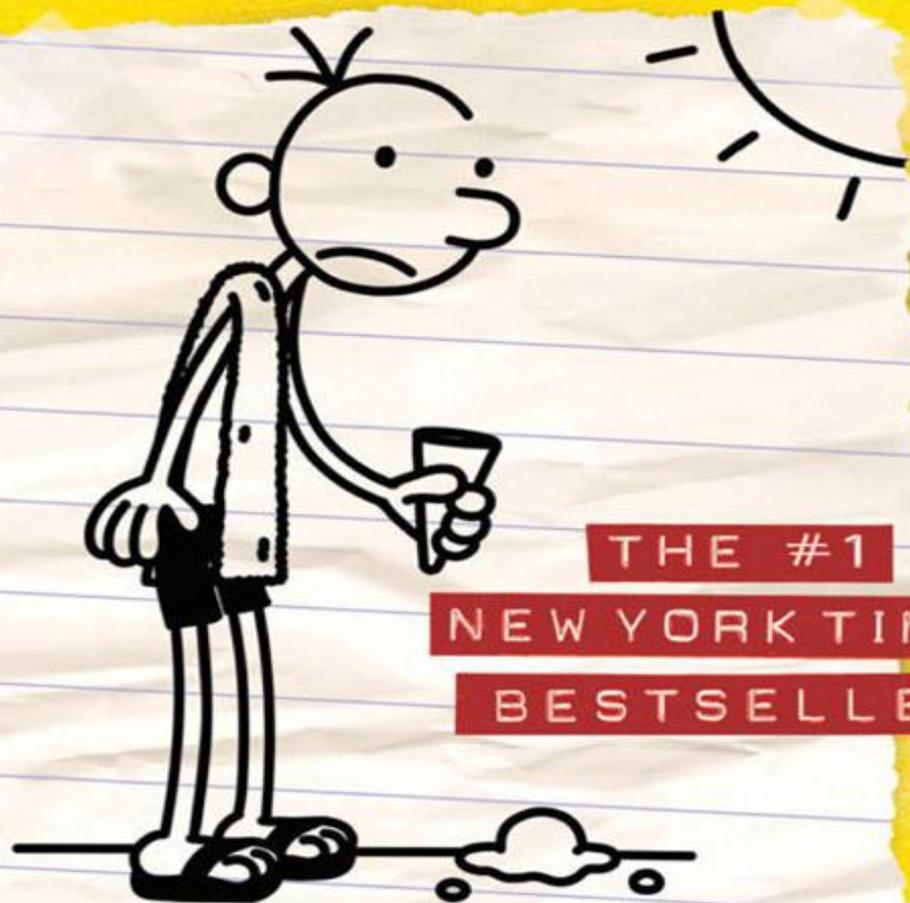


DIARY of a Wimpy Kid

DOG DAYS



THE #1
NEW YORK TIMES
BESTSELLER

Jeff Kinney



Dear reader,

I'm very excited that you're holding the Kindle edition of
Diary of a Wimpy Kid in your hands.

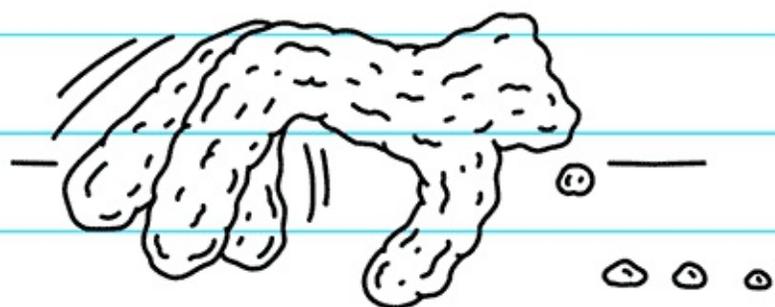
When I read my first e-book on a Kindle, I was amazed at
the possibilities. Carrying a whole library around with me on a
device I could fit in the palm of my hand? Amazing.

What's been very rewarding to me as an author has been
seeing kids carrying their dog-eared copies of Diary of a
Wimpy Kid with them. The Kindle allows kids to have the
whole series at their fingertips, and the reading experience
is crisp and clean every time . . . with no chance of today's
breakfast staining the pages.

Thank you for purchasing Diary of a Wimpy Kid on your
Kindle. I hope it gives you lots of laughs and you have as
much fun reading it as I did writing it.

Jeff Kinney

Jeff Kinney





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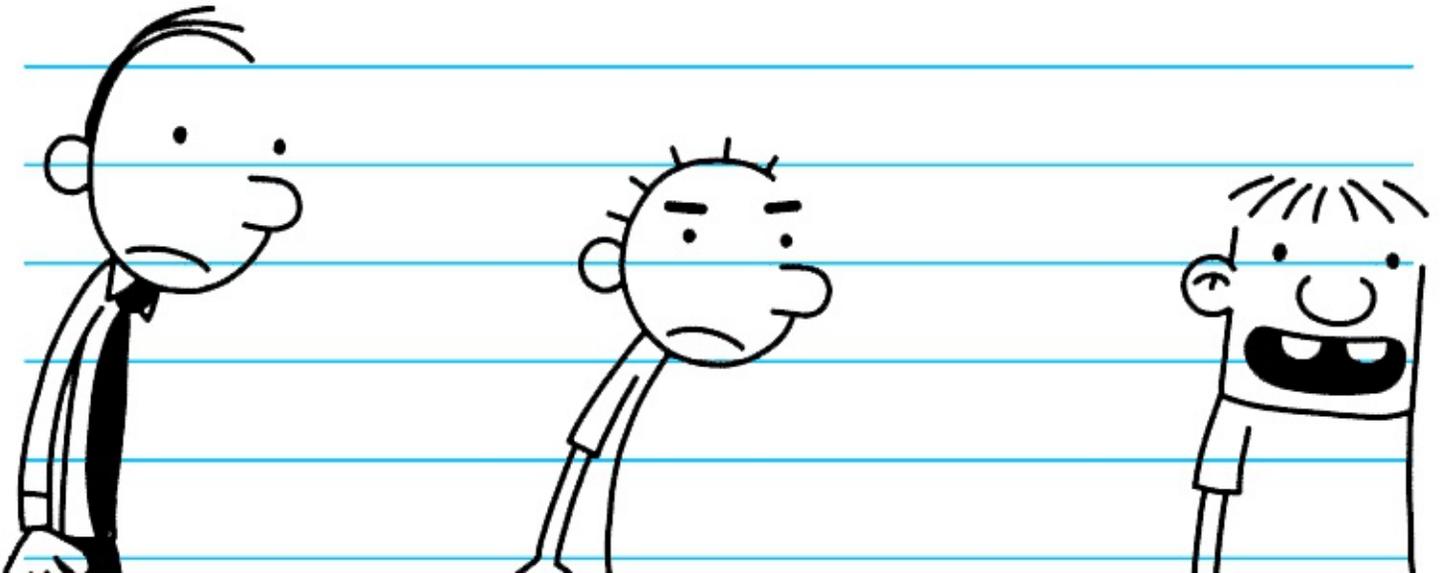
Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Ugly Truth

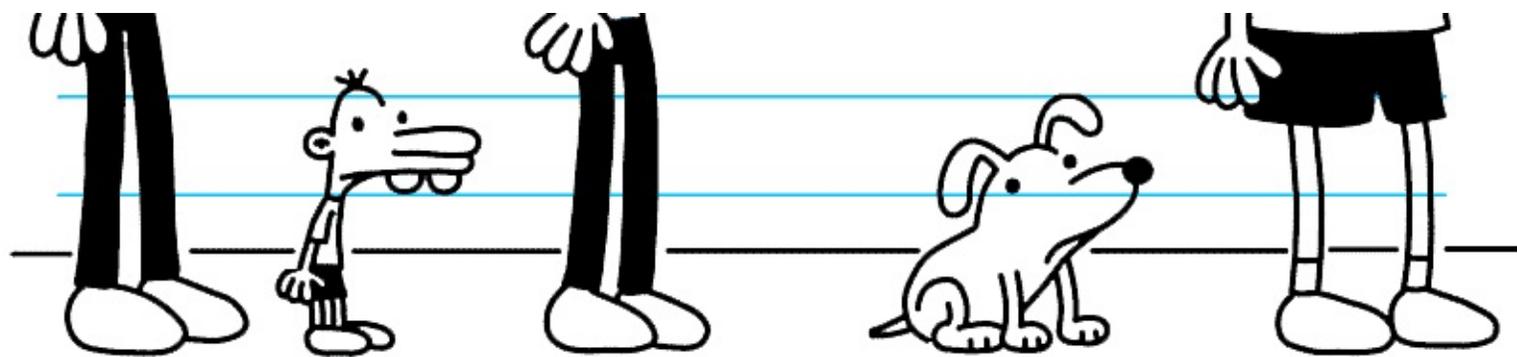
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DIARY of a Wimpy Kid

DOG DAYS

by Jeff Kinney



AMULET BOOKS

New York



PUBLISHER'S NOTE: This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

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Summary: In the latest diary of middle-schooler Greg Heffley, he records his attempts to spend his summer vacation sensibly indoors playing video games and watching television, despite his mother's other ideas.

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TO JONATHAN

June

Friday

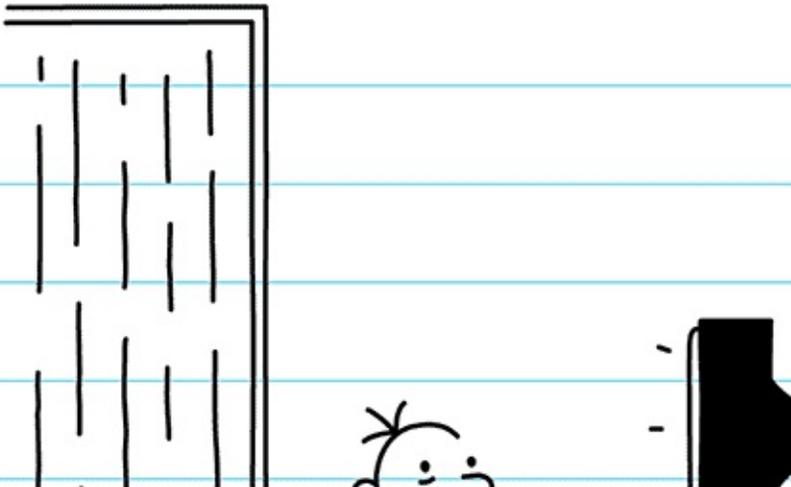
For me, summer vacation is basically a three-month
guilt trip.

Just because the weather's nice, everyone expects
you to be outside all day "frolicking" or whatever.

And if you don't spend every second outdoors,
people think there's something wrong with you.

But the truth is, I've always been more of an
indoor person.

The way I like to spend my summer vacation is in
front of the tv, playing video games with the
curtains closed and the lights turned off.





Unfortunately, Mom's idea of the perfect summer

vacation is different from mine.



Mom says it's not "natural" for a kid to stay

indoors when it's sunny out. I tell her that I'm

just trying to protect my skin so I don't look

all wrinkly when I'm old like her, but she doesn't

want to hear it.

Mom keeps trying to get me to do something

outside, like go to the pool. But I spent the

first part of the summer at my friend Rowley's

pool, and that didn't work out so good.

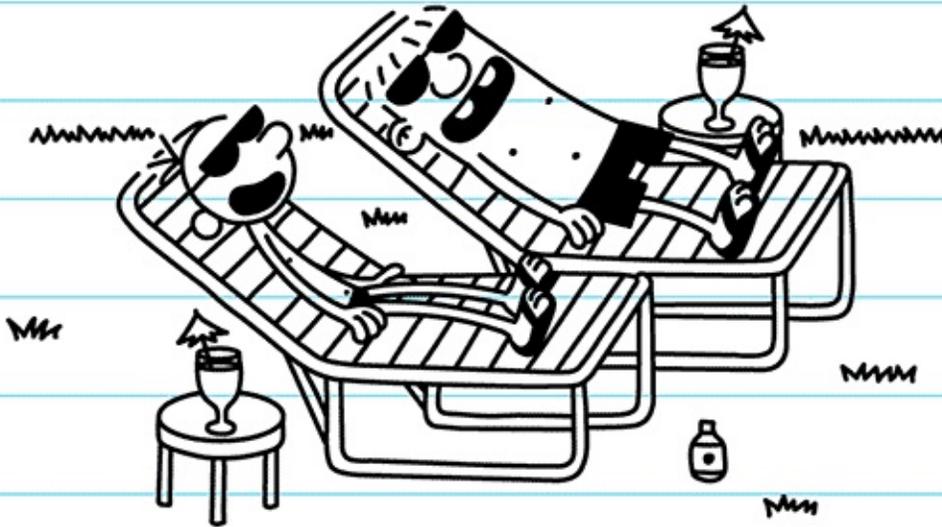
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Rowley's family belongs to a country club, and

when school let out for the summer, we were

going there every single day.



Then we made the mistake of inviting this girl

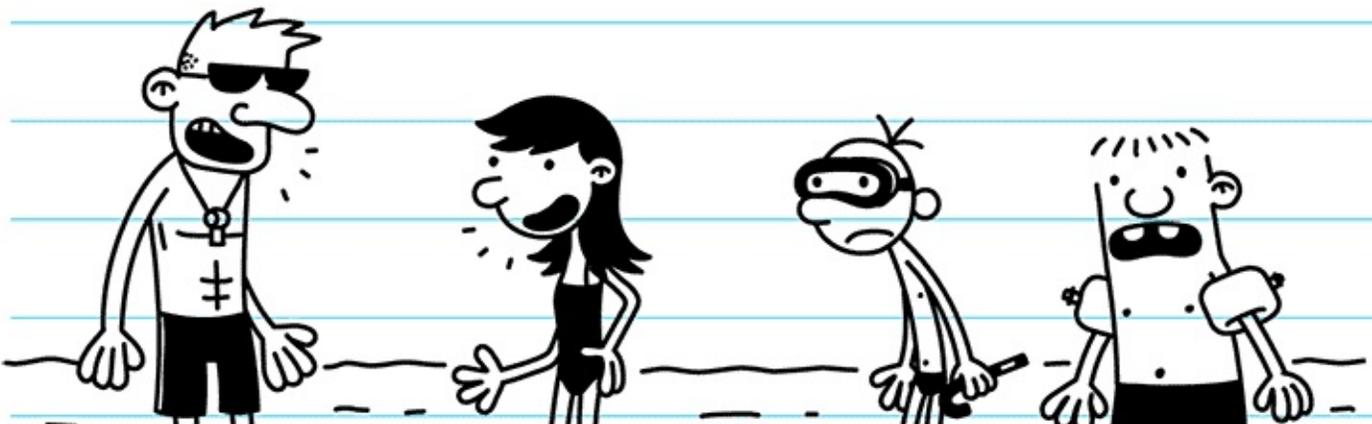
named Trista who just moved into our neighborhood.

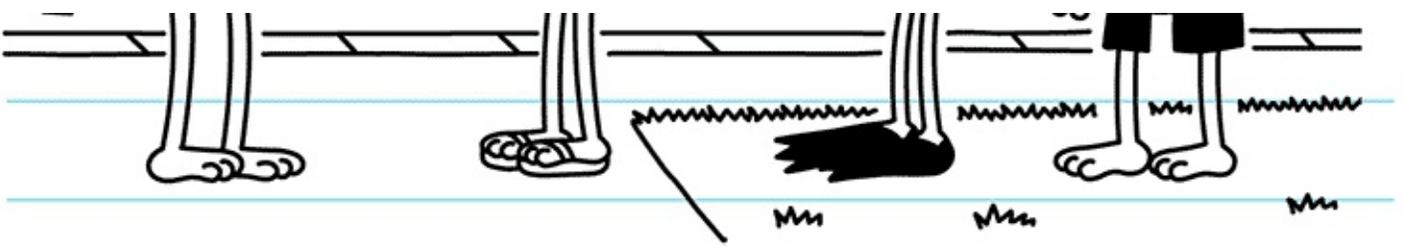
I thought it would be really nice of us to share our

country club lifestyle with her. But five seconds

after we got to the pool, she met some lifeguard

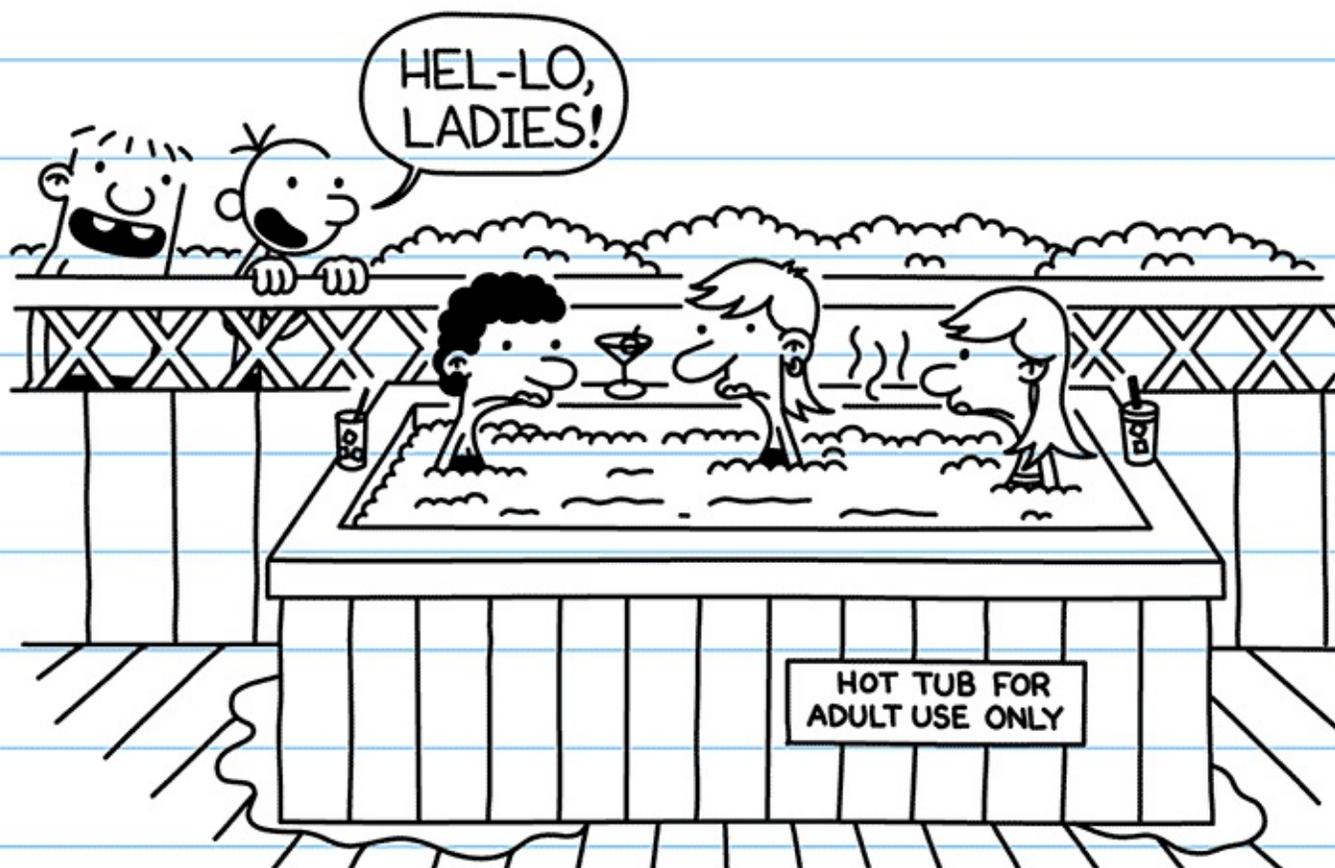
and forgot all about the guys who invited her there.





The lesson I learned is that some people won't think twice about using you, especially when there's a country club involved.

Me and Rowley were better off without a girl hanging around, anyway. We're both bachelors at the moment, and during the summer it's better to be unattached.



A few days ago I noticed the quality of service at the country club was starting to go down a little. Like sometimes the temperature in the sauna was a few degrees too hot, and one time

the poolside waiter forgot to put one of those

little umbrellas in my fruit smoothie.

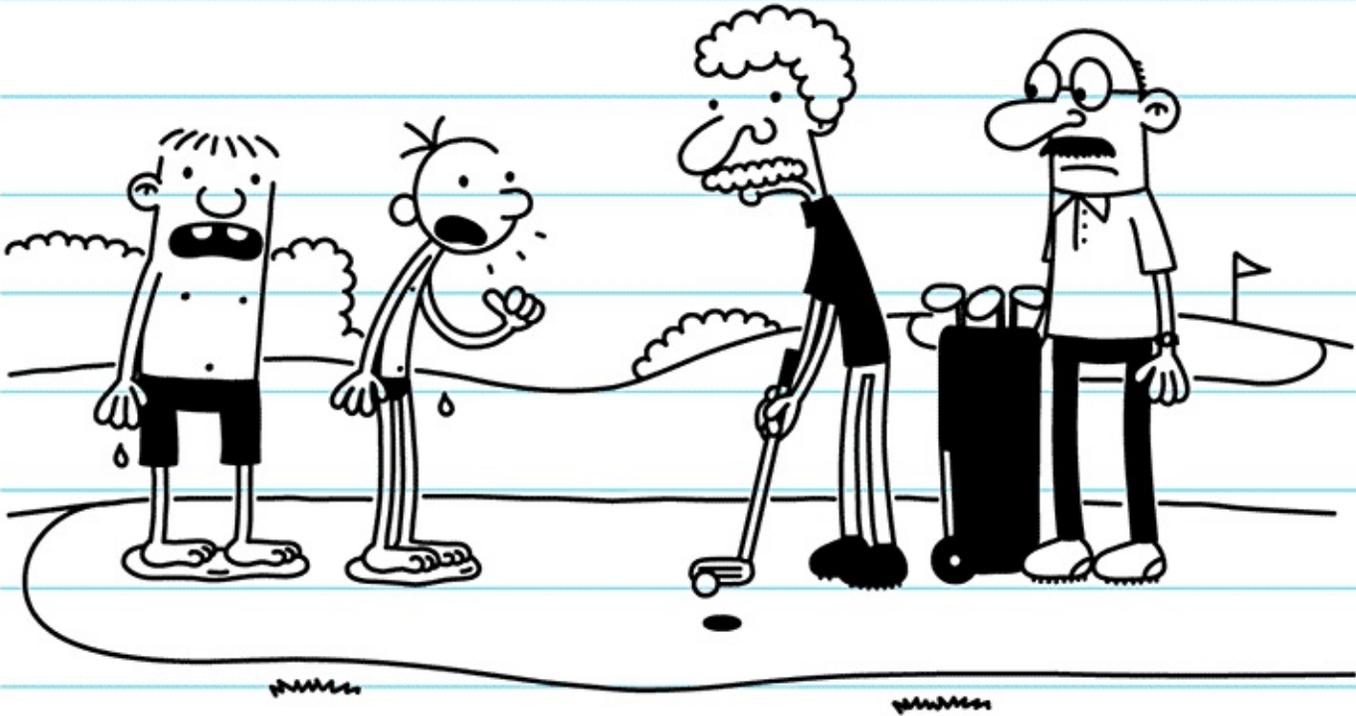
4



I reported all my complaints to Rowley's dad.

But for some reason Mr. Jefferson never passed

them on to the clubhouse manager.



Which is kind of weird. If it was me who was

paying for a country club membership, I'd want

to make sure I was getting my money's worth.

Anyway, a little while later Rowley told me he

wasn't allowed to invite me to his pool anymore,

which is fine with me. I'm much happier inside

my air-conditioned house, where I don't have to

check my soda can for bees every time I go to

take a sip.

Saturday

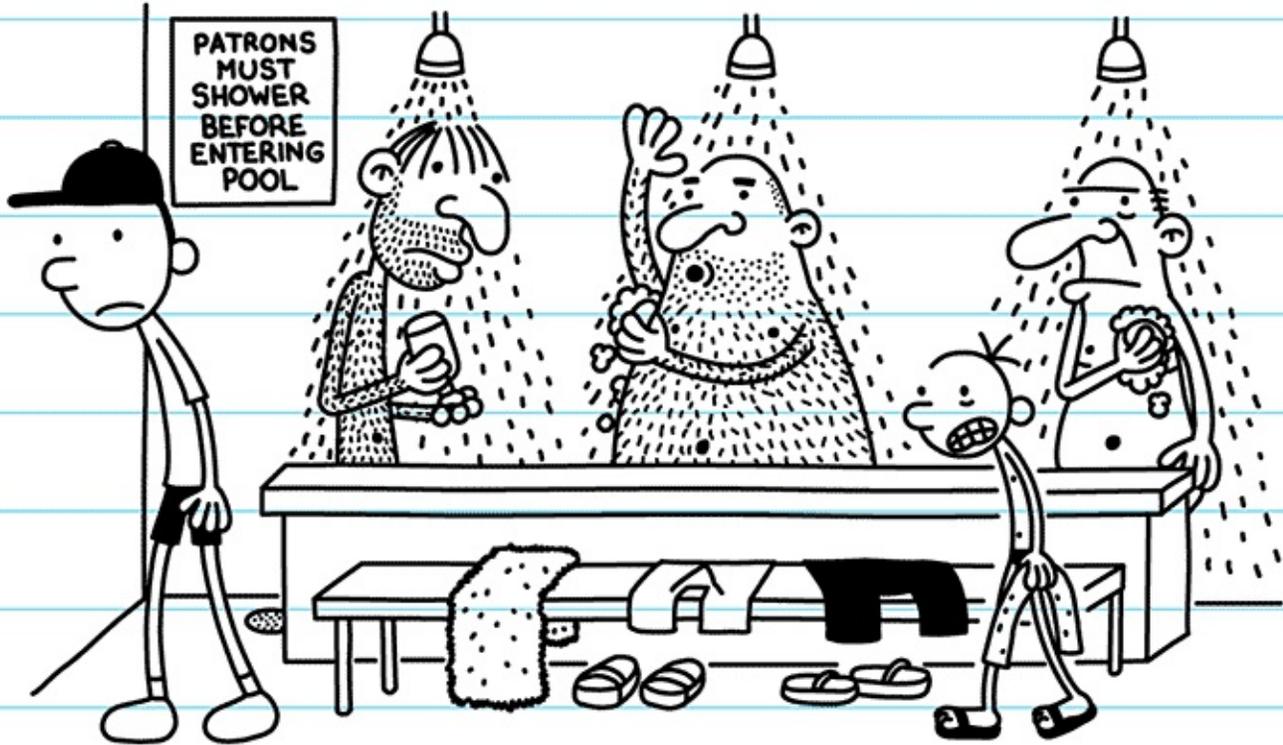
Like I said, Mom keeps trying to get me to go to the pool with her and my little brother, Manny, but the thing is, my family belongs to the town pool, not the country club. And once you've tasted the country club life, it's hard to go back to being an ordinary Joe at the town pool.



Besides, last year I swore to myself that I would never go back to that place again. At the town pool you have to go through the locker room before you can go swimming, and that means walking through the shower area, where grown

men are soaping down right out in the open.

The first time I walked through the men's locker room at the town pool was one of the most traumatic experiences of my life.



I'm probably lucky I didn't go blind. Seriously, I don't see why Mom and Dad bother to try and protect me from horror movies and stuff like that if they're gonna expose me to something about a thousand times worse.

I really wish Mom would stop asking me to go to the town pool, because every time she does, it puts images in my mind that I've been trying

hard to forget.

Sunday

Well, now I'm Definitely staying indoors

for the rest of the summer. Mom had a "house

meeting" last night and said money is tight this

year and we can't afford to go to the beach,

which means no family vacation.

that really stinks. I was actually looking

forward to going to the beach this summer.

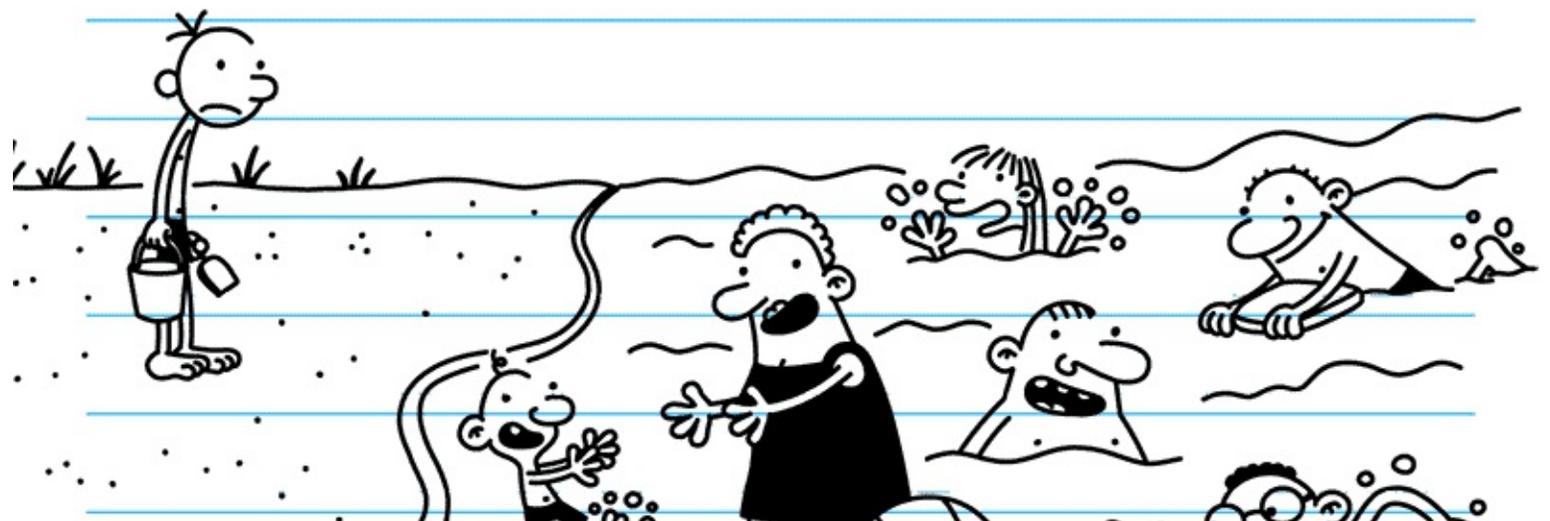
Not because I like the ocean and the sand and

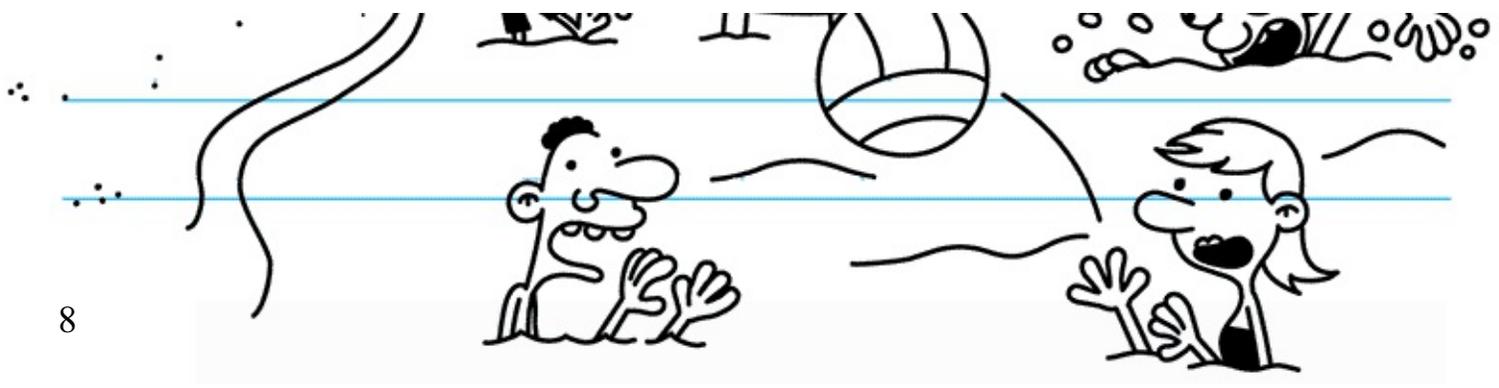
all of that, because I don't. I realized a long

time ago that all the world's fish and turtles and

whales go to the bathroom right there in the

ocean. And I seem to be the only person who's bothered by this.

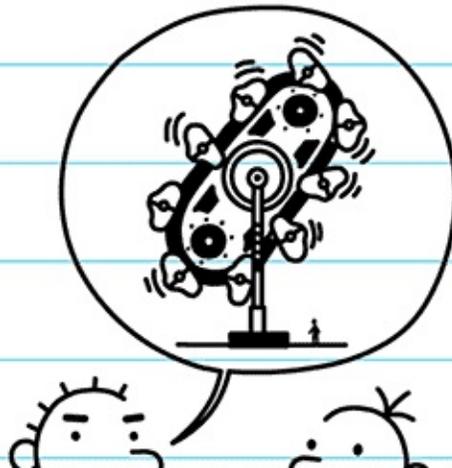




My brother Rodrick likes to tease me because he thinks I'm afraid of the waves. But I'm telling you, that's not it at all.



Anyway, I was looking forward to going to the beach because I'm finally tall enough to go on the Cranium Shaker, which is this really awesome ride that's on the boardwalk. Rodrick's been on the Cranium Shaker at least a hundred times, and he says you can't call yourself a man until you ride it.





Mom said maybe if we “save our pennies” we can go

back to the beach next year. Then she said we’d

still do a lot of fun stuff as a family and one day

we’ll look back on this as the “best summer ever.”

Well, now I only have two things to look forward

to this summer. One is my birthday, and the

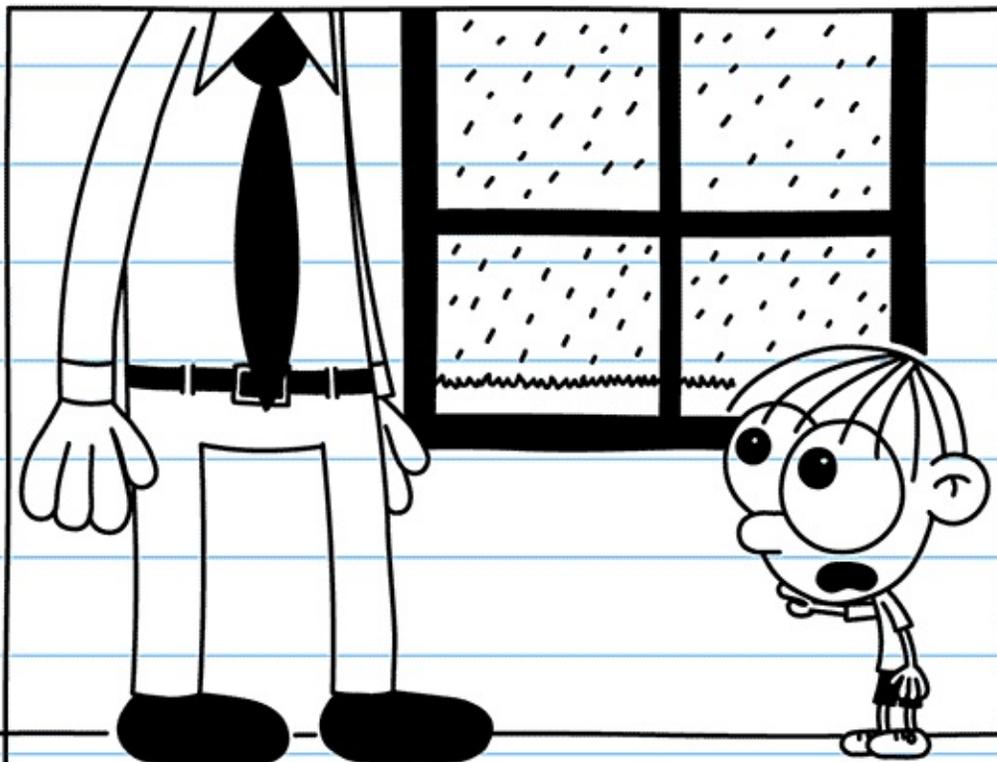
other is when the last “Li’l Cutie” comic runs in

the paper. I don’t know if I ever mentioned

this before, but “Li’l Cutie” is the worst comic

ever. To give you an idea of what I’m talking

about, here’s what ran in the paper today —



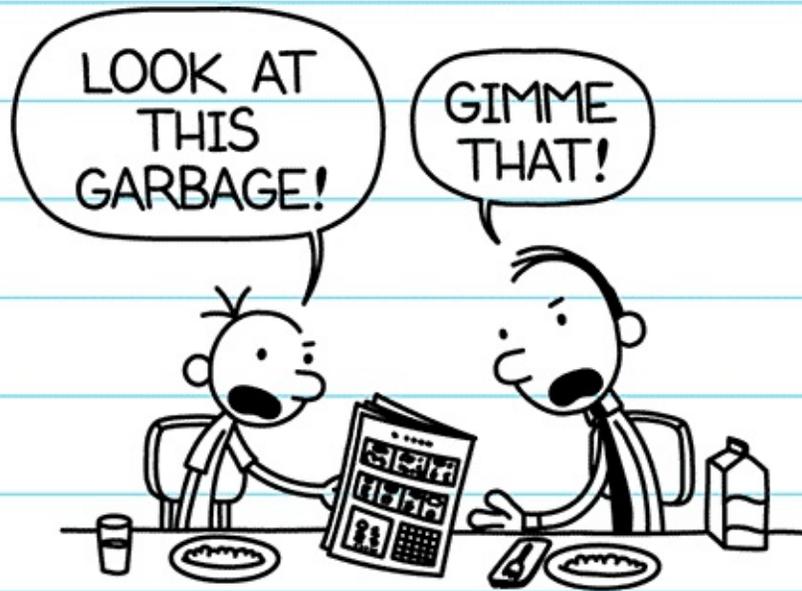
Daddy, is rain just God sweating?

But here's the thing: Even though I hate "Li'l

Cutie," I can't stop myself from reading it, and

Dad can't, either. I guess we just like seeing

how bad it is.



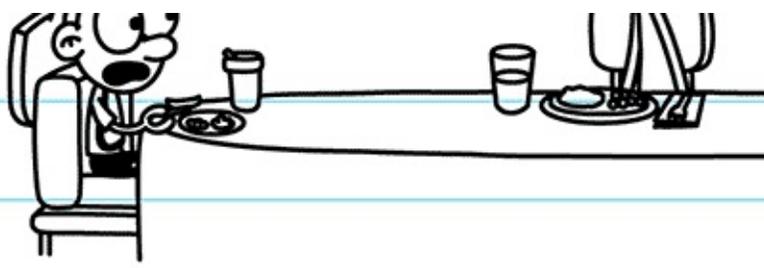
"Li'l Cutie" has been around for at least thirty

years, and it's written by this guy named Bob

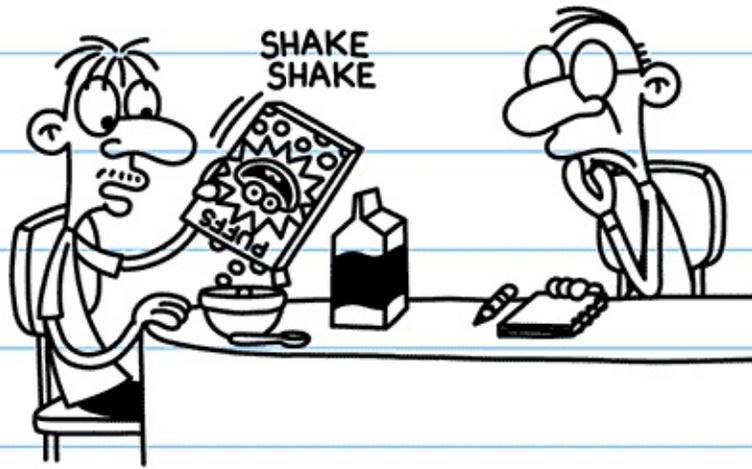
Post. I've heard Li'l Cutie is based on Bob's son

when he was a little kid.

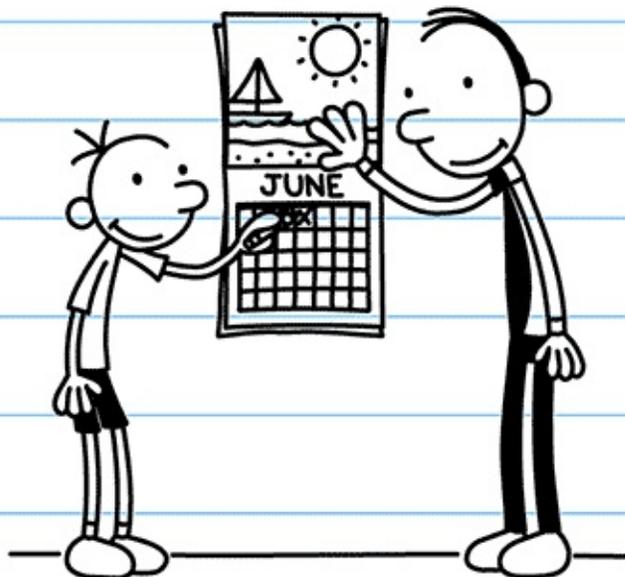




But I guess now that the real Li' l Cutie is all grown up, his dad's having trouble coming up with new material.



A couple of weeks ago the newspaper announced that Bob Post is retiring and the final "Li' l Cutie" is gonna be printed in August. Ever since then me and Dad have been counting down the days until the last comic runs.



When the last "Li' l Cutie" comes out, me and Dad

will have to throw a party, because something like _____
that deserves a serious celebration. _____

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Monday

Even though me and Dad see eye to eye on “Li’l

Cutie,” there are still a lot of things we butt

heads over. The big issue between us right now is

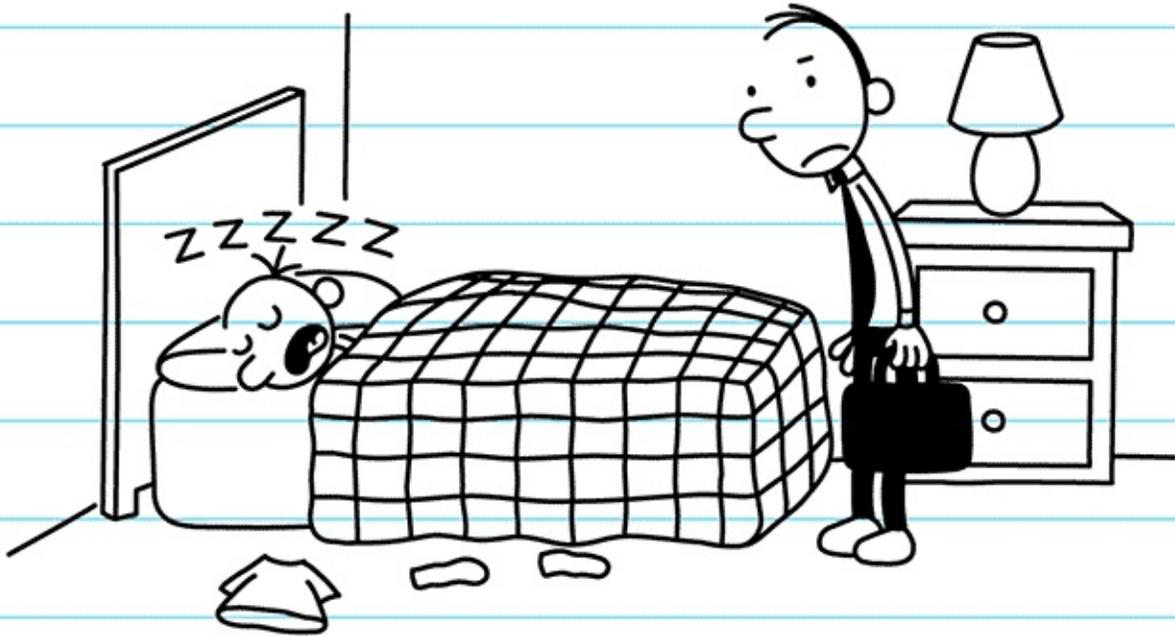
my sleep schedule. During the summer I like to

stay up all night watching tv or playing video

games and then sleep through the morning. But

Dad gets kind of crabby if I’m still in bed when

he gets home from work.



Lately, Dad’s been calling me at noon to make sure

I’m not still asleep. So I keep a phone by my bed

and use my best wide-awake voice when he calls.

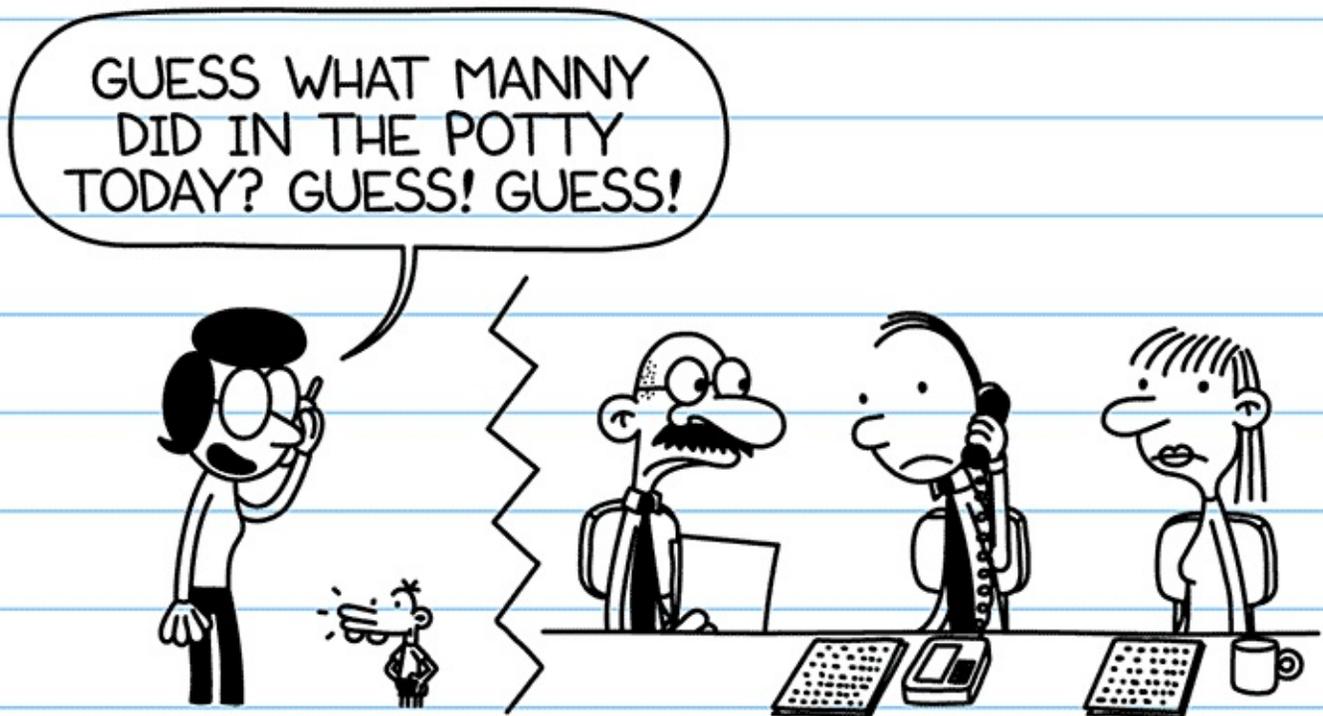
I think Dad’s jealous because he has to go to

work while the rest of us get to kick back and

take it easy every day.

But if he's gonna be all grumpy about it, he should just become a teacher or a snowplow driver or have one of those jobs where you get to take summers off.

Mom's not really helping improve Dad's mood, either. She calls him at work about five times a day with updates on everything that's going on around the house.



