Section 1: Pages 1 – 45

Summary

Greg is looking forward to a long, relaxing summer vacation, until his mom, Susan, announces the family is going on a road trip. Greg is surprised. He does not enjoy road trips, especially after the one where they visited Aunt Loretta in the nursing home, and Aunt Loretta's roommate grabbed Greg and wouldn't let him go until she got a chocolate chip muffin. Susan gets her ideas for road trips and family activities from "Family Frolic" magazine – which always makes things look better than they turn out. Greg's mom insists the coming family road trip will be good bonding time with new experiences. When Greg's dad, Frank, gets home, he is just as surprised as the kids.

Greg's mom oversees packing. She refuses to allow the kids to bring along electronics, but Manny's plastic potty is accepted. Greg suggests renting a giant RV so everyone can have enough space, but they are too expensive. Greg's dad decides to bring along an old boat on a trailer to store extra things. He patches up a crack in the boat's hull with duct tape. Even with the extra space, the minivan is still packed, and Greg gets stuck in the very back with everything. As they drive off, Susan announces Flat Stanley, a children's book character flattened by a bulletin board, is coming along for the ride. She will take pictures of Flat Stanley in front of all the places they visit. She also announces the family will listen to Spanish learning CDs, so that the family can learn a new language.

When no one pays attention to educational activities, they switch to playing car games. One of them is "I Must Confess", where if people have done something written on the card they are given, they get a point. Greg learns interesting things as a result, such as how his mom once dyed her hair blonde, and his father had a pet chameleon as a kid. Manny falls asleep for a nap. The entire family does their best to stay quiet, since Manny freaks out if he is woken up in the middle of a nap. As a result, the family does not stop for some sightseeing opportunities.

Analysis

"Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Long Haul" is a young adult novel by Jeff Kinney which recounts the misadventure-prone summer road trip of Greg Heffley and his family. "The Long Haul" is the ninth installment in Kinney's "Wimpy Kid" series. From the start of the novel, the theme of family is readily apparent to the reader. Greg and his brothers are surprised to learn that their mother has planned a road trip for them. Greg understands that a road trip will involve travel, and his family being in a confined space for hours at a time. Greg wants to stop and stretch, but he cannot. Even Greg's father is concerned about a road trip, but Susan is unshakeable. Having seen it in Family Frolic magazine, she is determined to replicate the feature article with her family.



Also from the start of the novel, the theme of summer can be observed. Greg states very clearly early in the novel that it is summer, and summer means air conditioning and relaxation. Greg's plans for the summer, like so many kids, is to have no plans for the summer. Greg's mom, however, is determined that a part of the summer be used for a family road trip. It is not even close to Greg's idea of what the summer is supposed to be about – but he figures that perhaps if he has good reading material, the first part of the summer won't be a total waste because of the road trip.

The theme of journey begins with the journey the Heffleys set out on. In literature, journeys are often more than merely physical traveling, but lead to some greater purpose or truth about the individual on the journey. In this case, it is the entire Heffley family whose journey will come to have greater significance than mere traveling. Yet, by all appearances, the Heffleys' journey appears rather mundane and straightforward at first, as though it was merely traveling. Even Susan's explanations that the trip will be good for family bonding and for new experiences seem generic at best. From bringing along Flat Stanley to Manny's napping, nothing seems out of the ordinary. However, the reader should note that Manny's naps, and the missing of several sightseeing attractions, is an ill-omen for future events. Small mishaps lead to large mishaps. Additionally, Greg notes that attempts to do things as seen in Family Frolic have led to disasters in the past – such as the last family barbecue.

Discussion Question 1

Why do Greg, Frank, and Rodrick view the idea of a road trip apprehensively? Why are they each reluctant to go on the trip?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Susan decide that her family shall go on a road trip? Where does she get the idea? What does Greg think of where his mom got the idea? Why?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Greg's dad bring along the boat? Why does Greg's mom bring along Flat Stanley? Does Greg have an opinion on either of these things? If so, what?

Vocabulary

bluffing, postponing, authentic, winterize, socialize, practical joke, hoard, protest, alternative, skeptical, ballistic, sightseeing

Section 2: Pages 46 – 91

Summary

Greg does his best to make himself comfortable in the back of the minivan by reading the “Underpants Bandits” series, about kids who steal the underpants of famous people to put them in a museum. They are not popular with adults or teachers, and are banned from school. As the day gets late, the Rodrick is sent to pick up groceries and the family must take a dirty room at a cheap motel. At the motel, it turns out that Rodrick has not purchased anything the family can eat for dinner, so Greg is sent to a vending machine to try to find nutritious snacks. He comes back with sugar wafers and breath mints.

Greg and Rodrick go to the pool to swim, but there is no water. An obnoxious family with a hairy, bearded father takes up all the room in the hot tub, so Greg and Rodrick cannot go in. Back in the room, Greg’s parents have fallen asleep on the bed. Rodrick uses cushions from the sofa to sleep on the floor. Greg tries to sleep on some towels, but bad smells and noises keep him up most of the night. He has to go in the hallway to yell at the kids from the hot-tub, because they are ramming a janitorial cart into the wall. One of the kids tells their father on Greg, but Greg ducks in the room to avoid him. In the morning, Greg realizes the bad smells are from sleeping near Rodrick’s shoes.

The family hits the road again. Susan decides their goal for the day will be the 130th Annual Country Fair on Highway 1. On the way, Susan switches places with Greg in the back so Greg can have a break. The car in front of them on the way to the fair is driven by the noisy hot tub family, whom Greg nicknames the Beardos. The Beardo kids make faces at Greg, who does the same back. At the fair, Susan stays in the car with Manny to finish his nap, while Greg, Rodrick, and their dad head to find something to eat. Greg tries deep-fried-butter-on-a-stick, but it makes him feel sick. Greg encourages Rodrick to enter the Foulest Footwear Contest. Rodrick wins a prize for free deep-fried-butter-on-a-stick. His shoe will be sent on to the national competition. Greg narrowly avoids running into the Beardos, and seeks out his mom and Manny.