Tuesday

Dad got Mom a new camera for Mother's Day, and lately she's been taking lots of pictures. I

think it's because she feels guilty about not _____

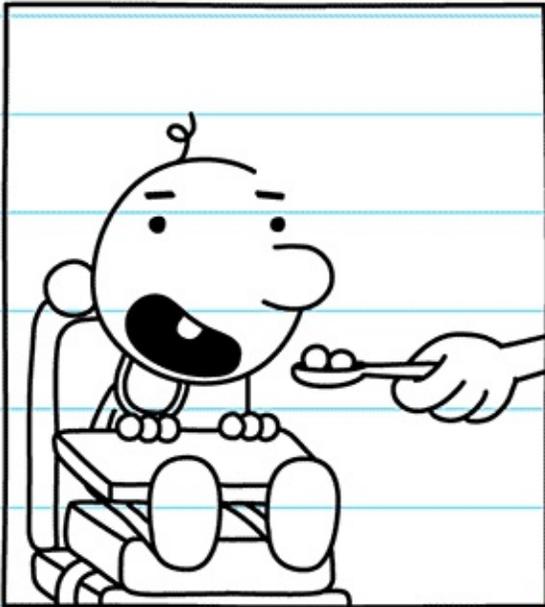
keeping up on the family photo albums. _____

14

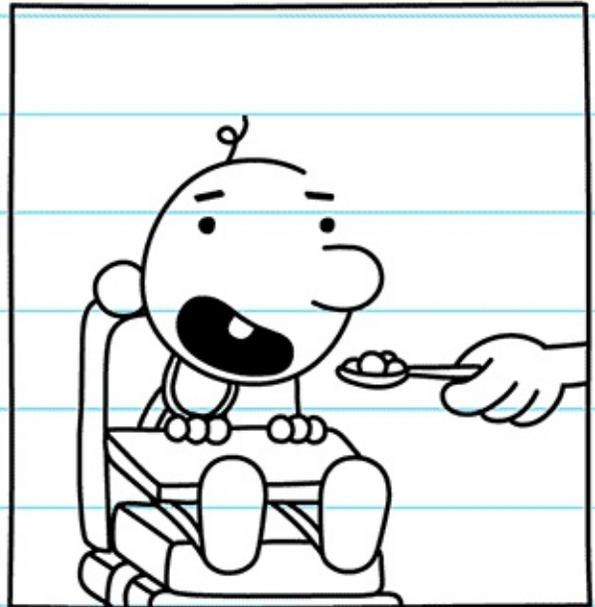


When my older brother, Rodrick, was a baby,

Mom was totally on top of things.



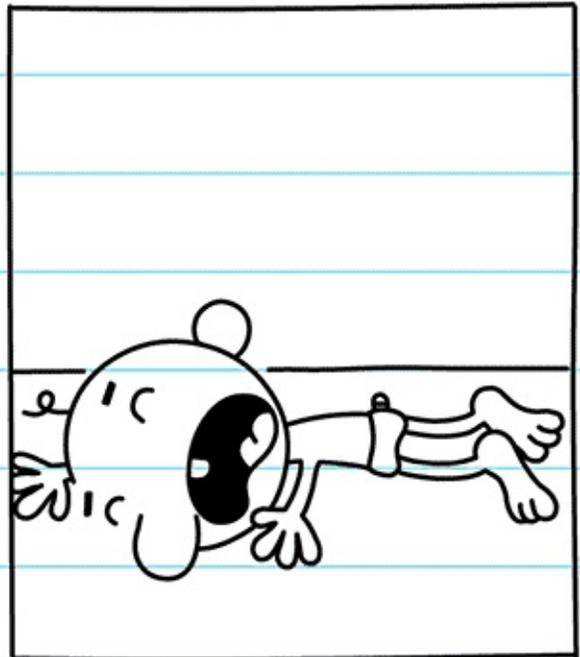
Rodrick's first
time trying peas



Rodrick's second
time trying peas



Rodrick's first
steps

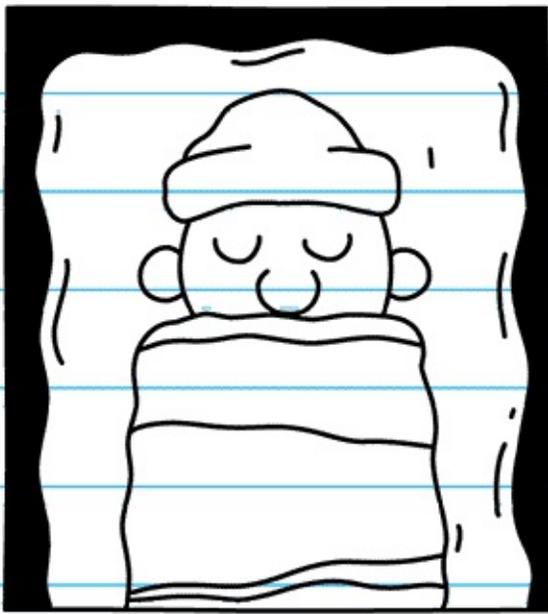


Kaboom!

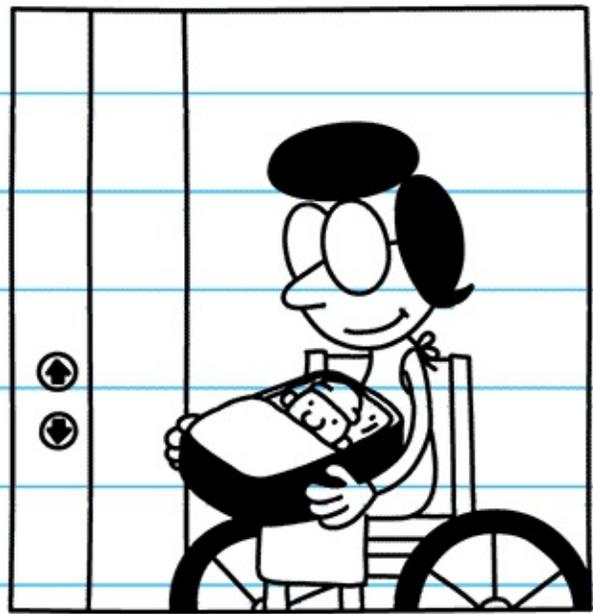
Once I came along I guess Mom got busy, so

from that point on there are a lot of gaps in

our official family history.



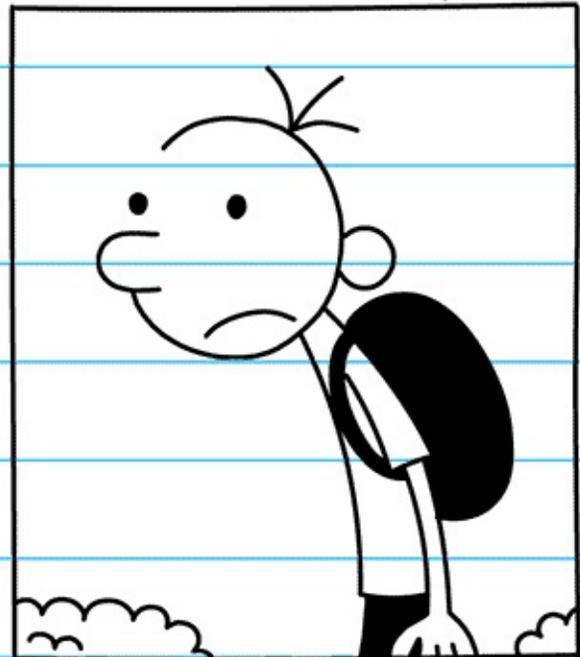
Welcome Gregory to the world



Taking Gregory home from the hospital



Gregory's 6th birthday party



Gregory's first day of middle school

I've learned that photo albums aren't an accurate record of what happened in your life, anyway.

Last year when we were at the beach, Mom bought a bunch of fancy seashells at a gift shop,

and later on I saw her bury them in the sand

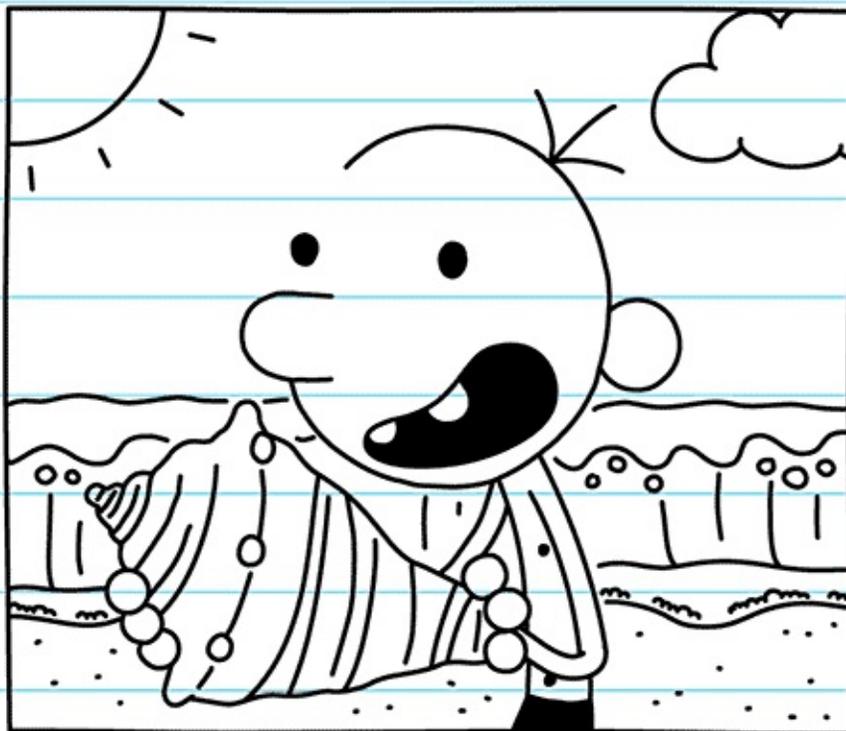
for Manny to “discover.”

16





Well, I wish I didn't see that, because it made me re-evaluate my whole childhood.



Gregory really "digs" seashells!

Today Mom said I was looking “shaggy,” so she

told me she was taking me to get a haircut.

But I never would've agreed to get my hair cut if

I knew that Mom was taking me to Bombshells

Beauty Salon, which is where Mom and Gramma

get their hair cut.



I have to say, though, the whole beauty salon

experience wasn't that bad. First of all, they

have tvs all over the place, so you can watch a

show while you're waiting to get your hair cut.

Second, they have lots of tabloids, those newspapers you see in the checkout lines at grocery stores. Mom

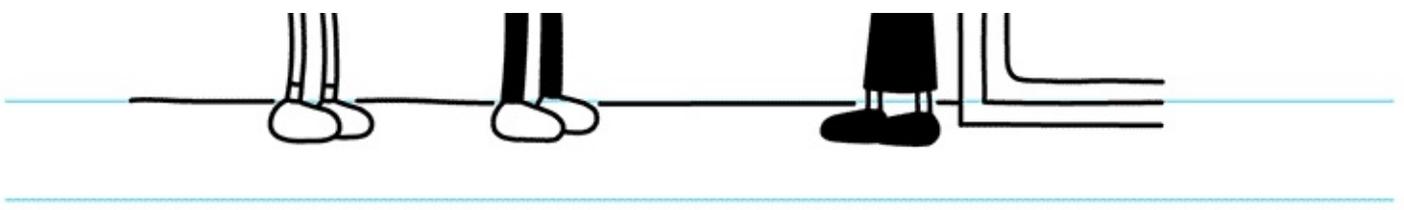
says tabloids are full of lies, but I think there's

some really important stuff in those things.



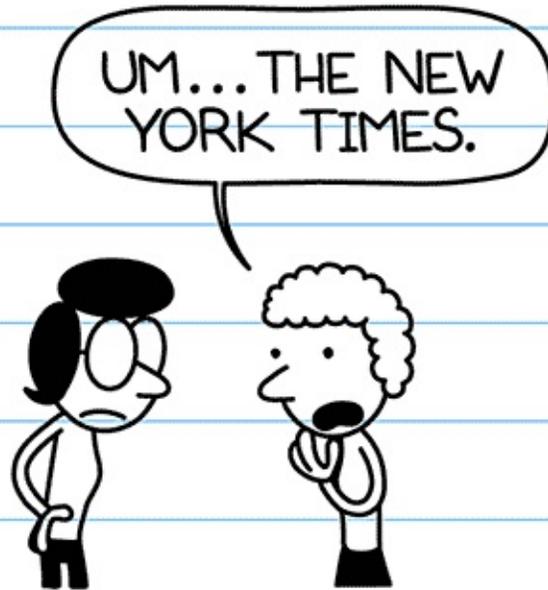
Gramma is always buying tabloids, even though Mom doesn't approve. A few weeks ago Gramma wasn't answering her phone, so Mom got worried and drove over to Gramma's to see if she was ok. Gramma was fine, but she wasn't picking up her phone because of something she read.





But when Mom asked Gramma where she got her

information, Gramma said —



Gramma's dog, Henry, died recently, and ever since

then Gramma has had a lot of time on her hands.

So Mom's dealing with stuff like the cordless phone

thing a lot these days.

Whenever Mom finds any tabloids at Gramma's

house, she takes them home and throws them in

the garbage. Last week I fished one out of the

trash and read it in my bedroom.

I'm glad I did. I found out that North America

will be underwater within six months, so that kind

of takes the pressure off me to do well in school.

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I had a long wait at the beauty salon, but I didn't really mind. I got to read my horoscope and look at pictures of movie stars without their makeup, so I was definitely entertained.

When I got my hair cut, I found out the best thing about the beauty salon, which is the gossip. The ladies who work there know the dirt on just about everyone in town.

...AND THEN MARLENE SAYS TO VANESSA, "IF YOU'RE GONNA GET UP IN MY FACE, YOU'D BETTER BE READY TO BACK IT UP!"



Unfortunately, Mom came to pick me up right in

the middle of a story about Mr. Peppers and his

new wife, who's twenty years younger than him.

Hopefully my hair will grow out fast so I can

come back and hear the rest of the story.

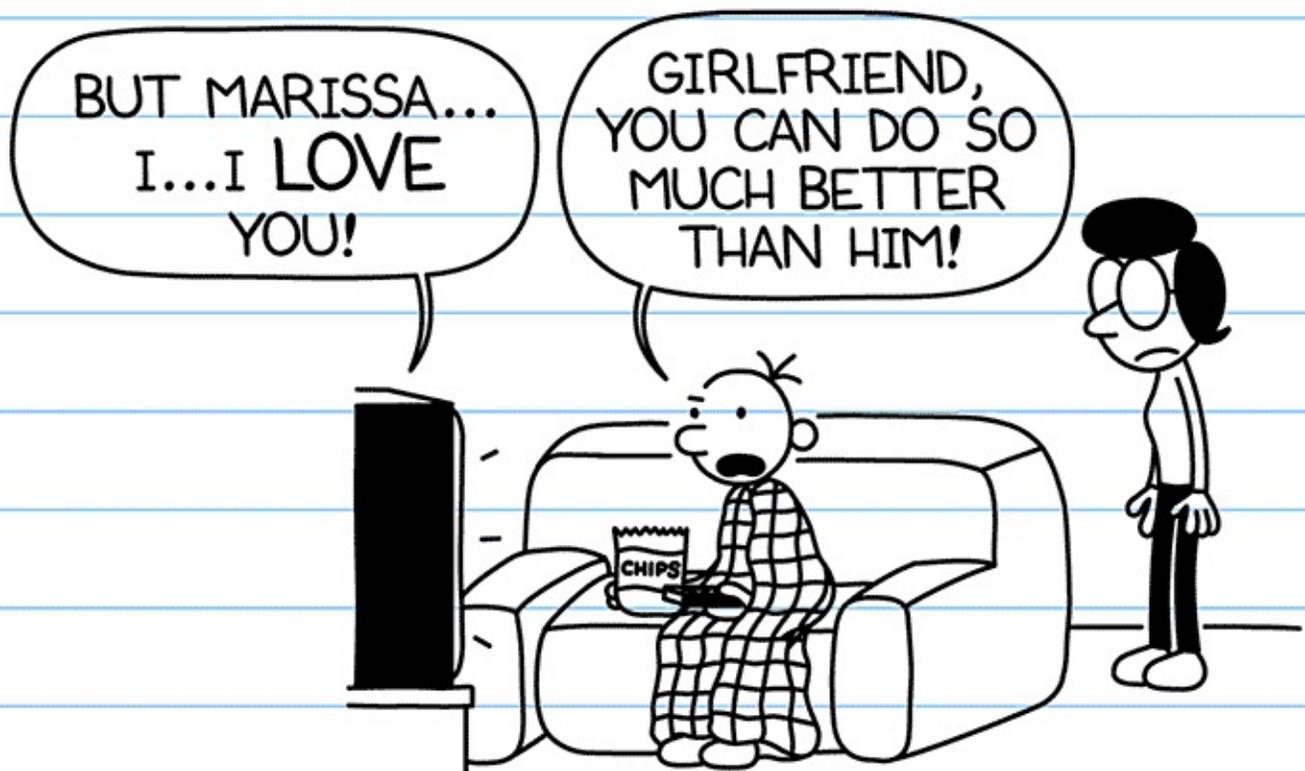
Friday

I think Mom's starting to regret taking me to

get my hair cut the other day. The ladies at

Bombshells introduced me to soap operas, and now

I'm totally hooked.



Yesterday I was in the middle of my show,

and Mom told me I had to turn off the tv

and find something else to do. I could tell

there was no use arguing with her, so I called

Rowley and invited him over.

22



When Rowley got to my house, we went straight to Rodrick's room in the basement. Rodrick is off playing with his band, Löded Diper, and whenever he's away I like to go through his stuff and see if I can find anything interesting.



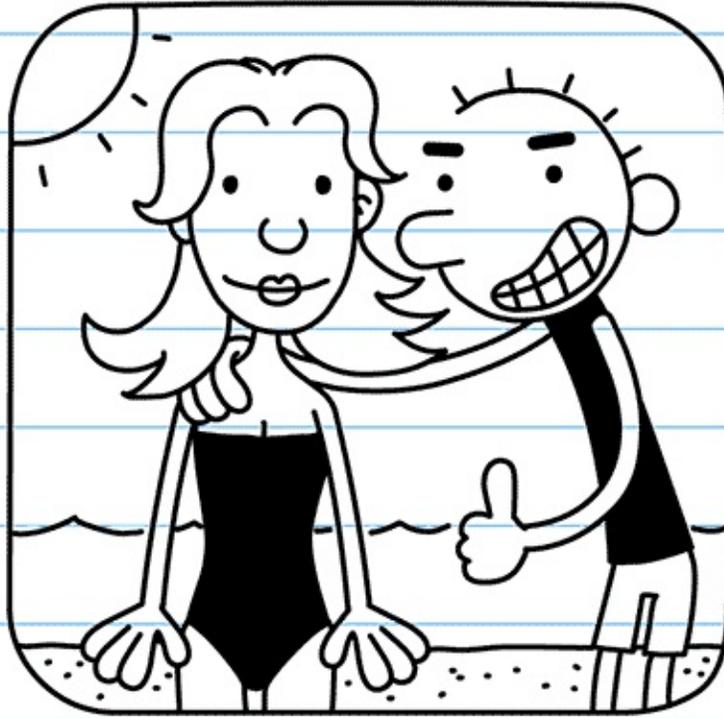
The best thing I found in Rodrick's junk drawer this time around was one of those little souvenir picture keychains you get at the beach.





If you look into it, you see a picture of Rodrick

with some girl.



I don't know how Rodrick got that picture,

because I've been with him on every single family

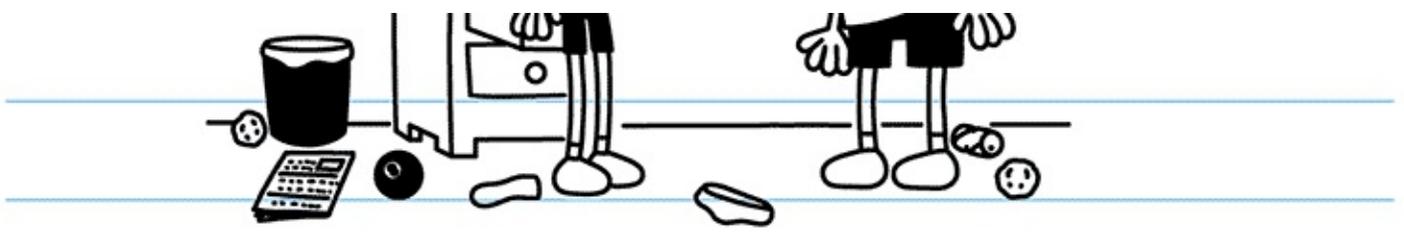
vacation, and if I saw him with that girl, I

definitely would have remembered her.

I showed the picture to Rowley, but I had to hold

the keychain because he was getting all grabby.





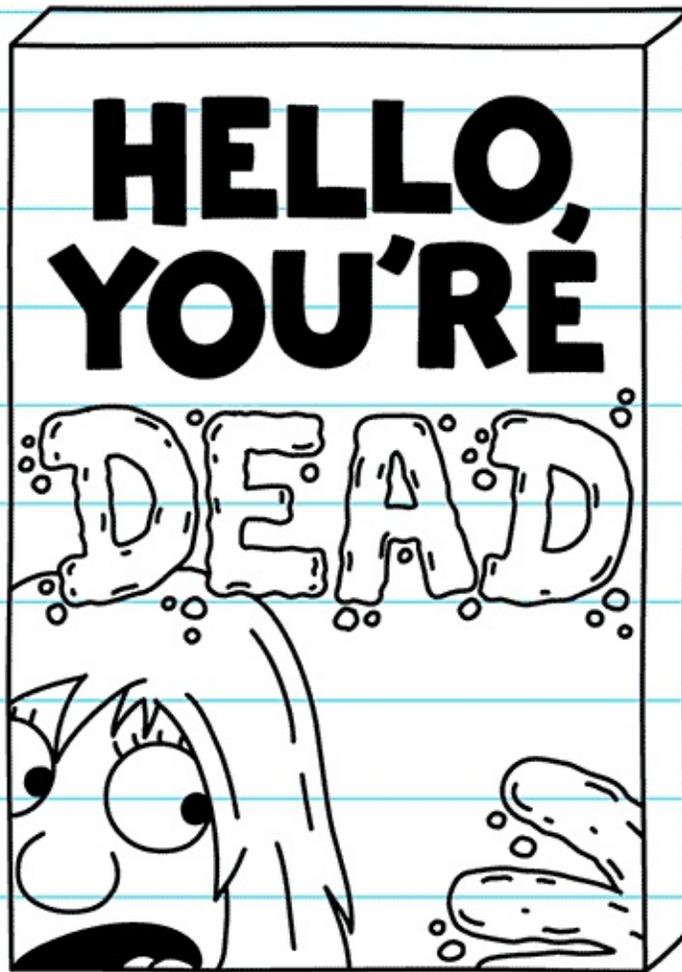
We dug around some more, and then we found a

horror movie at the bottom of Rodrick's drawer.

I couldn't believe our luck. Neither one of us had

actually seen a horror movie before, so this was a

really big find.



I asked Mom if Rowley could spend the night,

and she said yes. I made sure I asked Mom when

Dad was out of the room, because Dad doesn't

like it when I have sleepovers on a "work night."

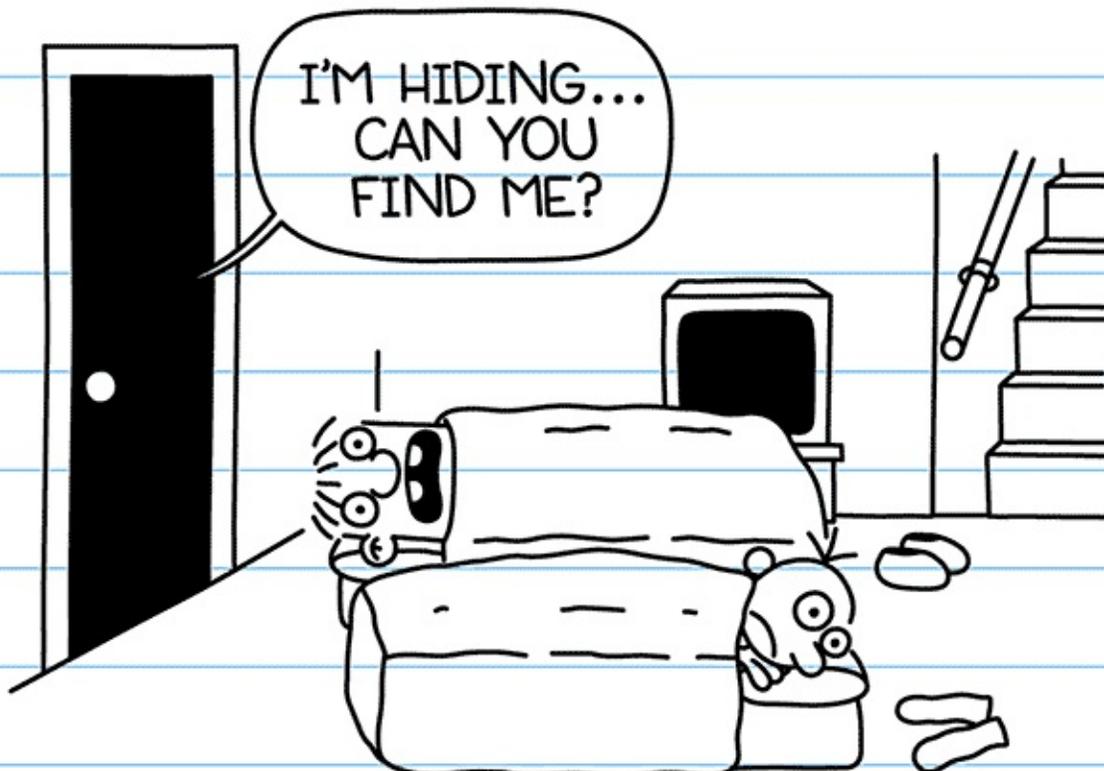
Last summer Rowley spent the night at my

house, and we slept in the basement.

I made sure Rowley took the bed that was closest
to the furnace room, because that room really
freaks me out. I figured if anything came out of
there in the middle of the night, it would grab
Rowley first and I'd have a five-second head
start to escape.

At about 1:00 in the morning, we heard something
in the furnace room that scared the living daylights
out of us.

It sounded like a little ghost girl or something,
and it said —



Me and Rowley practically trampled each other to

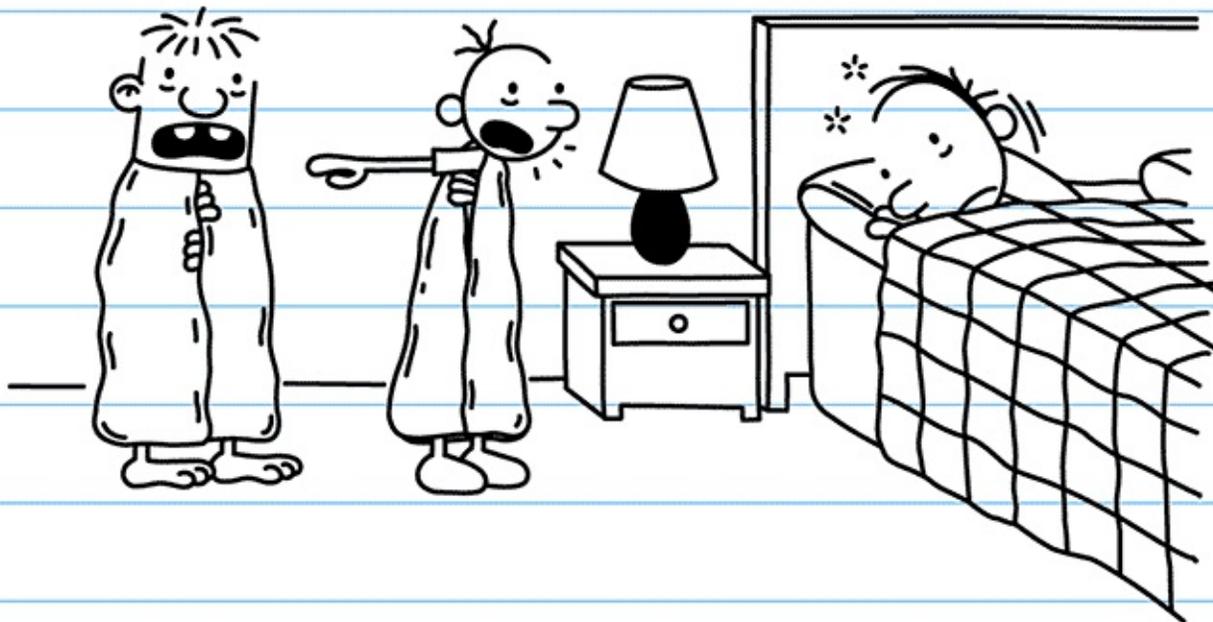
death trying to get up the basement stairs.

26

We burst into Mom and Dad's room, and I

told them our house was haunted and we had

to move immediately.



Dad didn't seem convinced, and he went down to

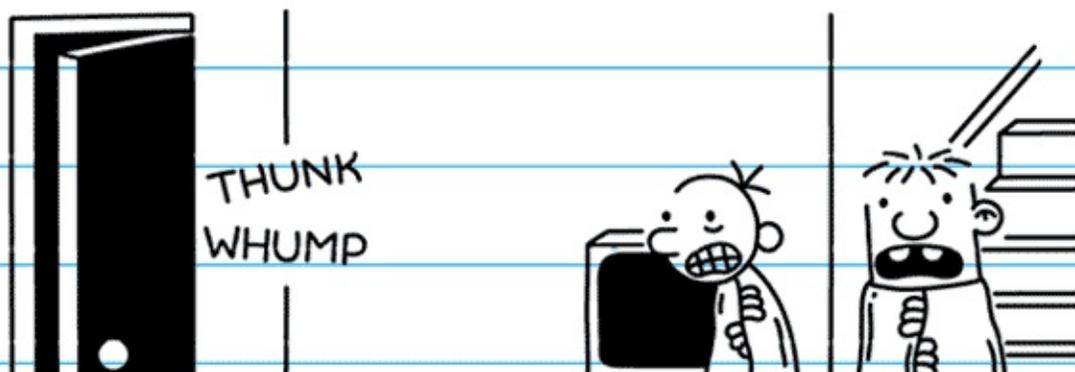
the basement and walked right into the furnace

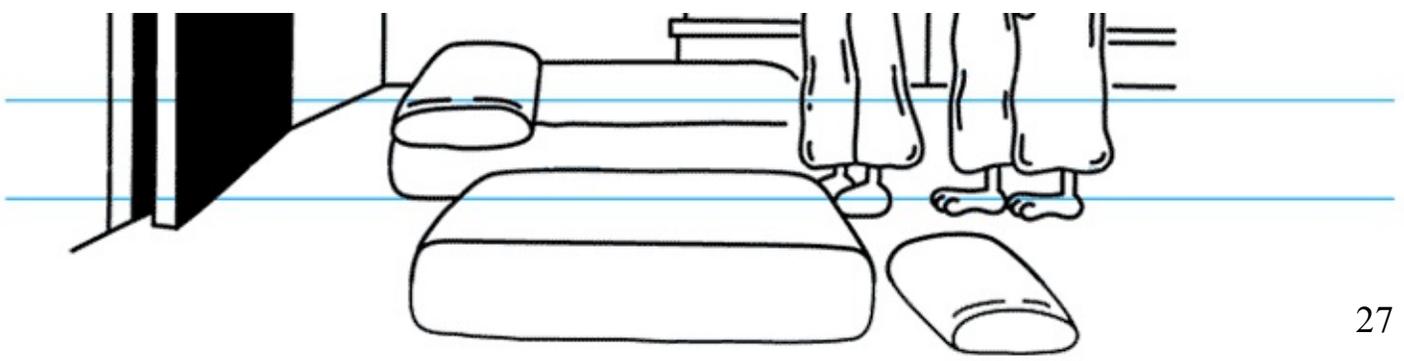
room. Me and Rowley stayed about ten feet back.

I was pretty sure Dad wasn't going to get out

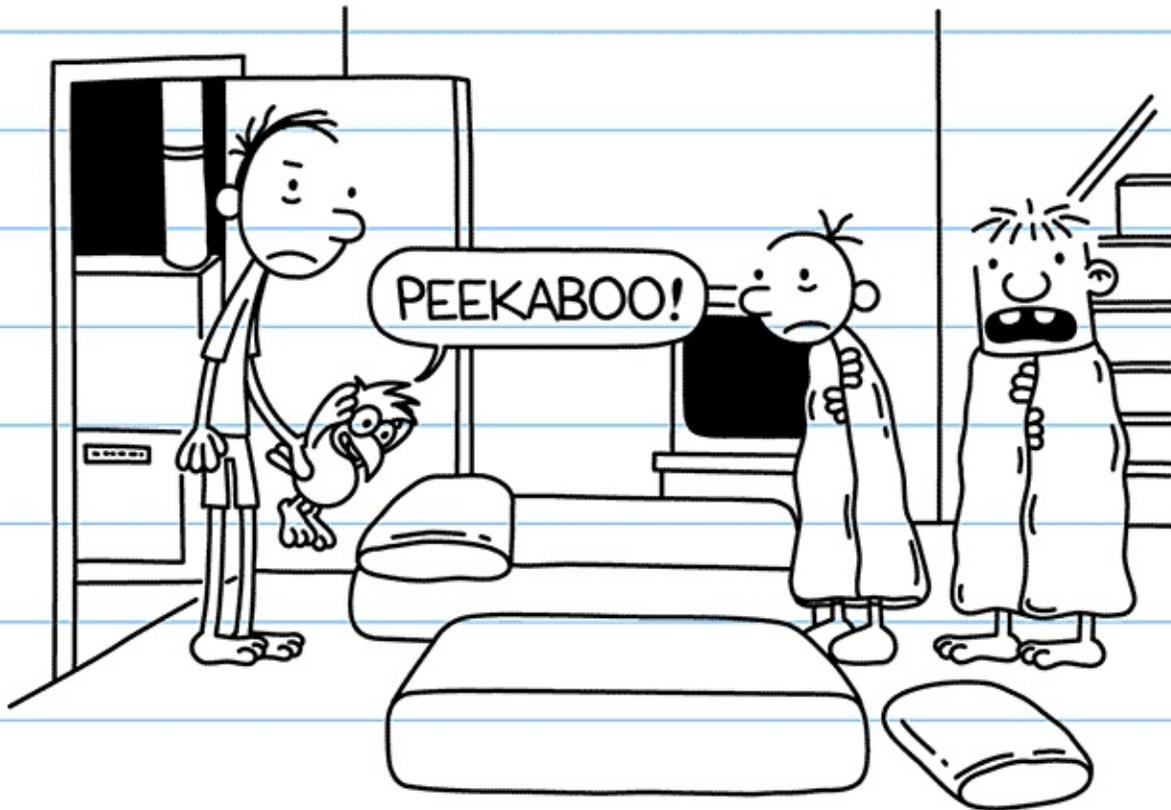
of there alive. I heard some rustling and a few

bumps, and I was ready to make a run for it.

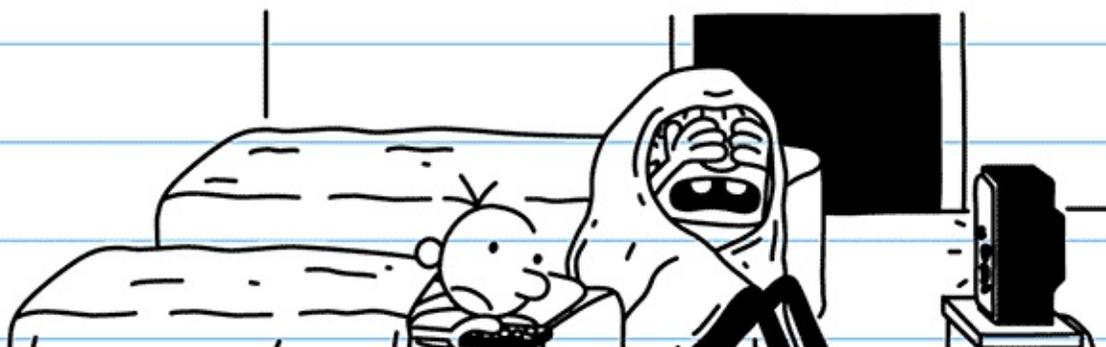




But a few seconds later he came back out with one
of Manny's toys, a doll named Hide-and-Seek Harry.



Last night me and Rowley waited for Mom and
Dad to go to bed, and then we watched our
movie. Technically, I was the only one who
watched it, because Rowley had his eyes and ears
covered the whole entire time.





The movie was about this muddy hand that goes around the country killing people. And the last person who sees the hand is always the next victim.



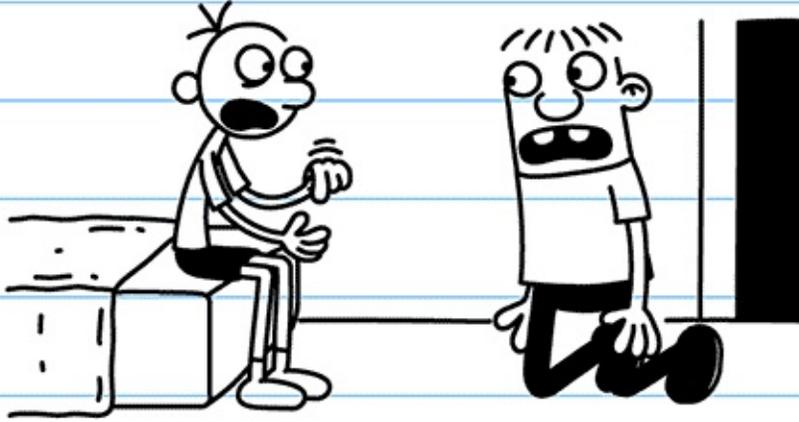
The special effects were really cheesy, and I wasn't even scared until the very end. That's when the twist came.

After the muddy hand strangled its last victim, it came crawling straight at the screen, and then the screen went black. At first I was a little confused, but then I realized it meant the next victim was gonna be me.

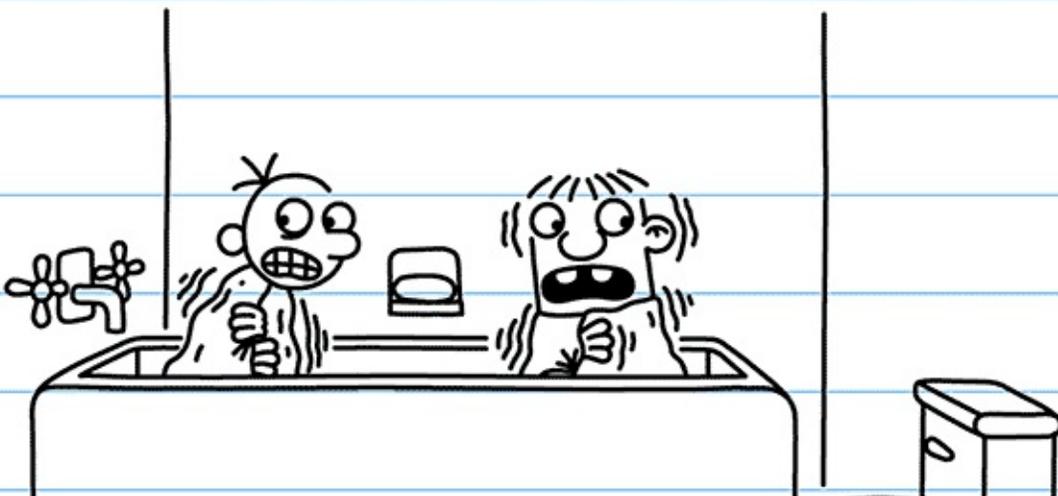
I turned the tv off, and then I described

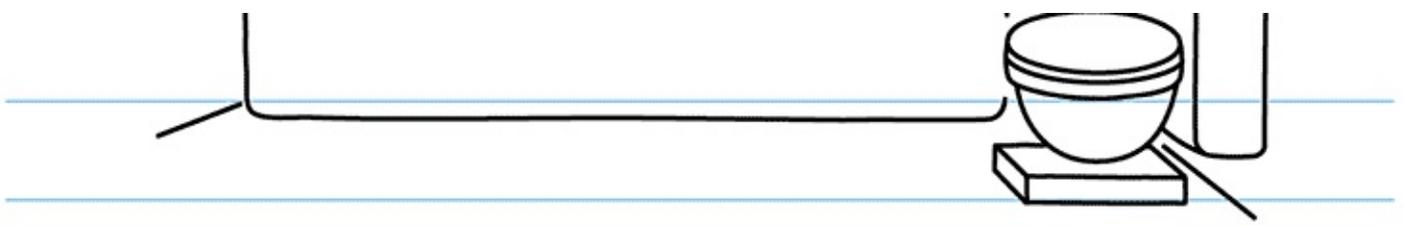
the whole movie to Rowley from beginning to end.

Well, I must've done a pretty good job telling the story, because Rowley got even more freaked-out than I was.

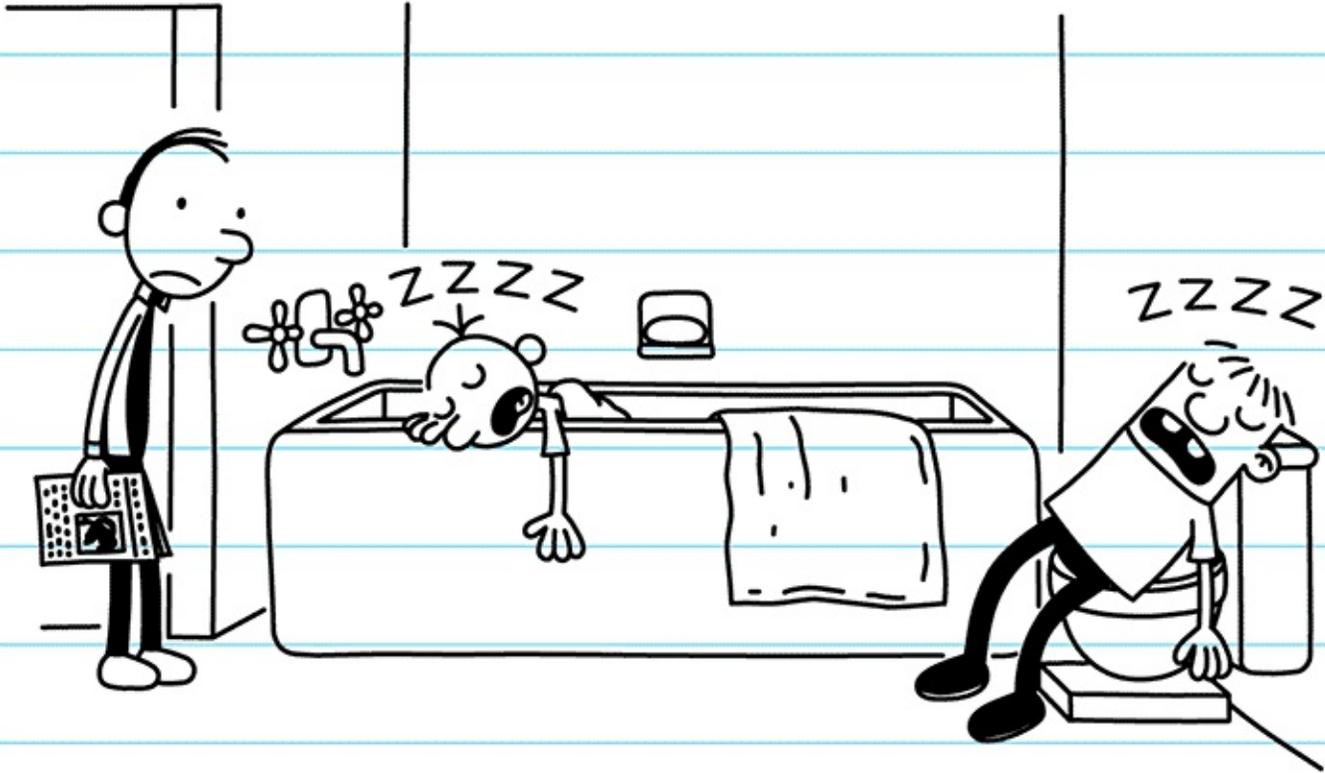


I knew we couldn't go to Mom and Dad this time because they'd ground me if they found out we watched a horror movie. But we didn't feel safe in the basement, so we spent the rest of the night in the upstairs bathroom with the lights on.





I just wish we had managed to stay awake the whole night, because when Dad found us in the morning, it wasn't a pretty scene.



Dad wanted to know what was going on, and I had to fess up. Dad told Mom, so now I'm just waiting to hear how long I'm gonna be grounded for. But to be honest with you, I'm a lot more worried about this muddy hand than any punishment Mom can dream up.

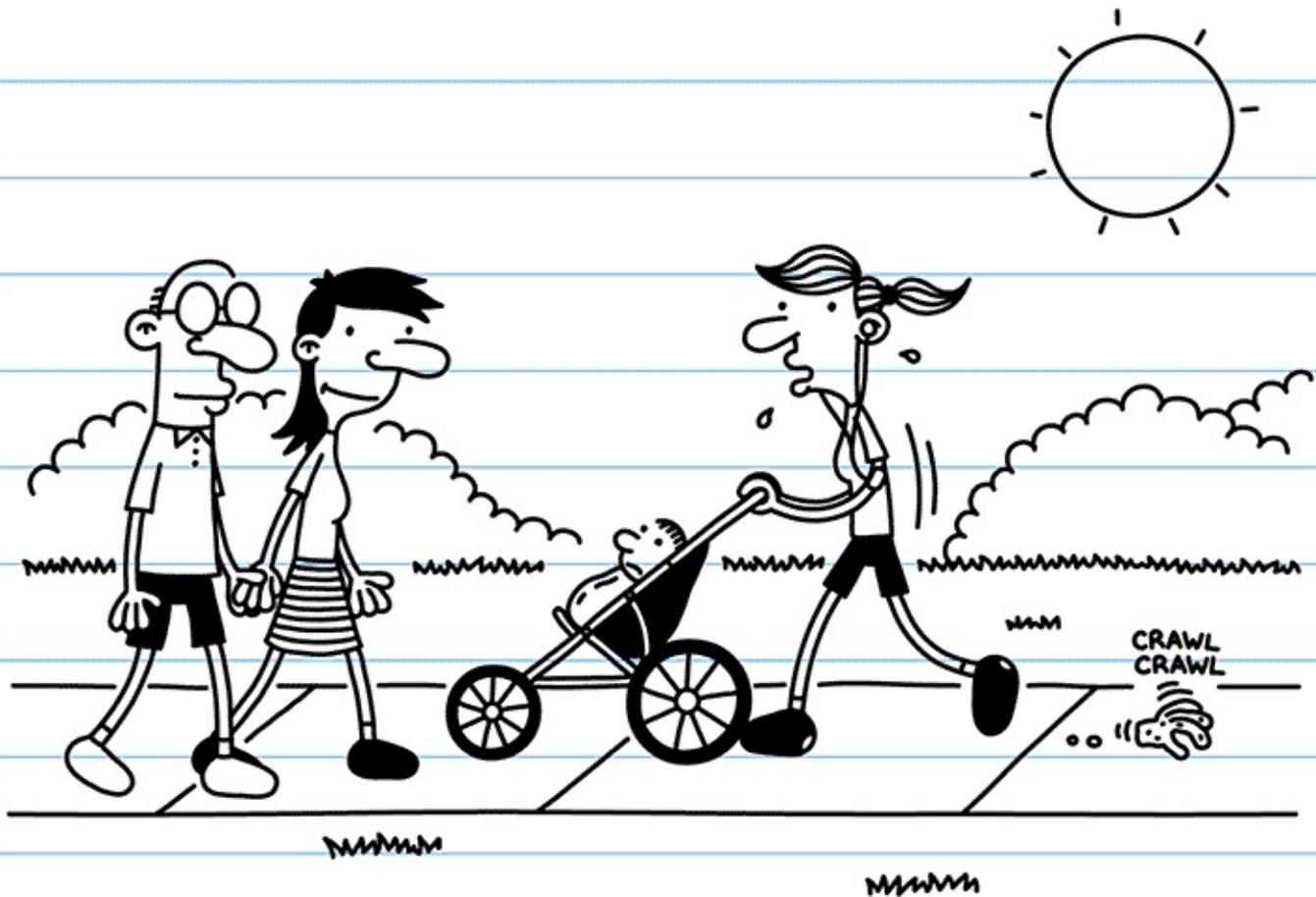
I thought about it, though, and I realized

there's only so much ground a muddy hand can

cover in a day.