Analysis

As the journey truly gets underway, Greg – smooshed in the back of the van – does his best not only to enjoy the trip, but he summer as well. Here, the themes of journey and summer intertwine. Greg’s summer – originally intended to be relaxing and without being bothered – decides he will do some summer reading with the Underpants Bandits series. Greg figures he will do his best to relax through reading, and make the most out of the trip. But it soon becomes apparent through Susan’s use of Spanish CDs that she has underlying motives. The journey is not merely to be a trip, but something more. Susan’s insistence that her family learn something together is not merely the desire for educational improvement, but actual family togetherness.



Family togetherness serves as the underlying motive for the journey. Through this, the theme of family becomes clear once more not only in Susan's desire to have them learn something together, but in that everything that happens in the coming days will have an impact on all members of the family. It is not what Greg originally anticipated from his summer, but he has no choice now. As the family continues its journey, the theme of tourism becomes apparent. The Heffleys fit into the pattern of any average American family on vacation: they must take rooms where they can, including in dumpy motels, and visits attractions like the county fair.

However, as the trip truly gets underway, mishaps begin emerging. The motel where Greg and his family are forced to spend the night reeks of cigarette smoke, is smelly, uncomfortable, and dirty. The motel pool is empty, there is no suitable food for dinner, and the hot tub is full. Greg is forced to sleep on the floor, and forced to tell the Beardo kids to cut out their noisemaking in the hallway. Indeed, the presence of the Beardos at all will give rise to serious mishaps by the end of the novel. They serve as a bad omen, especially after the Beardo kids' father seeks to yell at Greg for disciplining his kids.

Discussion Question 1

What is Susan's true purpose for the family road trip? Is it family bonding and togetherness, or something else? What do you think it is? Why?

Discussion Question 2

Although the first part of Greg's summer has been blown by the trip, he decides to do his best to enjoy himself. How so? Do any of Greg's attempts at enjoyment work out? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Why must Greg run away from Mr. Beardo after telling the Beardo kids to settle down? Do you believe Mr. Beardo is justified in wanting to yell at Greg? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

banned, spectrum, reeked, nutritious, ruckus, blabbering, nauseous



Section 3: Pages 92 – 137

Summary

Greg learns that Manny has correctly guessed the weight of a pig, and has won a real live baby pig as a prize. Greg's mom has no choice but to accept. Manny and the baby pig become fast friends. Greg's dad is not thrilled about the prospect of a pig. The pig is put into an empty cooler in the back of the minivan with Greg. They have to find a place to stay that accepts pets. They get stuck in traffic near a tollbooth. Greg and the pig both end up having to use the bathroom, so they leave the car and rush ahead to a gas station, but the bathroom is horribly dirty. Greg uses the bathroom, but the pig will not go until Greg puts him on Manny's potty. Two rooms are rented at the motel so there are enough beds for everyone. Because Manny will be sleeping in the room with Greg's parents, Greg and Rodrick must watch the baby pig. The pig makes a mess of the bathroom, and scratches to get through the door that connects Greg's room with his parents' room.

The door is left open. Overnight, the pig raids the minibars in both rooms, resulting in a higher cost than the original cost of the rooms. As the family heads out, Frank must be on the phone to handle a work emergency. They make stops at the world's biggest popcorn kernel and an exhibit with life-size butter carvings of U.S. Presidents. Back on the road, Greg's father's business call ends disastrously. Greg's mom makes Rodrick to get rid of his gum through the sunroof because he is chewing so loudly, but noise from the wind is horrible. The gum gets stuck in the track so the sunroof can't close, the pig causes havoc running around, causes Frank to drop his phone, swerve into the other lane, and get honked at. Greg then tries to stop the pig from taking Manny's pacifier, but gets bitten. The pig then tries to escape through the window, causing Frank to swerve everywhere and come to a stop.

Frank puts his foot down, and the pig is taken to a local petting zoo. Unable to locate a first care center for Greg's finger, the family goes to a veterinarian's office instead. Because the skin has not been broken on Greg's finger by the bite, Greg will be fine. Greg's mom buys a retractable leash to keep a hold on Manny. Unable to get the sunroof repaired, Frank uses plastic wrap and tape to cover it. But it rains, and the plastic fills with water and gives way, soaking everyone in the car except Greg. Frank stop under an underpass to wait out the rain. Greg's mom decides to change up the schedule, deviating from what has been suggested by Family Frolic magazine.

Analysis

If the Beardos didn't signal the beginning of major mishaps, Manny's winning of a baby pig does. The family is initially forced to accept the pig as a pet, not only because the county fair people have insisted, but because Manny and the pig have grown so attached to one another. Although everyone but Manny is unhappy with the decision to



adopt a pig, they agree to go along with it out of a sense of familial obligation. Rather than the family coming together around Manny and the pig, or coming together because of the trip, the family has been pushed away a bit. Greg, especially, recoils at having to have to deal with the pig. Indeed, even though the family takes on a double-room at the hotel, Greg is stuck watching the pig.

The mishaps due to the baby pig multiply, making mishaps a very important theme in this section of the novel. The pig makes a mess of the bathroom, and will not settle down until the door between the two rooms is opened. During the night, the baby pig raids the minibars in both hotel rooms. Not only does this cause a mess, but it ends up costing Frank more money than he paid for the hotel rooms to begin with.

The pig also bites Greg's finger. Frank, on a business call – a mishap in and of itself during a family vacation, though arguably one that must necessarily be dealt with – nearly loses control of the van while the pig runs around crazily and attempts to escape through the window. It is at this point that Frank, as head of the family, puts his foot down and has the pig taken to a petting zoo. Frank, who is very giving and kind toward his family, here assumes the very traditional role as male head-of-house, and for the best since the pig has caused so much trouble.

Mishaps for the family come not just through the pig, but the actions of the family themselves. Manny's attempt to get rid of his gum through the sunroof leads to the sunroof getting stuck, a saran wrap cover being used, and water building up until it explodes inside the van. However, this mishap proves to be the final straw for the family. Susan retains her optimism, however, assuring her family that good can still come from the trip. Susan here acts as the glue keeping her family together, as their primary motivation to go on. Though the family trip has not turned out as noted in Family Frolic, Susan is ready to change up the schedule to make the most out of what remains of the trip.