So hopefully that means I have a little while

longer to live.



Tuesday

Yesterday, Mom lectured me about how boys my

age watch too many violent movies and play too

many video games, and that we don't know what

Real entertainment is.

I just stayed quiet, because I wasn't sure

exactly where she was going with all this.





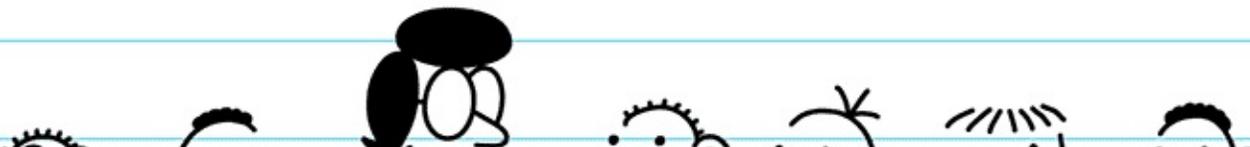
Then Mom said that she was gonna start a
“reading club” for the boys in the neighborhood so
she could teach us about all the great literature we
were missing out on.

I begged Mom to just give me a regular punishment
instead, but she wouldn't budge.



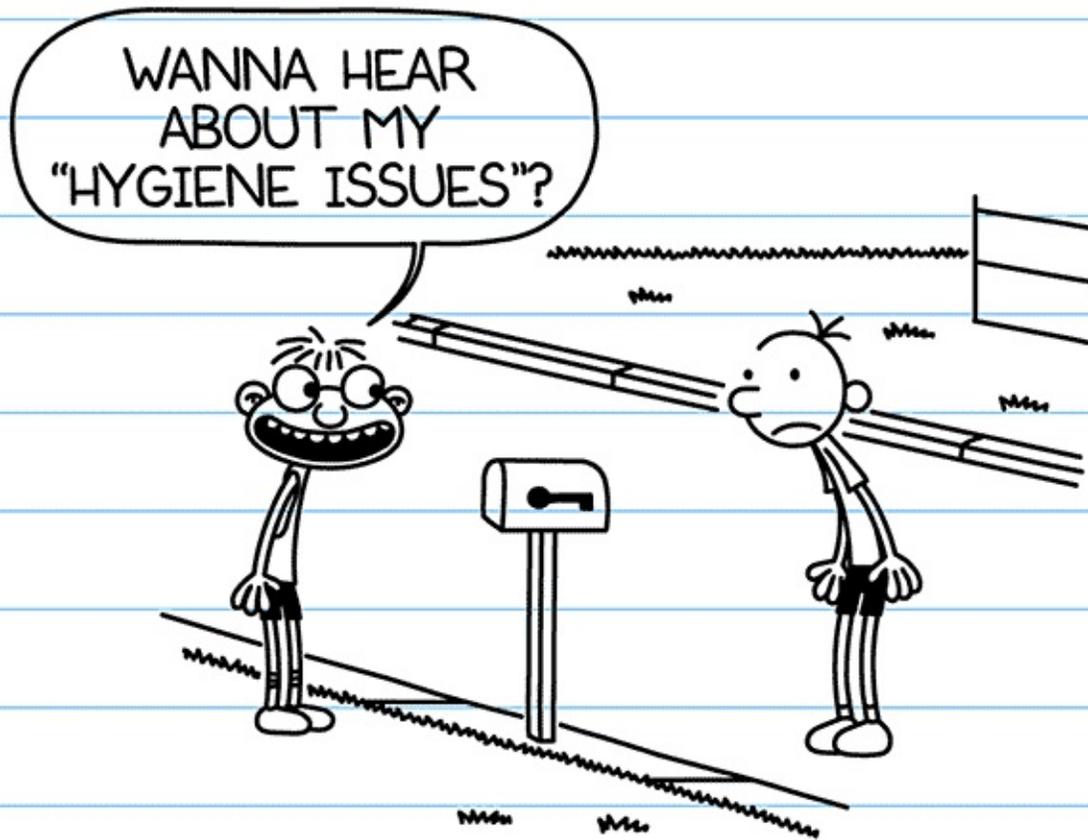
So today was the first meeting of the Reading
Is Fun Club. I felt kind of bad for all the boys
whose moms made them come.

READING IS FUN





I was just glad Mom didn't invite Fregley, this weird kid who lives up the street, because he's been acting stranger than usual lately.



I'm starting to think maybe Fregley's a little dangerous, but luckily he doesn't really leave his front yard during the summer. I think his parents must have an electrical fence or something.

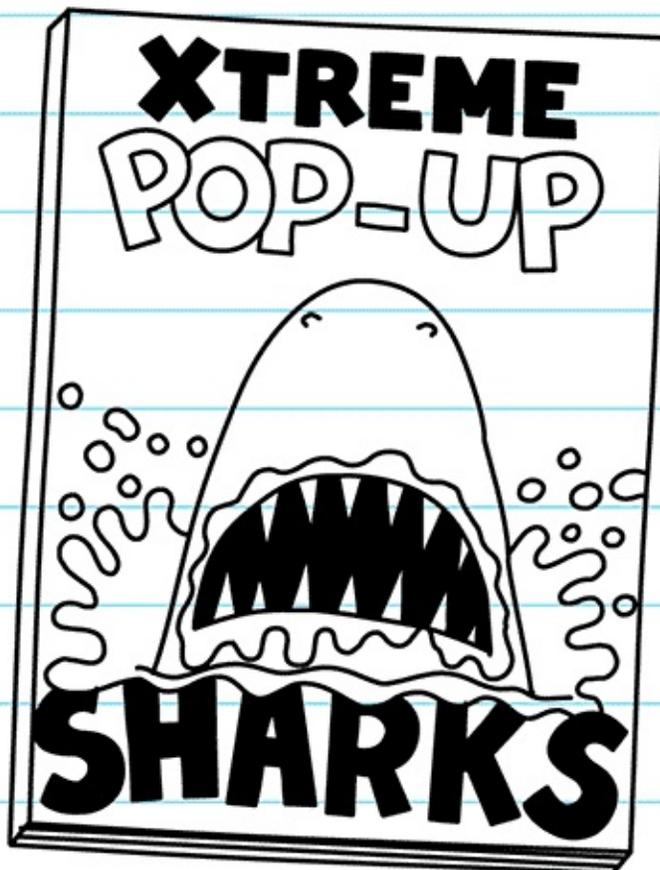
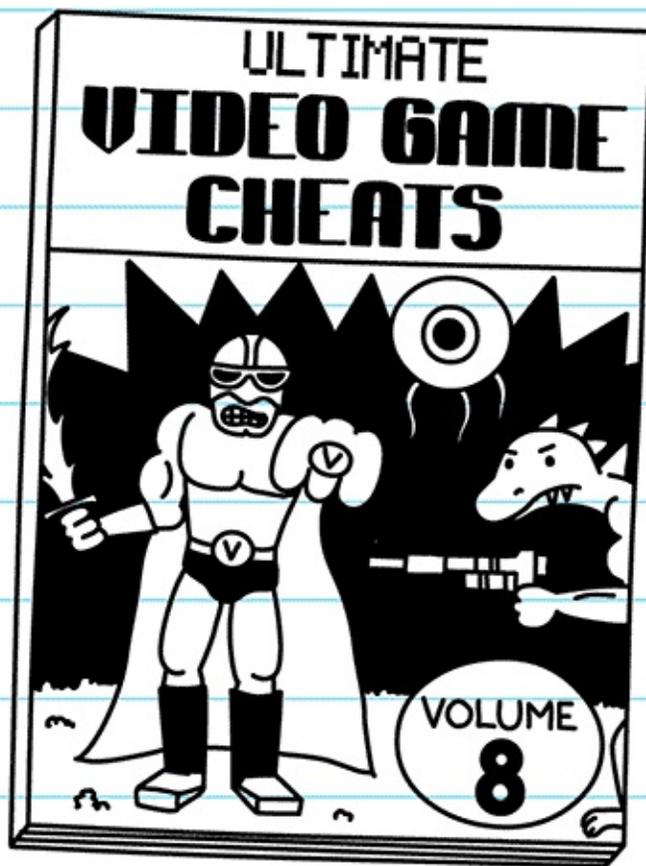
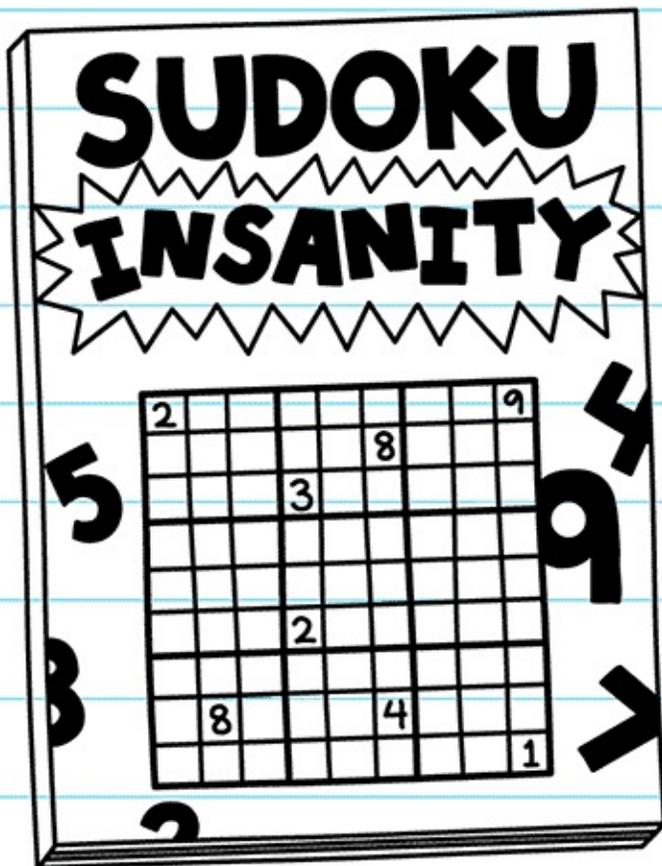
Anyway, Mom told everyone to bring their favorite book to today's meeting so we could pick one and discuss it. All the guys laid their books

on the table, and everyone seemed pretty happy

with the selection except Mom.

34



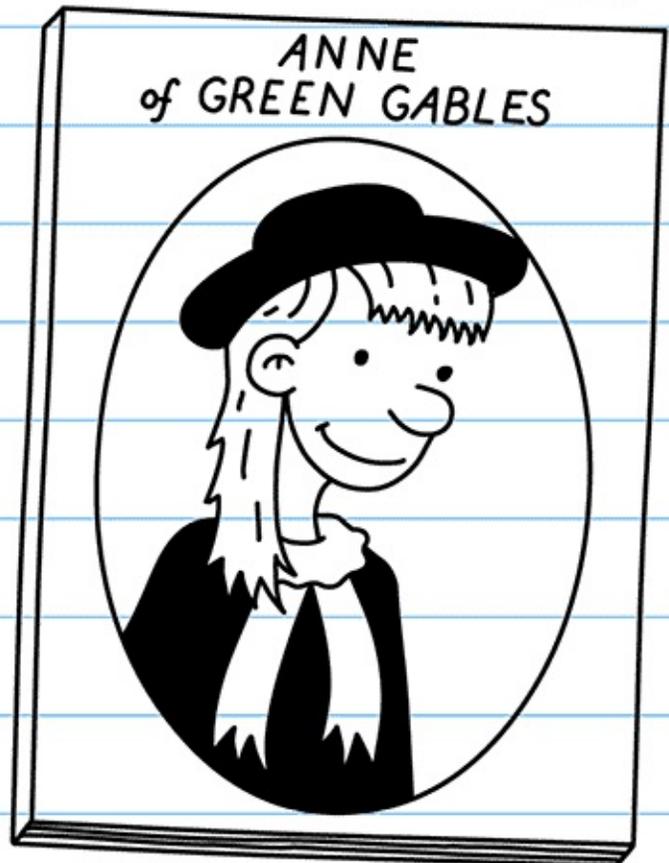


literature and that we were gonna have to

start with the “classics.”

Then she brought out a bunch of books that she

must've had since she was a kid.



These are the exact same types of books our _____
teachers are always pushing us to read at school. _____

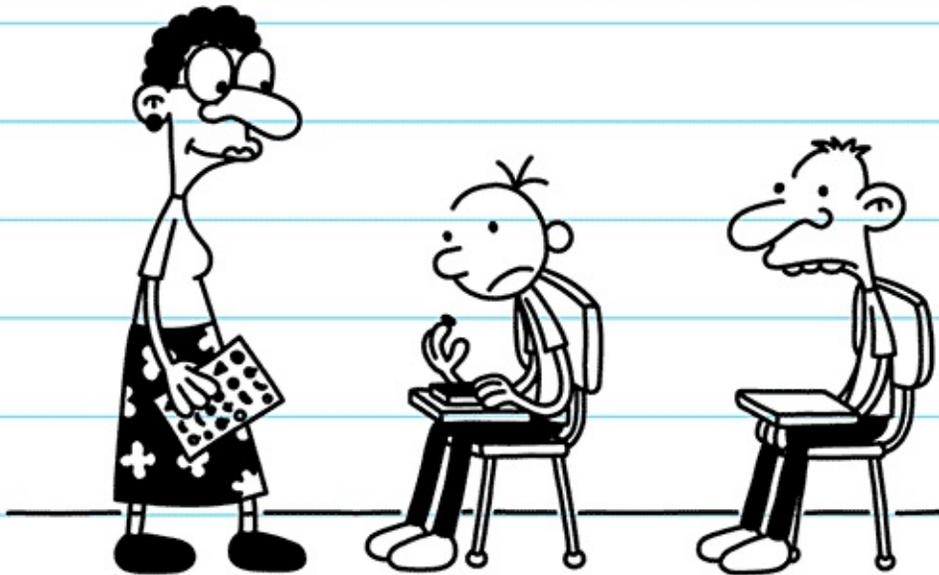
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They have a program where if you read a “classic”

in your free time, they reward you with a sticker

of a hamburger or something like that.



I don't know who they think they're fooling.

You can get a sheet of a hundred stickers down

at the arts-and-crafts store for fifty cents.

I'm not really sure what makes a book a “classic”

to begin with, but I think it has to be at least

fifty years old and some person or animal has to

die at the end.

Mom said if we didn't like the books she picked

out, we could go on a field trip to the library

and find something we all agreed on. But that

won't work for me.

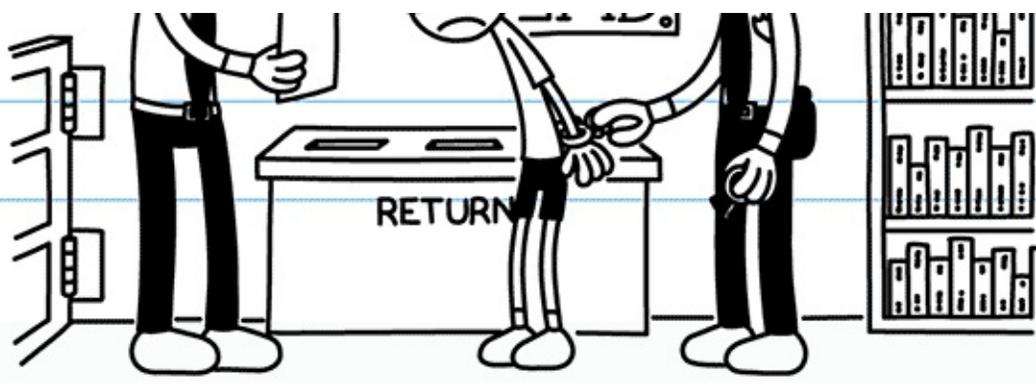
See, when I was eight years old I borrowed a book from the library, and then I forgot all about it. I found the book a few years later behind my desk, and I figured I must've owed about two thousand dollars in late fees on that thing.



So I buried the book in a box of old comics in my closet, and that's where it is to this day. I haven't been back to the library since then, but I know if I ever do show up, they'll be waiting for me.

GREG HEFFLEY, YOU ARE UNDER ARREST FOR FAILING TO RETURN "HOW TO MAKE SOCK PUPPETS."





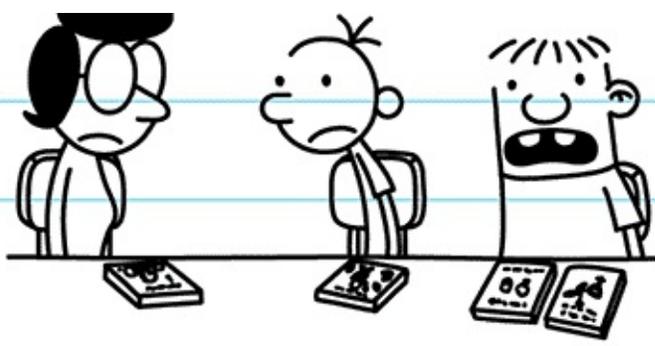
In fact, I get nervous if I even see a librarian.



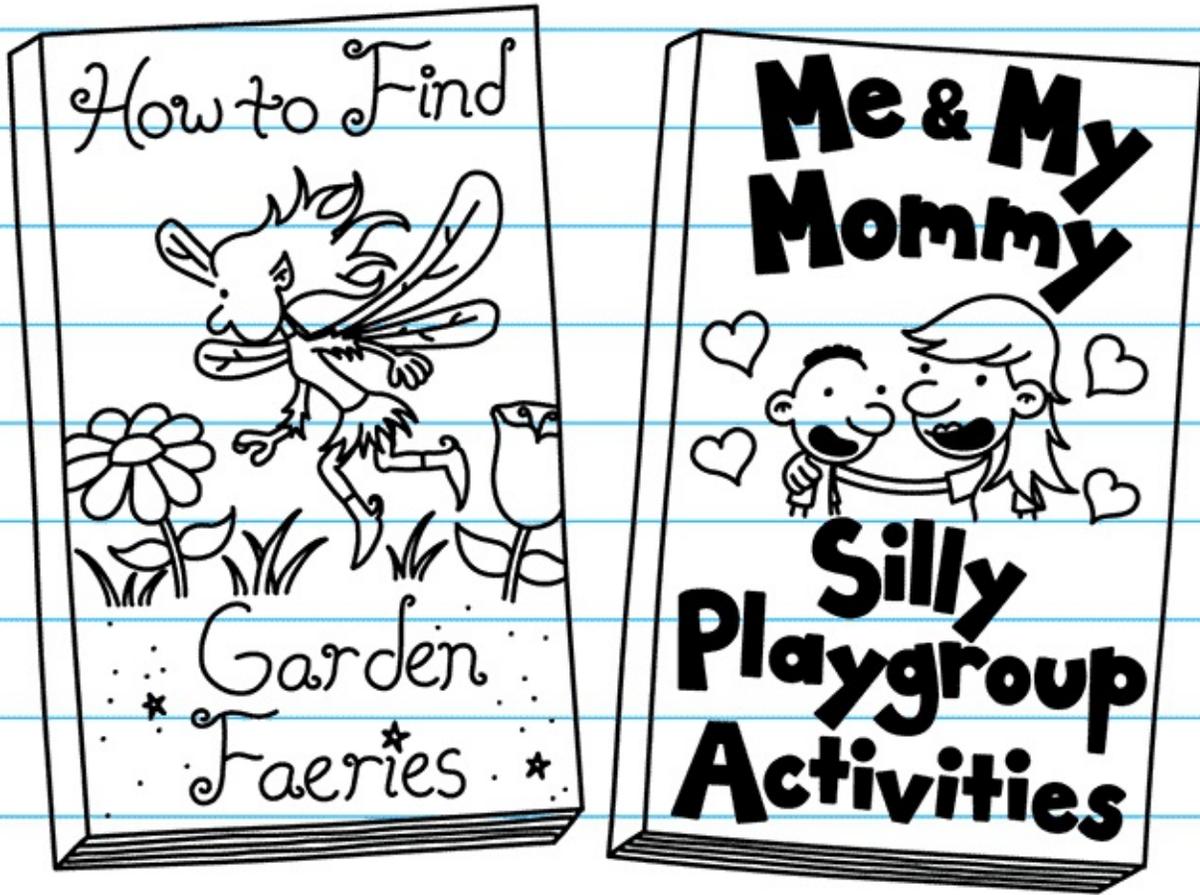
I asked Mom if we could get a second chance to pick out a book on our own, and she said we could. We're supposed to meet again tomorrow and bring our new selections with us.

Wednesday

Well, the membership of the Reading Is Fun Club took a big hit overnight. Most of the guys who came yesterday bailed out, and now there's only two of us.



Rowley brought two books along with him.



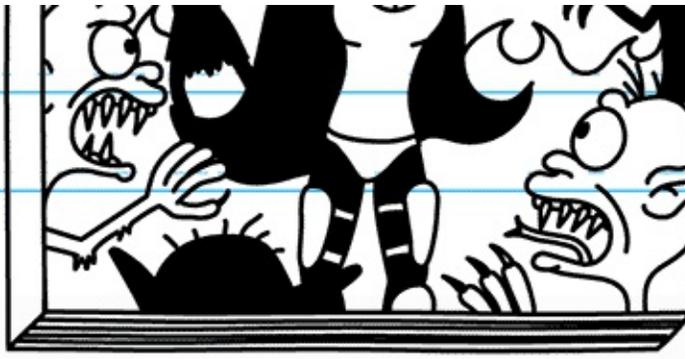
The book I picked was the ninth volume in the

“Magick and Monsters: Dark Realms” series. I

figured Mom would like it because it’s pretty long

and there aren’t any pictures.





But Mom didn't like my book. She said she didn't

approve of the illustration on the cover because

she didn't like the way it portrayed women.

I've read "Shadowdoom," and from what I can

remember, there aren't even any women in the

story. In fact, I kind of wonder if the person

who designed the cover even Read the book.

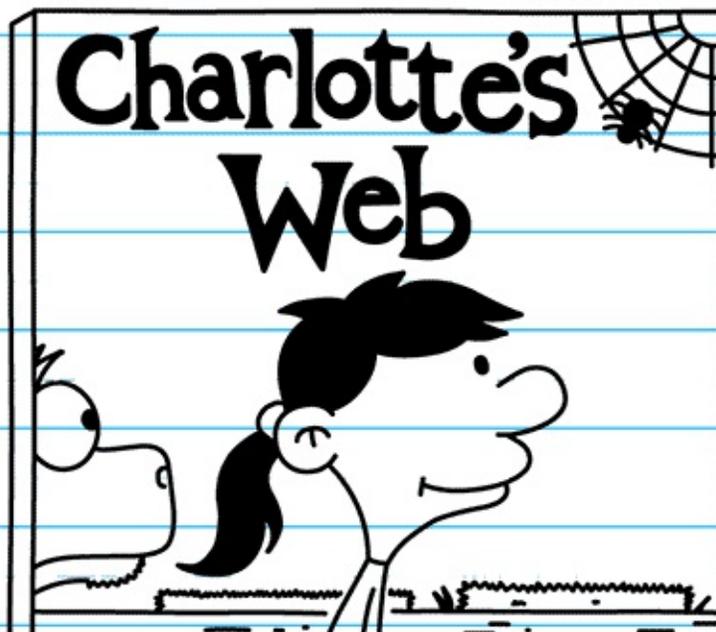
Anyway, Mom said that she was gonna use her

veto power as the Reading Is Fun Club's founder

and choose the book for us. So she chose this

book called "Charlotte's Web," which looks like one

of those "classics" I was talking about before.





Just from looking at the cover, I guarantee either

the girl or the pig doesn't make it to the end of

the book.

Friday

Well, the Reading Is Fun Club is down to one

member, and that's me.



Yesterday Rowley went golfing or something with

his dad, so he kind of hung me out to dry. I

didn't do my reading assignment, and I was really

counting on him to cover for me at the meeting.

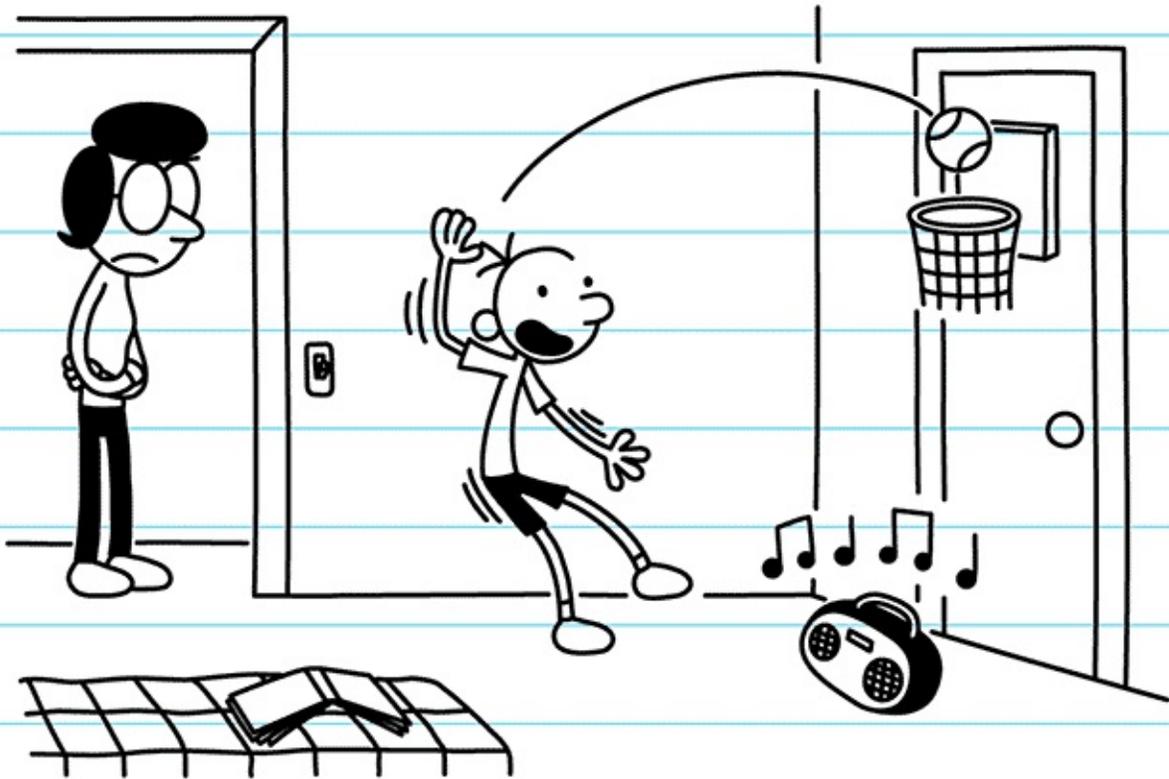
It's not really my fault that I couldn't finish

my reading assignment, though. Mom told me I

had to read in my bedroom for twenty minutes

yesterday, but the truth is, I just have trouble

concentrating for long periods of time.



After Mom caught me horsing around, she
banned me from watching tv until I read the
book. So last night I had to wait until she went
to bed before I could get my entertainment fix.

I kept thinking about that movie with the muddy
hand, though. I was afraid that if I was watching
tv all by myself late at night, the muddy hand
might crawl out from under the couch and grab my
foot or something.

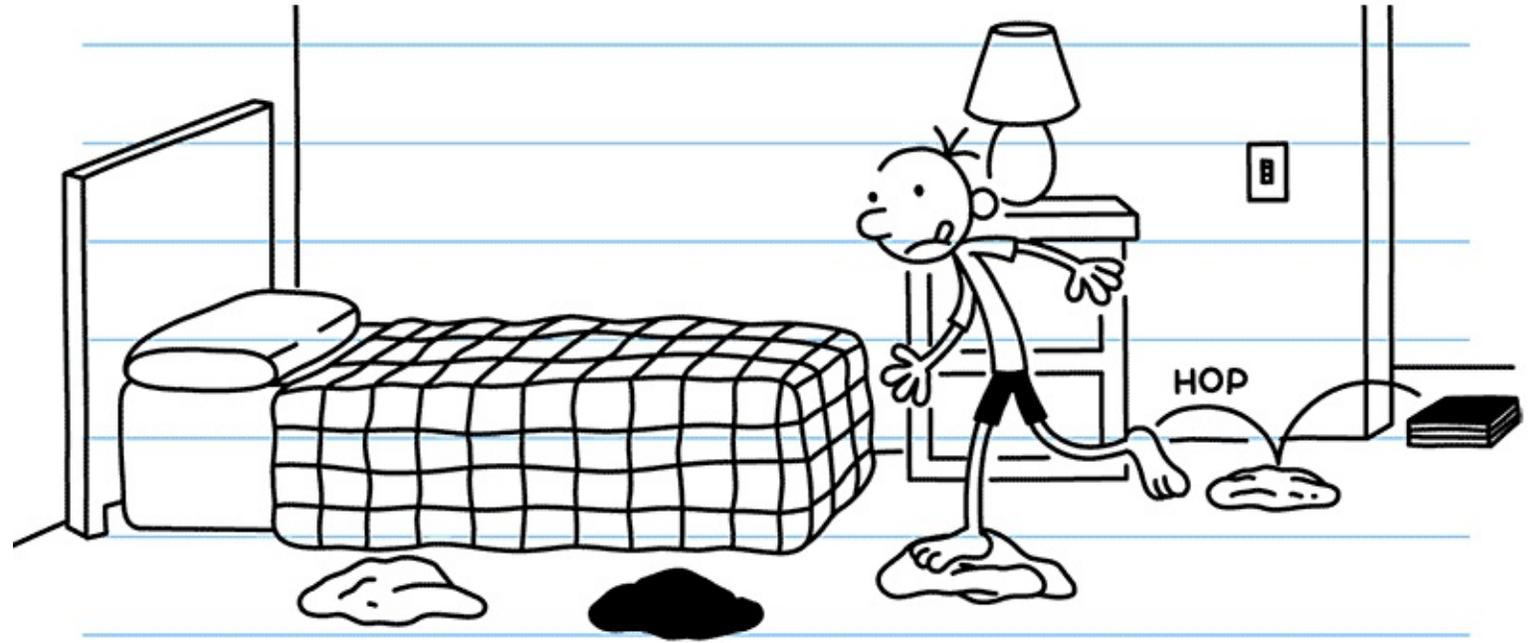
The way I solved the problem was by making a

trail of clothes and other stuff all the way from my

bedroom down to the family room.

That way I was able to make it downstairs

and back without ever touching the ground.



This morning Dad tripped over a dictionary I

left at the top of the stairs, so now he's mad

at me. But I'll take Dad being angry over the

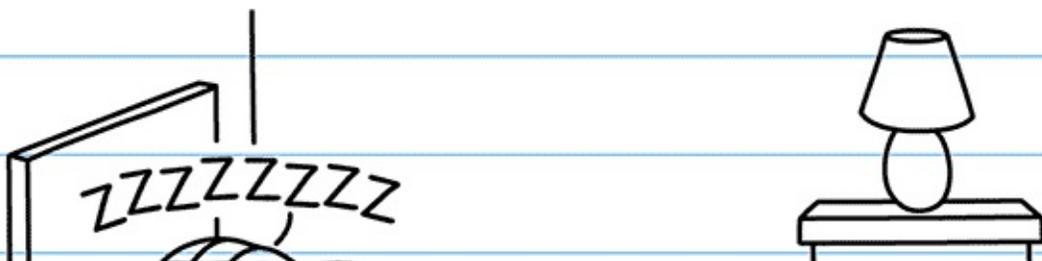
alternative any day of the week.

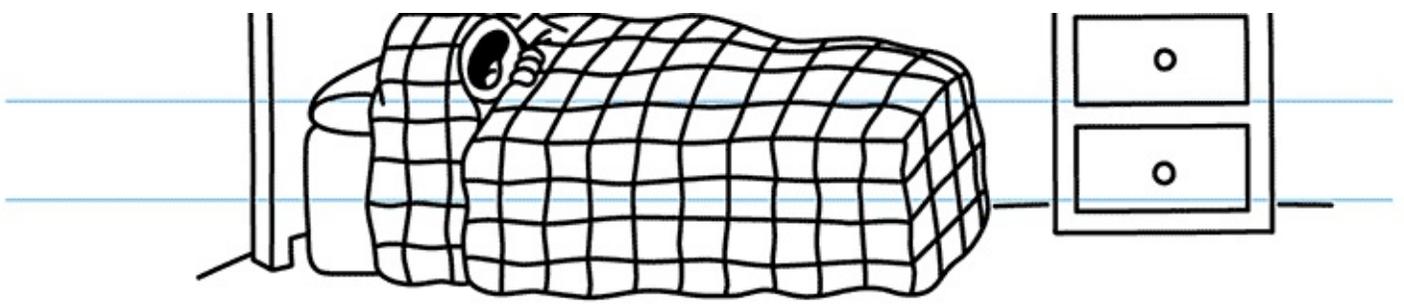
My new fear is that the hand is gonna crawl up

on my bed and get me in my sleep. So lately I've

been covering my whole body with the blanket

and leaving a hole so I can breathe.



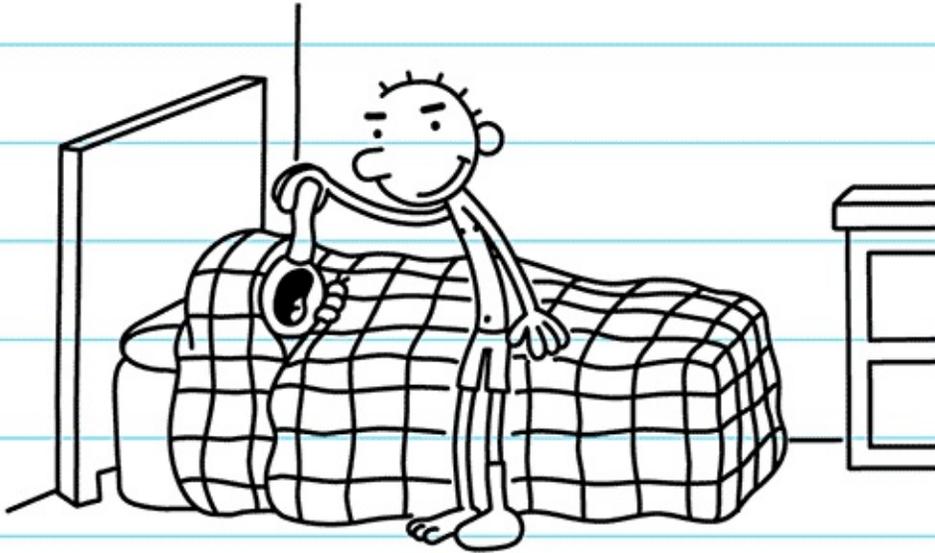


But that strategy has its own risks. Rodrick

got into my room today, and I had to spend

the morning trying to wash the taste of a dirty

sock out of my mouth.



Sunday

Today was my deadline for finishing the first

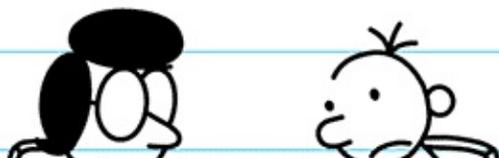
three chapters of "Charlotte's Web." When Mom

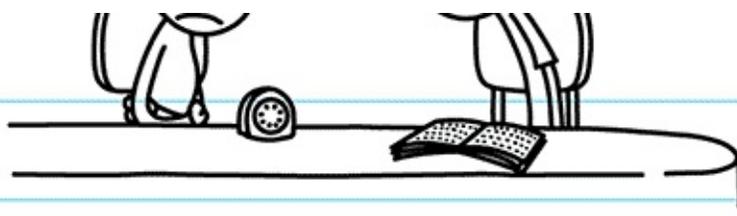
found out I wasn't done yet, she said we were

gonna sit down at the kitchen table until I

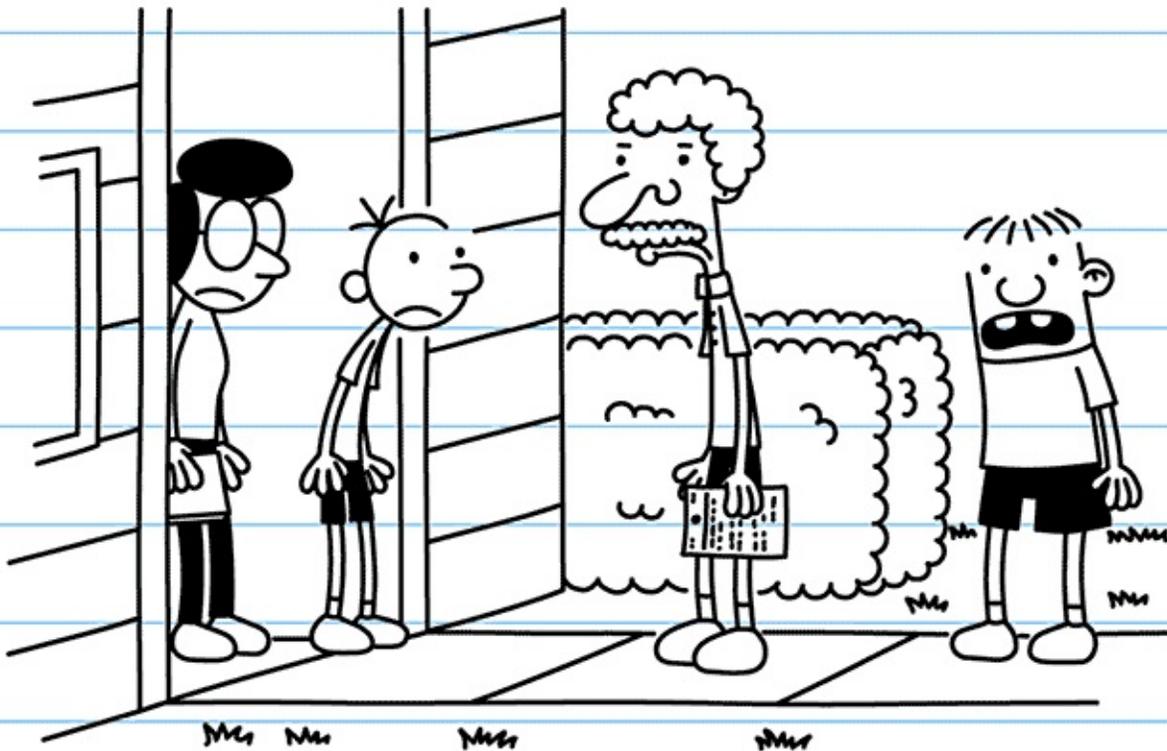
was finished.

READING IS FUN





About a half hour later there was a knock at the front door, and it was Rowley. I thought maybe he was coming back to the Reading Is Fun Club, but when I saw that his dad was with him, I knew something was up.



Mr. Jefferson had an official-looking piece of paper with the country club logo on it. He said it was a bill for all the fruit smoothies me and Rowley ordered at the clubhouse, and the grand total was eighty-three dollars.

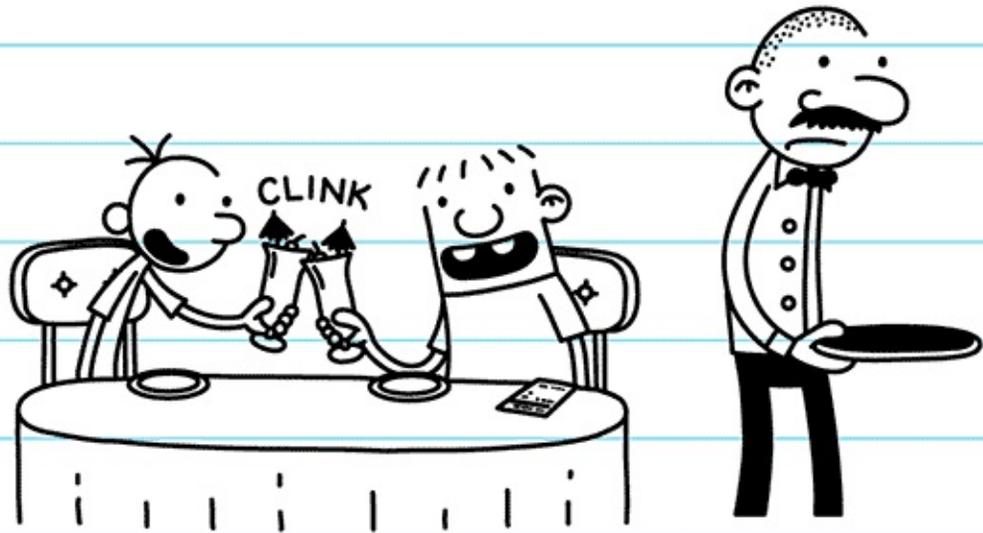
All those times me and Rowley ordered drinks at the clubhouse, we just wrote down Mr. Jefferson's

account number on the tab. Nobody told us someone

actually had to pay for all that.

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I still didn't really understand what Mr. Jefferson was doing at my house. I think he's an architect or something, so if he needs eighty-three bucks, he can just design an extra building. He talked to Mom, though, and they both agreed that me and Rowley needed to pay off the tab.

I told Mom me and Rowley are just kids and it's not like we have salaries or careers or whatever.

But Mom said we were just gonna have to be "creative." Then she said we would have to suspend the Reading Is Fun Club's meetings until we paid what we owed.

To be honest with you, I'm kind of relieved.

Because at this point, anything that doesn't

involve reading sounds pretty good to me.

Tuesday

Me and Rowley racked our brains all day yesterday

trying to figure out how to pay off that eighty-

three dollars. Rowley said maybe I should just go

to the Atm and withdraw some money to pay off

his dad.

The reason Rowley said that is because he thinks

I'm rich. A couple of years ago during the holidays,

Rowley came over and we had just run out of toilet

paper at my house. My family was using these holiday

cocktail napkins as a substitute until Dad got to the

store again.



Rowley thought the holiday napkins were some

kind of really fancy toilet paper, and he asked

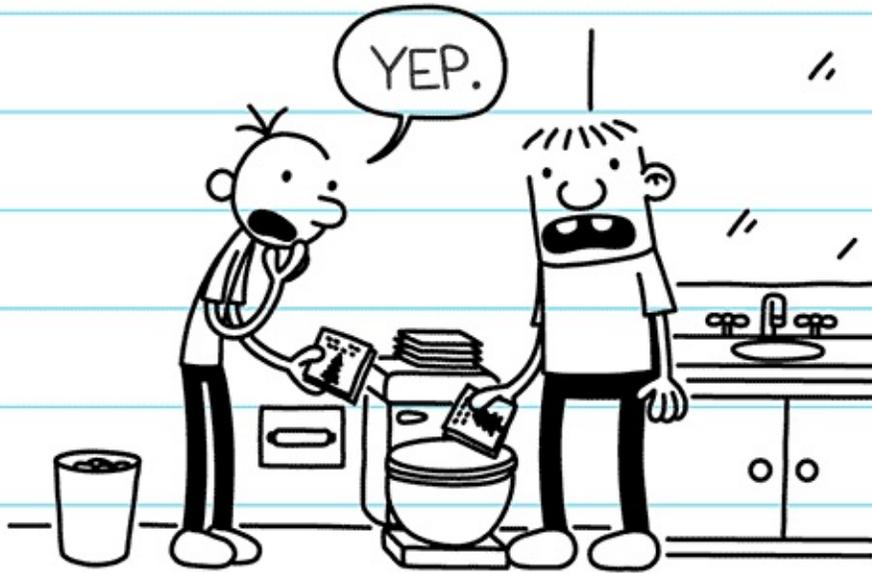
me if my family was rich.

48



I wasn't gonna pass up the opportunity to

impress him.



Anyway, I'm Not rich, and that's the problem.

I tried to figure out a way a kid my age could

get his hands on some cash, and then it hit me:

We could start a lawn care service.

I'm not talking about some average, run-of-the-mill

lawn care service, either. I'm talking about a company

that takes lawn care to the next level. We decided

to name our company the V.I.P. Lawn Service.

We called up the Yellow Pages people and told

them we wanted to place an ad in their book.

And not just one of those tiny little text ads,

but a really big one with full color that takes up

two whole pages.

But get this: The Yellow Pages people told us it

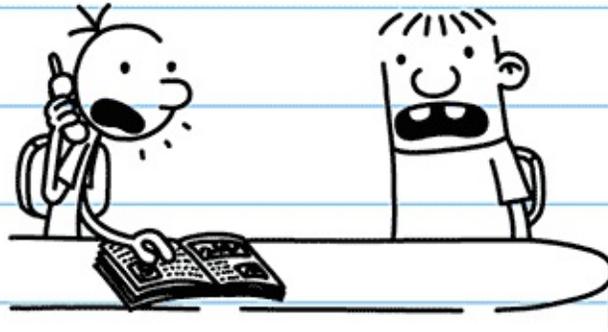
was gonna cost us a few thousand bucks to put

our ad in their book.

I told them that didn't make a lot of sense to

me, because how's someone supposed to pay for an

ad if they haven't even earned any money yet?



Me and Rowley realized we were gonna have to do

this a different way, and make our oWN ads.

I figured we could just make flyers and put them in

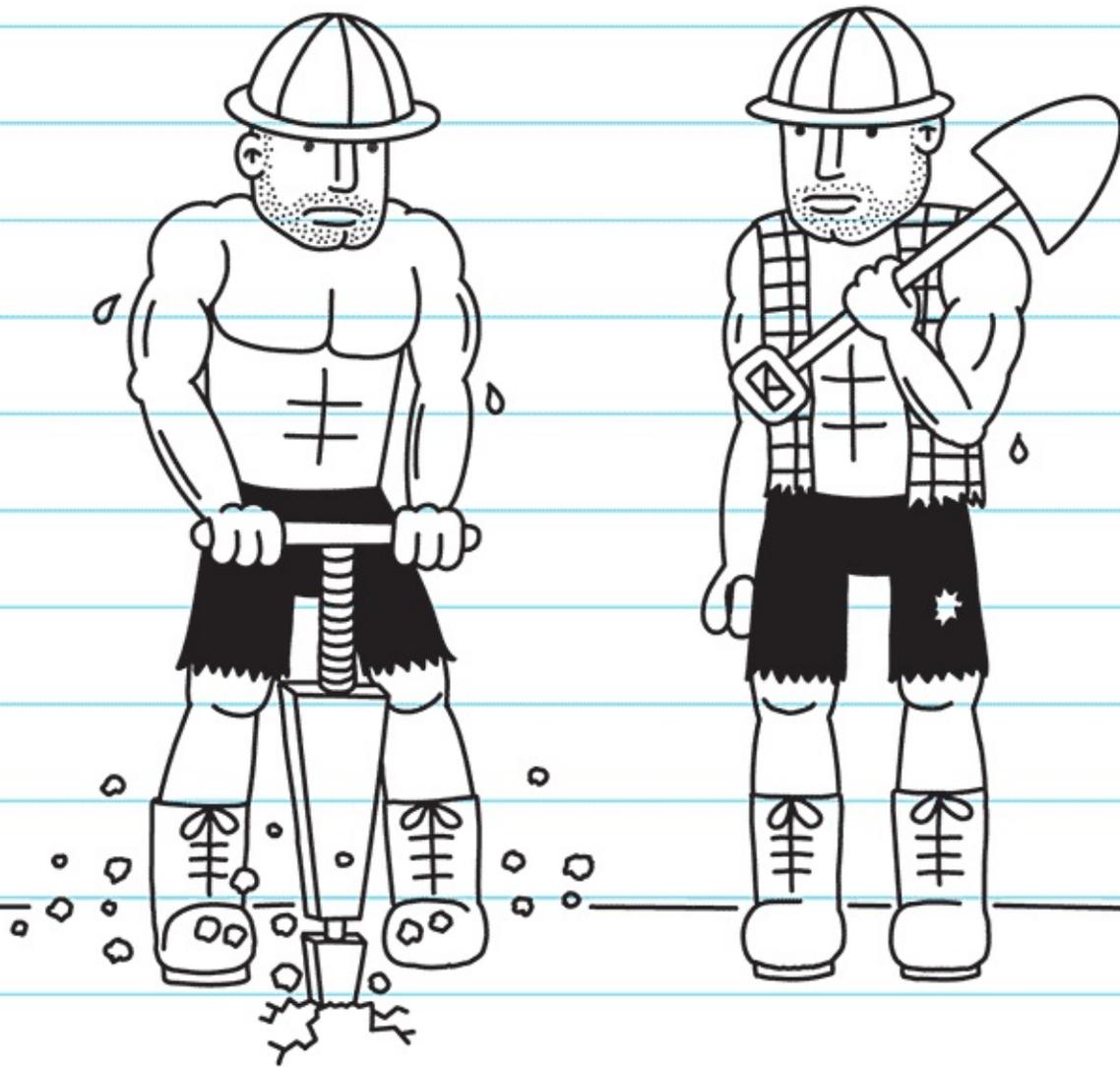
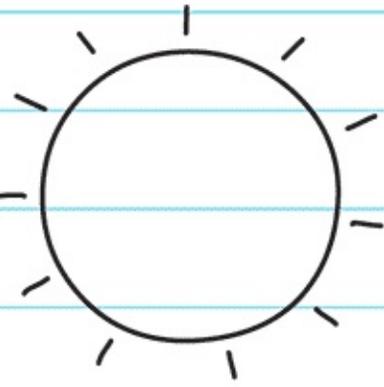
every mailbox in our neighborhood. All we needed was

some clip art to get us started.

So we went down to the corner store and bought

one of those cards women get each other on their birthdays.

**Hope your
birthday is**



HOT, HOT, HOT!

pasted pictures of our heads onto the bodies

from the card.

After that we got some clip art of lawn tools and

put it all together. Then we printed it out, and

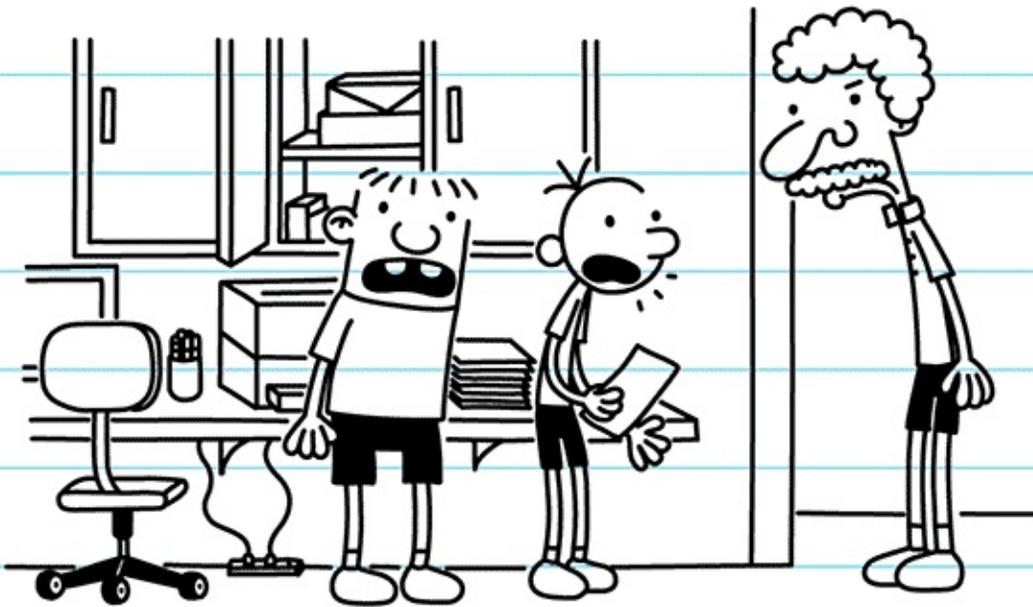
I have to say, it looked great.



AWARD-WINNING,
WORLD-CLASS SERVICE!

CALL 555-2941

I did some math, and I figured it would cost us at least a couple hundred bucks in color ink cartridges and paper to make enough flyers for the whole neighborhood. So we asked Rowley's dad if he'd go out to the store and get us all the stuff we needed.

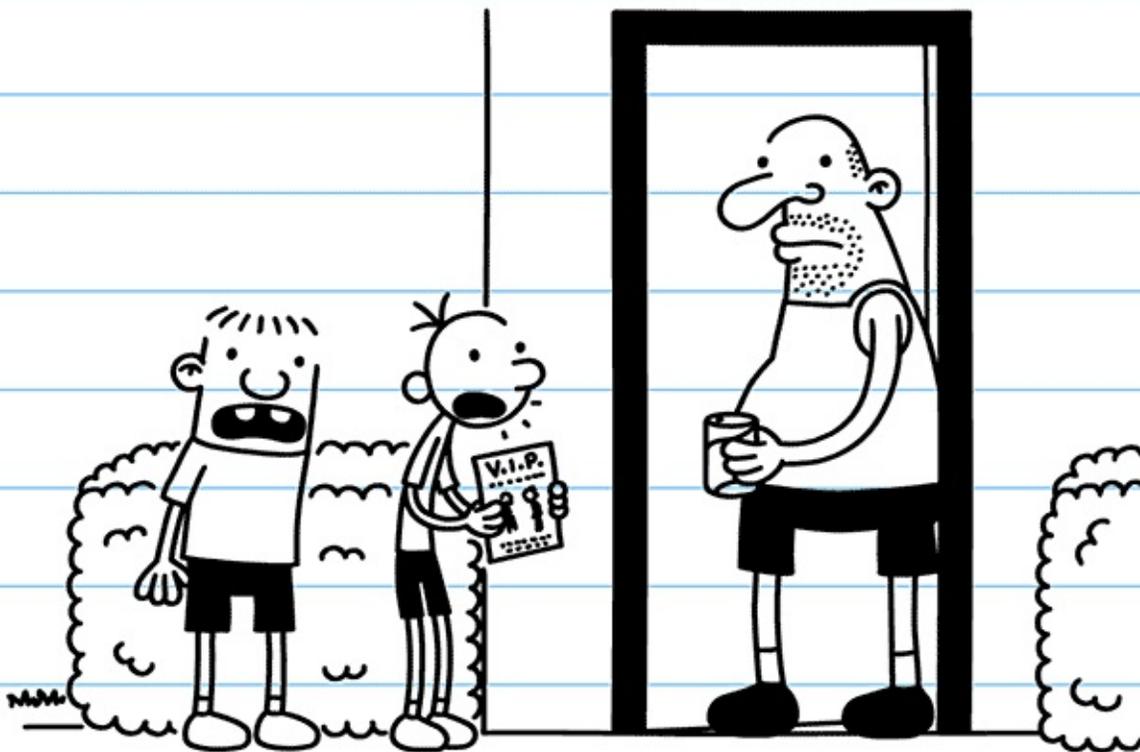


Mr. Jefferson didn't go for it. In fact, he told us we couldn't use his computer or print out any more copies of our flyer.

I was a little surprised by that, because if Mr. Jefferson wanted us to pay him back, he sure wasn't making it easy. But all we could really do

was take our one flyer and get out of his office.

Then me and Rowley went around from house to house showing everyone our flyer and telling them about the V.I.P. Lawn Service.



After we hit a few houses, we realized it would be a lot easier to just ask the next person we spoke with to pass the flyer along so me and Rowley wouldn't have to do all that walking.

Now the only thing we have to do is sit back and wait for the phone calls to start rolling in.

Thursday

Me and Rowley waited around all day yesterday,

but we didn't get any calls.

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I was starting to wonder if we should try to find

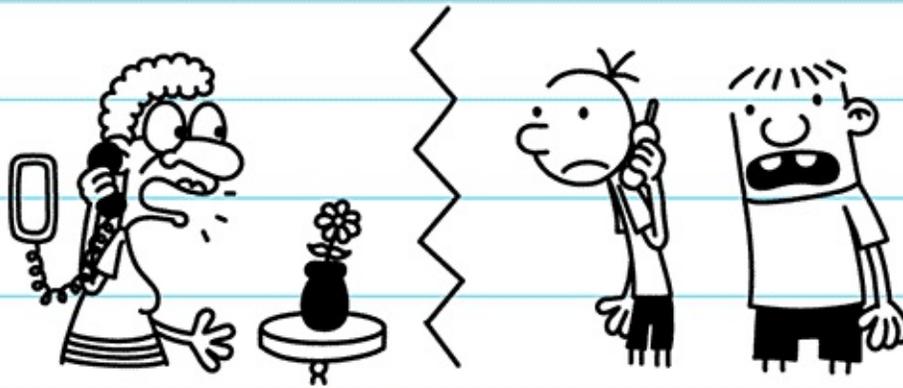
a card with more muscular guys for our next flyer.

Then, at about 11:00 this morning, we got a call

from Mrs. Canfield, who lives on Gramma's street.

She said her lawn needed mowing but she wanted to

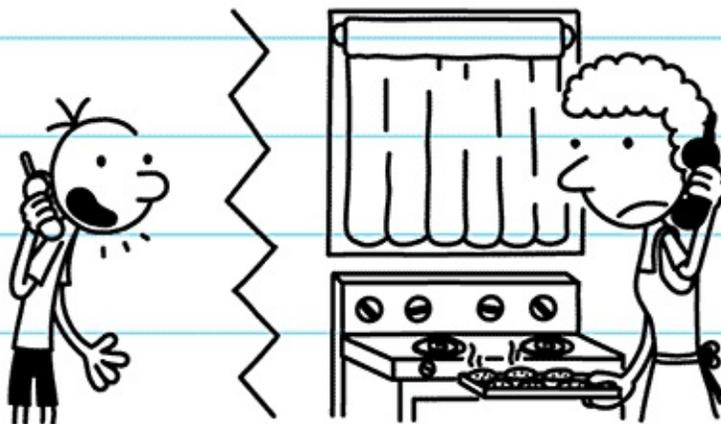
check our references before she hired us.



I used to do lawn work for Gramma, so I called

her up and asked if she could call Mrs. Canfield

and tell her what a good worker I am.



Well, I must've caught Gramma on a bad day,

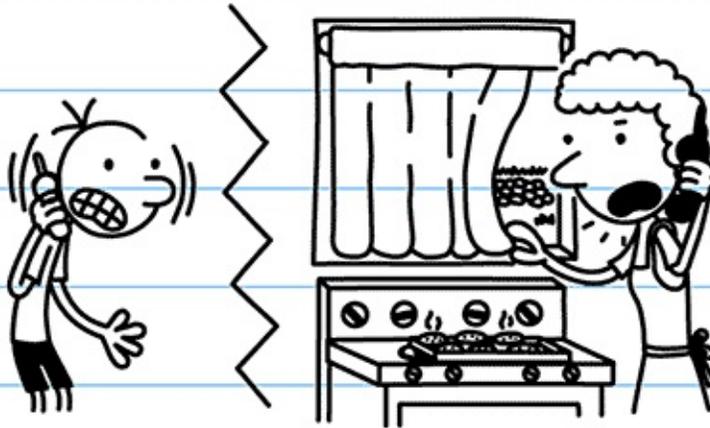
because she really lit into me. She said I left piles

of leaves on her lawn last fall and now there were

patches of dead grass all over her yard.

Then she asked me when I was gonna come over

and finish the job.



That was not really the kind of response I was

looking for. I told Gramma we were only taking

paying jobs at the moment but maybe we could

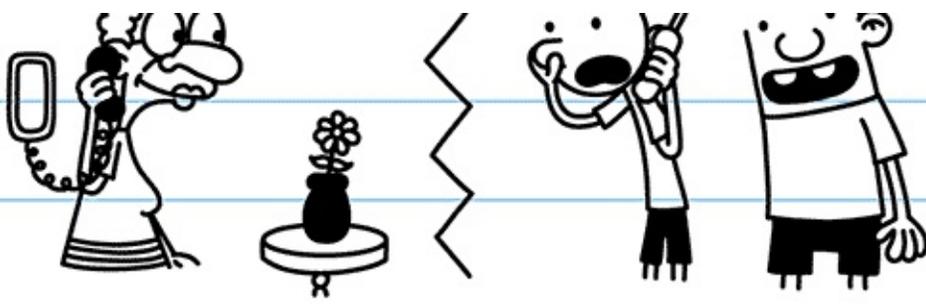
get back to her later on in the summer.

Then I called Mrs. Canfield and did my best

imitation of Gramma. I guess I'm lucky my voice

hasn't changed yet.

THE V.I.P. LAWN SERVICE
DOES EXCEPTIONAL WORK
AND CATERED TO MY
EVERY LAWN NEED.



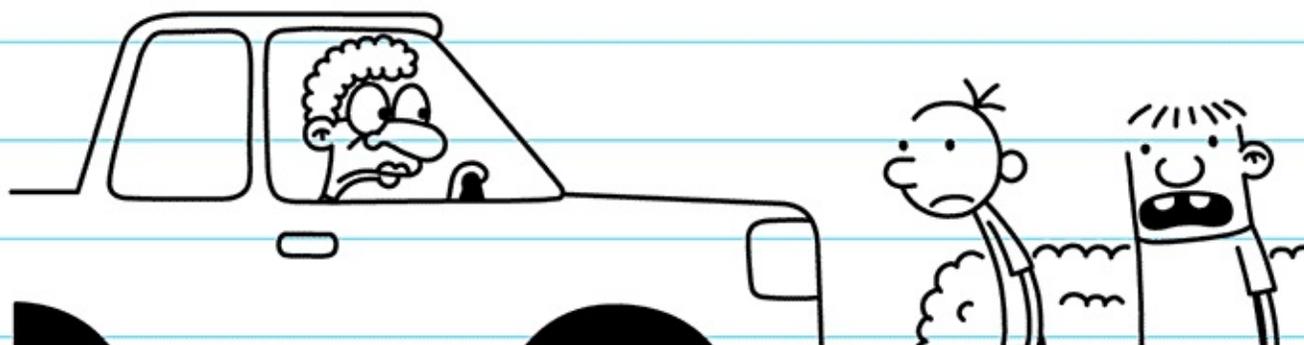
Believe it or not, Mrs. Canfield bought it. She thanked "Gramma" for the reference and hung up.

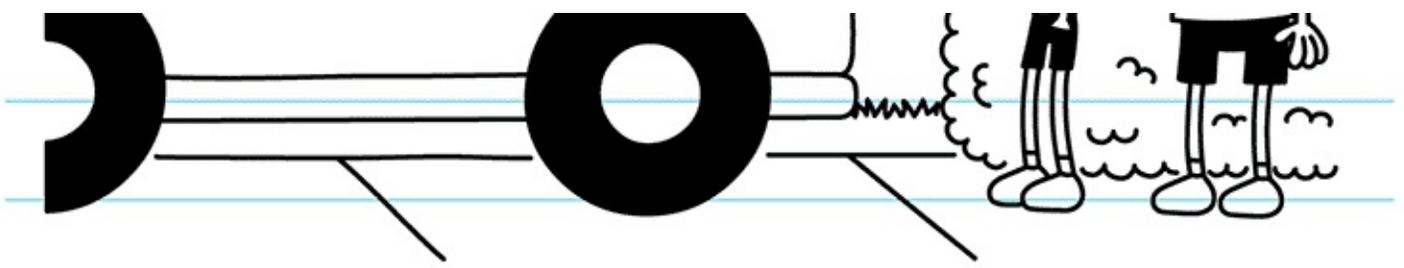
Then she called back a few minutes later, and I answered in my regular voice. Mrs. Canfield said she'd hire us and that we should come by her house later today to get started.

But it's kind of far from my house to Mrs. Canfield's, so I asked her if she could come get us.

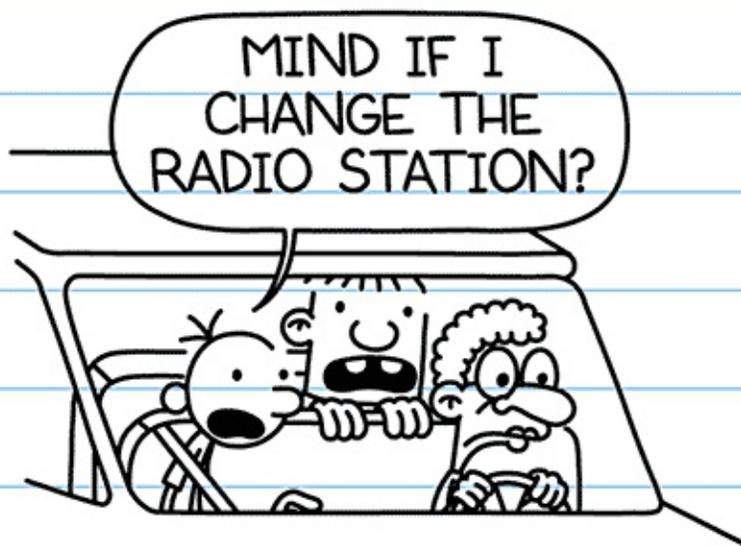
She didn't seem real happy that we didn't have our own transportation, but she said she'd be willing to pick us up if we could be ready at noon.

Mrs. Canfield came to my house at 12:00 in her son's pickup truck, and she asked us where our lawn mower and all our equipment was.





I said we didn't actually have any equipment but
that my Gramma keeps her side door unlocked and
I might be able to sneak in and borrow her mower
for a few hours. I guess Mrs. Canfield must have
been pretty desperate to get her lawn mowed,
because she went along with my plan.



Luckily, Gramma wasn't home, so it was easy to get
the mower out of her house. We rolled it over to
Mrs. Canfield's yard, and then we were ready to
get to work.

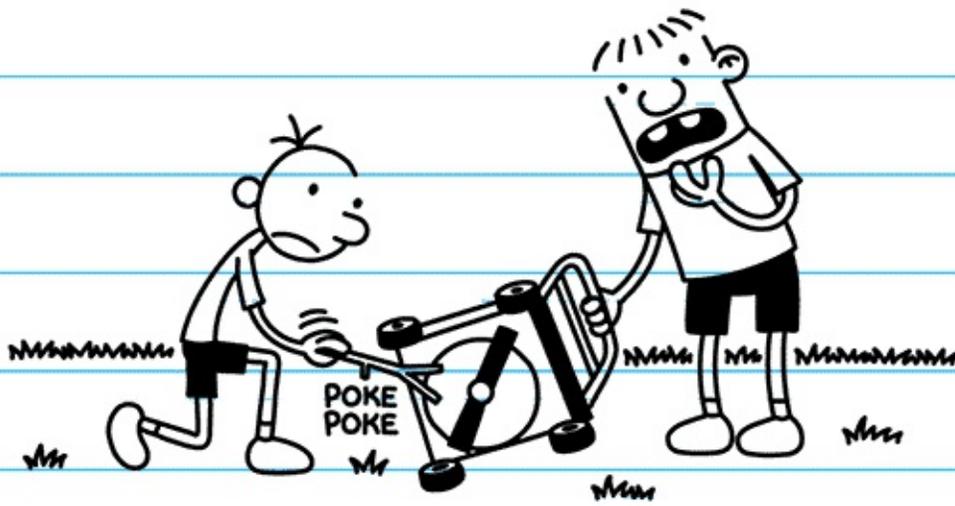
That's when me and Rowley realized neither one
of us had ever actually operated a lawn mower
before. So the two of us poked around for a

while and tried to figure out how to get the

thing started.

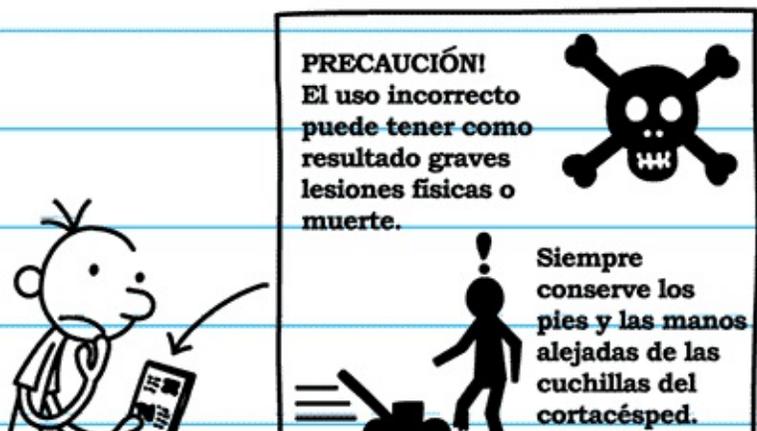
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Unfortunately, when we tilted the mower on its side, all the gasoline spilled out onto the grass, and we had to go back over to Gramma's to get a refill.

I picked up the owner's manual for the mower while we were at it. I tried to read it, but the instructions were written in Spanish. I got the feeling from the bits and pieces I could understand that operating a lawn mower was a lot more dangerous than I originally thought.





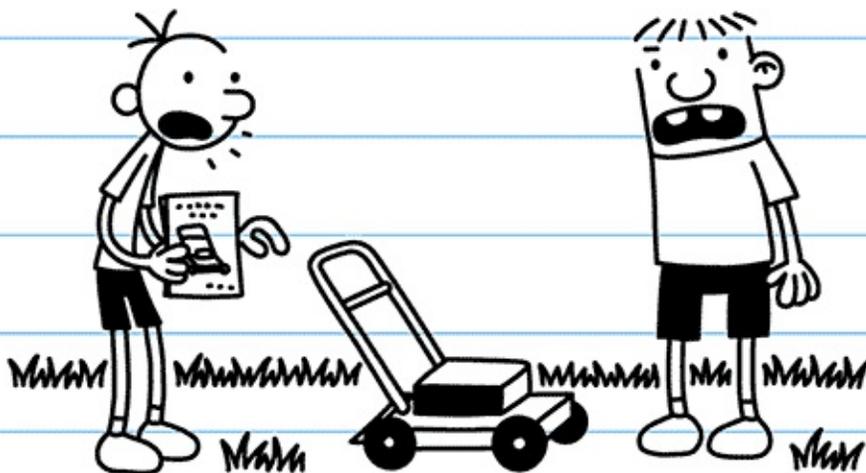
Nunca utilice el
cortacésped
durante
tempestades
con truenos.



I told Rowley he could have the first crack at the lawn mowing and that I would go sit in the shade and start working on our business plan.

Rowley didn't like that idea at all. He said this was a "partnership" and that everything had to be 50-50. I was pretty surprised by this, because I'm the one who came up with the idea for the lawn service in the first place, so I was more like the owner than a partner.

I told Rowley we needed someone to do the grunt work and someone to handle the money so it didn't get all sweaty.

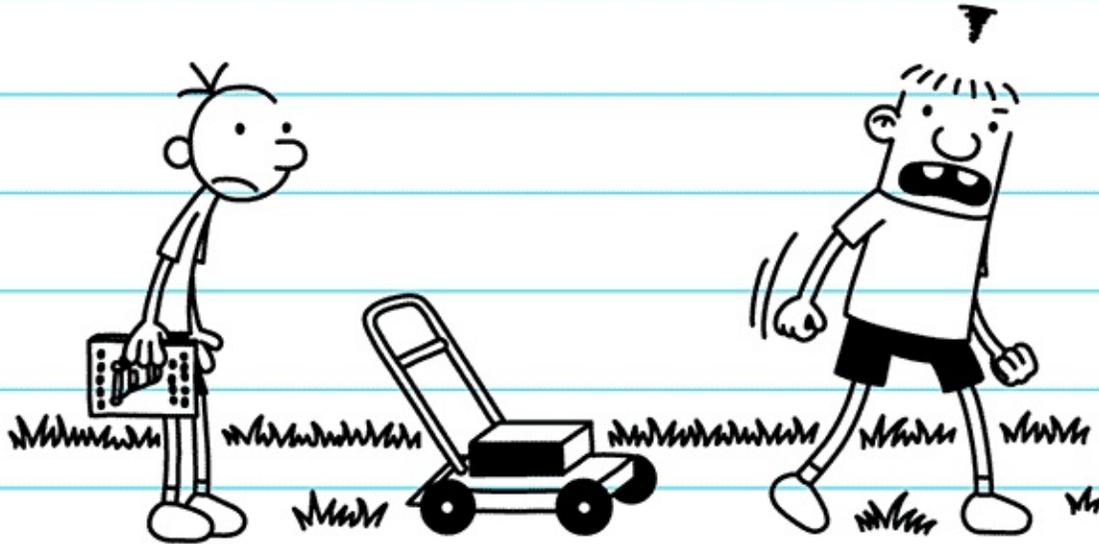


Believe it or not, that was enough to make Rowley
walk right off the job.

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I just wanna say for the record that if Rowley
ever needs me for a job reference in the future,
I'm gonna have to give him a lousy review.



The truth is, I don't really need Rowley anyway.
If this lawn service business grows the way I
think it will, I'm gonna have about a HuNDReD
Rowleys working for me.

In the meantime, I needed to get Mrs.
Canfield's lawn mowed. I looked through the
manual for a little while longer and then figured
out that I needed to pull on this handle
attached to a cord, so I tried that.

The mower started up right away, and I was off

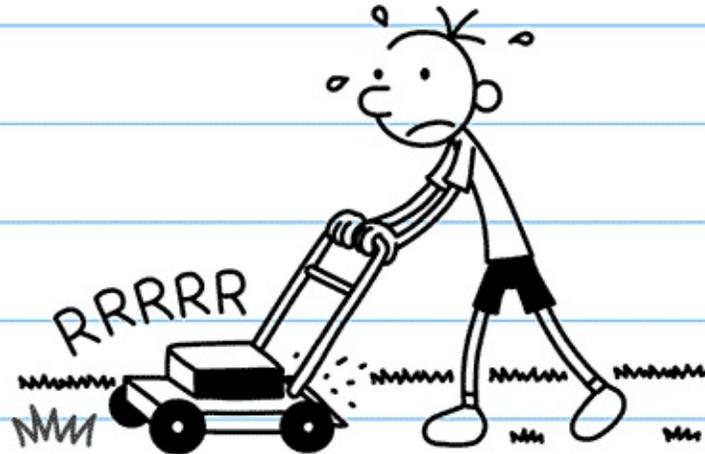
and running.

It wasn't as bad as I thought it was gonna

be. The lawn mower was self-propelled, so all I

needed to do was walk behind it and steer every

once in a while.



Then I started to notice that there were

piles of dog poop everywhere. And steering

around them was not an easy thing to do with

a self-propelled mower.



The V.I.P. Lawn Service has a very strict policy

when it comes to dog poop, which is that we won't

go anywhere near it.

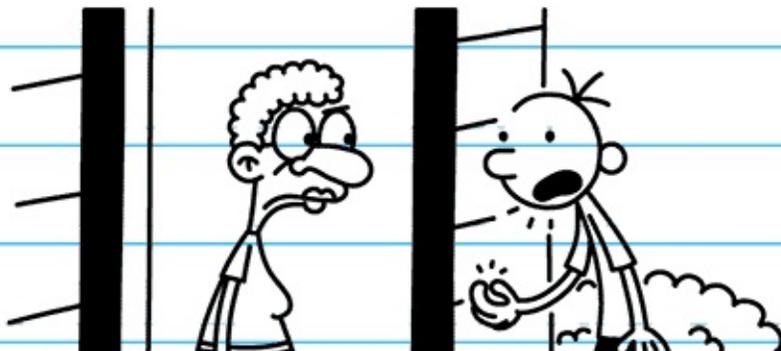
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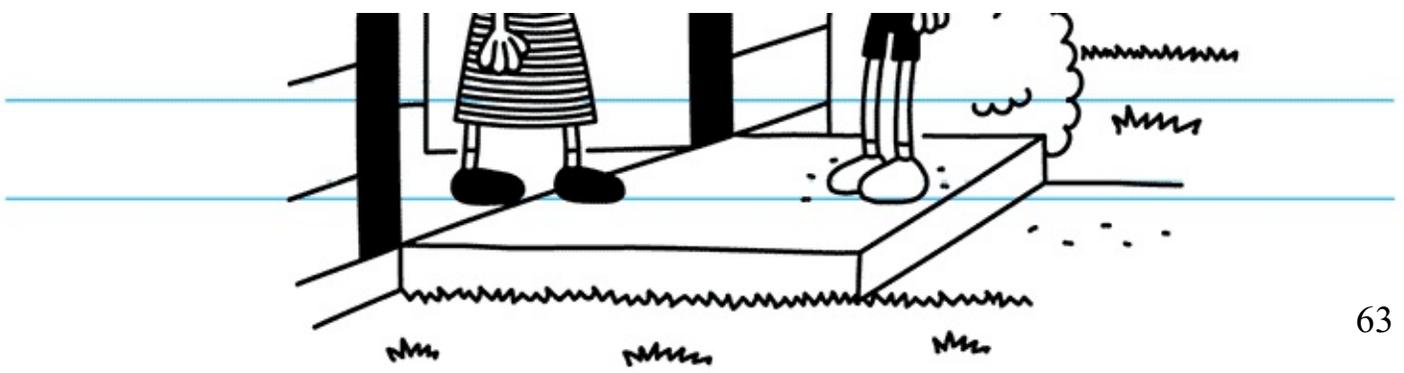


So from that point on, whenever I saw anything that looked suspicious, I would mow a ten-foot circle around it just to be safe.



The job actually went a lot faster after that because I had a lot less lawn to cover. After I was done, I went to the front door to collect my money. The final bill was thirty dollars, which was twenty dollars for the lawn plus ten bucks for the time me and Rowley spent designing that flyer.

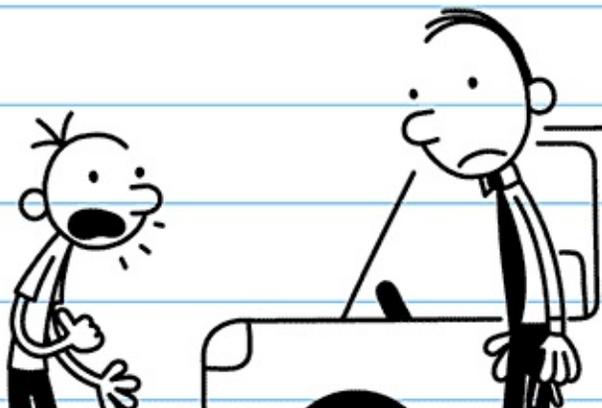


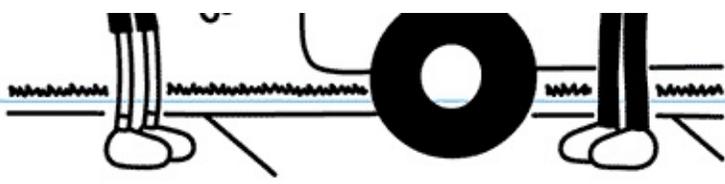


But Mrs. Canfield wouldn't pay. She said our service was "lousy" and that we hardly mowed any of her lawn.

I told her about the dog poop issue, but she still wouldn't cough up what she owed me. And to make matters worse, she wouldn't even give me a ride home. You know, I figured someone might try to stiff us this summer, but I never thought it would be our very first customer.

I had to walk home, and by the time I got to my house, I was really mad. I told Dad the whole story about my lawn mowing experience and how Mrs. Canfield wouldn't pay me.





Dad drove right over to Mrs. Canfield's house,

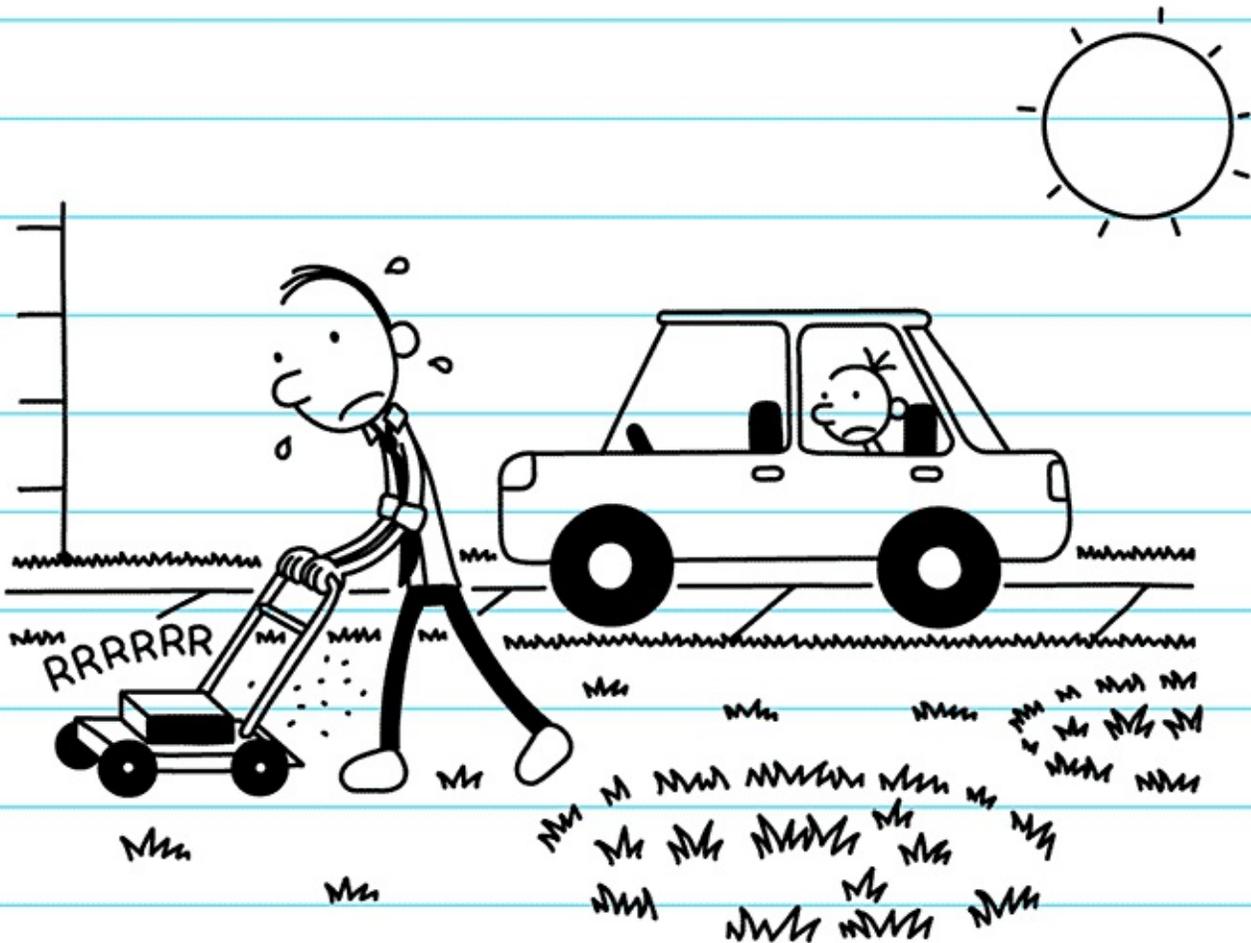
and I went with him. I thought he was gonna

chew her out for taking advantage of his son,

and I wanted to be there to see it firsthand.

But Dad just got Gramma's mower and cut the

rest of Mrs. Canfield's grass.



When he was done, he didn't even ask her for

any money.

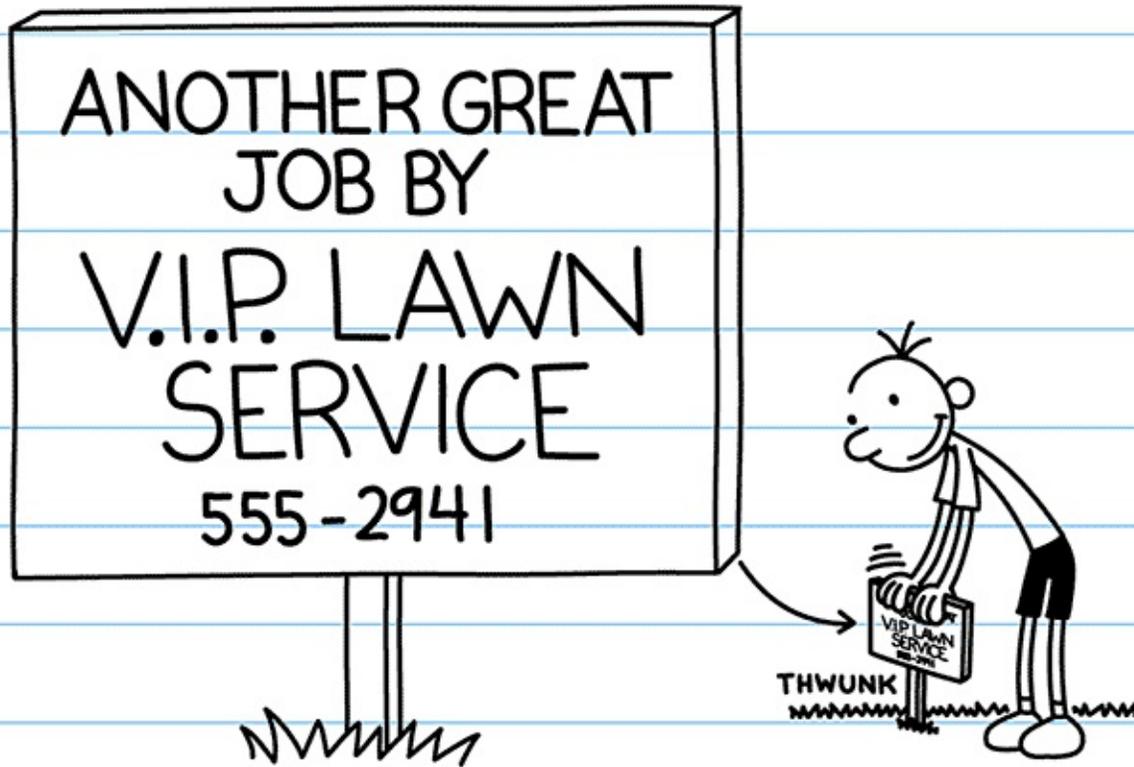
The trip wasn't a total waste of time, though.

When Dad wrapped things up, I planted a sign

in Mrs. Canfield's front yard.

I figured if I wasn't gonna get paid, I might

as well get some free advertising for all my trouble.



Saturday

The V.I.P. Lawn Service has not really panned

out the way I thought it would. I haven't

had any work since that first job, and I'm

starting to think maybe Mrs. Canfield has been

bad-mouthing me to her neighbors.

I thought about just giving up and closing our

business, but then I realized that with a few

tweaks to the flyer, we could start things back

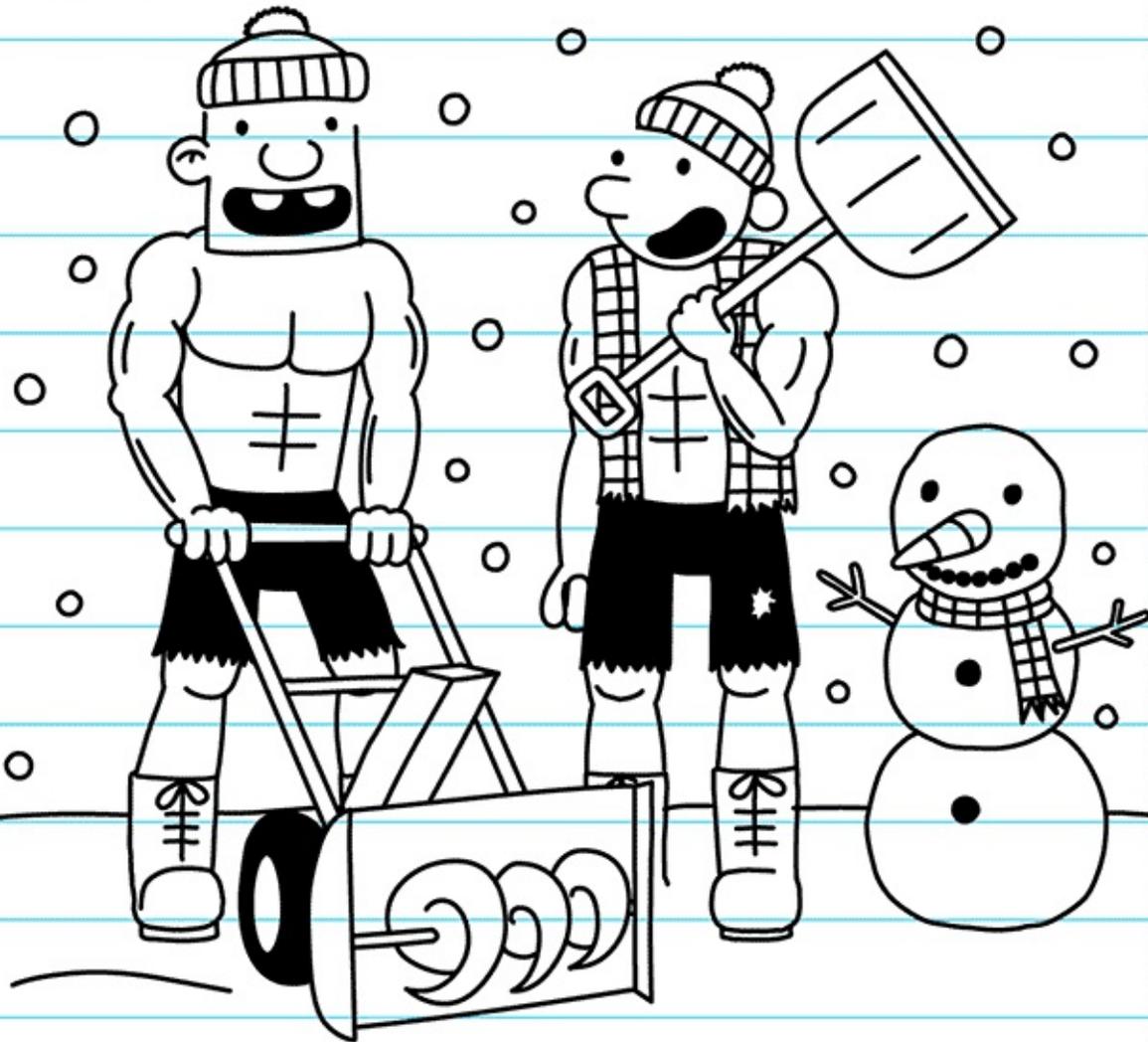
up again in the winter.

66



V.I.P.

SNOW REMOVAL



YOU'VE TRIED THE REST,
NOW GO WITH THE BEST!

The problem is, I need money now. I called up

Rowley to start brainstorming new ideas, but his

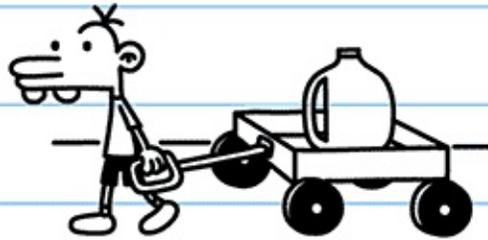
mom said he was at the movies with his dad. I was

a little annoyed, because he never bothered to ask

me if he could take the day off.

Mom's not letting me do anything fun until this
fruit smoothie bill is paid off, so that meant it was
up to me to figure out how to earn the cash.

I'll tell you who has a lot of money, and that's
Manny. I mean, that kid is RICH. A few weeks
ago Mom and Dad told Manny they'd give him a
quarter for every time he uses the potty without
being asked. So now he carries around a gallon of
water with him at all times.



Manny keeps all his money in a big jar on his dresser.
He's gotta have at least \$150 in that thing.





I've thought about asking Manny to lend me the money, but I just can't bring myself to do that.

I'm pretty sure Manny charges interest on his loans anyway.



I'm trying to figure out a way to earn money without doing any actual work. But when I told Mom what I was thinking, she said I'm just "lazy."

ok, so maybe I Am lazy, but it's not really my fault. I've been lazy ever since I was a little kid, and if someone had caught it early on, maybe I

wouldn't be the way I am now.

I remember in preschool, when playtime was over,
the teacher would tell everyone to put away their
toys, and we would all sing the "Cleanup Song" while
we did it. Well, I sang the song with everyone
else, but I didn't do any of the actual cleaning.



So if you want to find somebody to blame for
the way I am, I guess you'd have to start
with the public education system.

Sunday

Mom came into my room this morning and woke me
up for church. I was glad to go, because I knew I
was gonna have to turn to a higher power to get
this fruit smoothie bill paid off. Whenever Gramma

needs anything she just prays, and she gets it

right away.

70



I think she has a direct pipeline to God or

something.



For some reason I don't have that same kind of

pull. But that doesn't mean I'm gonna quit trying.

DEAR LORD, PLEASE LET MR. JEFFERSON GET HIT ON THE HEAD SO HE FORGETS ABOUT THE MONEY I OWE HIM. AND PLEASE LET ME GET PAST THE THIRD LEVEL OF TWISTED WIZARD WITHOUT HAVING TO USE ANY OF MY BONUS HEALTH PACKS. AMEN, AND THANK YOU IN ADVANCE.



Today's sermon was called "Jesus in Disguise," and

it was about how you should treat everyone you

meet with kindness because you never know which

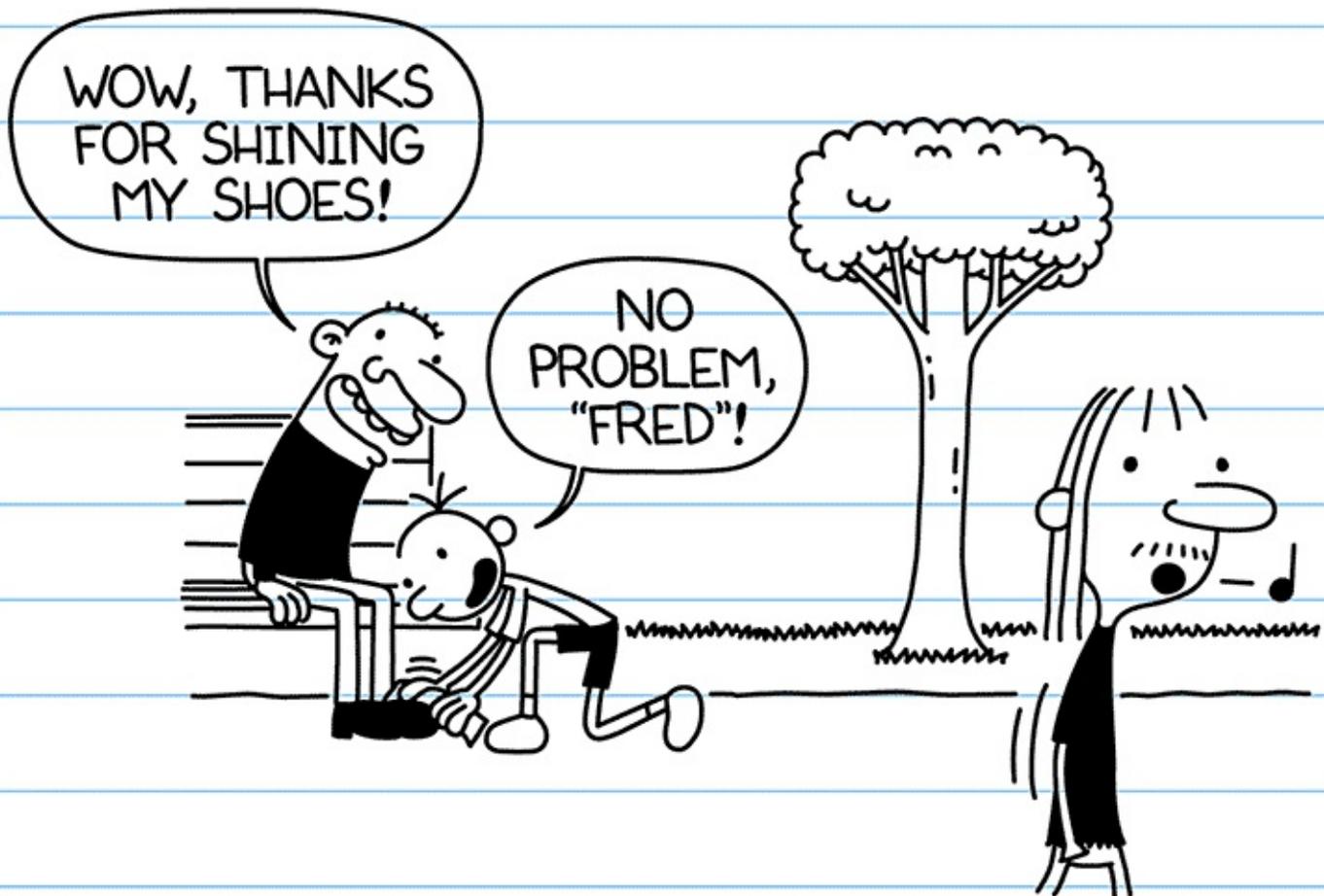
person is really Jesus pretending to be someone else.