Discussion Question 1

Although the baby pig is meant to be Manny's pet primarily, and a family pet generally, who ends up taking care of the pig more than anyone else? Why?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Frank finally put his foot down and bring the baby pig to a petting zoo? Do you agree or disagree with his decision to have done so? Why?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Susan decide to stop following the Family Frolic agenda for the family's road trip? Do you believe this new approach will be any more successful? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

imprinted, inhumane, embarrassed, international, immunizations, priority, retractable



Section 4: Pages 138 – 187

Summary

Greg's mom decides they will go wherever the road takes them, and that they will now make decisions as a family unit. Greg is skeptical, but willing to give it a shot. They begin making random turns, and up in a small town diner with amazing apple pie. Only Manny is unhappy because of the pig. Manny attempts to escape through the bathroom window of the diner to go back to the pig, but Greg stops him. Leaving the diner, Frank accidentally interrupts a funeral procession, and the cars begin following him. They decide to head to the nearest cemetery to help the people out, but the cemetery turns out to be for pets. The people in the cars get angry, so Greg's family quickly leaves and finds a hotel room for the night.

The next day, no one can decide on what to see next. They decide to go to the beach, but get in traffic on the way over the bridge to the beach. Rodrick drives because Frank hates long bridges. Greg throws a cheese curl to a seagull, who flies in through the sunroof. Panicked and unable to get out, the seagull begins flying around the van, grabs the bag of cheese curls, and flies out. But other seagulls come after the bag, which is dropped back into the van. The van fills up with seagulls. Rodrick rear-ends the car in front of them, but the couple is understanding. Insurance information is exchanged, and the situation is settled. A tow truck is called, and the minivan will take five hours to be repaired. While waiting, instead of the beach, the family goes to Soak Central, a water amusement park.

The park is packed with people, but Greg decides to try to make the most of it. His family puts their personal possessions in a locker, and the rest of their stuff on a chair. When Greg goes back to the chair, he discovers the chair has been taken by the Beardos. Greg's family then realizes their locker key is also missing. When they have the staff open the locker, they find that all their things are gone. Greg thinks the Beardos are responsible, and tells his family everything about them. Frank, without his wallet, cannot pay for the minivan repairs, so the mechanic cannot do the full repair. He puts sealant on the van's cracked radiator, telling them that if they keep the heat at full blast, the van will be good for another day or two. Greg's family decides to head home, and are miserable in the heat. The tarp over their boat comes loose, and all of the family's extra possessions go flying out. They find almost all their things, then scrape change together change to go to a fast food place.

Analysis

Susan's decision that the family will now wing it at first seems to be a good choice. The family randomly ends up in a friendly, small town with a diner that serves the best apple pie Greg has ever tasted. The family happily comes closer together over their meal, enjoying one another's company as well as the good food. Greg notes how much things



improve through the course of the meal at the diner – a clear sign that the journey itself may yield good results by the end of the trip. However, However, by the end of the meal, the mishaps begin once again as Greg’s dad accidentally interrupts and misleads part of a funeral procession.

The move to allow the family to make up its mind about what to do ends up resulting in confusion. Everyone wants to do something different, but the family ultimately agrees to settle on going to the beach. Everyone seems happy with this decision, for it is one of the most traditional summer activities anyone can enjoy. Greg is happy that the summer of relaxation, despite having to travel so much, seems back on course. However, the family encounters traffic on the bridge to the beach. The traffic in and of itself is a staple of summer roads leading to beaches, but is a mishap for the Heffley family. Greg’s decision to feed a single seagull leads to the van filling with them – and Rodrick rear-ending the car ahead.

The family ends up going to the watersports amusement park, Soak Central, instead, because their car must be fixed before they can move on. Amusement parks, especially water amusement parks, have also become staples of summer vacations and tourists. However, mishaps continue to plague the Heffleys. The appearance of the Beardos – who rudely take the Heffleys’ lawn chair – also comes at the same time of the disappearance of the Heffleys’ locker key. When Greg and his family get a staff member to open the locker, it is empty. Among the possessions stolen are Frank’s wallet and credit cards – the very last thing anyone wants to lose on a vacation. It is one of the worst mishaps yet so far – perhaps the worst.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Susan decide that the family should now wing it when deciding what to do next? Is this new plan initially successful? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Greg’s family end up going to Soak Central? Is their time at Soak Central fun and relaxing? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

When the Beardos appear, what goes missing? How does Frank manage to get his car temporarily repaired, and get on the road to head home?

Vocabulary

procession, panicky, artificial, executive decision, aggressive, wholesome, agitated



Section 5: Pages 190 – 217

Summary

Geg's family is able to afford a box of chicken nuggets and a biscuit with their change. With the night coming on and no money for hotels, the family decides to find a place to pull over and sleep. They end up on an unpaved road that the GPS doesn't even recognize. They end up in a wooded area that hunters use. It is then that a cinnamon roll dough package explodes from the heat in the car, getting gooey dough everywhere. Rodrick thinks he has been shot in the head and has lost his brain. The family then finds a supermarket parking lot to sleep in. They get up around 6 when the store's employees arrive for work. After going into the supermarket, Susan realizes she has locked the keys in the minivan. Manny must be lowered through the sunroof to get the keys. Manny manages to start the van and put it in drive, but it only moves a few miles an hours, crashing into shopping carts where it stops.

Back on the road, the family passes the motel they stayed in on the first night. The Beardos are there. Greg's dad goes to call the police, but then sees the Beardos going to the pool. They have left their motel room door open, so Greg and his family look in the room. They can't find any of their things, but decide to use the bathroom. Only Greg's dad remains behind in the bathroom when the Beardos come back. Frank grabs their keys and throws them in the bushes to allow an escape without being followed. However, they forget to turn on the heater. The radiator breaks, the van stops, and the van gets a flat tire.