I guess that's supposed to make you wanna be

a better person, but all it does is make me

paranoid because I know I'm gonna just end up

guessing wrong.



They passed the donation basket around like they

do every week, and all I could think was how I

needed that money a lot more than whoever it was

going to.

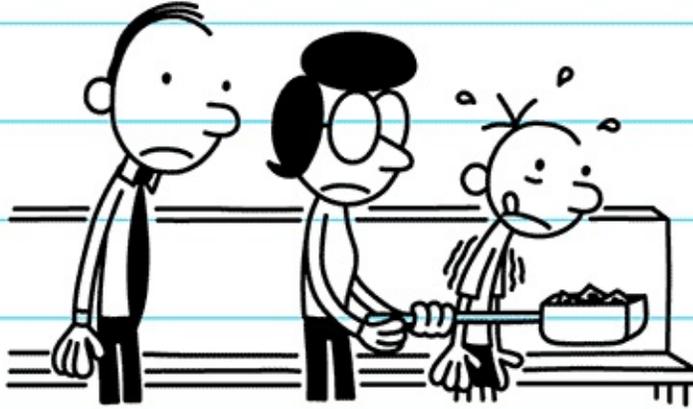
72



But Mom must've seen the look in my eye, because

she passed the basket to the row behind us before

I could take what I needed.



Monday

My birthday's coming up this weekend, and it

can't get here quick enough for me. This year I'm

gonna have a FAMlLY party. I'm still really

burned up with Rowley for bailing out on our lawn

care business, so I don't want him thinking he can

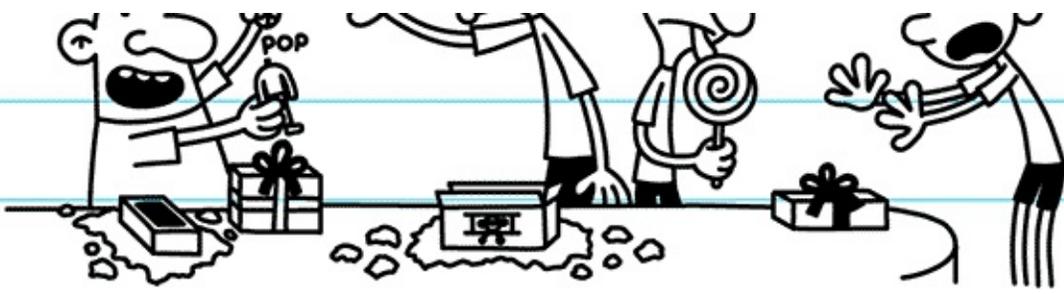
come over and eat my birthday cake.

Plus, I've learned my lesson about friend parties.

When you have a friend party, all your guests think

they have the right to play with your presents.





And every time I have a friend party, Mom invites

HeR friends' kids, so I end up with a bunch of

people at my party I barely even know.



And those kids don't buy the gifts, their moms

do. So even if you get something like a video game,

it's not a video game you'd actually want to play.



write about
SHARING

74



I'm just glad I'm not on the swim team this summer.

Last year I had practice on my birthday, and Mom

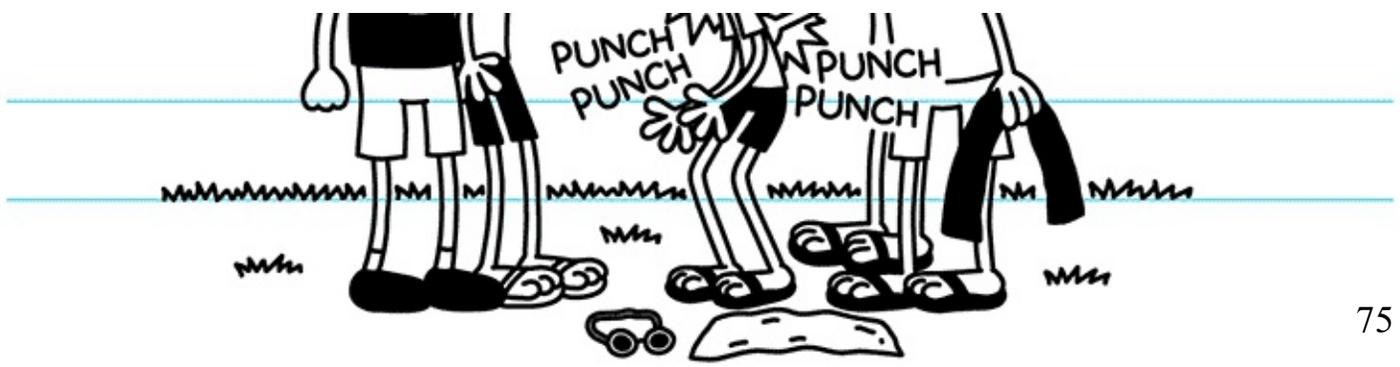
dropped me off at the pool.



I got so many birthday noogies that I couldn't

even lift my arms to swim.





So when it comes to your birthday, I've learned

it's best to just keep kids out of the equation.

Mom said I could have a family party as long

as I promised not to do my "usual" with the

birthday cards. That stinks, because I have a

GReAt system for opening cards. I put them

all in a neat pile, and then I rip each one open

and shake it to get the money out. As long as

I don't stop to read anything, I can get

through a pile of twenty cards in under a minute.



Mom says the way I do it is "insulting" to the people

who got me the cards. She says this time around I

have to read every card and acknowledge the person

who gave it to me. That'll slow me down, but I

guess it's still worth it.

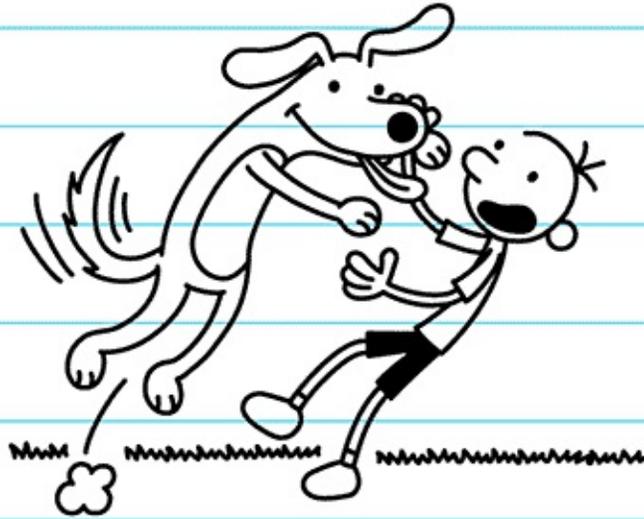
76



I've been doing a lot of thinking about what I

want for my birthday this year. What I ReAlly

want is a dog.



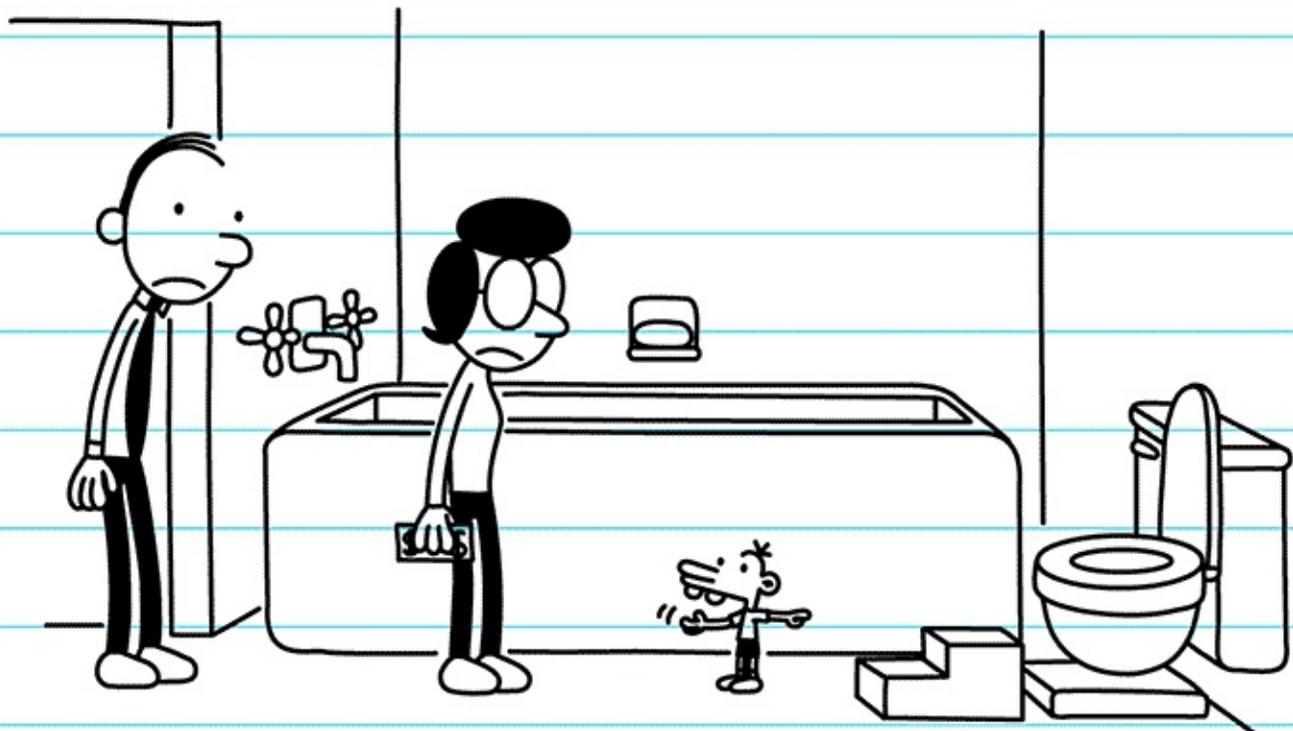
I've been asking for a dog for the past three

years, but Mom says we have to wait until Manny's

completely potty trained before we get one. Well,

with the potty training racket Manny's got going

on, that could take FoReVeR.



The thing is, I know that Dad wants a dog,

too. He used to have one when He was a kid.

I figured all Dad needed was a little nudge, and

on Christmas last year I saw my chance. My

Uncle Joe and his family stopped by our house,

and they brought their dog, Killer, with them.

I asked Uncle Joe if he wouldn't mind hinting to

Dad that he should get us a dog. But the way Uncle

Joe did it probably set my dog-getting campaign back

by five years.



The other thing I have no chance of getting for

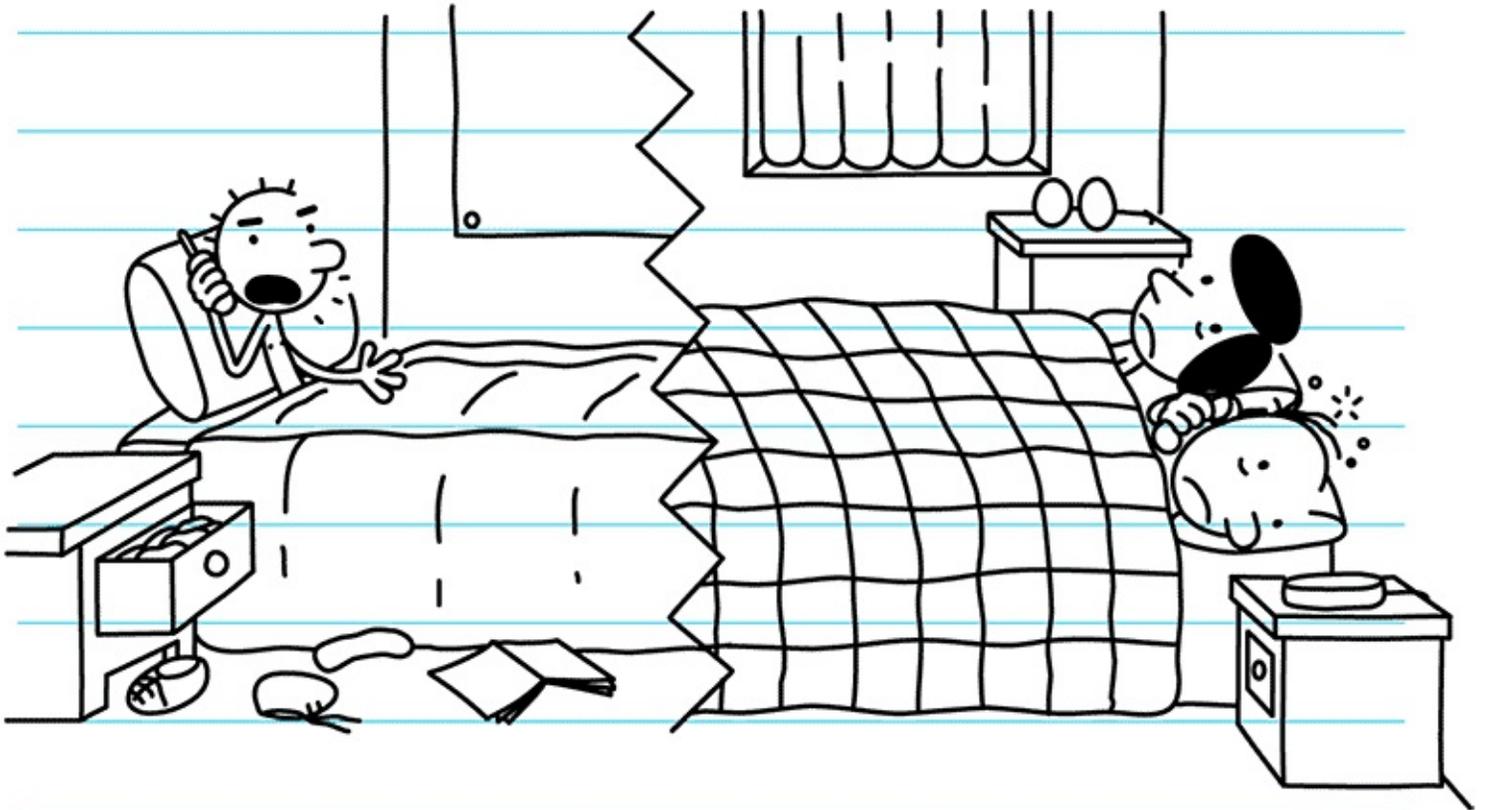
my birthday is a cell phone, and I can thank

Rodrick for that.

78

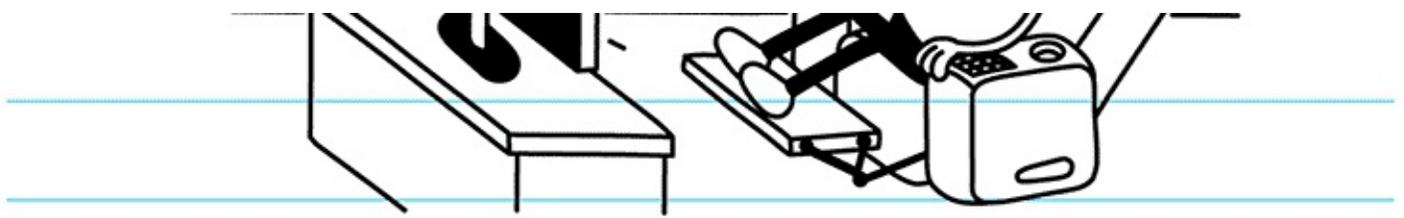


Mom and Dad got Rodrick a cell phone last year,
and he racked up a bill for three hundred dollars in
the first month. Most of that was from Rodrick
calling Mom and Dad from his room in the basement
to ask them to turn the heat up.



So the only thing I'm asking for this year is a
deluxe leather recliner. My Uncle Charlie has one,
and he practically lives in that thing.





The main reason I want my own recliner is because

if I had one, I wouldn't have to go up to my

room after watching tv late at night. I could

just sleep right in the chair.

Plus, these recliners have all sorts of features, like a

neck massager and adjustable firmness and stuff like

that. I figure I could use the "vibrate" feature to

make Dad's lectures a lot more tolerable.



The only reason I'd ever need to get up is to

go to the bathroom. But maybe I should just

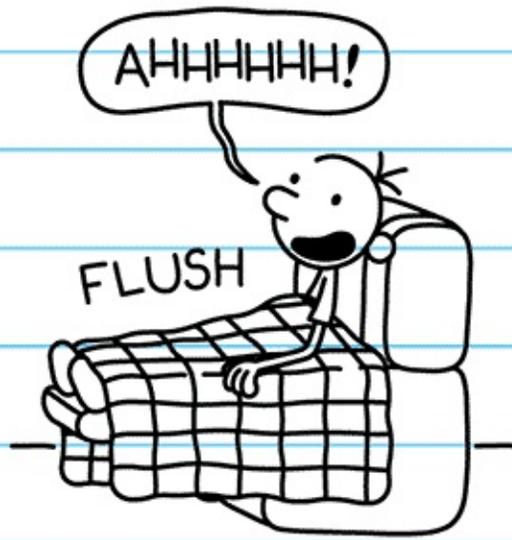
wait until next year to ask for a recliner,

because I bet they' ll have that taken care of _____

in the new model. _____

80





Thursday

I asked Mom to take me back to Bombshells

Beauty Salon again today, even though I didn't

really need a haircut. I just felt like catching up

on the town gossip.



Annette, my hairstylist, said she heard from a lady

who knows Mrs. Jefferson that me and Rowley had

a falling out.

Apparently, Rowley's "heartbroken" because I didn't

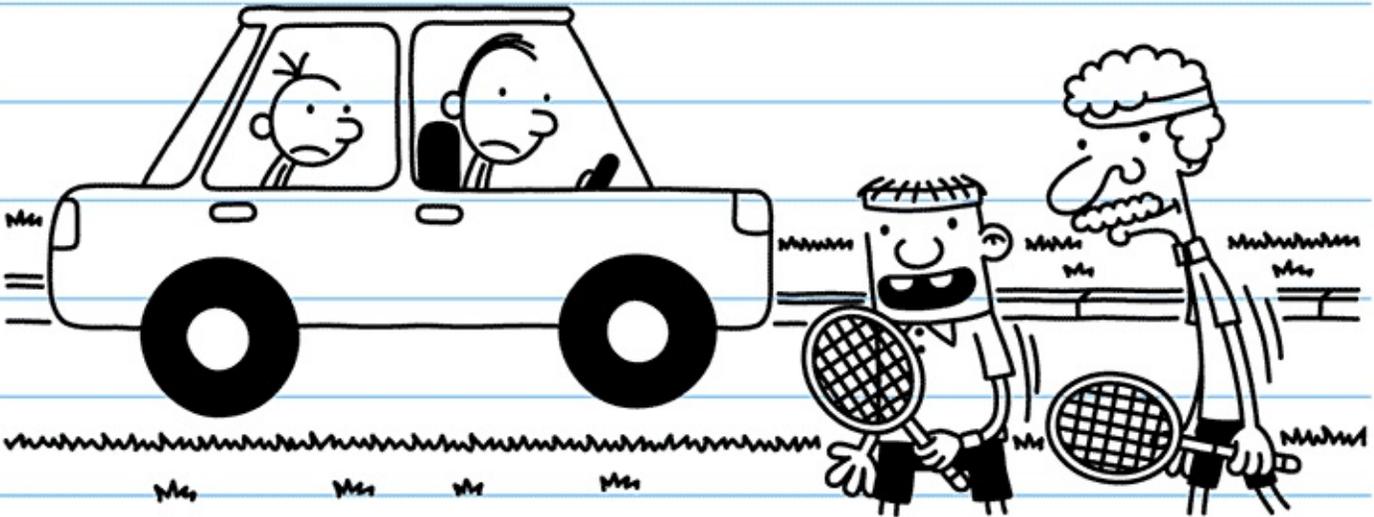
invite him to my birthday party. Well, if Rowley's

upset, you wouldn't know it from looking at him.

Every time I see Rowley, he's palling around with

his dad. So the way it looks to me, he's already

got himself a new best friend.



I just wanna say I think it stinks that Rowley

gets to go to the country club even though he

still owes money on that fruit smoothie bill.

Unfortunately, Rowley's chummy relationship with

his dad is starting to affect my life. Mom says

the way Rowley and his dad hang out together is

“neat” and that me and Dad should go fishing or _____

play catch in the front yard or something. _____

82



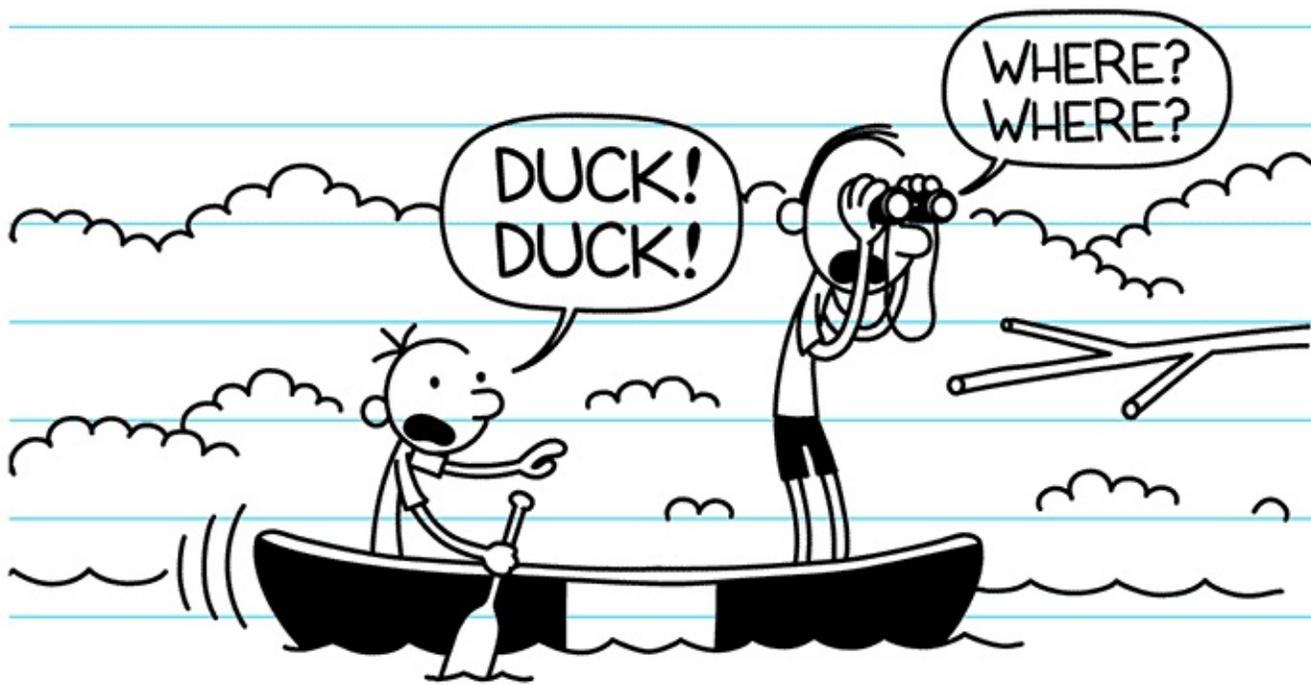
But the thing is, me and Dad just aren't cut out

for that kind of father-son stuff. The last time

Mom tried to get me and Dad to do something

like that together, it ended with me having to

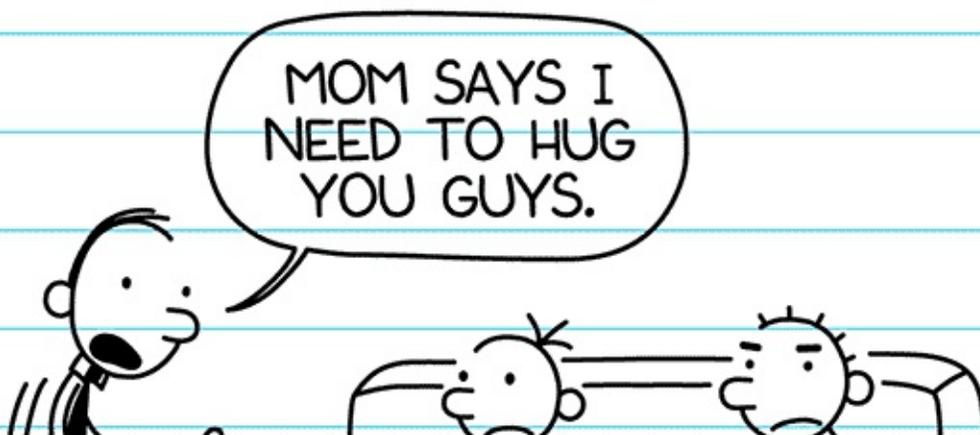
pull him out of Rappahannock Creek.

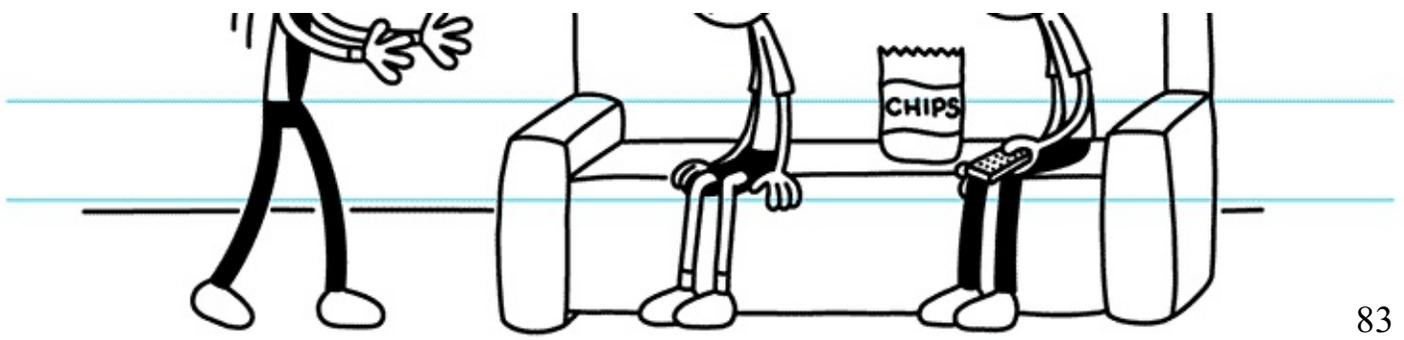


Mom won't let it go, though. She says she wants

to see more "affection" between Dad and us boys.

And that's created some really awkward moments.

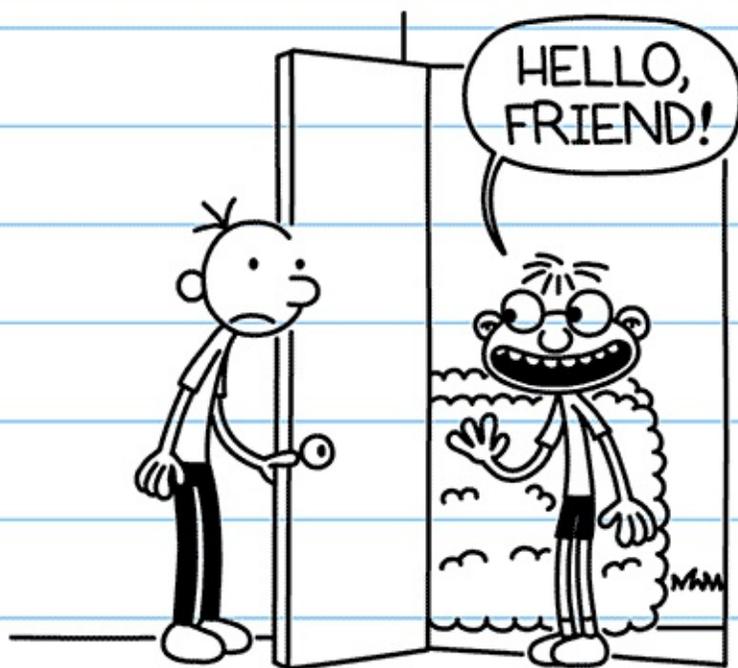




Friday

Today I was watching tv, minding my own business, when I heard a knock at the front door. Mom said there was a "friend" there to see me, so I thought it must be Rowley coming to apologize.

But it wasn't Rowley. It was Fregley.

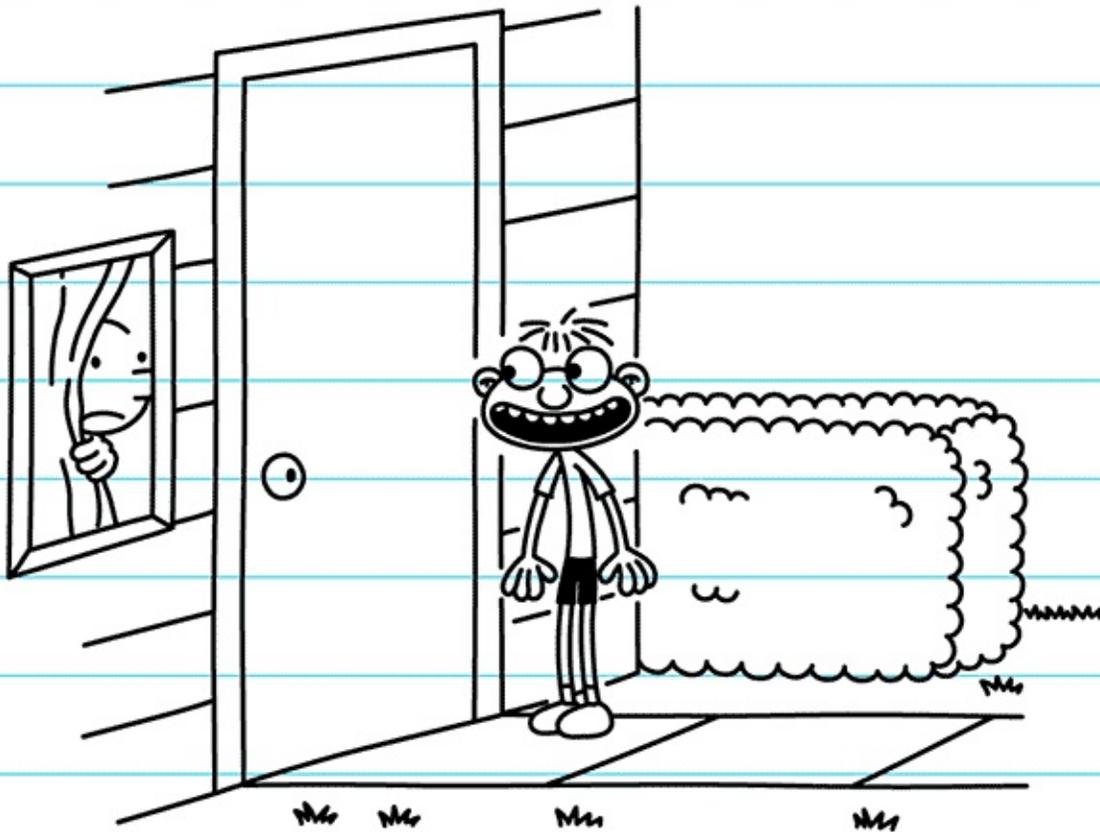


After I recovered from my initial shock, I slammed the door shut. I started to panic because I didn't know what Fregley was doing at my front door. After a few minutes went by, I looked out the side window, and Fregley was

still standing there.

84

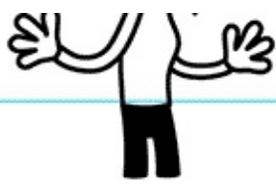




I knew I had to take drastic measures, so I
went to the kitchen to call the cops. But Mom
stopped me before I could finish dialing 911.

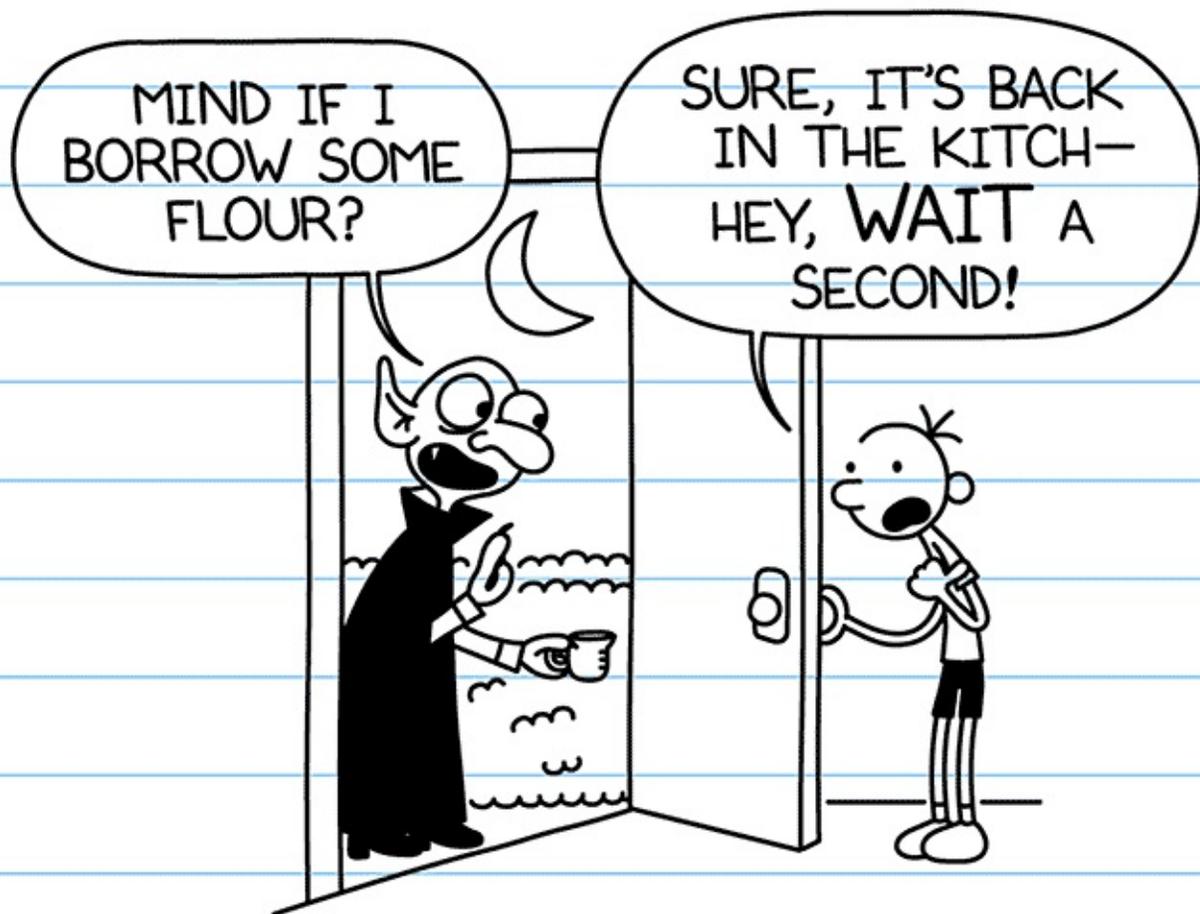
Mom said she invited Fregley over. She said I've
seemed "lonely" ever since I had that fight with
Rowley, and she thought she'd set up a "playdate"
with Fregley.





See, this is why I should never tell Mom about my personal business. This Fregley thing was a total disaster.

I've heard that a vampire can't come inside your house unless you invite him in, and I'll bet it's the same kind of deal with Fregley.



So now I've got two things to worry about: the muddy hand and Fregley. And if I had to choose the one to get me first, I'd take the

muddy hand in a heartbeat.

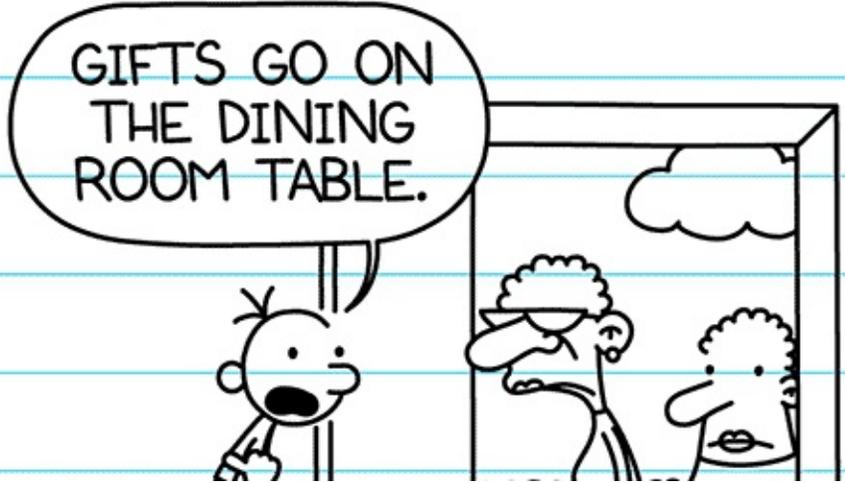
86

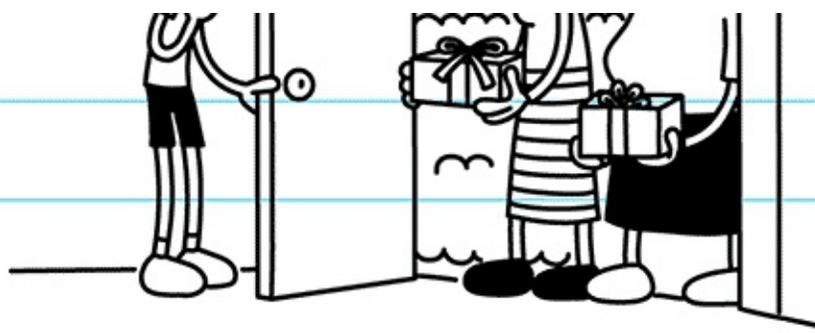




Saturday

Today was my birthday, and I guess things went more or less like I expected. The relatives started showing up around 1:00. I asked Mom to invite as many people as possible so I could maximize my gift potential, and I got a pretty good turnout.





I like to cut to the chase on my birthday and

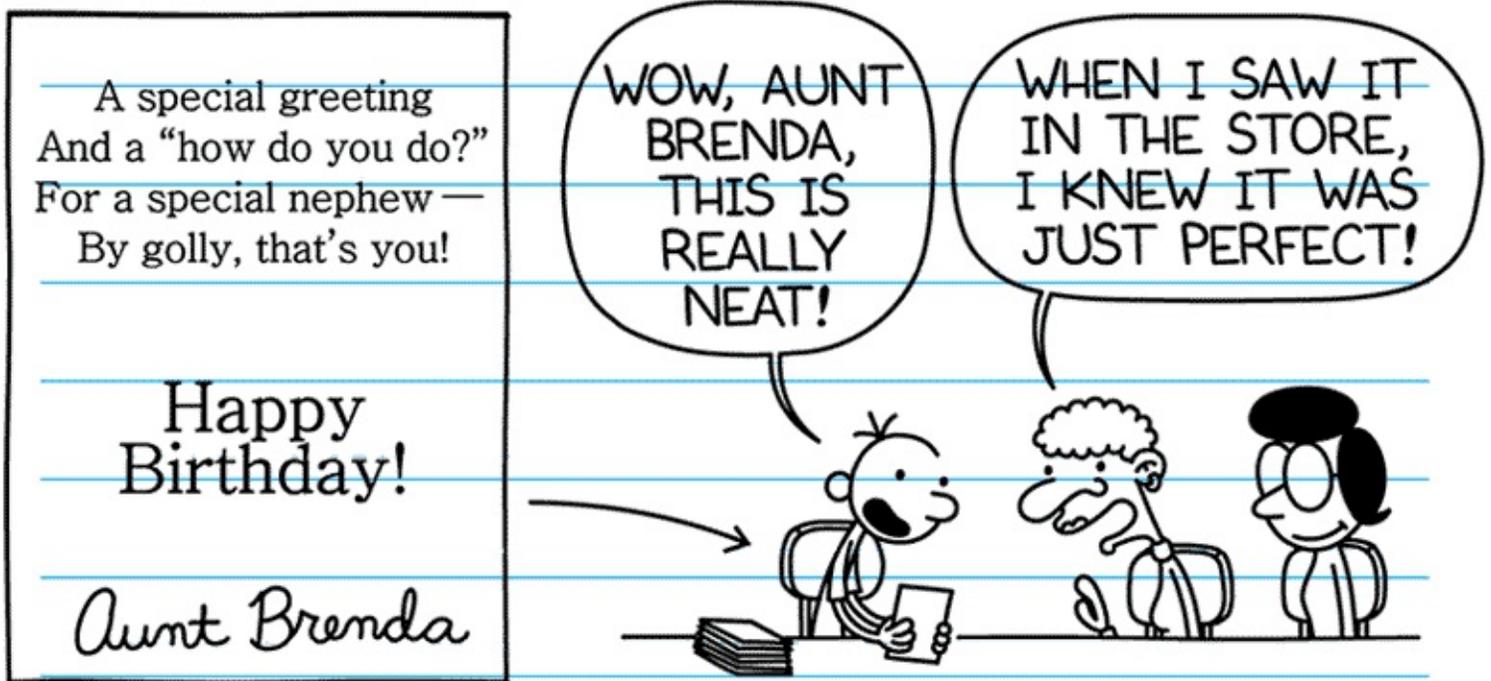
get right to the gifts, so I told everyone to

gather in the living room.

I took my time with the cards, just like Mom

asked. It was a little painful, but I got a good

haul, so it was worth it.



Unfortunately, as soon as I collected my

checks, Mom confiscated the money to pay off

Mr. Jefferson.





Then I moved on to the wrapped presents, but

there weren't a whole lot of those. The first

gift, from Mom and Dad, was small and heavy,

which I thought was a good sign. But I was

still pretty shocked when I opened it.



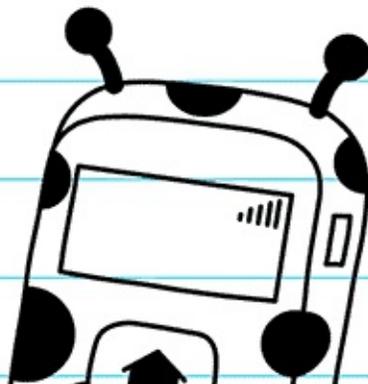
When I looked more closely, I found out it

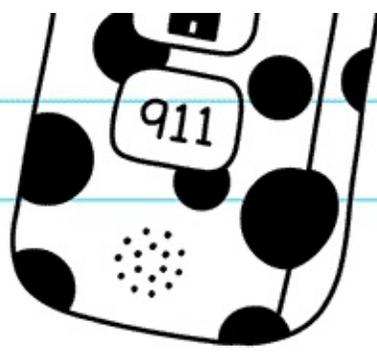
wasn't an ordinary cell phone. It was called a

"Ladybug." The phone didn't have a keypad on it or

anything. It only had two buttons: one to call home

and one for emergencies. So it's pretty much useless.





All my other gifts were clothes and other stuff I

didn't really need. I was still hoping I might get

that recliner, but once I realized there weren't

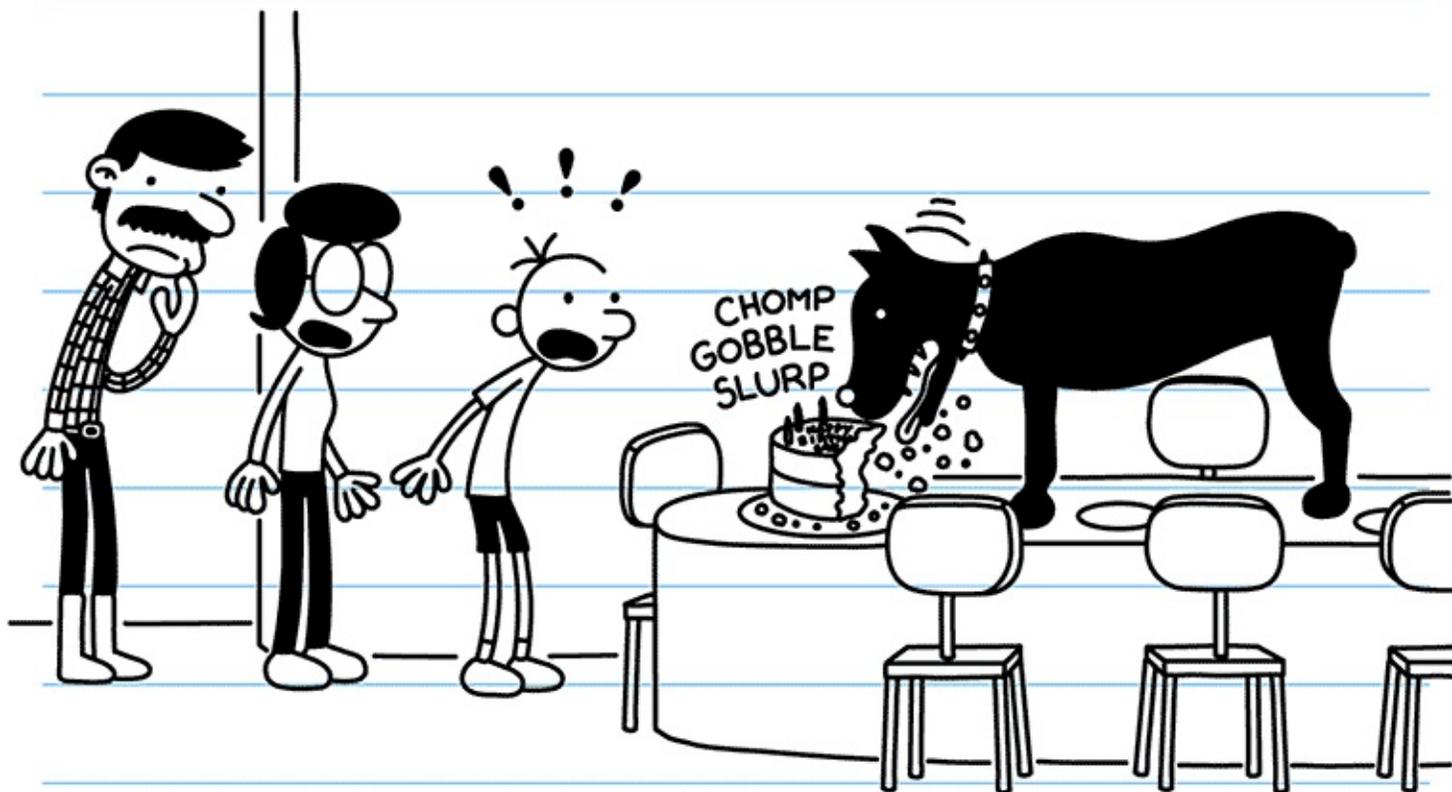
any places Mom and Dad could be hiding a giant

leather chair, I gave up looking.

Then Mom told everyone it was time to go into the

dining room to have some cake. Unfortunately, Uncle

Joe's dog, Killer, had beaten us to it.



I was hoping Mom would go out and get me a new

cake, but she just took a knife and cut away the

parts the dog didn't touch.

90





Mom cut me a big piece, but by that point I
wasn't really in the mood for cake. Especially not
with Killer throwing up little birthday candles
under the table.

Sunday

I guess Mom must've felt bad about how my birthday
went down, because today she said we could go to
the mall and get a "makeup gift."