An Hispanic father and son stop to help. Manny surprises everyone by speaking Spanish, and telling the father and son what to do. He directs them to the zoo to pick up the baby pig. The pig ends up being the Heffley family's pet. The boat is given to the father and son as a gift of thanks. Back home, Frank has to cancel all his cards and get new ones. Sue considers the trip an adventure, even if it didn't go as planned. She is sending in an article to Family Frolic about it. In his things, Greg discovers the key from Soak Central – with a different number than the one the family had opened up by the staff. Greg wonders how to go about telling his parents, or if he should tell them at all.

Analysis

In times of crisis, families often come together. The same is true for the Heffleys. With their personal possessions stolen, no money, and a minivan that is barely getting by, the family joins together to scrape together enough change to afford dinner. The family spends the night in their van, knowing they have only one another to rely on until they get home. While the actual trip itself by the end of the novel may not have been a success – there was more stress and more problems than in everyday life at home – the journey undertaken was successful. By the end of the novel, the Heffleys have truly



grown closer to one another. True to Susan's promise, the family did endure a host of new experiences – most of which they will never want to repeat.

Most of those new experiences are mishaps. And mishaps continue right up through the end of the novel. The family ends up on a road used by hunters which the GPS cannot even identify. The cinnamon bun dough has exploded due to the heat in the car. Manny attempts to escape with the minivan. The minivan breaks down once more. The Beardos catch Frank in their motel bathroom. And finally, Manny sends the family's rescuers to the petting zoo to pick up the baby pig to bring home as a pet. The Hispanic father and son are given Frank's old boat in thanks. Though there are more mishaps than purely enjoyable, good times, it is clear that Greg and his family will in the future look back on the mishaps as funny or even mildly amusing.

The final mishap in the novel is directly attributable to Greg. Greg learns that he had the key to the family's Soak Central locker all along – and that the key on the number is different than the number on the locker the family had the staff open up for them. Frank has taken days to cancel his credit cards, order new ones, and get his financial situation taken care of, while the rest of the family has taken days to get settled once more. The trip was more jarring than relaxing – and Greg's revelation of the key (should he decide to reveal it at all) will make the return home perhaps even more problematic than the entirety of the trip in the first place.

Discussion Question 1

Despite the horrible end to the family vacation, Greg's family pulls together. Why does this happen? How do they pull together?

Discussion Question 2

Why do the Heffleys sneak into the Beardos' motel room? Do you believe that the Heffleys are justified in their actions? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

How do you believe Greg will handle the key situation? Will he tell his parents or not? If not, why not? If so, what do you believe he will tell them? Why?

Vocabulary

obvious, civilization, miserable, complaint, contribute



Characters

Greg Heffley

Greg Heffley is the main character and narrator of the novel “Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Ugly Truth”. Greg is the son of Frank and Susan, is the younger brother of Rodrick, and the older brother of Manny. Greg’s summer vacation has just begun as the novel opens, and Greg is looking forward to having no schedule, relaxing, and spending his days in the air conditioning of his living room. However, Greg is stunned when his mom announces they are going on a road trip. Greg is further annoyed when he must pick up much of the slack, from having to sit in the very back with all of the family’s luggage and belongings, to dealing with Manny’s new pet pig.

Greg becomes a central figure in the mishaps later in the novel. Having had a series of run-ins and near-encounters with the Beardos, Greg alerts his family to the possibility that the Beardos have stolen their locker key at Soak Central. The family then believes that all of their possessions have been stolen. Despite Greg’s initial annoyance with the family trip, he ends up growing closer with them as a result of the hardships and mishaps the family must face. Back at home, Greg discovers the locker key in his possession, and learns the locker the family had the Soak Central staff open was the wrong one. Greg ends the novel determining how best to tell his parents.

Susan Heffley

Susan “Sue” Heffley is the mother of Greg, Rodrick, and Manny, and is the wife of Frank. Susan is a kind and patient woman who loves and cares deeply for her family. Susan is a big fan of the magazine “Family Frolic”, and longs to have a wonderful family vacation over the summer. She genuinely wants the family to come closer together, and to have new experiences. The family reluctantly agrees. Nothing goes right through the trip, but Susan remains optimistic, even departing from the Family Frolic itinerary to make her family happy.

Frank Heffley

Frank Heffley is the father of Greg, Rodrick, and Manny, and is the husband of Susan. He is also the brother of Gary and Joe. Frank is a kind man who is very responsible, and very loving toward his family. He is concerned and skeptical about the family trip, but does his best to go along with things by doing most of the driving and allowing his family to get later starts in the mornings. Frank must conduct business on the phone through the trip, and must deal with car repair bills, hotel bills, and numerous other expenses as the family faces one mishap after another. Frank’s most challenging time is when he believes his credit cards are stolen, and upon returning home, must cancel them all to get new ones.



Rodrick Heffley

Rodrick Heffley is the older brother of Greg and Manny, and is the son of Frank and Sue. Rodrick is a moody teenager who would rather spend time with friends than family, and has no desire to go on the family road trip. Rodrick, attempting to throw his gum through the sunroof of the minivan, learns his gum lands in the roof track and prevents it from closing. He is later made to drive across the bridge to the beach, but when the minivan is filled with seagulls, he rear-ends the car ahead of him. While nearing home, Rodrick's cinnamon bun dough explodes from the heat in the car, causing him to think he has been shot in the brain.

Manny Heffley

Manny Heffley is the younger brother of Greg and Rodrick, and is the third child of Frank and Sue. Manny is a quiet toddler who causes significant trouble, and who is notorious for being unmanageable if woken up early from his naps. As a result, the family misses many sightseeing opportunities, not wanting to wake Manny up. When Manny wins a pet pig at the county fair, he and the pet pig become fast friends. Manny is enraged when the pig is taken to a petting zoo after causing so much trouble. Manny also learns working Spanish by listening to the CDs his mother plays. He surprises everyone by using Spanish to not only help when the minivan breaks down for good, but when he directs the Hispanic father and son who have come to the Heffleys' aid to the petting zoo to pick up the pig.