Mom took Manny and Rodrick along for the ride,
and she said they could each pick out something,

too, which is totally unfair, because it wasn't

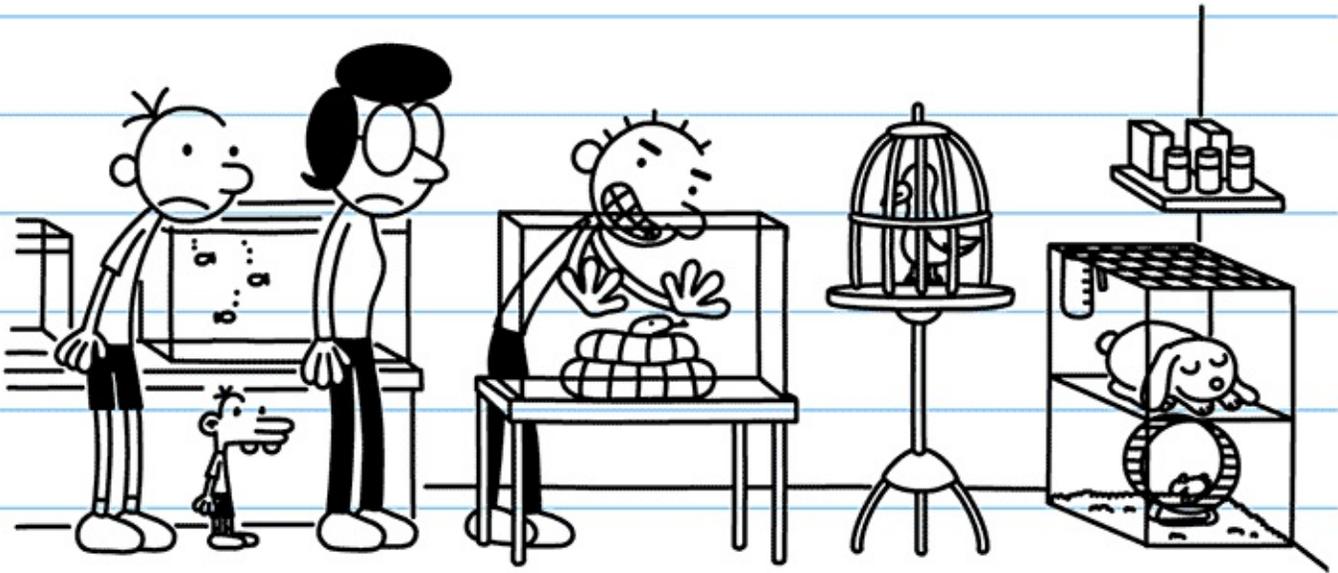
their birthday yesterday.

We walked around the mall for a while and ended

up in a pet store. I was hoping we could pool our

money to buy a dog, but Rodrick seemed to be

interested in a different kind of pet.



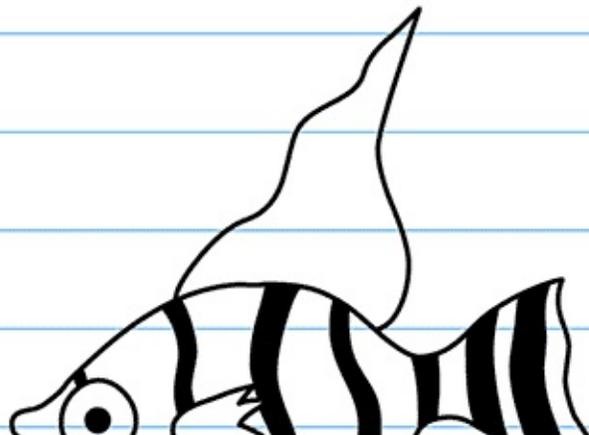
Mom handed us each a five-dollar bill and told us

we could buy whatever we wanted, but five bucks

doesn't exactly get you very far in a pet store. I

finally settled on this really cool angelfish that's

all different colors.



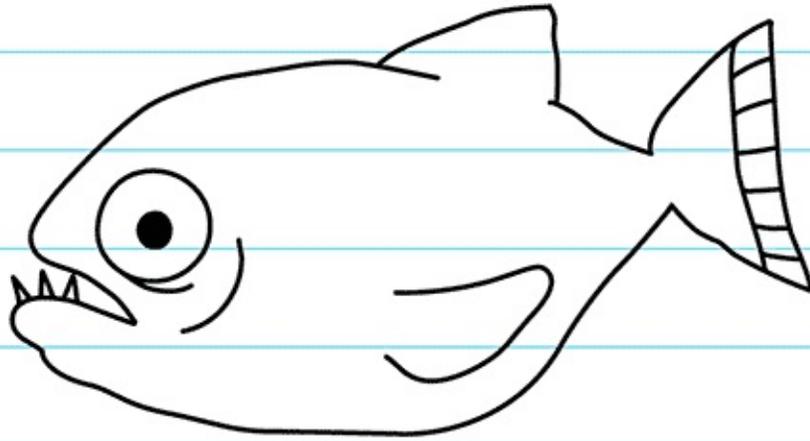


Rodrick picked out a fish, too. I don't know

what kind it was, but the reason Rodrick chose

it was because the label on the tank said the fish

was "aggressive."



Manny spent His five bucks on fish food. At

first I thought it was because he wanted to

feed the fish that me and Rodrick bought, but

by the time we got home, Manny had eaten

half the canister.

Monday

This is the first time I've had my very own

pet, and I'm kind of getting into it. I feed

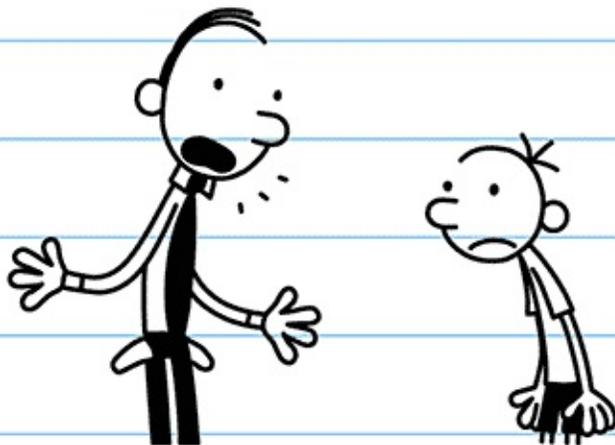
my fish three times a day, and I keep his bowl

really clean.

I even bought a journal so I could keep track of everything my fish does during the day. I have to admit, though, I'm starting to have a little trouble filling up the pages.



I asked Mom and Dad if we could buy one of those aquariums and get a ton of fish to keep my little guy company. But Dad said that aquariums cost money and maybe I could ask for one for Christmas.



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

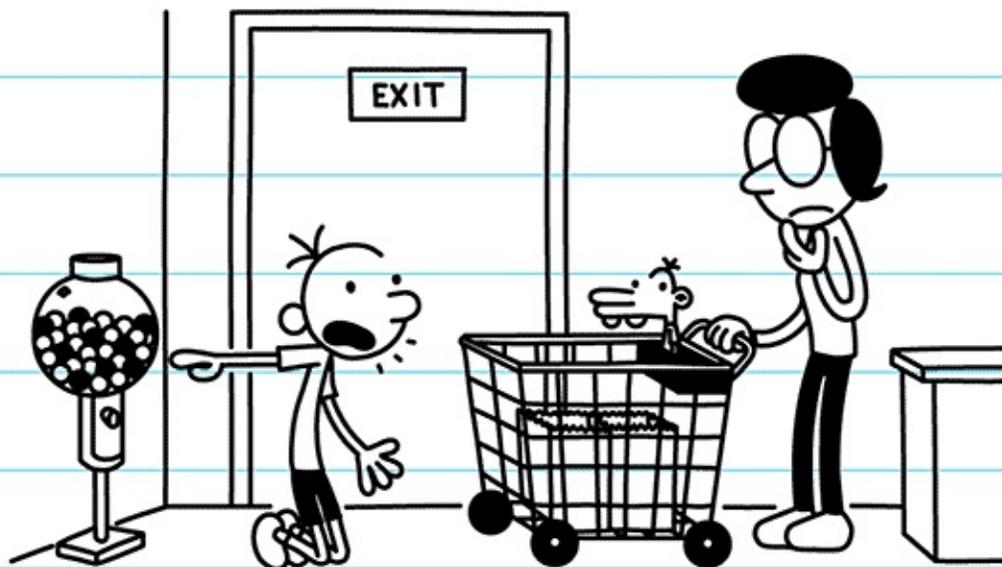
then when one of those days Does come, your _____

parents mess things up and buy you a Ladybug. _____

94



If I had my own money, I could just buy
whatever I wanted and not have to embarrass
myself every time I needed to rent a video game
or buy a piece of candy or something.



Anyway, I've always known that I'll eventually
be rich and famous, but I'm starting to get a
little concerned that it hasn't happened yet. I
figured I'd at least have my own reality tv
show by now.

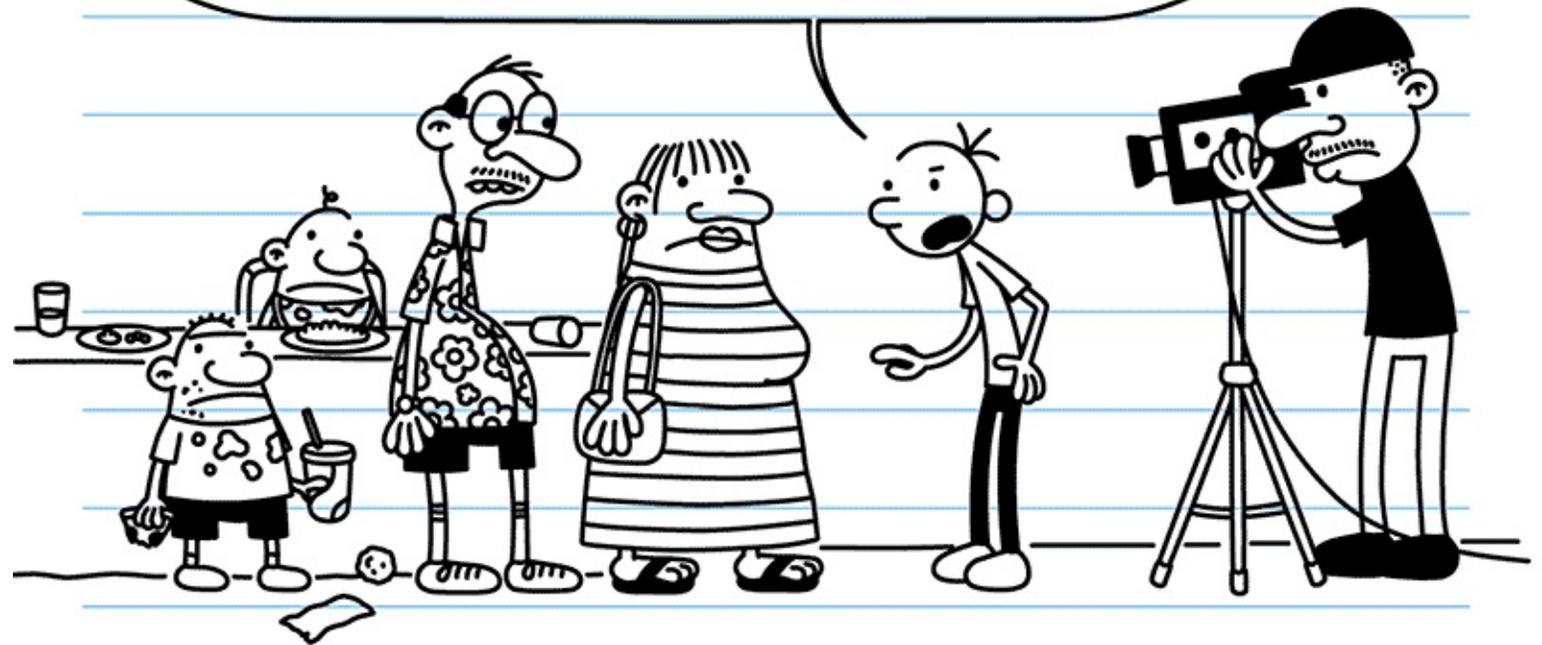
Last night I was watching one of those television
shows where a nanny lives with a family for a
week and then tells them all the ways they're

screwing up.

Well, I don't know if the woman had to go to
some special nanny school or something, but that's
the kind of job I was BoRN to do.

I just need to figure out how to get myself in
line for that job when the nanny retires.

YOUR HOUSE IS A WRECK, YOUR KIDS
HAVE NO MANNERS, AND...HEY, MR.
JOHNSON, YOU'RE NOT GOING OUT
IN THAT SHIRT, ARE YOU?



A few years ago I started collecting my personal
mementos, like book reports and old toys and
stuff like that, because when my museum opens I

wanna make sure it's packed with interesting

things from my life.

96



EXPERIENCE

CAN WE GET A DISCOUNT FOR OUR THREE-MONTH-OLD?

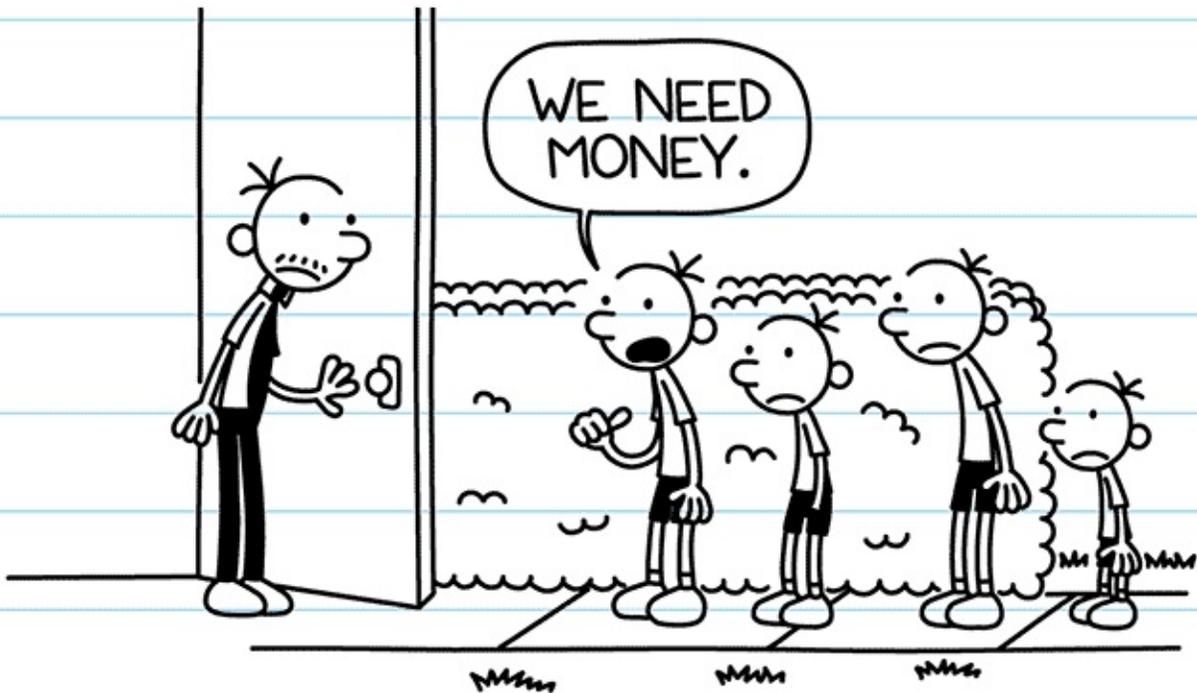
SORRY, NO EXCEPTIONS!



But I don't keep anything like lollipop sticks

that have my saliva on them because, believe me,

I do Not need to be cloned.



When I'm famous, I'm gonna have to make some
life changes.

I' ll probably have to fly in private jets, because

if I fly on regular planes, I' ll get really annoyed

when people in the back try to mooch off my

first-class bathroom.



Another thing famous people have to deal with is

that their younger siblings end up getting famous

just because they're related.



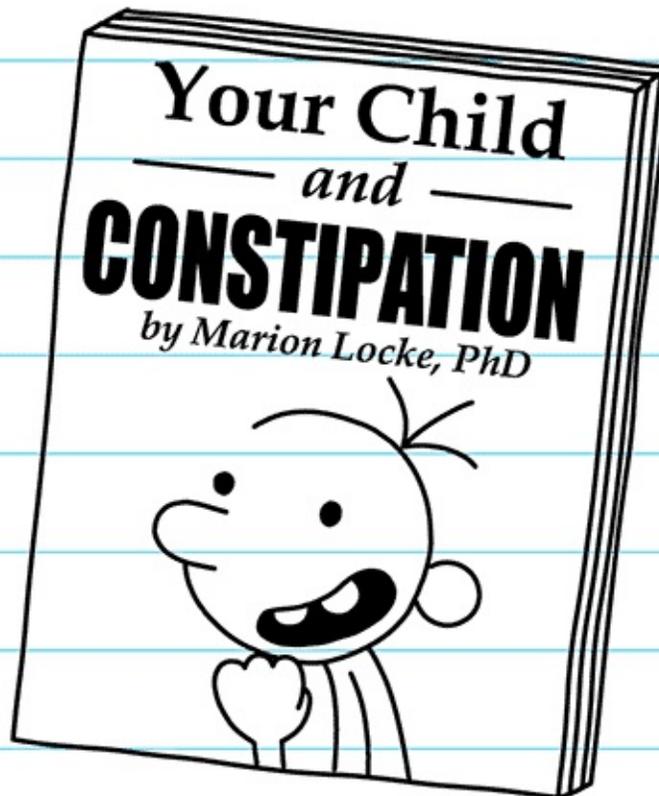


My closest brush with fame so far was when Mom signed me up for a modeling job a few years ago.

I think her idea was to get pictures of me in clothes catalogues or something like that.



But the only thing they used my picture for was this stupid medical book, and I've been trying to live it down ever since.

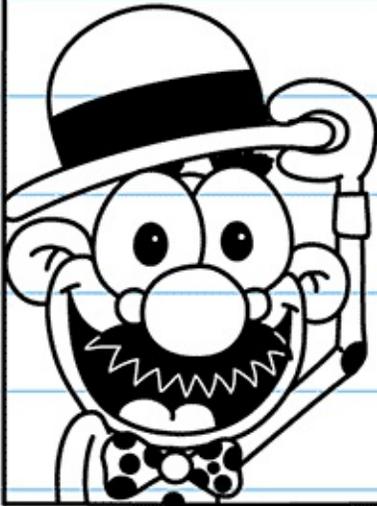


I spent the afternoon playing video games and _____
catching up on the Sunday comics. _____

I turned to the back page, and there was an ad

where “Li’l Cutie“ usually is.

Wanna be on the funny pages?



We're looking for a talented cartoonist to write and draw a one-panel comic to replace "Li'l Cutie." Can you tickle our funny bone?

Cartoons featuring animals or pets will not be considered.

Man, I've been waiting forever for an

opportunity like this. I had a comic in my school

paper once, but this is a chance to hit the BIG time.

The ad said they weren't accepting any animal

comic strips, and I think I know why. There's

this comic about a dog called "Precious Poochie,"

and it's been running for about fifty years.

The guy who wrote it died a long time ago, but

they're still recycling his old comics.

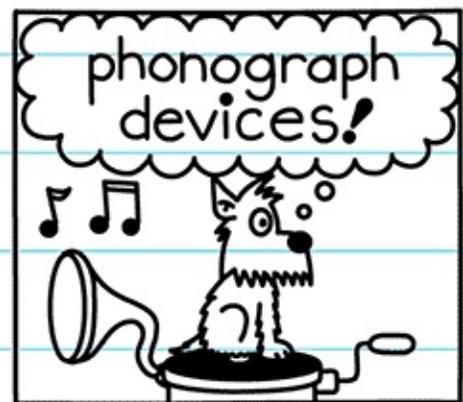
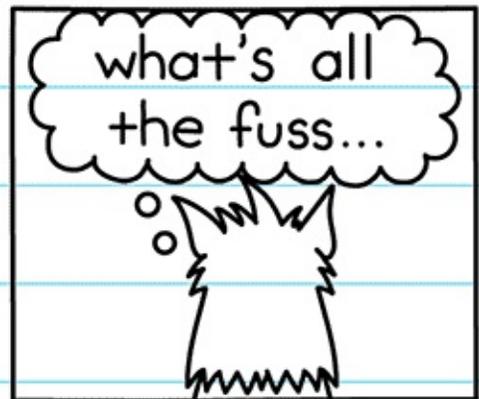
100



I don't know if they're funny or not because, to

be honest with you, most of them don't even make

sense to a person my age.



Anyway, the newspaper has tried to get rid of

that comic a bunch of times, but whenever they

try to cancel it all the "Precious Poochie" fans come

out of the woodwork and make a big stink. I

guess people think of this cartoon dog as their

own pet or something.

The last time they tried to cancel "Precious Poochie,"

four busloads of senior citizens from Leisure Towers

showed up at the newspaper offices downtown and

didn't leave until they got their way.



Saturday

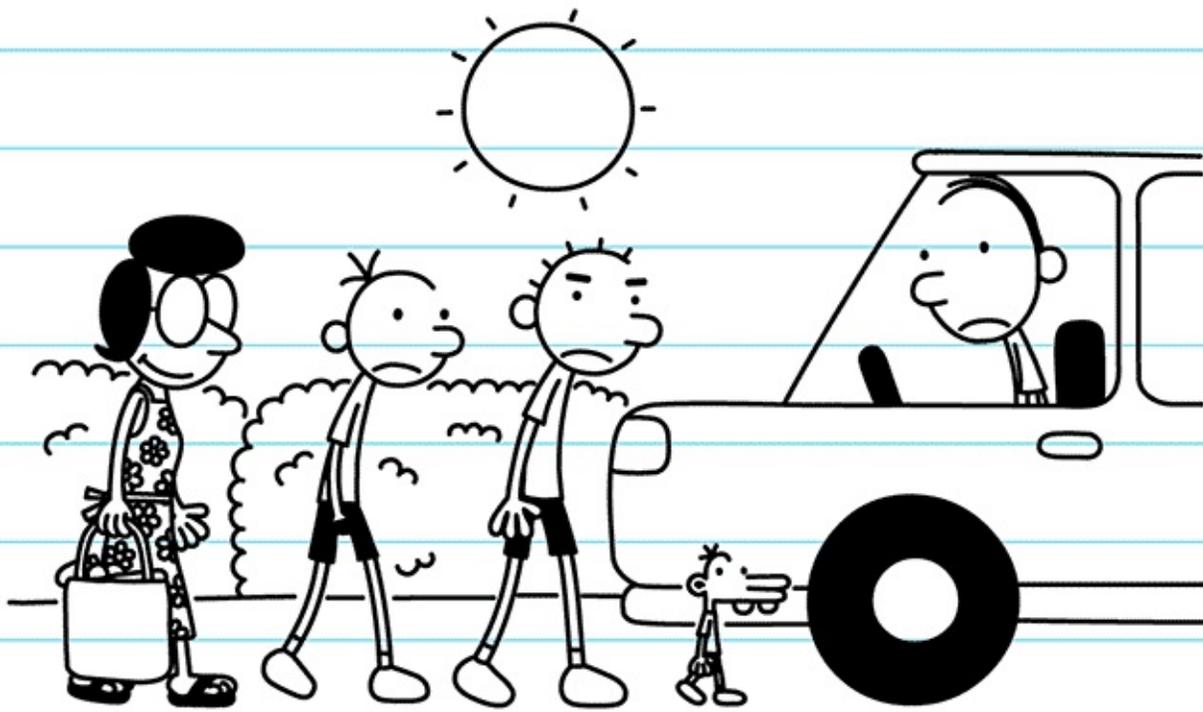
Mom was acting extra-cheery this morning, and I

could tell she had something up her sleeve.

At 10:00 she said we all needed to get in the

station wagon, and when I asked her where we

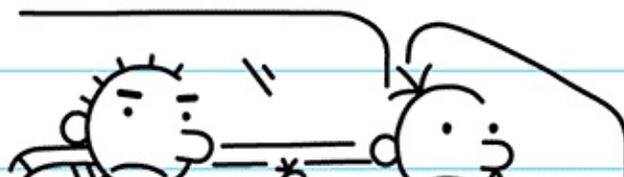
were going, she said it was a “surprise.”



I noticed Mom had packed sunscreen and bathing suits and stuff in the back of the station wagon, so I thought we must be headed for the beach.

But when I asked her if I was right, Mom said the place we were going was better than the beach.

Wherever we were going, it was taking a long time to get there. And it wasn't that fun being stuck in the backseat with Rodrick and Manny.



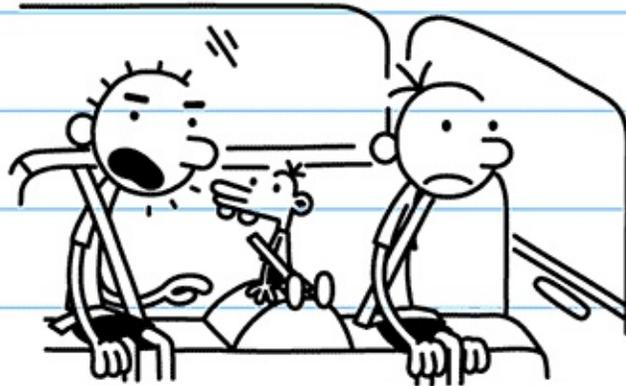


Manny was sitting in between me and Rodrick on

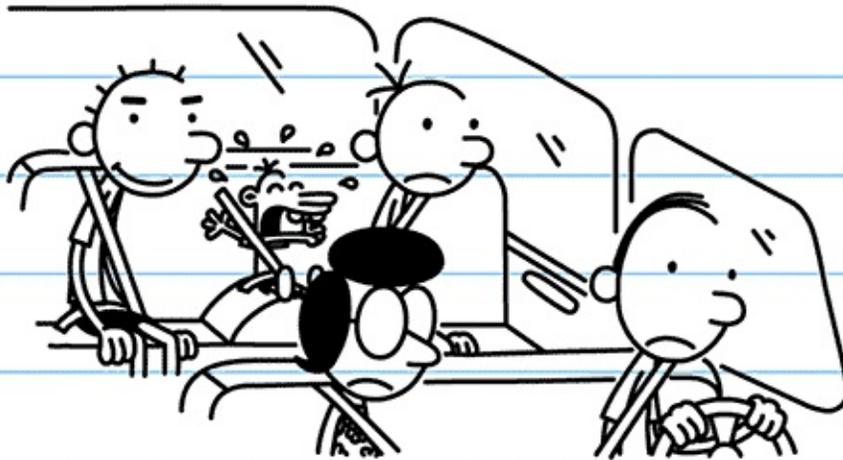
the hump. At one point Rodrick decided to tell

Manny the hump was the worst seat in the car

because it was the smallest and least comfortable.



Well, that totally set Manny off.



Eventually, Mom and Dad got sick of Manny's

crying. Mom said I had to take a turn on the

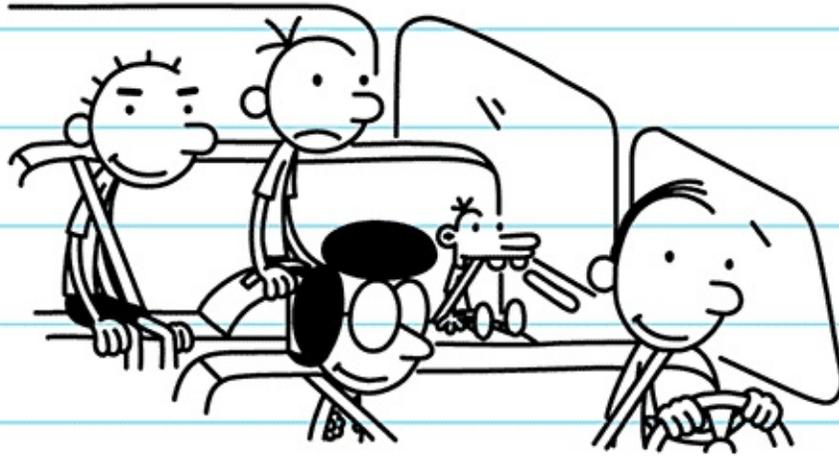
hump because I'm the second youngest and it

was "only fair." So every time Dad ran over a

pothole, my head hit the roof of the car.

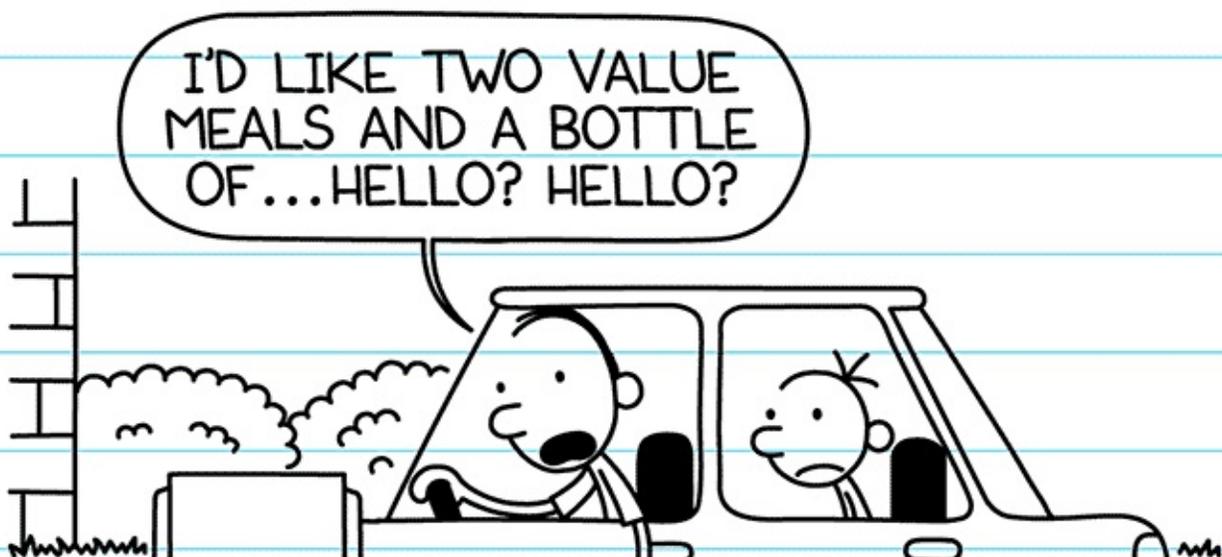
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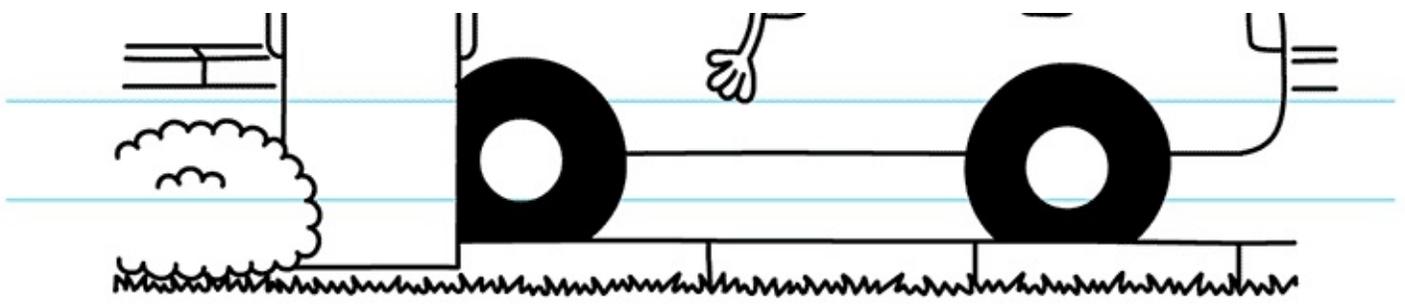




At about 2:00 I was getting really hungry, so I asked if we could stop for some fast food. Dad wouldn't pull over, because he said the people at fast-food restaurants are "idiots."

Well, I know why he thinks that. Every time Dad goes to the fried chicken place over near our house, he tries to place his order through the trash can.





I saw a sign for a pizza place, and I begged Mom and Dad to let us eat there. But I guess Mom was trying to save money, because she came prepared.



A half hour later we pulled into a big parking lot, and I knew exactly where we were.



We were at the Slipslide Water Park, where we

used to go as kids. And I mean little kids.

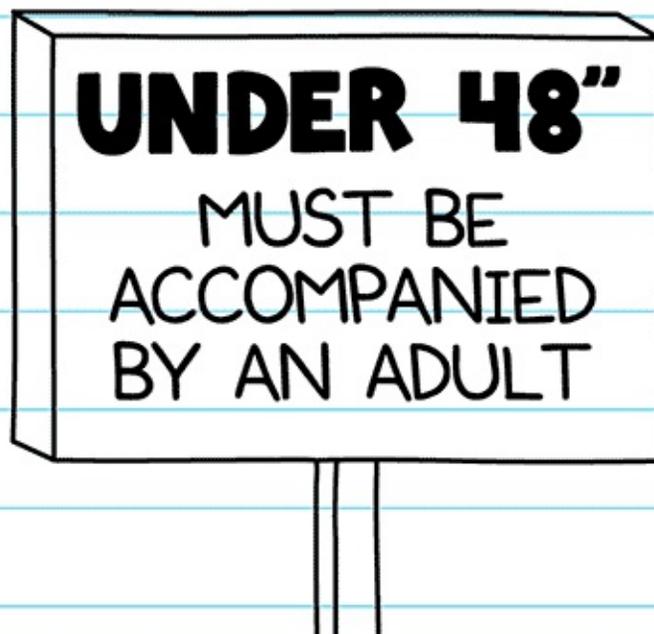
It's really a place meant for people Manny's age.

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Mom must've heard me and Rodrick groan in the backseat. She said we were gonna have a great day as a family and it would be the highlight of our summer vacation.

I have bad memories of the Slipslide Water Park. One time Grandpa took me there, and he left me in the waterslide area for practically the whole day. He said he was gonna go read his book and he'd meet me there in three hours. But I didn't actually go on any slides because of the sign at the entrance.



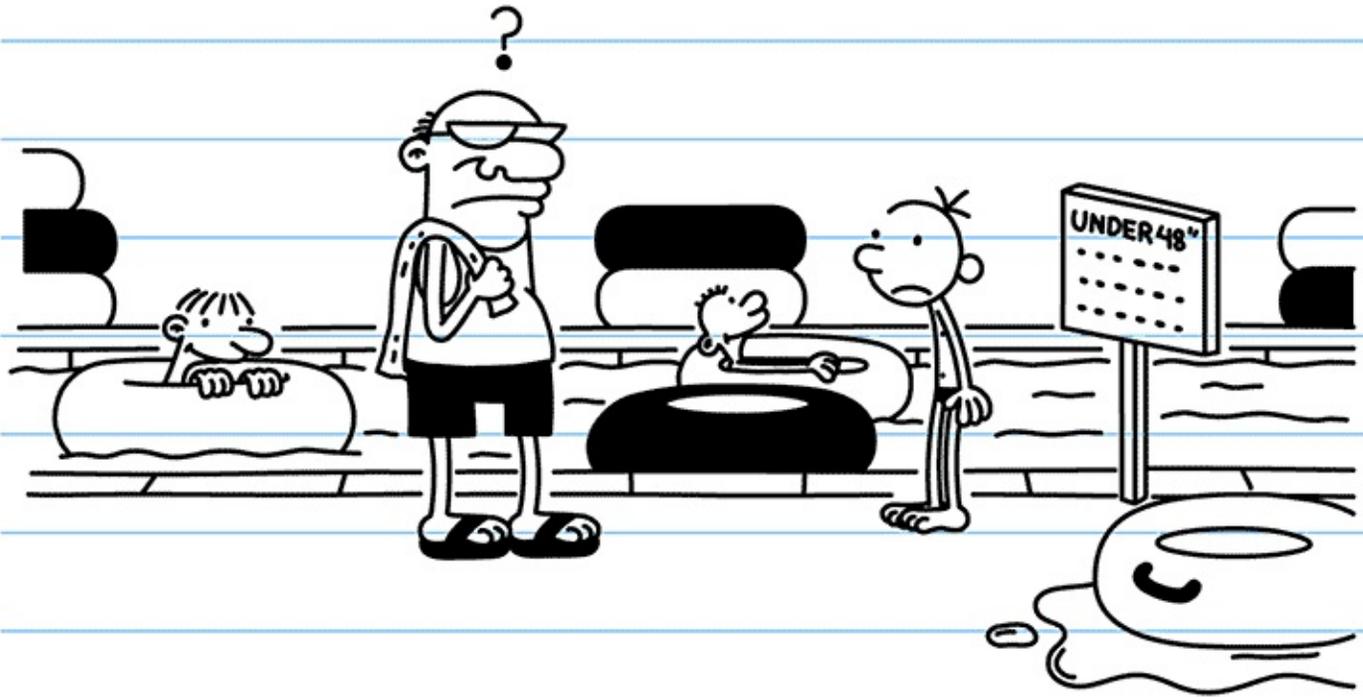
I thought you had to be forty-eight years old

to ride, but it turns out the two little lines

next to the number meant “inches.”

So I basically wasted my day waiting for Grandpa

to come back and get me, and then we had to leave.



Rodrick has bad memories of the Slipslide Water

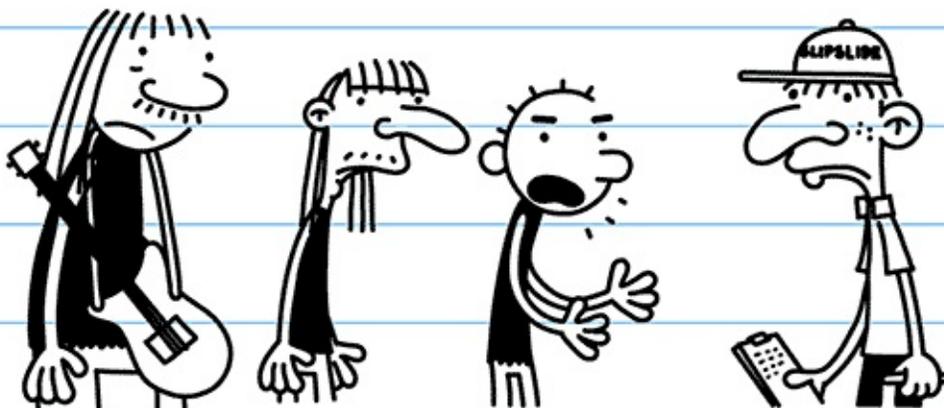
Park, too. Last year his band got booked to do

a show on the music stage they have near the

wave pool. Rodrick's band asked the park people

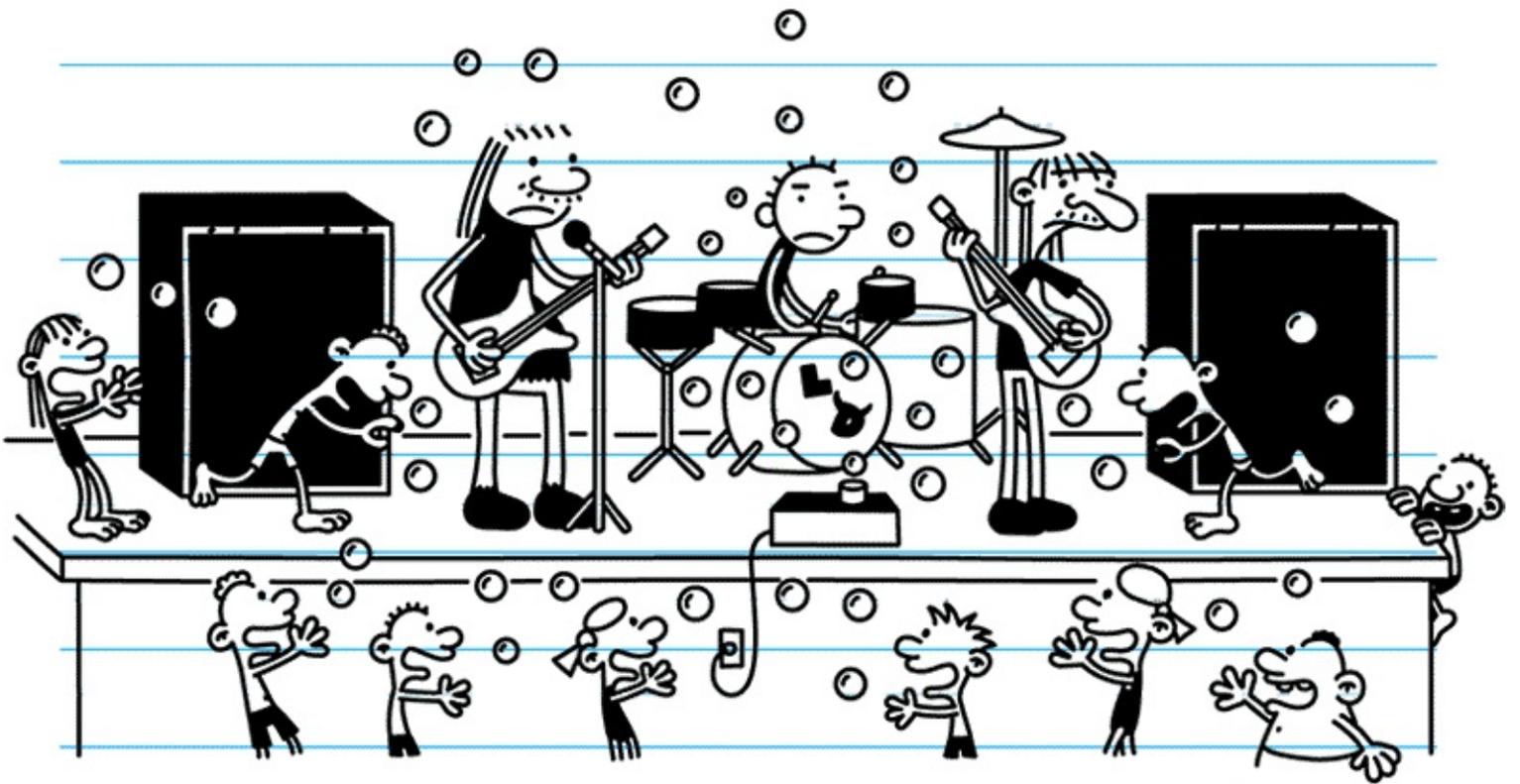
to set them up with a smoke machine so they could

have some special effects for their show.



But somebody screwed up, and they set Rodrick's
band up with a BuBBle machine instead.

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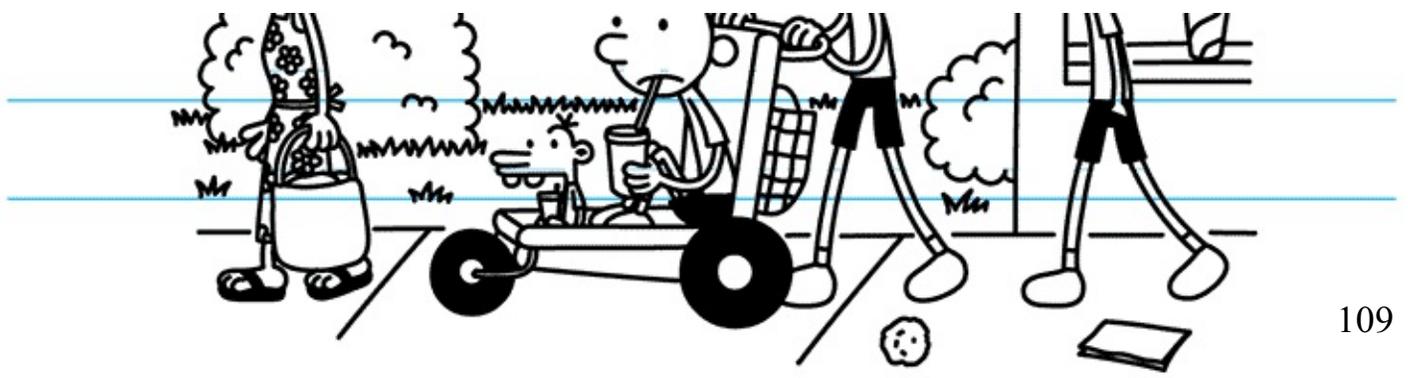


I found out the reason Mom took us to the
water park today: It was half-price for families.

Unfortunately, it looked like just about every
family in the state was there, too.

When we got through the gates, Mom rented a
stroller for Manny. I convinced her to spend a
little more money and rent a double stroller,
because I knew it was gonna be a long day and
I wanted to conserve my energy.





Mom parked the stroller near the wave pool, which was so crowded you could barely even see the water.

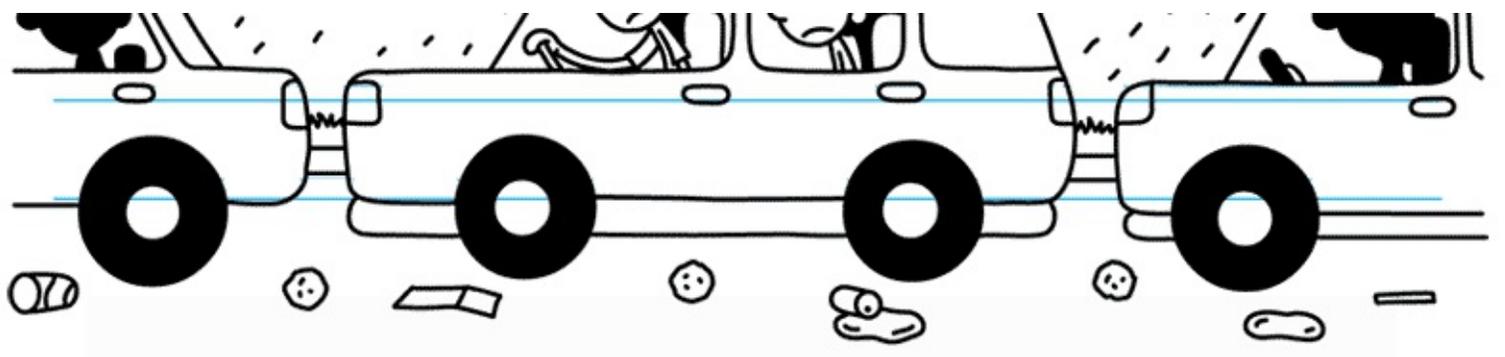
After we put on our sunscreen and found a place to sit, I felt a few raindrops, and then I heard thunder. Then an announcement came over the loudspeaker.

DUE TO LIGHTNING, THE SLIPSLIDE WATER PARK IS NOW CLOSED. THANK YOU FOR COMING, AND HAVE A NICE DAY.



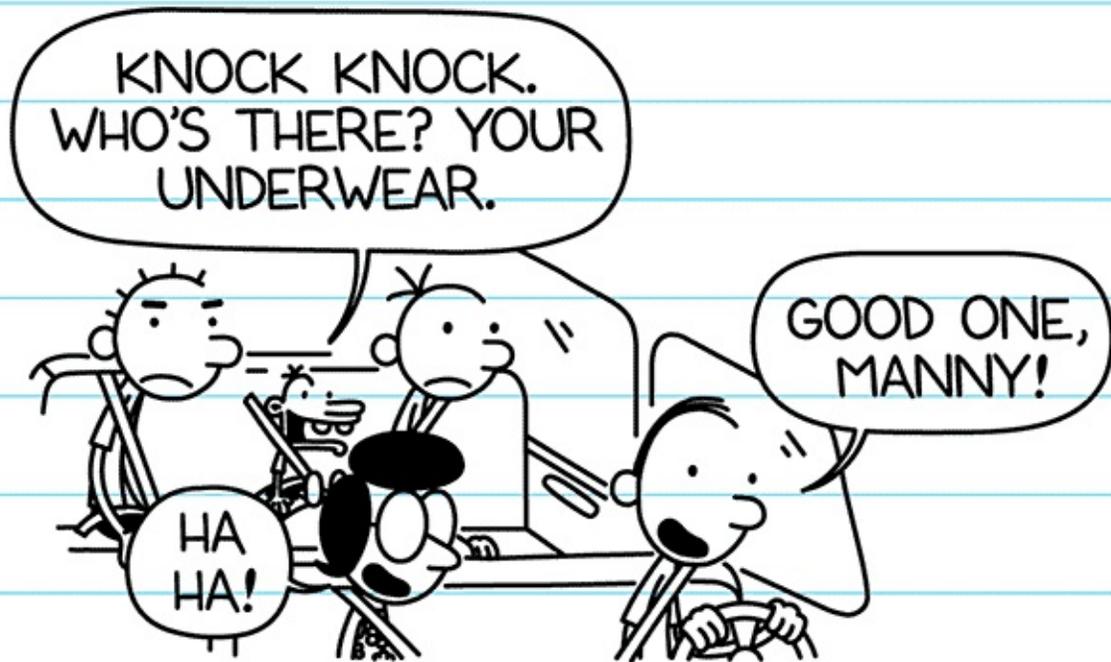
Everyone hit the exits and got in their cars. But with all the people trying to leave at the exact same time, it was a total traffic jam.





Manny tried to entertain everyone by telling jokes.

At first Mom and Dad were encouraging him.



But after a while, Manny's jokes didn't even make sense.



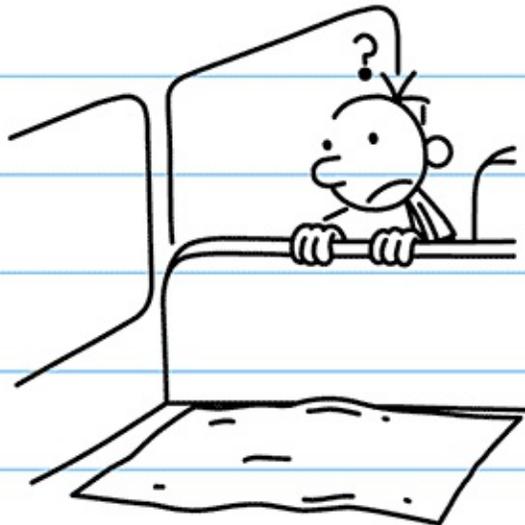
We were low on gas, so we had to turn off the

air conditioner and wait for the parking lot to

clear up.

Mom said she had a headache, and she went to
the back to lie down. An hour later traffic finally
thinned out, and we got onto the highway.

We stopped for gas, and about forty-five minutes
later we were home. Dad told me to wake Mom up,
but when I looked in the back of the station
wagon, Mom wasn't there.



For a few minutes nobody knew where she went.
Then we realized the only place she could be was
at the gas station. She must've gotten out to use
the bathroom when we stopped, and nobody noticed.

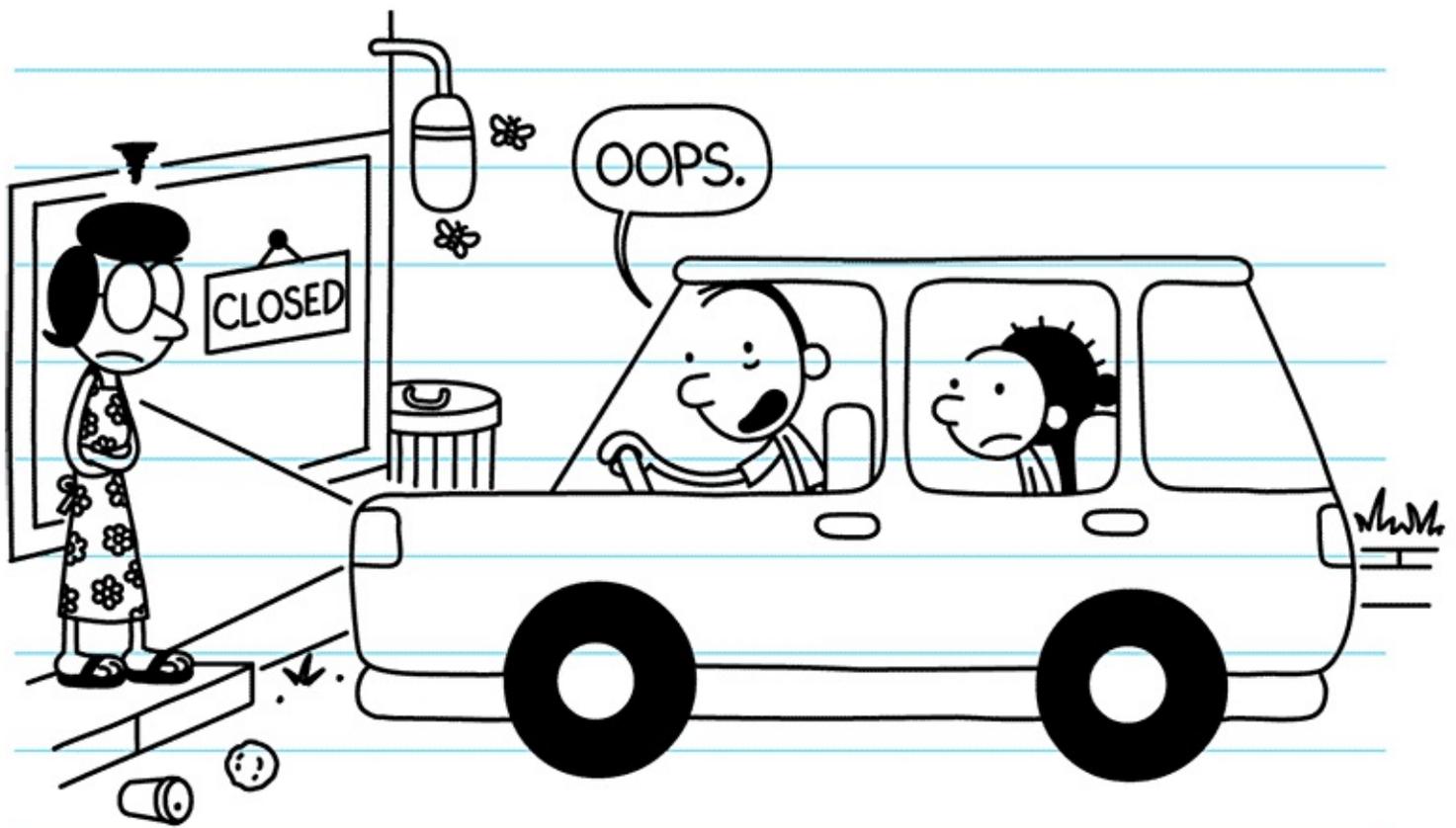
Sure enough, that's where she was. We were glad

to see her, but I don't think she was too happy _____

to see US. _____

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Mom didn't really say anything on the ride back.

Something tells me she's had her fill of family

togetherness for a while, and that's good,

because I have, too.

Sunday

I really wish we didn't go on that trip yesterday,

because if we stayed home, my fish would still be alive.

Before we left for our trip I fed my fish, and Mom

said I should feed Rodrick's fish, too. Rodrick's fish

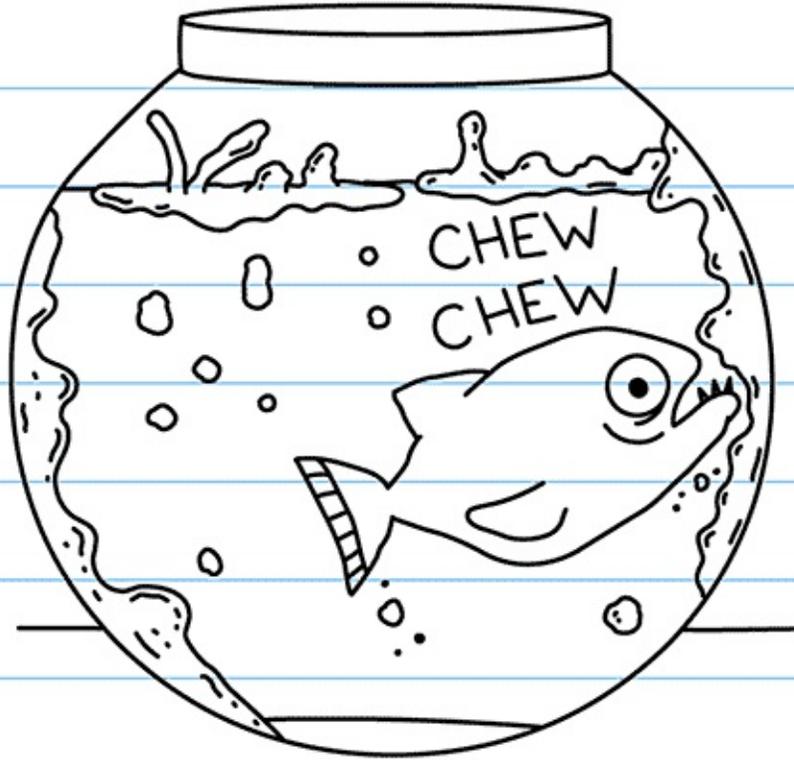
was in a bowl on top of the refrigerator, and I'm

pretty sure Rodrick hadn't fed his fish or cleaned

the bowl once.

I think Rodrick's fish was living off of the algae

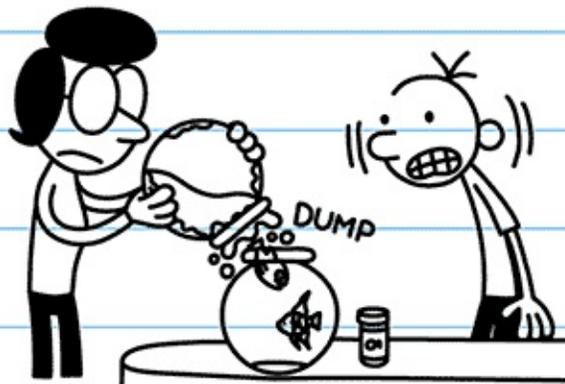
growing on the glass.



When Mom saw Rodrick's bowl, she thought it

was disgusting. So she took his fish and put it in

my bowl.



When we got home from the water park, I

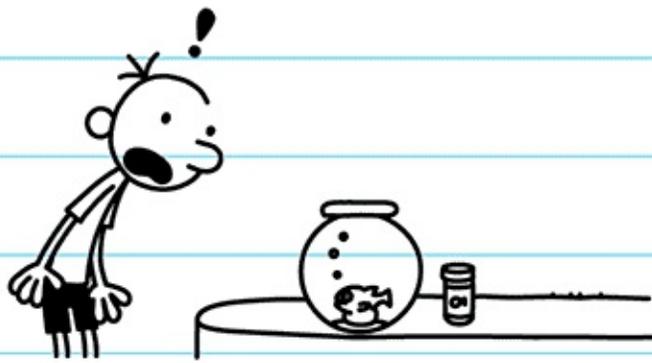
went straight to the kitchen to feed my fish.

But he was gone, and it wasn't a big mystery

what happened to him.

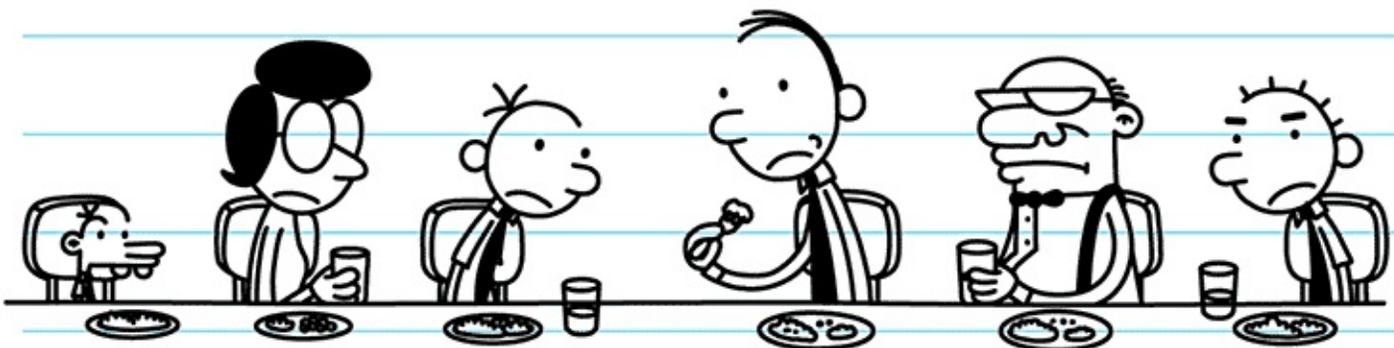
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I didn't even have time to feel sad about it,
because today was Father's Day and we all had to
get in the car and go up to Grandpa's for brunch.

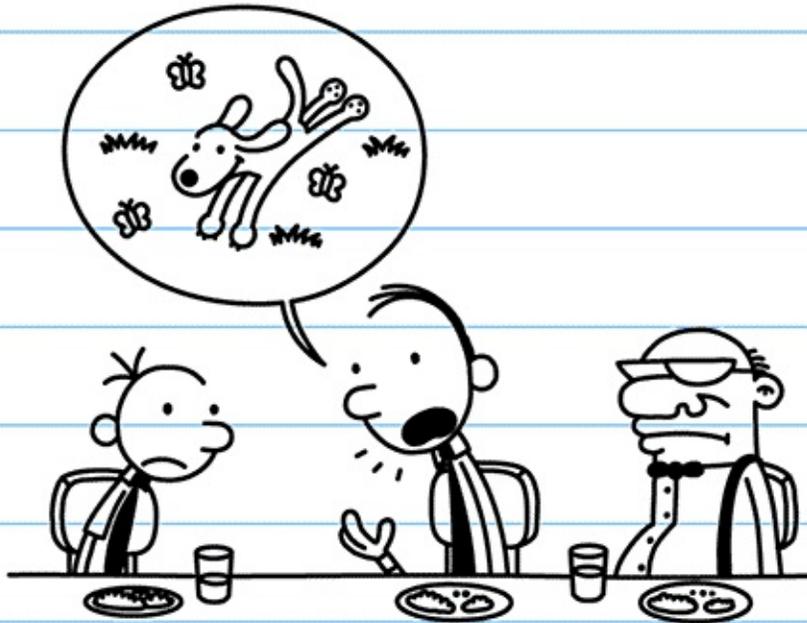
I'll tell you this: If I'm ever a dad, you're not
gonna see me dressing up in a shirt and tie and
going to Leisure Towers on Father's Day. I'm
gonna go off by myself and have some FuN. But
Mom said she thought it would be good for the
three generations of Heffley men to be together.



I guess I must've been picking at my food,
because Dad asked me what was wrong. I told him
I was bummed out because my fish died. Dad said

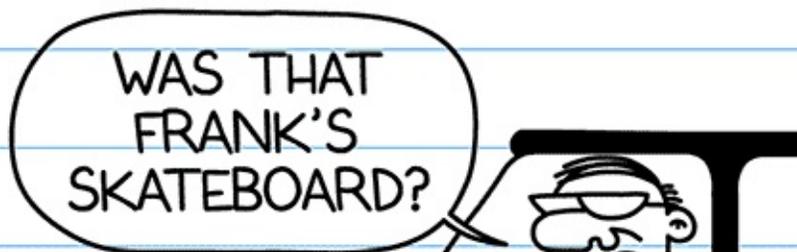
he didn't really know what to say because he'd
never had a pet die before.

He said he used to have a dog named Nutty when he was a kid, but Nutty ran away to a butterfly farm.



I've heard Dad tell this same story about Nutty and the butterfly farm a million times, but I didn't wanna be rude and cut him off.

Then Grandpa spoke up and said he had a "confession" to make. He said that Nutty didn't actually run away to a butterfly farm. Grandpa said what ReAlly happened was that he accidentally ran over the dog when he was backing his car out of the driveway.





Grandpa said he made up the butterfly farm story

so he didn't have to tell Dad the truth, but that

now they could have a good laugh over it.



But Dad was mAD. He told us to get in the car,

and he left Grandpa with the bill for brunch. Dad

didn't say anything on the way home. He just

dropped us off at the house and drove away.



Dad was gone for a long time, and I was starting

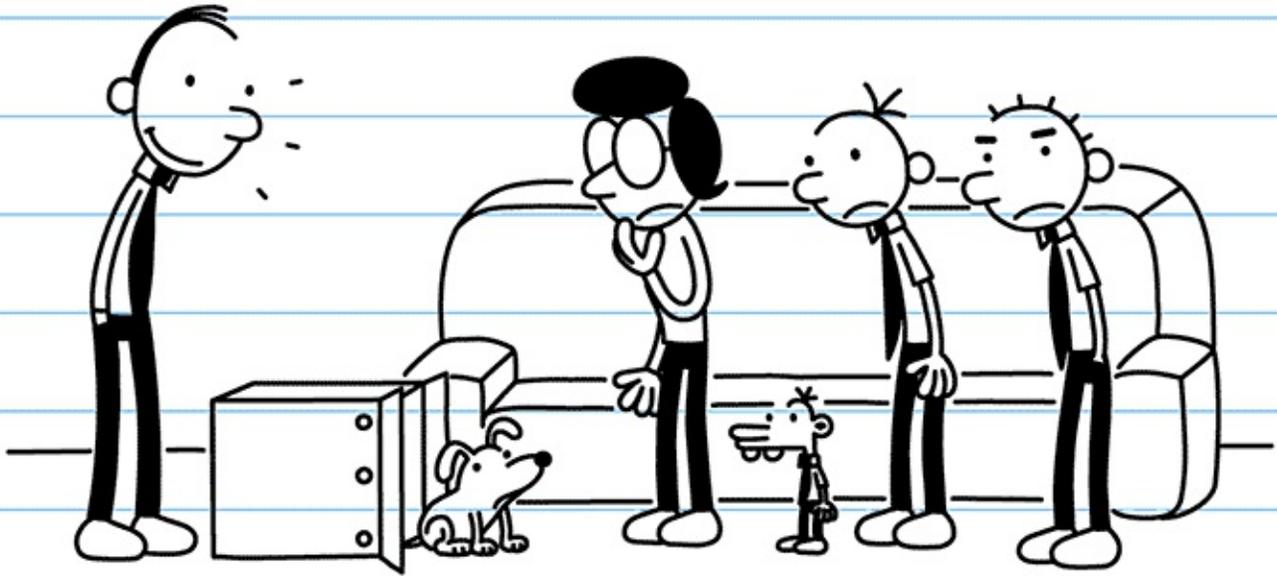
to think maybe he was gonna just take the rest of

the day for himself. But he showed up an hour

later carrying a big cardboard box.

Dad put the box on the floor, and believe it or

not, there was a DoG in there.



Mom didn't seem too thrilled that Dad went out

and bought a dog without checking with her first.

I don't think Dad has ever even bought a pair

of pants for himself without getting Mom's ok

beforehand. But I think she could see that Dad

was happy, so she let him keep it.

At dinner Mom said we should come up with a name

for the dog.





I wanted to name it something cool like Shredder or

Ripjaw, but Mom said my ideas were too “violent.”

Manny’s ideas were a whole lot worse, though. He

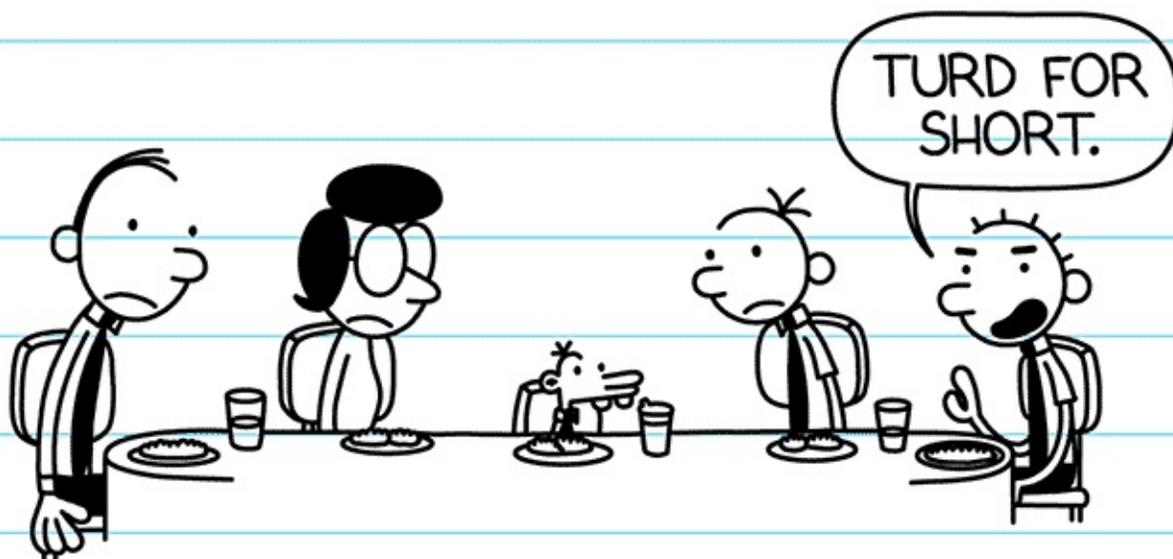
wanted to name the dog an animal name like

Elephant or Zebra.



Rodrick liked the animal name idea, and he said we

should call the dog Turtle.



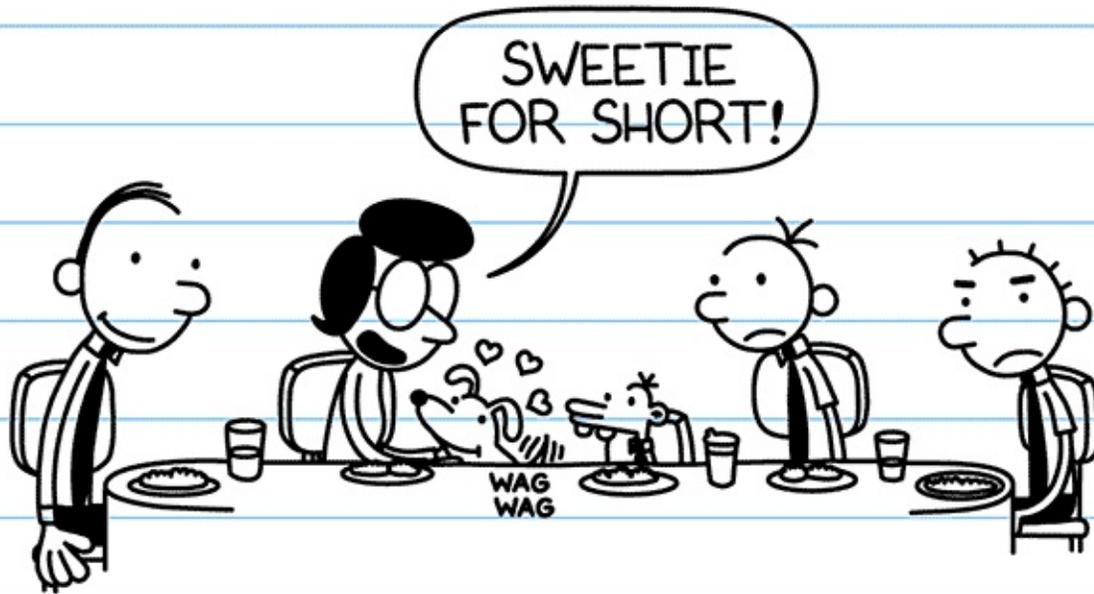
Mom said we should call the dog Sweetheart. I

thought that was a really terrible idea, because

the dog is a boy, not a girl.

But before any of us could fight it, Dad agreed

with Mom's idea.



I think Dad was willing to go with anything Mom

came up with if it meant he didn't have to take

the dog back. But something tells me Uncle Joe

would not approve of our dog's name.

Dad told Rodrick he should go to the mall to buy

a bowl and get the dog's name printed on it, and

here's what Rodrick came back with —



SWEATY

120

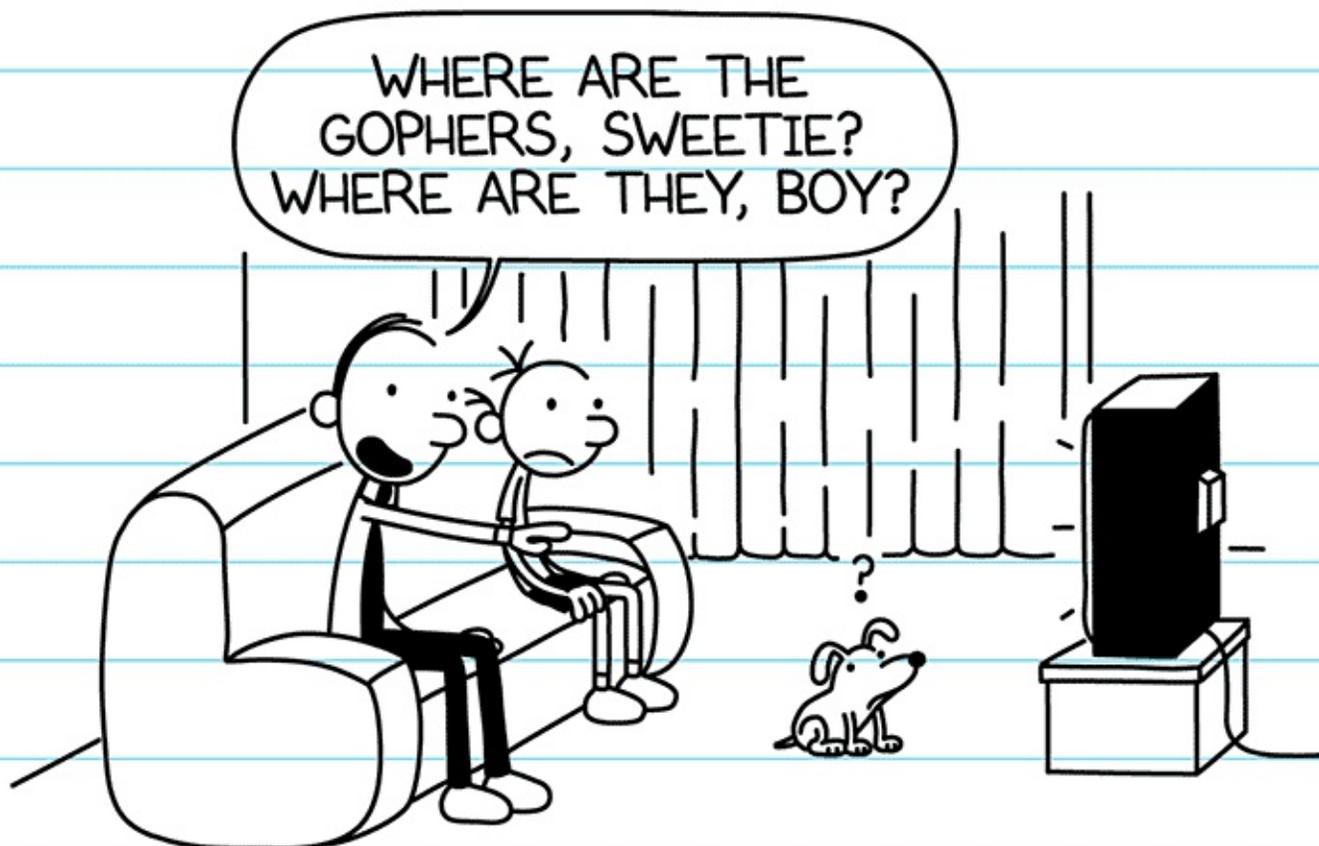


I guess that's what you get when you send the
worst speller in the family off to do your errands.

Wednesday

I was really happy when we got our dog at first,
but now I'm starting to have second thoughts.

The dog's actually been driving me crazy. A few
nights ago a commercial came on tv, and it
showed some gophers popping in and out of their
holes. Sweetie seemed pretty interested in that, so
Dad said —



That got Sweetie all riled up, and he started

barking at the tv.

Now Sweetie barks at the tV constantly,

and the only thing that gets him to stop is when

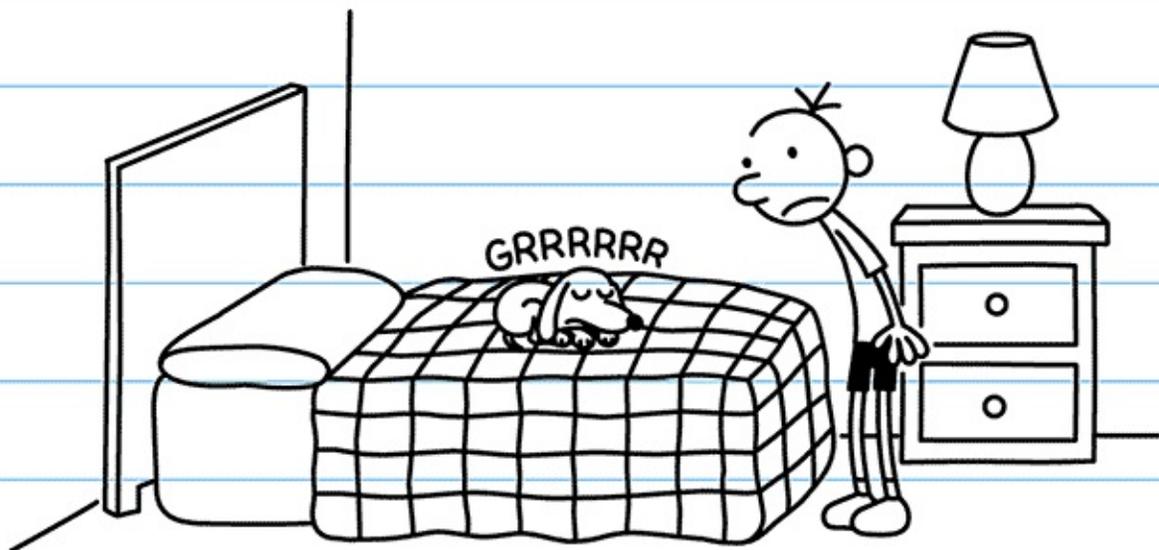
the commercial with the gophers comes back on.



But what really bugs me about the dog is that he

likes to sleep in my bed, and I'm afraid he'll bite

my hand off if I try to move him.



And he doesn't just sleep in my bed. He sleeps

right smack in the middle.

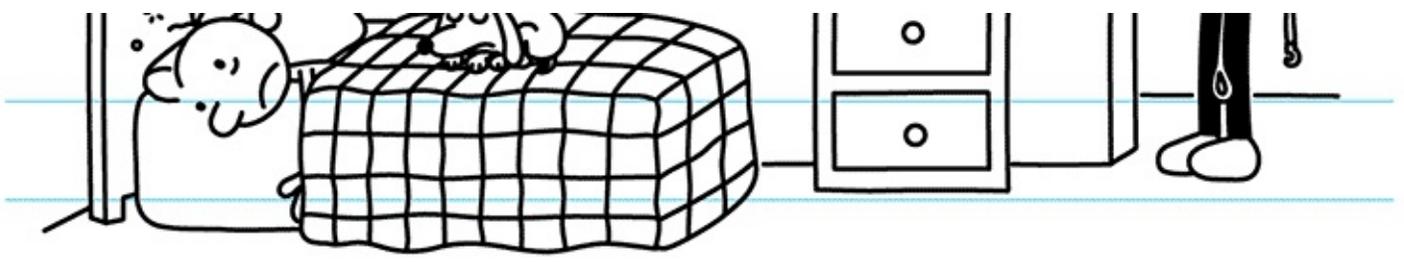
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Dad comes in my room at 7:00 every morning to take Sweetie out. But I guess me and the dog have something in common, because he doesn't like getting out of bed in the morning, either. So Dad turns the lights on and off to try to make the dog wake up.





Yesterday Dad couldn't get Sweetie to go outside,

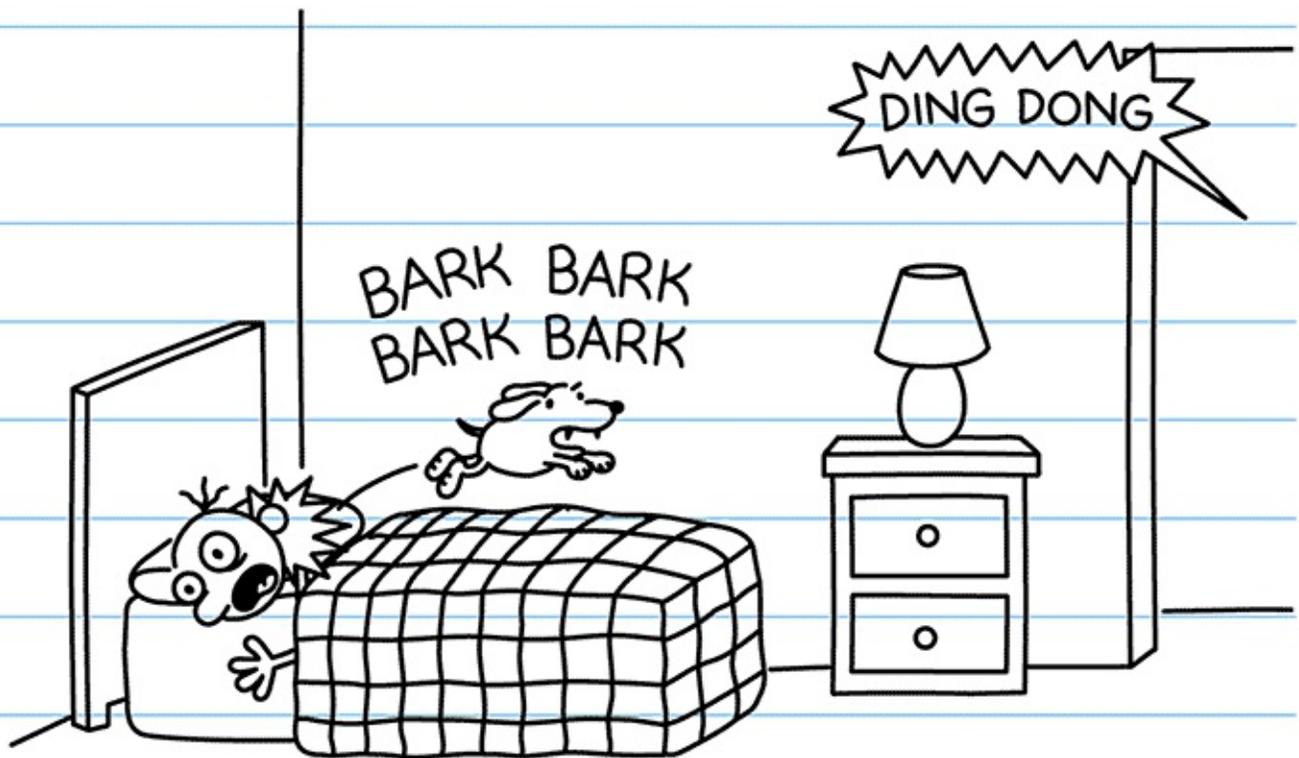
so he tried something new. He went to the front

of the house and rang the doorbell, which made

the dog shoot out of bed like a rocket.

The only problem was, he used my face as a

launching pad.



It must've been raining outside this morning, because

when Sweetie came back in he was shivering and

soaking wet. Then he tried to get under the covers

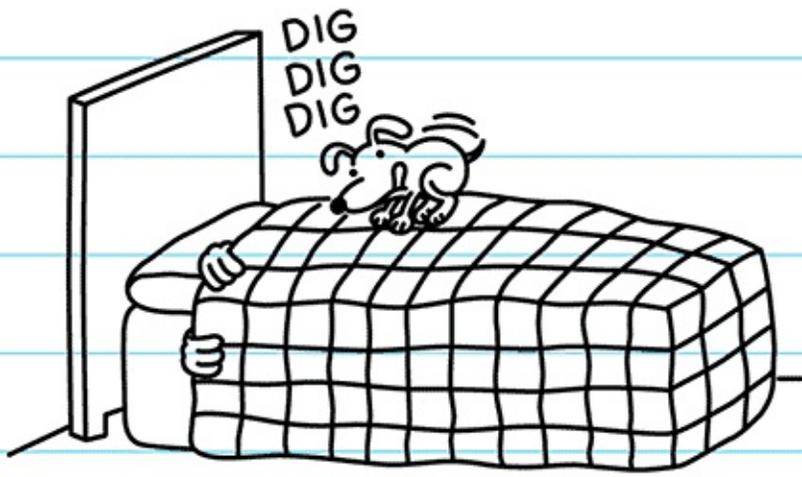
with me to get warm. Luckily, the muddy hand has

given me a lot of practice with this sort of thing,

so I was able to keep him out.

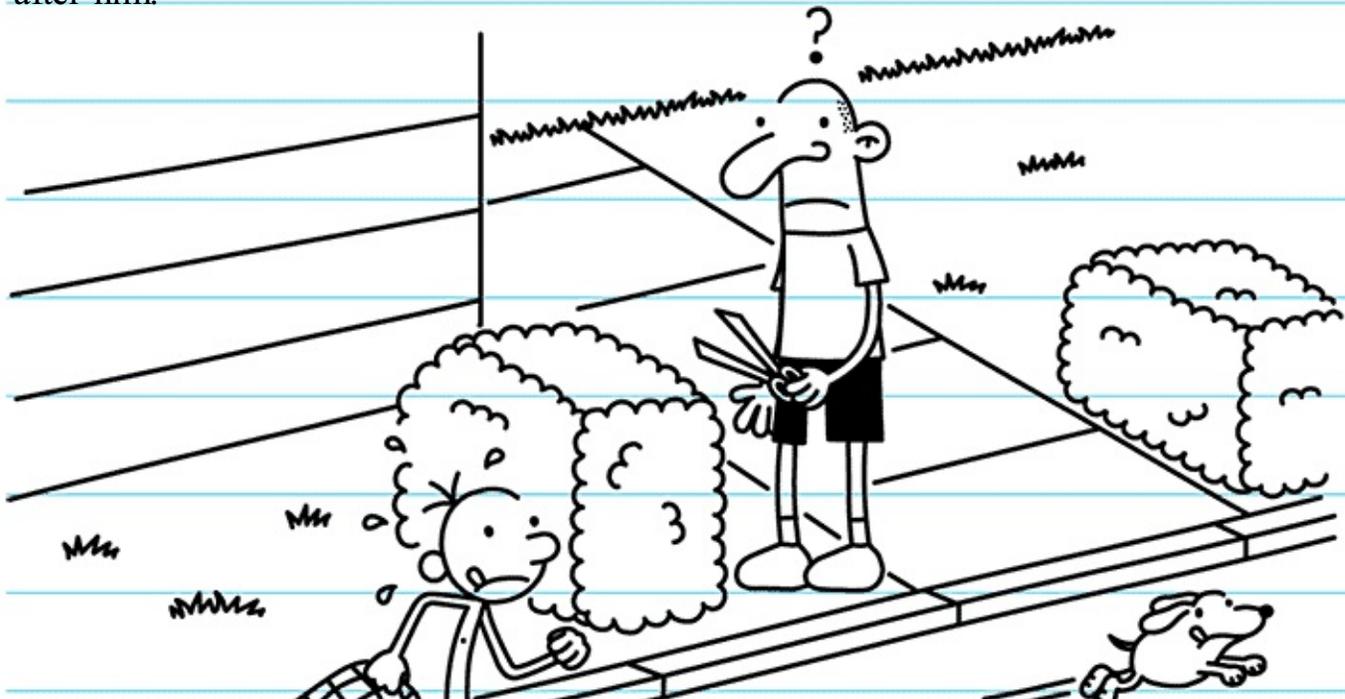
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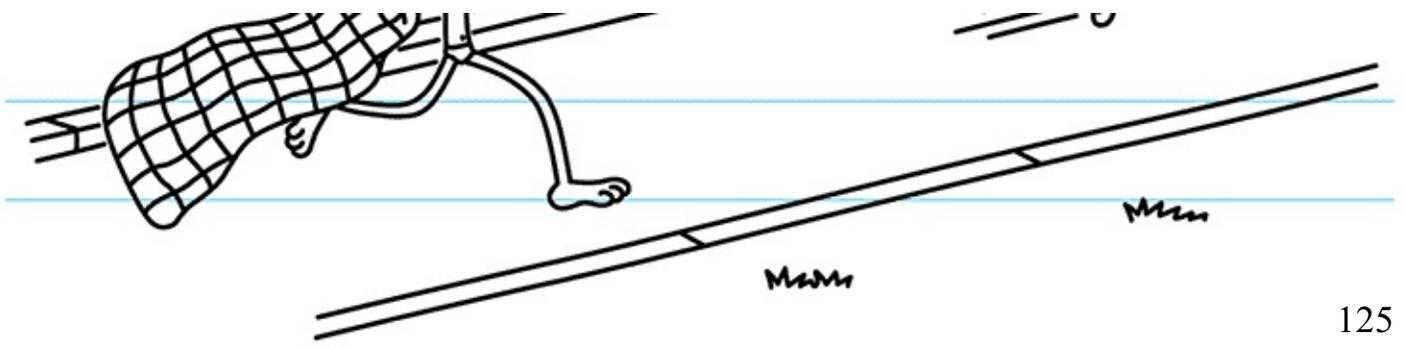




Thursday

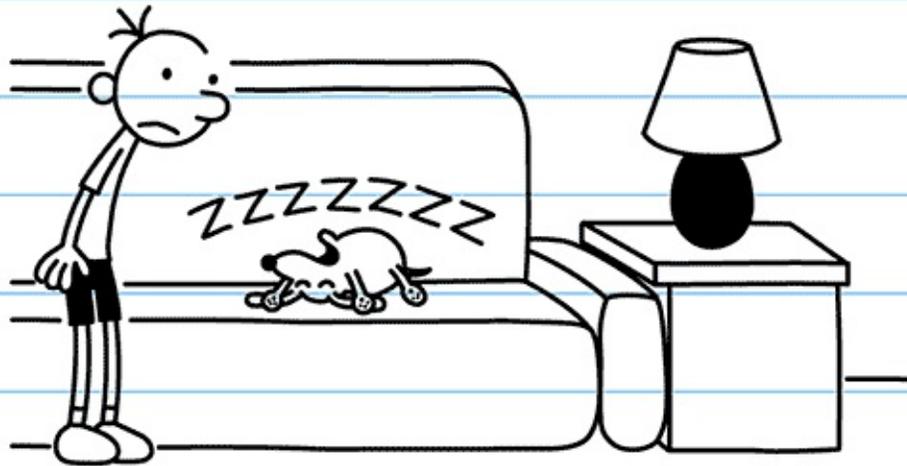
This morning Dad wasn't able to get the dog out of my bed no matter WHAT he tried. So he went to work, and about an hour later Sweetie woke me up to take him outside. I wrapped myself in my blanket and then let the dog out the front door and waited for him to do his business. But Sweetie decided to make a run for it, and I had to chase after him.





You know, I was actually having a pretty decent summer until Sweetie came along. He's ruining the two things that are the most important to me: television and sleep.

And you know how Dad is always getting on my case about lying around all day? Well, Sweetie is twice as bad as me, but Dad's CRAZY about that dog.



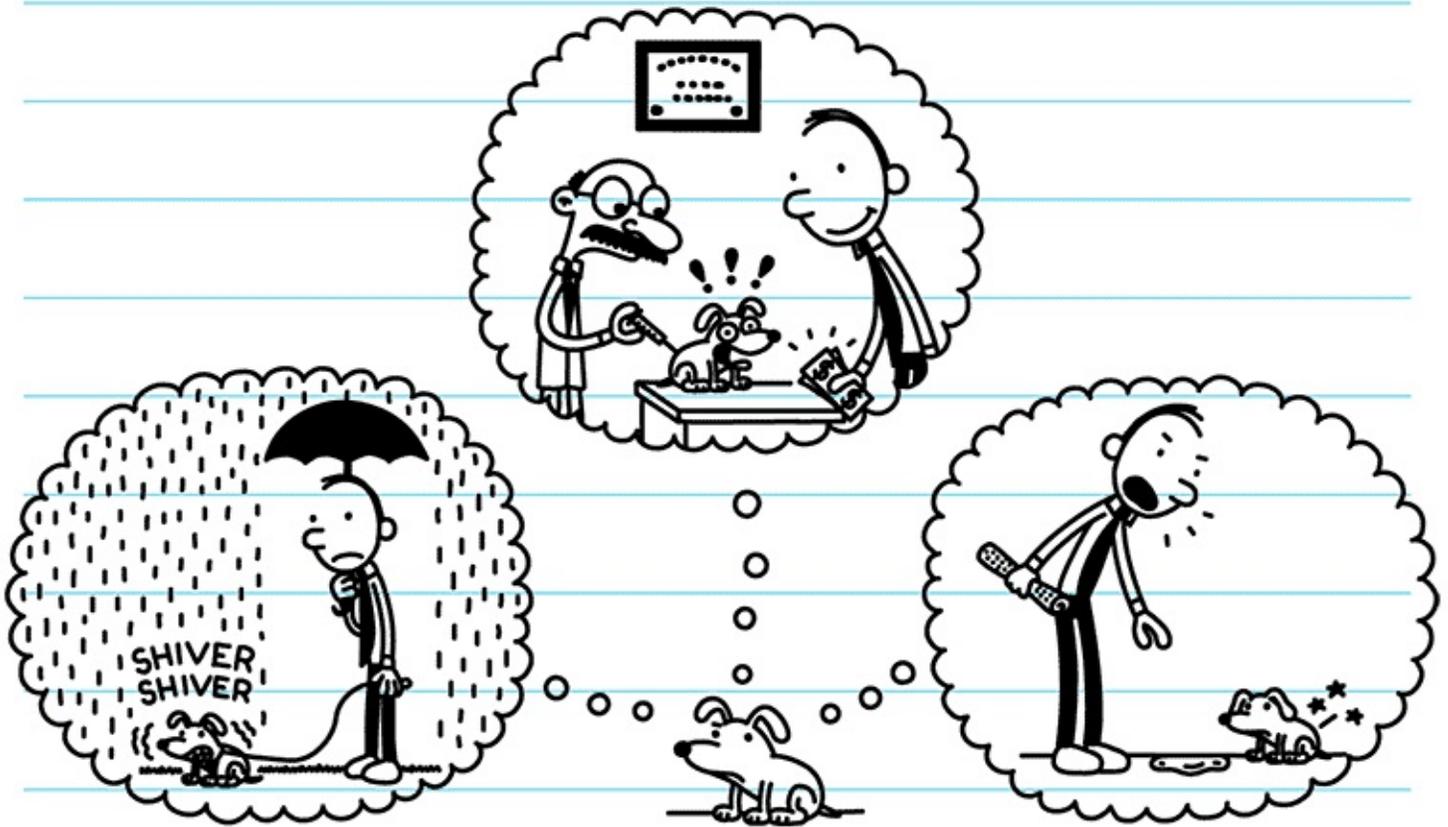
I don't think the feeling is mutual, though. Dad is always trying to get the dog to give him a kiss on the nose, but Sweetie won't do it.





I can kind of understand why the dog doesn't

like Dad.

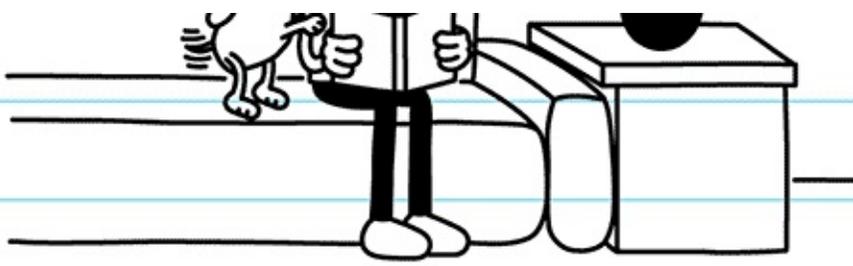


The only person Sweetie really likes is Mom, even

though she barely pays him any attention. And I

can tell that's starting to drive Dad a little nuts.





I think Sweetie is just more of a ladies' man. So I

guess that's something else we have in common.