Baby Pig

The baby pig is a prize won by Manny at the county fair for correctly guessing the weight of another pig. Though pigs make good pets, Manny's baby pig causes far more problems than it is worth. The pig destroys a hotel bathroom, rummages through two minibars, causes chaos in the minivan by trying to escape through the window, and bites Greg's finger. The pig is donated to a petting zoo, only to be picked up a few days later at Manny's insistence. The pig thus becomes a full-fledged member of the family.

Mr. Beardo

Mr. Beardo is a large, fat, hairy man with a beard who has taken his family on vacation at the same time as the Heffleys. Mr. Beardo is gruff, rude, and selfish, from allowing his family to have total control over the hot tub to wanting to yell at Greg for telling his kids to quiet down, to allowing his family to take Greg's family's chair at Soak Central. Mr. Beardo later catches Frank using his motel bathroom, and chases Frank out.

Mrs. Beardo

Mrs. Beardo is the wife of Mr. Beardo. She is fat, unsympathetic toward others, and wears glasses. She and her husband have no problem with taking the chair the Heffleys are using at Soak Central, dumping the Heffleys' stuff on the ground, and using the chair.

The Beardo kids

The three Beardo kids are the children of Mr. and Mrs. Beardo. All boys, the Beardo children are loud, annoying, and rambunctious. They hog the hot tub at the motel, make faces at Greg on the road, and smash a janitorial cart into the walls of the motel, keeping Greg up. When Greg yells at them to settle down, the youngest Beardo kid tells on Greg, causing Mr. Beardo to try to find Greg to yell at him.

Hispanic father and son

An Hispanic father and son kindly stop to give Greg and his family a hand when their minivan breaks down for good. The father and son give the family a ride, including to the petting zoo to pick up the pig at Manny's direction. The father and son are then given a boat by Frank in thanks for their assistance.



Symbols and Symbolism

Family Frolic Magazine

Family Frolic is a magazine read by Susan Heffley. It is a family-oriented magazine full of articles, ideas, and suggestions for families and family activities, gatherings, and outings. Susan bases her idea for a family road trip on an article seen in Family Frolic. Greg knows Susan's past ideas, based on Family Frolic, have ended in disaster – such as the family's last barbeque. Nevertheless, Susan remains optimistic about the family summer road trip, doing her best to follow the itinerary suggested by the magazine. However, even Susan has enough eventually, and agrees to depart from the Family Frolic recommendations to wing it for the rest of the trip.

Boat

Greg's dad owns an old boat that has been sitting in the backyard for years. Having refused to winterize the boat, the boat's hull cracked, leading to the boat never being used. For vacation, Greg's dad decides to bring the boat out, trailing it behind the minivan. He tapes over the hull with duct tape, and stores the family's overflow possessions in the boat. When the family is rescued by an Hispanic father and son, Greg's dad gives them the boat as a token of thanks.

Flat Stanley

Flat Stanley is a children's book character flattened by a billboard. It has become popular, based on school assignments, to take a cutout of Flat Stanley on trips and vacations, and to take a photo of Flat Stanley in different locations. Greg's mom brings along Flat Stanley on their vacation. When Rodrick's gum ruins the sunroof, Flat Stanley flies out of the car.

Rodrick's shoes

Rodrick's shoes smell horrible, and keep Greg up the first night of the trip because he unknowingly sleeps near them. At the county fair, Rodrick enters his shoes in the Foulest Footwear Contest, and wins first prize – free deep-fried-butter-on-a-stick. One of his shoes is kept to be sent onto the national competition.

Baby pig

A baby pig is won by Manny when Manny correctly guesses the weight of an adult pig. Susan tries to resist taking the pig, but Manny and the fair locals insist. The baby pig ends up causing chaos over the next few days, from trying to escape from the minivan



while it is moving to practically eating out two minibars in the hotel. The pig is donated to a petting zoo, but later picked up at Manny's insistence. The pig becomes a part of the Heffley family.

Retractable leash

A retractable leash is purchased by Susan at a veterinarian's office when, unable to find a first care center for Greg's pig bite, the family heads to the vet's. Susan uses the retractable leash throughout the novel to keep Manny in check, and to stop him from wandering or running off.

Locker key

A key to locker 292 is given to the Heffley family at Soak Central to store their most valuable possessions to protect them from getting wet. At some point, Greg ends up in possession of the key. Unable to locate the key, the family believes the Beardos have stolen it. The family misremembers the number of their locker, telling the staff that locker 929 needs to be opened.

Personal possessions

Personal possessions, including wallets, cash, cell phones, and credit cards, all belonging to the Heffleys, are stored in locker 292 at Soak Central to prevent them from getting wet. When the family erroneously has the staff open locker 929, they believe all of their personal possessions have been stolen. This leads Greg's dad to later have to cancel all of his credit cards, and to order in new ones.

Spanish Language Learning CDs

Spanish language learning CDs are brought along by Susan on the family road trip. She begins to play them, thinking the family should take advantage of their time traveling in order to learn something together. No one is thrilled with the CDs, except for Manny who ends up learning how to speaking Spanish.

Underpants Bandits

"Underpants Bandits" is a series of children's books about kids who steal the underwear and undergarments of famous people, from Napoleon to Cleopatra to Shakespeare. The books are found to be disgusting by girls, but are a hit with boys, including Greg. Many schools end up banning the "Underpants Bandits" books for their crudity. Greg brings along several books from the series to read while on vacation.

Settings

The Minivan

The minivan is one of the primary settings of the novel, The minivan, owned by the Heffley family, and usually driven by Frank, is not only a means of transportation for the family, but ends up being a place for them to sleep as well. It is while traveling in the minivan that many of the family's mishaps happen, from the pig trying to escape to the vehicle being filled with seagulls in search of snacks to being flooded by a downpour.

The first motel

The first motel the Heffleys stay at is because it is available. Most other places to stay have no vacancies. The first motel is run-down, its swimming pool has not been used in years, the rooms are dirty and smell of smoke, and the Beardo children ram a janitorial cart into the walls in the middle of the night for fun. Greg's family has a horrible night at the motel, with Greg having to sleep on the floor on some towels for padding. On the way home, the Heffleys pass the motel once more, and see the Beardos checked in. They sneak into the Beardos' room when the Beardos go to the pool, and look for their stolen possessions. Unable to find anything, the family helps themselves to everything in the room, from using the bathroom to the minibar.

The Annual County Fair

The Annual County Fair is the first major attraction Greg and his family visit on their second day of the road trip. It is at the county fair that Greg first tries fried-butter-on-a-stick, Rodrick winds the Foulest Footwear contest, and where Manny wins a baby pig. It is also at the fair that Greg has a near run-in with the Beardos. The Annual County Fair serves as a source of friction between the Heffley family members, especially when it comes to the pig. The pig will end up causing tremendous problems for the family as they leave the fair and get on the road.

Soak Central

Soak Central is a watersports amusement park located near the beach. It is where Greg originally wants to go on the trip. During the seagull incident on the bridge, the family's minivan rear-ends another car, causing the radiator to crack and the minivan to break down. While waiting for the car to be repaired, the family goes to Soak Central. Storing their important possessions in a locker, Greg and his family are disappointed to see how crowded Soak Central is. Greg is also stunned to learn that the Beardos have taken their spot, and presumably stolen their locker key and the contents of their locker. The overall experience at Soak Central is decidedly negative.



The Heffley household

The Heffley household, located at 12 Surrey Street, is where the novel begins and ends. At the beginning of the novel, Greg, Rodrick, and Manny are at home in the living room watching television, and planning to spend their summer relaxing. It is there that Greg and his brothers learn about their mother's plans for a family road trip. It is upon returning home from work the same day that Frank learns about his wife's plans for a family road trip. After the disaster-prone trip ends, Frank spends days canceling credit cards and ordering new ones, while Greg and the rest of the family take days to get situated again. When the novel ends, Greg, unpacking in his bedroom, discovers he had the locker key all along.



Themes and Motifs

Family

Family is an important theme in the novel “Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Long Haul” by Jeff Kinney. Family involves mutual love, compassion, loyalty towards, and emotional, spiritual, and physical support of individuals who may or may not be blood-related, but who still behave in the fashion of the traditional family unit. Thematically, family can be found consistently throughout the novel as the road trip begins, is undertaken, and ends, and heavily influences the events of the novel.

When the novel begins, Greg and his brothers are looking forward to a relaxing summer. But their mother, always looking for new family activities and bonding experiences, decides the family is going to take a road trip. Susan’s love of her family is absolutely clear in her desire to do more things together, but as Greg reveals to the reader, this doesn’t always work out. Much of Susan’s thinking and many of her ideas originate with Family Frolic magazine. For example, when Susan decided her family would have a barbeque like in the magazine, the barbeque turned disastrous when bees attacked and Rodrick ran around with a squirt gun.

While Greg, his brothers, and his father love their family, they are all skeptical and concerned about a family road trip. However, they agree to undertake the trip since they have no real choice in the matter, and because they know how much Susan wants to take the trip. She tells them it will give them good, new experiences, and will be perfect for bonding. But from the start, mishaps plague the trip. These include everything from the chaos caused by Manny’s pet pig, to the horrible motel accommodations, to the seagull attack, to Greg’s numerous encounters with the Beardos, and the theft of the personal possessions of Greg and his family.

However, it is in these darkest moments – when the family must get home with a half-broken radiator, no money, no cell phones, barely anything to eat, and no place beyond their van to stay – that they rally together. They are able to scrape together a few bucks for some fast food, rely on one another for encouragement and support – such as when Susan says that the trip can still be salvaged – and when Manny saves the day by speaking Spanish to the Hispanic father and son who pull over on the side of the highway to help the stranded Heffleys. While much of Greg’s family’s experiences were difficult at best, the trip did indeed remind them of what is truly most important, and that is family.

Journey

Journey is an important theme in the novel “Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Long Haul” by Jeff Kinney. In literature, journeys are often not only an actual, physical trip from one place to another, but have a deeper meaning or purpose to them –such as learning,



growing in character, or even coming to some important truth or realization. In the novel, journey is not merely a road trip for Greg and his family, but is a way for the family to grow closer together.

When Susan announces the family is taking a road trip, she explains that the rationale behind the trip will be to get the family to bond, and to experience new things. Only as the trip itself gets underway does the extent of Susan's desire for family closeness become apparent in the seemingly simplest way: her desire for the family to learn a foreign language together. While Greg and his brothers are looking forward to experiencing things like Soak Central, their mother is merely hoping the trip will be a reason for the family to grow closer.

However, as the trip unfolds, it appears at first as if Susan's plan is going to backfire. A series of nonstop mishaps, from the chaos caused by the pig to the broken sunroof to the seagull attack to the minivan being flooded in a downpour all conspire to drive the family members apart. Yet, interestingly enough, it is as things become more difficult that the family begins to draw together after becoming fed up.

Nowhere is this more clearly the case than when the family believes the Beardos have stolen all of their personal possessions, including money and credit cards. By this point, Greg and his family have only one another to rely upon. They must scrape together spare change for some food, comfort and encourage one another (such as when Susan reminds her family that things can still work out), and when the family operates as a unit to investigate the Beardos' motel room. By the end of the novel, Greg comes to recognize that the road trip was more than just going somewhere, but about being with the people he loves. Greg himself is also fuller and more well-rounded for the experiences he has had. Nevertheless, whether or not he reveals the truth about the key to his family is unknown as the novel ends.

Summer

Summer is an important theme in the novel "Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Long Haul" by Jeff Kinney. Summer is not only the seasonal setting for the novel, but also serves to be an experience for the young and for their families as well. Thematically, summer not only includes these things, but also entails a host of seasonal traditions and activities – many of which make appearances in the novel.

For kids, the number one thing that summer means is no school. Greg and Rodrick are thrilled to be on summer vacation. Greg plans to enjoy the summer by sitting in the air conditioning, watching TV, relaxing, and having no schedule. Greg's mother, however, sees the summer as a way for the family to grow closer through activities such as barbecues and road trips. Greg, Rodrick, and their father are all skeptical about Susan's plans for a road trip.

Nevertheless, Greg and his family hit the road, along with countless other Americans on their summer vacation trips. Another such family is the Beardos, who seem to have



Splash Central as their focal point. Greg's own family stops at numerous tourist attractions, as well as deciding to head to the beach before having to go to Splash Central while their van is repaired. When Greg's mom opens up the future of the trip to the members of the family, everyone has something different in mind – but all things are done typically during the summer. Greg wants to go to Splash Central; his father wants to go to a Civil War battlefield; Rodrick wants to go to an electric guitar museum; and Susan wants to go to the beach.

The family ultimately returns home more exhausted than rested, which is typical of family summer vacations. Whether it is because the family is moving nonstop, or because – like Greg's family – the family has numerous mishaps, returning home is the best part of the trip. At home, Greg still has a significant portion of his summer break to spend however he wants. It appears as if he will be spending a large amount of time deciding what to tell his family about the locker key.

Mishaps

Mishaps form an important theme in the novel “Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Long Haul” by Jeff Kinney. Mishaps – incidents, accidents, and the unexpected – plague Greg and his family on their road trip. Mishaps are not merely part of the plot of the novel, but help to drive the plot of the novel.

When the novel begins, Susan announces the family will be going on a road trip. For Greg and Rodrick, this is a mishap because it interrupts their summer plans of doing nothing. Nevertheless, they have no choice but to go along with the trip. From the start, mishaps begin to appear. Manny's insistence on napping means the family misses a handful of sightseeing opportunities. The family's inability to locate a decent motel room leads them to stay in a dumpy place their first night with no real dinner. Greg's encounters with the selfish and unkind Beardo family form another set of mishaps, as the Beardos hog the hot tub, and as the Beardo kids run wild with a janitor's cart that night.

Manny's winning of a pig as a prize at the country fair also leads to a series of mishaps. The pig wrecks the bathroom of the next hotel the family stays in, and raids the minibars of the rooms of both Greg and his parents. The pig's damage ends up costing Frank more money than the price of the rooms themselves. The pig goes on to cause chaos in the car, trying to escape through the window and causing Frank to swerve and nearly wreck. After this, Frank puts his foot down and has the pig donated to a petting zoo. Greg's mom, hoping to salvage the trip, throws away the trip itinerary.

Now on their own, Greg and his family end up at a diner with amazing apple pie. Not having a schedule begins to make things appear as if they will get better. But upon leaving the diner, Frank accidentally interrupts a funeral procession. The mourners are not happy, and let Frank know about it. While headed to the beach, seagulls flood the minivan looking for snacks, and causing a fender-bender. While waiting for the car to be



repaired, the family goes to Soak Central where they come to believe the Beardos have stolen their personal possessions.

The trip home is full of mishaps. Greg and his family sneak into the Beardos' motel room to try to find their stuff, but Frank is caught and must flee. The family, without money, must scrape together change for fast food. They end up having to sleep in the minivan, which finally breaks down for good on the way home. Only the kindness of passing strangers allows the family to get back on the road – after Manny's pet pig is picked up. At home, Greg discovers perhaps the biggest mishap of all in that he has had the locker key from Splash Central all the time – and the number on the key is different from the locker that the staff opened for Greg's family.

Tourism

Tourism is an important theme in the novel “Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Long Haul” by Jeff Kinney. Tourism involves sightseeing, and going places typically associated with vacations. Tourism allows people to see and experience things they typically cannot during normal working days, and factors heavily into Greg's summer vacation.

Greg's mom believes that not only will a family road trip bring the family closer together, but will allow them to experience new places. Here, tourism factors heavily into the trip. The first day of travel, the family must skip several sightseeing opportunities because Manny is asleep. They make up for it the following day by playing tourist at the county fair, where Manny unsuspectingly wins a baby pig as a prize. The family has numerous first experiences, such as eating deep-fried-butter-on-a-stick and Rodrick winning the Foulest Footwear Contest.

As the novel continues, the family takes trips to tourist traps. Among these are the world's largest popcorn kernel, and a visit to a place with sculptures of all U.S. Presidents made entirely from butter. As the trip takes a turn for the worst, Susan announces that the family can now choose what they want to do, that the family will no longer rely on the Family Frolic schedule. Frank decides he wants to see a Civil War battlefield; Rodrick decides he wants to see an electric guitar museum; Greg decides he wants to go to Soak Central; and Susan decides she wants to go to the beach. Each of these activities can be considered very touristy, but it is Susan who wins out, but it is Greg's idea that carries the day when the family cannot make it to the beach.

As is typical of tourism, tourists often encounter mishaps. Some of the greatest mishaps that Greg's family experiences are those at Soak Central. The place is packed with thousands of other tourists. Lines for attractions, such as the water slide, are very long. There is very little room to move around on land or in the water. Patience among people is short. The Beardos are also present. Greg's family comes to believe they have lost their personal possessions – including wallets, cash, and cell phones – by way of theft due to the Beardos.

Styles

Point of View

Jeff Kinney tells his novel “Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Long Haul” in the first-person reflective perspective from Greg’s point of view. The whole novel is composed to resemble a diary, full of written entries and drawings. Because Greg himself is meant to be writing the entries, the perspective is that of first-person. These experiences recorded have happened to Greg, and Greg himself is relating them to paper. The reflective aspect of the narration comes from the fact that Greg is writing about the events after they have happened, and so is reflecting on them, recalling them, and thinking back about them as he writes. This allows him a certain amount of clarity and limited-omniscience.

Language and Meaning

Jeff Kinney tells his novel “Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Long Haul” in language that is simple and straightforward. This is done for at least two primary reasons. First, the language Kinney uses in the novel is reflective of the intended target audience of the book – young adults. The language used is thus reflective of their age and level of education. Second, the language used in the novel is simple and straightforward because it is meant to be written by Greg, a boy of about eleven or twelve. As a result, the language employed reflects not only his age, but his level of education as well. The language used adds a sense of realism, of believability to the novel, as though it was truly being written by someone of Greg’s age.

Structure

Jeff Kinney divides his novel “Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Long Haul” into one long, continuous entry in June, beginning immediately after school lets out for the summer. The long and continuous entry reflects the chaotic nature of the road trip that Greg’s family undertakes: one situation, event, or mishap bleeds into the next and often directly influences the next. The story in the diary is told not only in written entries, but with dozens of drawings and sketches depicting events, thoughts, and ideas that Greg has as he writes as well. For example, page 111 deals with the family waking up in the morning, having spent the night at the hotel, listening to Frank deal with a work emergency on the phone. The illustrations depict Frank on the phone, angrily speaking on the phone in one, and excitedly speaking on the phone in the next.



Quotes

If there's one thing I've learned from my years of being a kid, it's that you have ZERO control over your own life.

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

Importance: When the novel begins, Greg is looking forward to a relaxing summer of doing nothing and having nowhere to go. However, his mom destroys these plans when she announces the family will be going on a road trip. Greg knows he has no choice but to go – and he expresses it with the astute observation that he has no control over his own life as a kid. Indeed, many of the misadventures and mishaps which will occur through the novel are beyond the control of Greg and his family at large.

Pack your bags. We're going on a road trip!

-- Susan (Section 1, Page 1 paragraph Illustration)

Importance: Here, Susan announces her intentions for the next week or two for the family – a road trip. Greg and Rodrick are stunned by this. They are skeptical that anything good is going to come of the road trip, but Susan is excited and hopeful. She believes the family trip will lead to new experiences and family bonding.

A few of the motels had big signs that said they had 'Color TV,' which if you ask me is not anything to brag about in this day and age.

-- Greg (Section 2, Page 60 paragraph 1)

Importance: As the road trip's first day comes to an end, Greg and his family begin looking for a motel to spend the night. While vacancies are hard to come by, Greg notes that many of the motels are advertising color TV. Given an age where wireless internet is a standard in hotels and motels, that motel should be advertising color television is a bad sign for the quality and condition of the motel itself. Greg and his family will be spending a night in just such a motel.

Dad was getting a little restless waiting for everyone to get going this morning. He's one of those guys who gets up every day at the crack of dawn so he can arrive at his office early, and this whole late-start thing wasn't working for him.

-- Greg (Section 2, Page 79 paragraph 1)

Importance: Greg's father echoes the sentiments of countless fathers through the history of family vacations. He is ready to move and get on the road to keep on with the trip, while the rest of the family is content to get a late start. Greg's father's anxiousness to get on the road also comes from the fact that he is such a hard worker, making sure to arrive at the office early.

The prize for guessing the hog's weight was a real live baby pig.

-- Greg (Section 3, Page 92 paragraph 3)



Importance: Manny wins a baby pig at the state fair by guessing the correct weight of a hog. The baby pig will prove to be the source of numerous mishaps and one near-death experience, when Greg's father must pull to the side of the road while driving because the pig is running crazy inside the minivan.

I'm not so sure Mom was doing the petting zoo any favors by donating a pig that bites kids.

-- Greg (Section 3, Page 123 paragraph 3)

Importance: After the near-death experience, Frank, who has been very lenient and relaxed with his family on the trip so far, puts his foot down and demands the pig be given up. Susan decides on bringing the pig to a petting zoo as a donation. Greg, who has had his finger bitten by the pig, humorously remarks that his mom is not doing anything good by giving a pig that bites to a children's petting zoo.

The trip was a total disaster up to this point, and even Mom was ready to admit it.

-- Greg (Section 3, Page 137 paragraph 2)

Importance: When the minivan is flooded during a downpour because of a broken sun roof, even Susan, the optimistic and hopeful member of the family, is ready to admit that things haven't gone as planned. From here on out, Susan hopes things will improve. She thinks the trip can still be salvaged, so she announces a change in approach to the trip: the family will no longer follow the schedule.

I wasn't so sure about Mom's new approach, but I figured anything was an improvement as long as I didn't get bit by any more pigs.

-- Greg (Section 4, Page 139 paragraph 3)

Importance: Susan's new approach for the trip is to throw the Family Frolic schedule out the window, and to allow the family members to choose what they want to do. Greg is, understandably, skeptical at first but willing to give the new approach a try. The new approach yields good initial results. The family ends up in a small town diner with the best apple pie ever, but later accidentally interrupts a funeral procession, which begins a new slew of mishaps.

I don't know what the odds are of running into the same people again and again, but this was starting to get RIDICULOUS.

-- Greg (Section 4, Page 173 paragraph 3)

Importance: Everywhere Greg and his family go, they seem to run into the Beardos. This includes seeing them at Soak Central. Not only does Greg see the Beardos at Soak Central, but the Beardos have rudely taken Greg's family's chair, and dumped their stuff on the ground. Greg begins to suspect the Beardos might even be following them, and comes to the conclusion the Beardos have robbed them.

Mom seemed pretty sad the trip was getting cut short, but to be honest, I was kind of relieved.



-- Greg (Section 4, Page 182 paragraph 3)

Importance: The final straw for Greg and his family's vacation is when the minivan breaks down and must be repaired. But without money to pay for the repair, the radiator cannot be fixed. The mechanic kindly agrees to seal the radiator, which will last a day or two – just enough time for Greg and his family to get home. While even at this late stage Susan holds out hope for a better ending to the trip, Greg is thrilled to learn it is all going to end.

We should've realized that if MANNY was the one doing all the talking, we'd end up going where HE wanted to go.

-- Greg (Section 5, Page 213 paragraph 1)

Importance: When Greg's family ends up stranded on the way home, a kind Hispanic father and his son come to help out. Manny, who can now speak Spanish, gives them instructions on what to do. He directs them to the petting zoo, where Manny's pet pig is taken back to come home and live with the Heffleys as a pet.

I couldn't believe I had the key all along.

-- Greg (Section 5, Page 216 paragraph 3)

Importance: At the very end of the novel, Greg is unpacking in his bedroom. As he does, he finds the key to the locker at Soak Central. The number on the key is different from the number on the locker opened by the staff, meaning that the Beardos did not steal their stuff after all. Greg ends the novel attempting to figure out how to break the news about the key to his parents.