July

Saturday

Last night I was working on a new comic to

replace "Li'l Cutie." I figured there would be a lot

of competition for the open slot, so I wanted to

come up with something that really stood out. I

made up this comic called "Hey, People!" that's

sort of like a half cartoon, half advice column. I

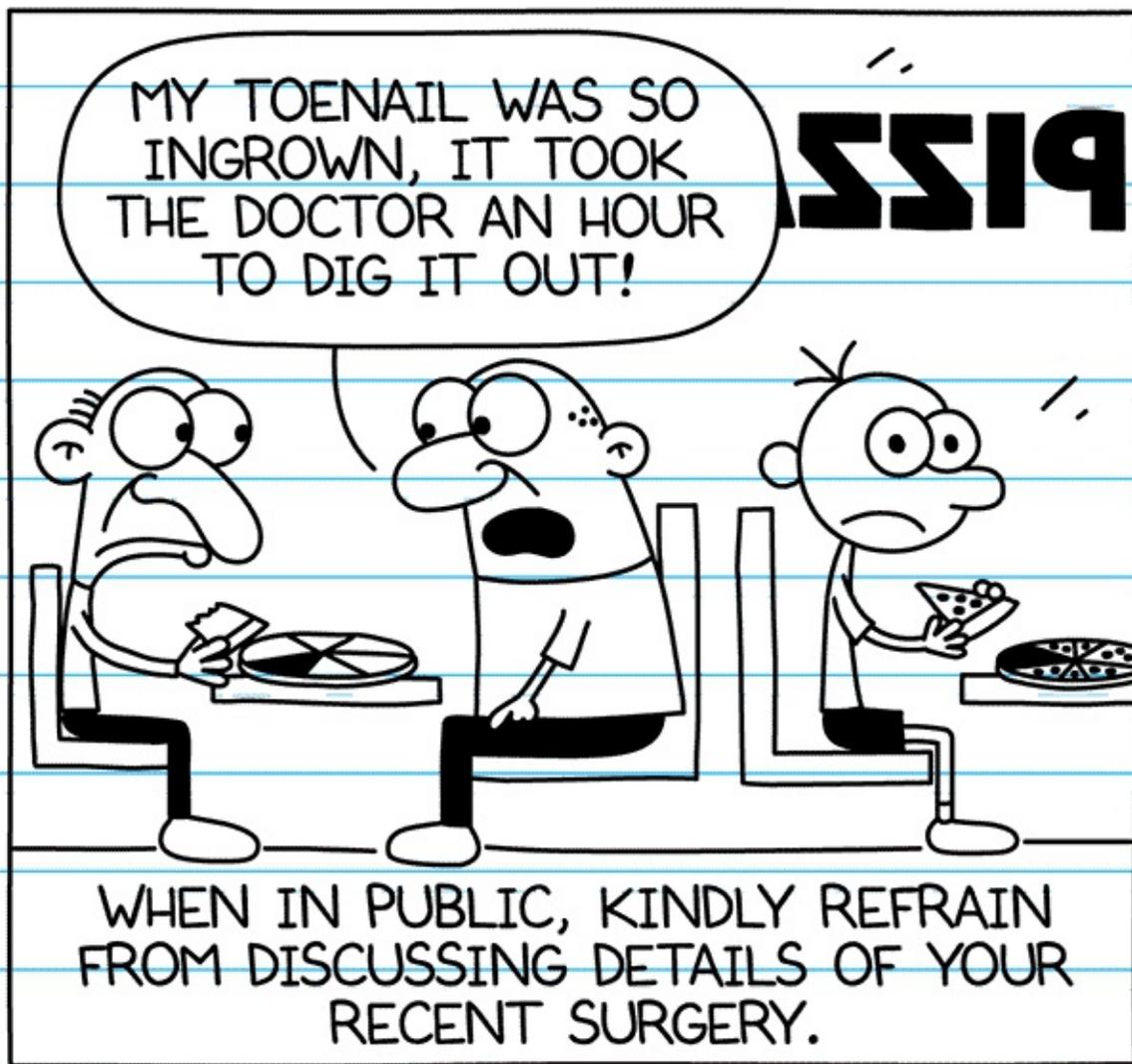
figure I can use it to make the world a better

place, or at least a better place for me.





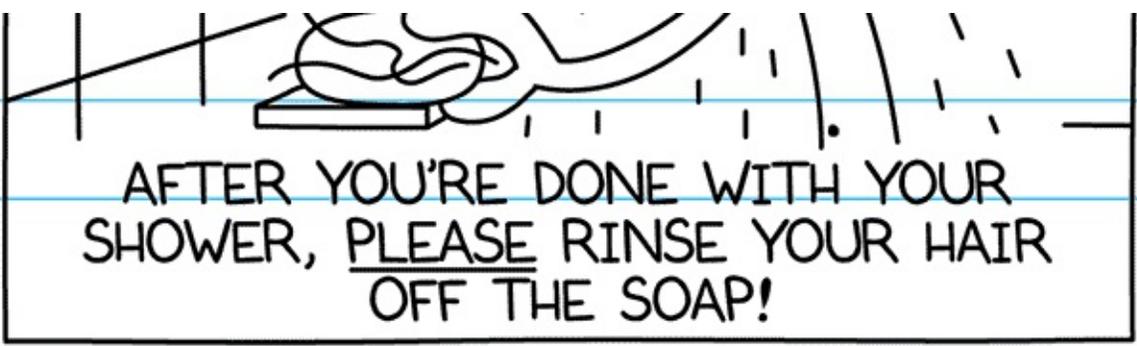
WHEN ORDERING FROM A FAST-FOOD RESTAURANT, TRY TO DECIDE WHAT YOU WANT BEFORE YOU GET TO THE FRONT OF THE LINE.



I figured since Dad reads the comics, I might as well

write a few that were specifically targeted at him.





AFTER YOU'RE DONE WITH YOUR
SHOWER, PLEASE RINSE YOUR HAIR
OFF THE SOAP!

I would've written a bunch of comics last night,
but Sweetie was driving me crazy and I couldn't
concentrate.

While I was drawing, the dog was sitting on my
pillow licking his paws and his tail, and he was
really getting into it.



Whenever Sweetie does that, I have to remember
to flip the pillow over when I go to bed. Last
night I forgot, and when I lay down I put my
head right on the wet spot.

Speaking of licking, Sweetie finally kissed Dad
last night. It's probably because Dad had potato

chips on his breath, and I think dogs have an _____

automatic response to that sort of thing. _____

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I didn't have the heart to tell Dad that Sweetie
had just spent the past half hour on my pillow
licking his rear end.

Anyway, I'm hoping I can write a few more
comics tonight, because I'm not gonna be able to
get any work done tomorrow. Tomorrow's the
Fourth of July, and Mom is making the whole
family go to the town pool.

I tried to get out of it, mostly because I want
to make it through the summer without having to
walk past the shower guys. But I think Mom's

still hoping to have one perfect family day this

summer, so there's no use fighting it.

Monday

My Fourth of July started out pretty rough. When

I got to the pool, I tried to get through the

locker room as quickly as I could. But the shower

guys were really chatty, and they didn't make it

easy on me.



Then Mom told me she left her sunglasses out in

the car, so I had to go BACK through the

shower area to the parking lot. I wore Mom's

sunglasses on the return trip to make it clear I

wasn't interested in conversation, but that didn't

work out so good, either.

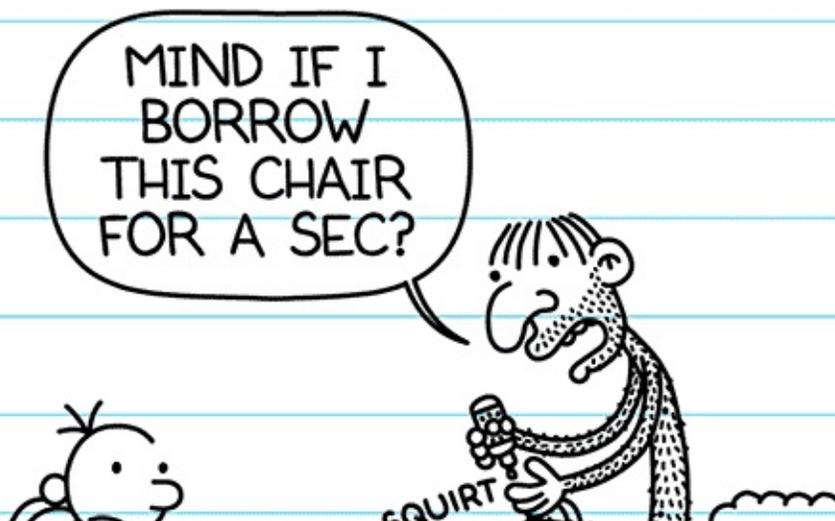
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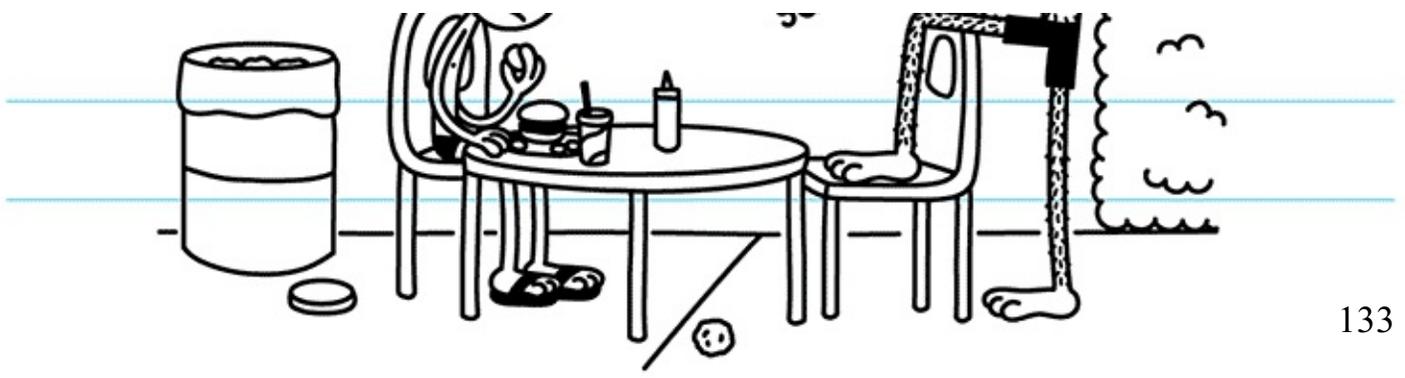




Seriously, I wish those guys would just take a shower at home before they came to the pool.

Because once you see somebody like that, you can never look at them the same way again.





After I got past the locker room, things didn't get a whole lot better. The scene was just about how I remembered it, except more crowded. I guess everyone had the same idea to spend the Fourth at the pool.



The only time the pool cleared out was when the lifeguard called a fifteen-minute rest break and all the kids had to get out of the water.

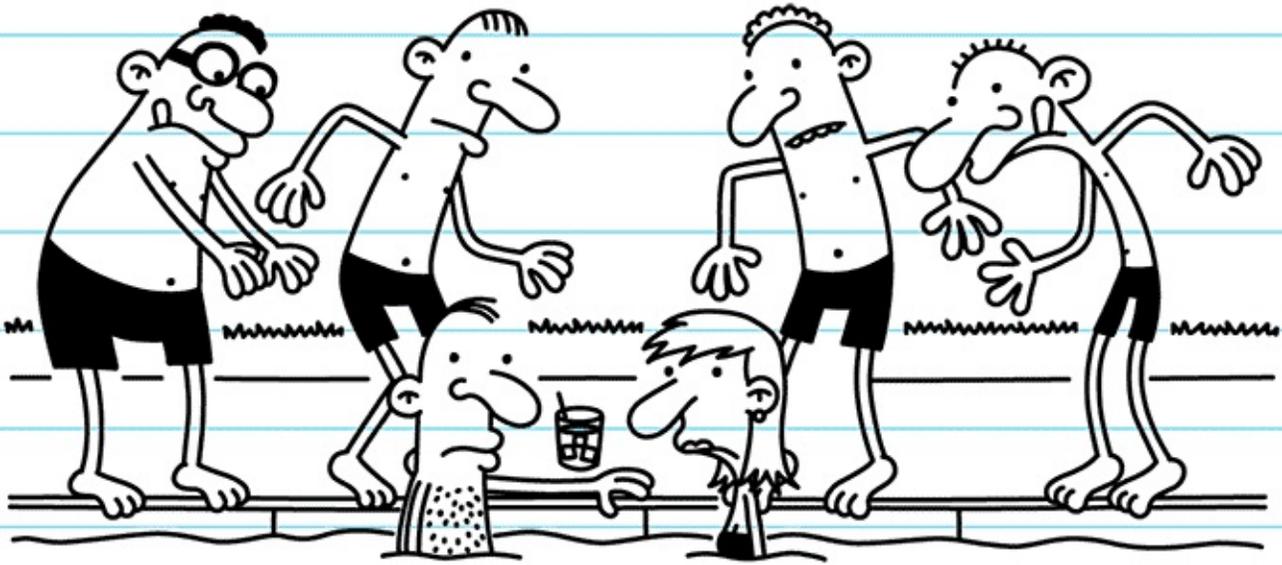
I think the idea behind rest breaks is to give adults a little time to enjoy the pool, but I don't

know how they're supposed to relax with three

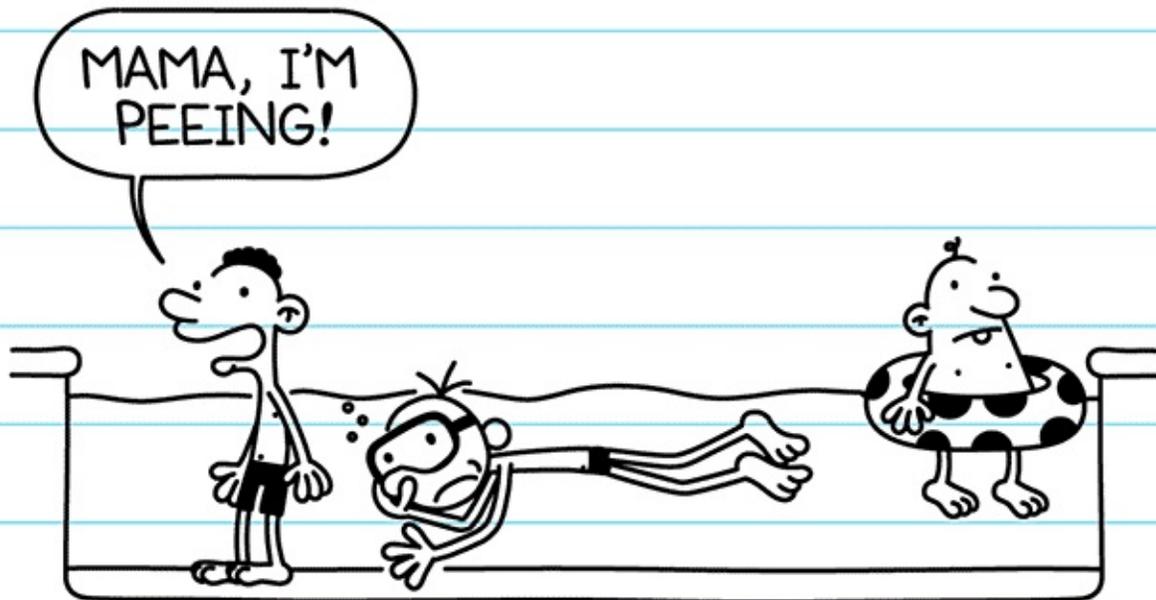
hundred kids waiting for the break to be over.

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When I was younger I used to just go swim in
the baby pool during the fifteen-minute rest
break, but that was before I knew what went
on in there.

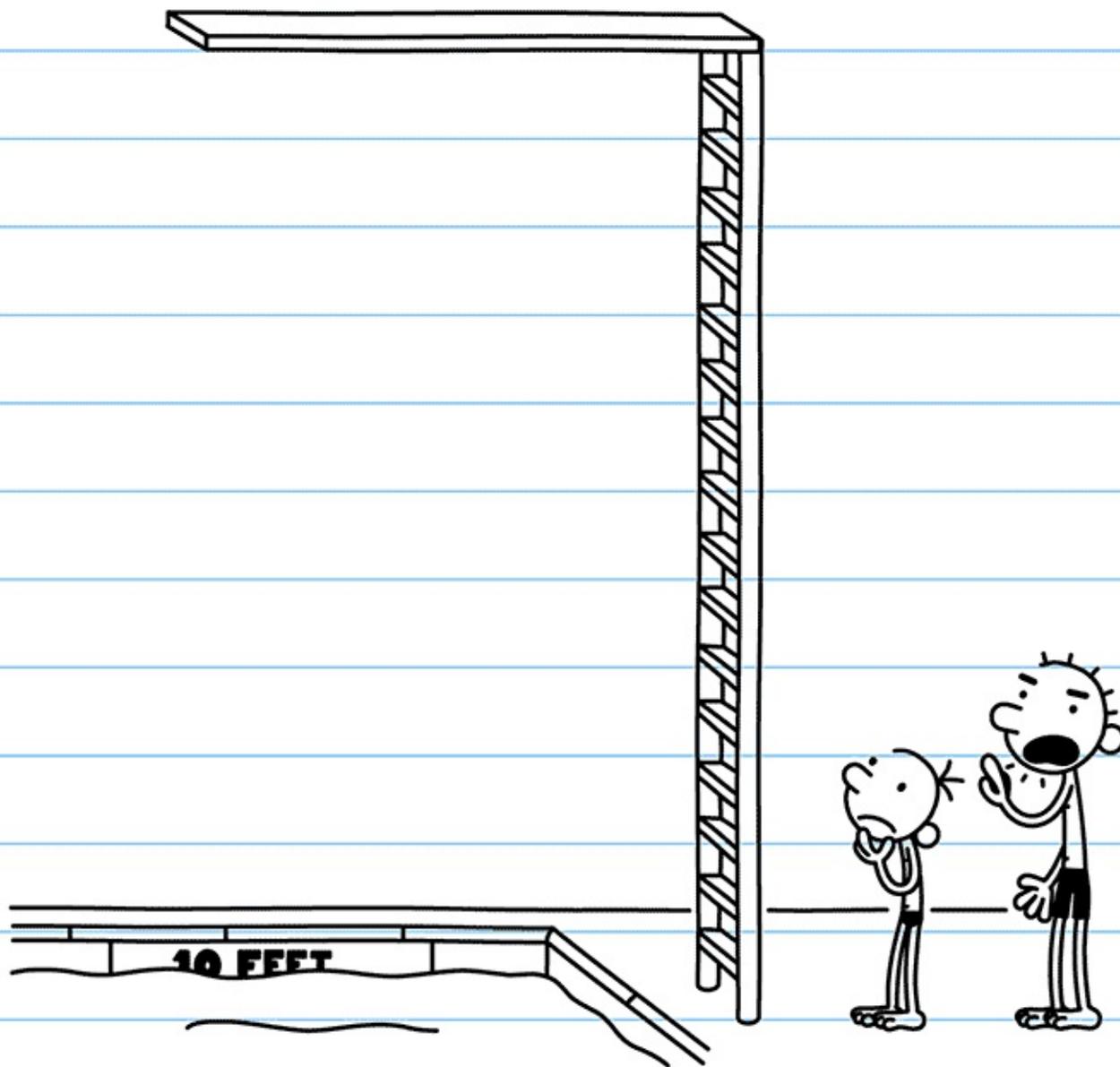


The only area of the pool that wasn't a complete
madhouse was the deep end, and that's where the
diving boards are. I haven't been in the deep end

since I was eight years old, when Rodrick talked

me into jumping off the high dive.

Rodrick was always trying to get me to jump off the high dive, but that tall ladder really scared me. He told me I needed to conquer my fears or I'd never become a man.



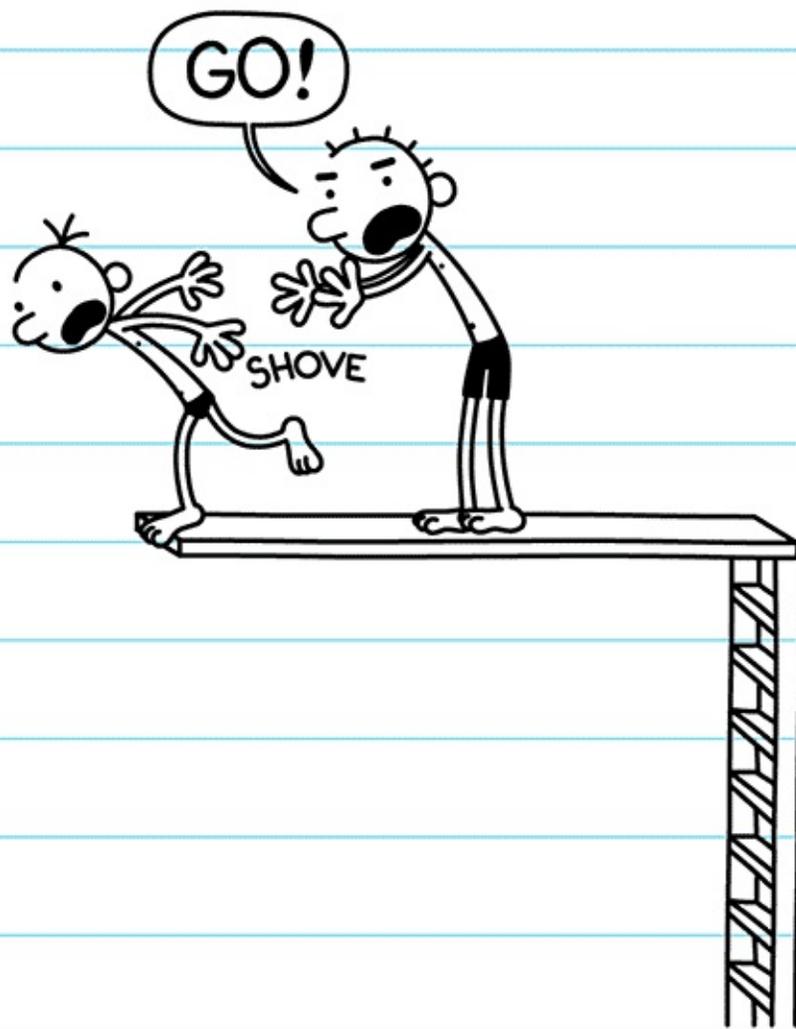
Then one day Rodrick told me that there was a clown at the top of the diving board who was handing out free toys, and that got my attention.

But by the time I realized Rodrick was full of

baloney, it was too late.

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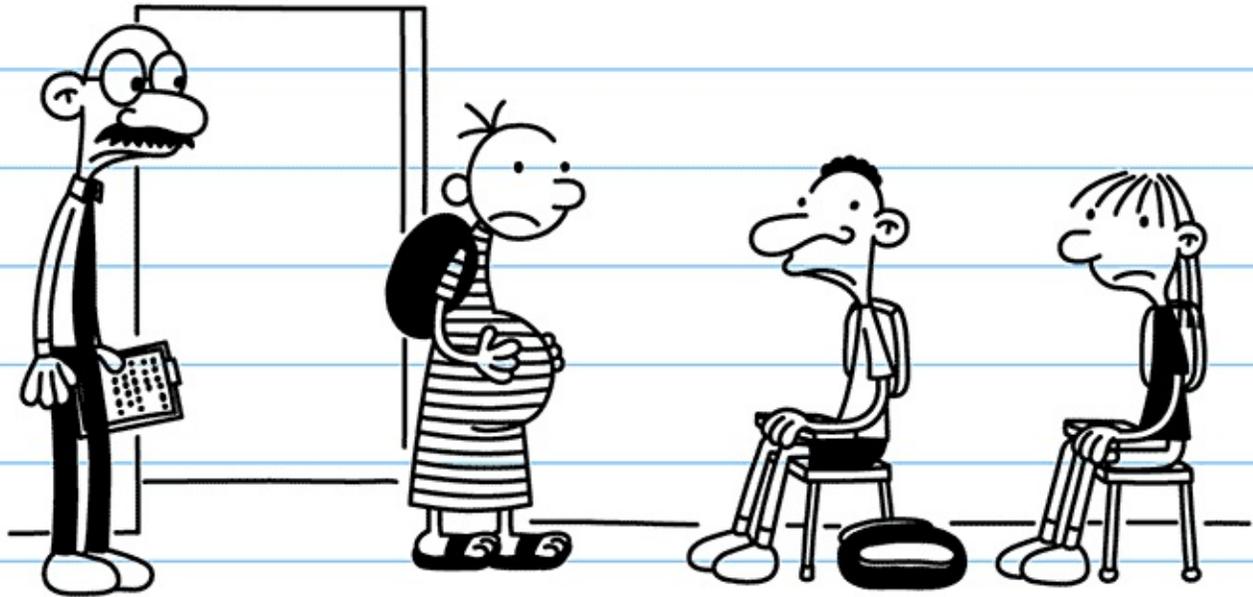
Anyway, today Mom got everyone together to go
to the picnic area because they were giving out
free watermelon.

But I've got a fear of watermelon, too. Rodrick
is always telling me that if you eat the seeds,
then a watermelon will grow in your stomach.





I don't know if he's telling the truth or not, but school's only a couple of months away, so I'm not willing to take the risk.



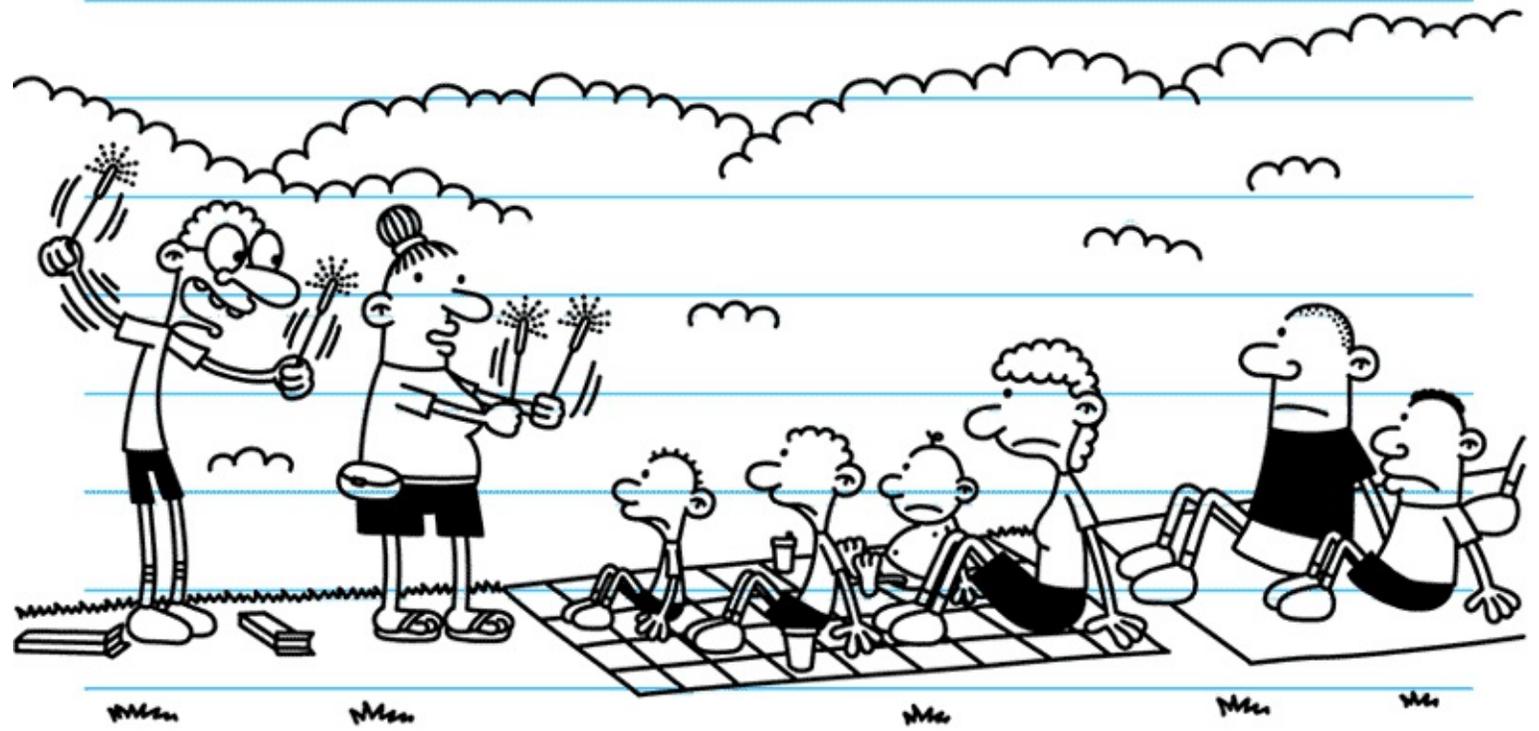
When it started getting dark, everyone put their blankets out on the lawn to watch the fireworks display. We sat staring up at the sky for a long time, but nothing was happening.

Then someone came on the loudspeaker and said that the show was canceled because someone left the fireworks out in the rain last night and they got soaked. Some little kids started to cry, so a couple of grown-ups tried to create their own

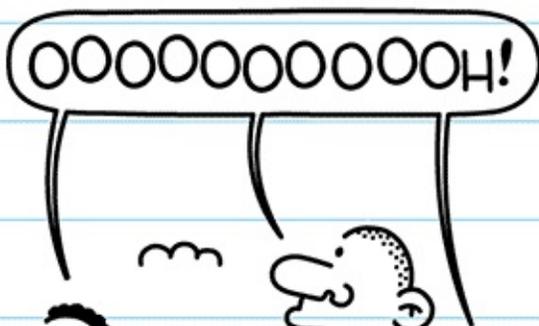
fireworks show.

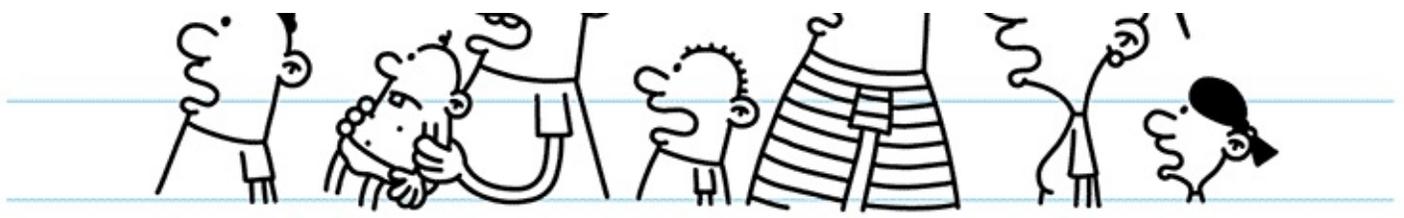
138





Luckily, the fireworks display at the country club
down the road started right about then. It was a
little hard to see over the trees, but at that point
I don't think anyone really cared.





Tuesday

This morning I was sitting at the kitchen table
flipping through the comics, and I came across
something that almost made me spit out my cereal.



It was a two-page back-to-school ad, right where
any kid could see it.

A black and white advertisement for a back-to-school sale. At the top, the text "BACK TO SCHOOL" is written in a bold, blocky font. Below it, "Blowout Sale!" is written in a large, cursive font. In the bottom left corner, there is a cartoon illustration of a boy and a girl. The boy is wearing a backpack and a tie, and the girl is wearing a backpack and holding an apple. In the center, there is a list of items: "Save on: slacks, v-neck sweaters, dungarees, pleated skirts, vests, and much, much more!". At the bottom center, there is a box that says "ONLY AT MORTIE'S!". On the right side, there is a black box with white text that says "All Items 50% OFF".

I can't believe it's actually legal to run a
back-to-school ad two months before school

starts. Anyone who would do that kind of thing _____

must really not like kids. _____

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I'm sure back-to-school ads are gonna start popping up all over the place now, and the next thing you know, Mom is gonna be telling me it's time to go clothes shopping. And with Mom, that's an all-day affair.



So I asked Mom if Dad could take me clothes shopping instead, and she said yes. I think she saw it as some kind of father-son bonding opportunity.

But I told Dad he could just go without me and _____
pick out whatever he wanted. _____

Well, that was a dumb move, because Dad did

all of his shopping at the pharmacy.



Before I saw that ad, my day was bad enough

already. It rained again this morning, so Sweetie

tried to get under the covers with me after Dad

took him out.

I guess I must've been a little off my game,

because the dog found a gap between the blanket

and the bed and managed to get through.

And let me tell you, there's nothing more terrifying

than being trapped under your covers wearing nothing

but underwear with a wet dog crawling all over you.

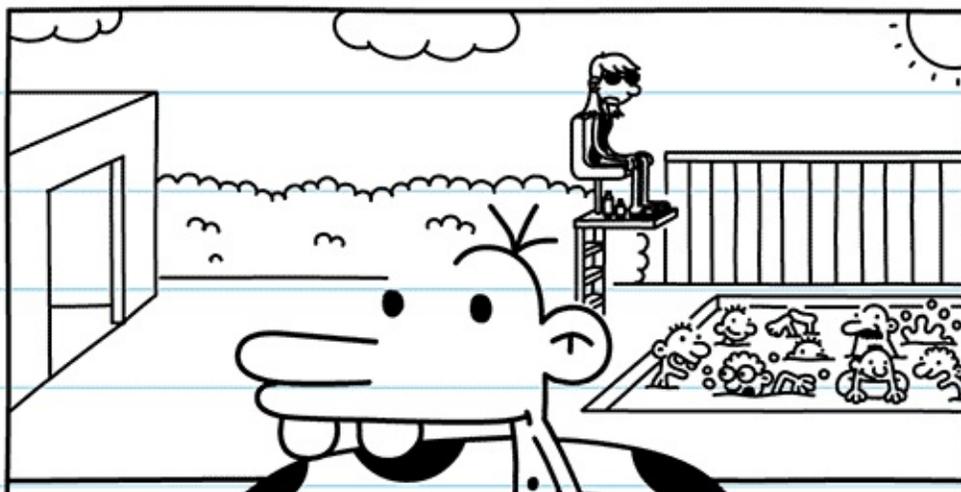
142

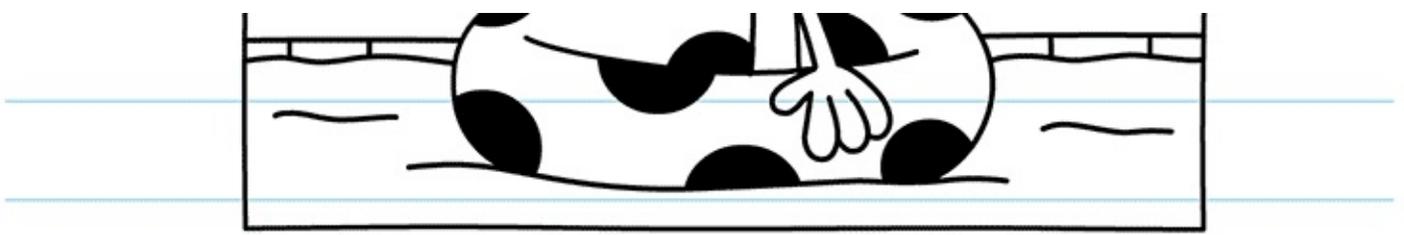




I was stewing about the dog and that back-to-school ad when my whole day turned around. Mom had printed out some pictures from the Fourth, and she left them lying on the kitchen table.

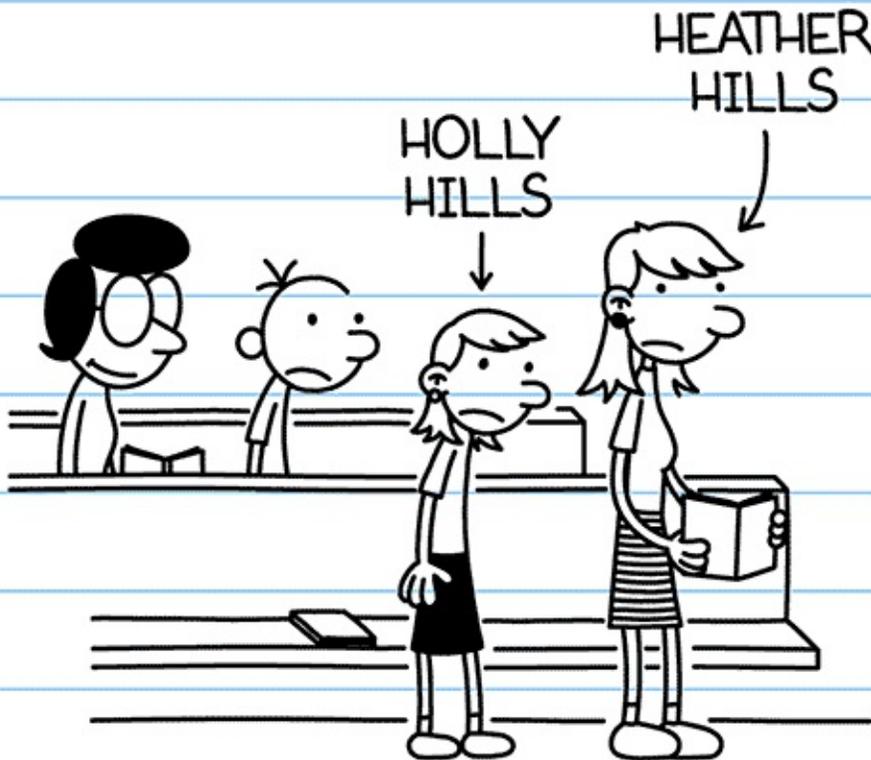
In one of the pictures you could see a lifeguard in the background. It was a little hard to tell, but I'm pretty sure the lifeguard was Heather Hills.





It was so crowded at the pool yesterday that I didn't even notice the lifeguards. And if that really WAS Heather Hills, I can't believe I missed her.

Heather Hills is the sister of Holly Hills, who is one of the cutest girls in my class. But Heather's in HIGH school, which is a whole different league than middle school.



This Heather Hills thing is changing my whole perspective on the town pool. In fact, I'm starting to rethink my whole summer. The dog has ruined all the fun of being at home, and I

realized that if I don't do something quick, I _____

won't have anything good to say about my vacation. _____

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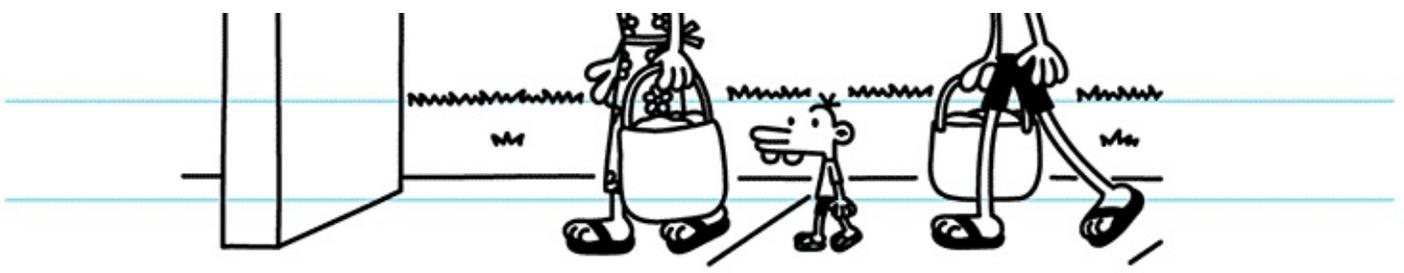


So starting tomorrow I'm gonna have a whole new attitude. And hopefully by the time I get back to school, I'll have a high school girlfriend, too.

Wednesday

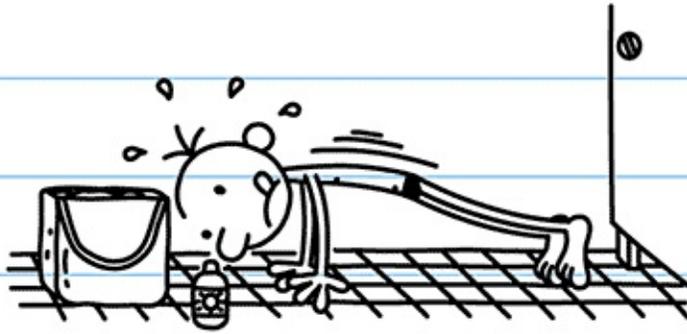
Mom was really happy I was willing to go to the pool with her and Manny today, and she said she was proud I was finally putting my family in front of video games. I didn't mention Heather Hills to Mom, because I don't need her getting in the middle of my love life.



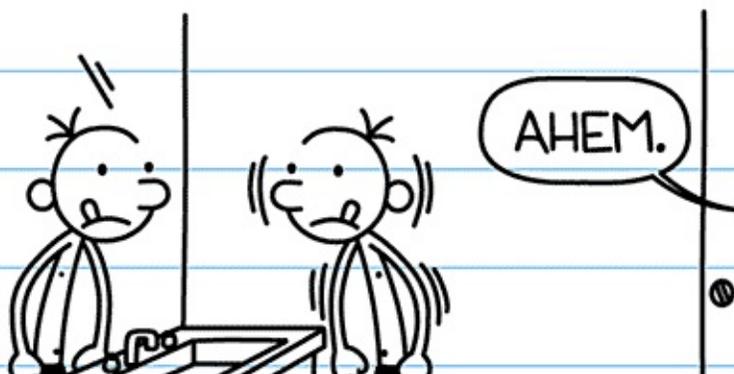


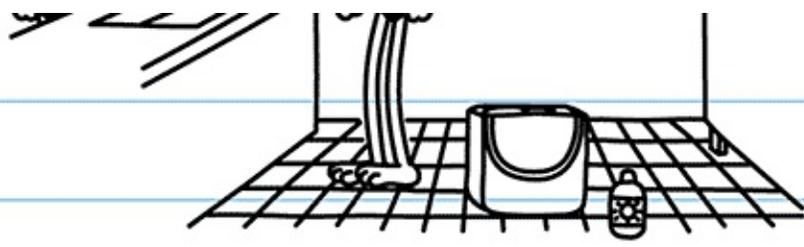
When we got there, I wanted to go straight to the pool area and see if Heather was on duty. But then I realized I'd better be prepared in case she was.

So I made a pit stop in the bathroom and lathered myself in suntan oil. Then I did a bunch of push-ups and sit-ups to really make my muscles pop.



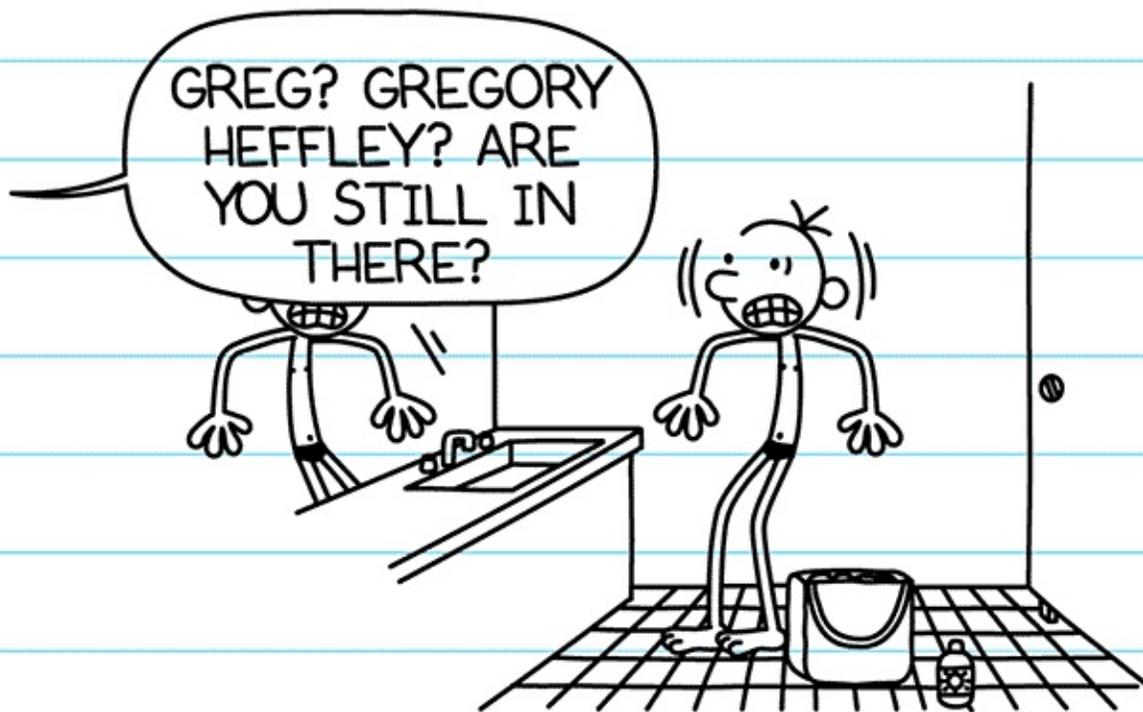
I was probably in there for about fifteen minutes. I was checking myself out in the mirror when I heard someone in a stall clear his throat.





Well, that was pretty embarrassing, because it meant whoever was in there could see me flexing in front of the mirror the whole time. And if that person was anything like me, he couldn't go to the bathroom until he had complete privacy.

I figured the person in the stall couldn't see my face, so at least he didn't know who I was. I was just about to slip out of the bathroom when I heard Mom at the front of the locker room.



Mom wanted to know what took me so long and why I looked so "shiny," but I was already

looking past her and scanning the lifeguard

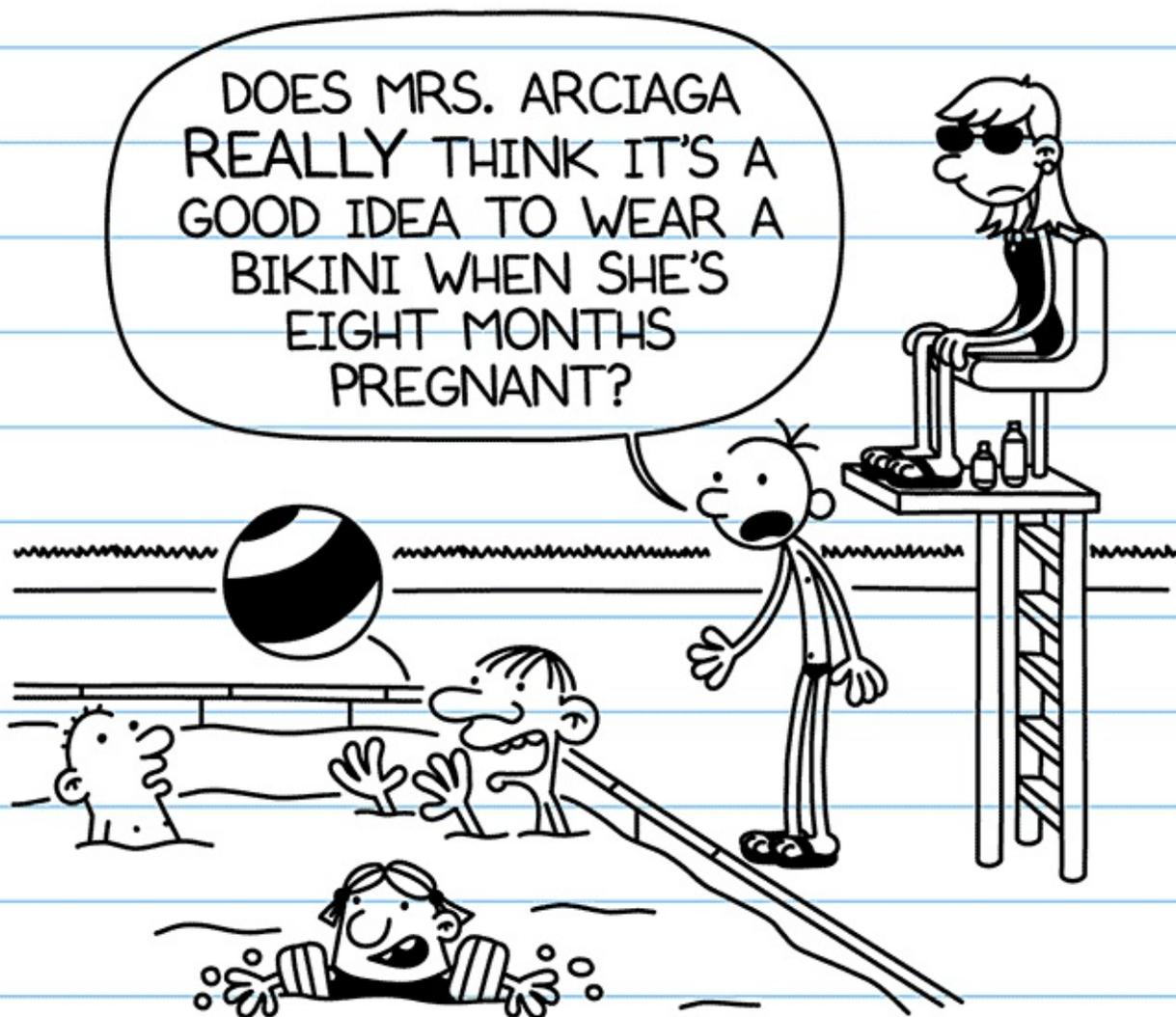
stands to see if Heather Hills was on deck.

And sure enough, she was. I went right over to

her and parked myself underneath her chair.

Every once in a while I'd say something witty,

and I think I was definitely impressing her.



I'd get Heather a new cup of water whenever it

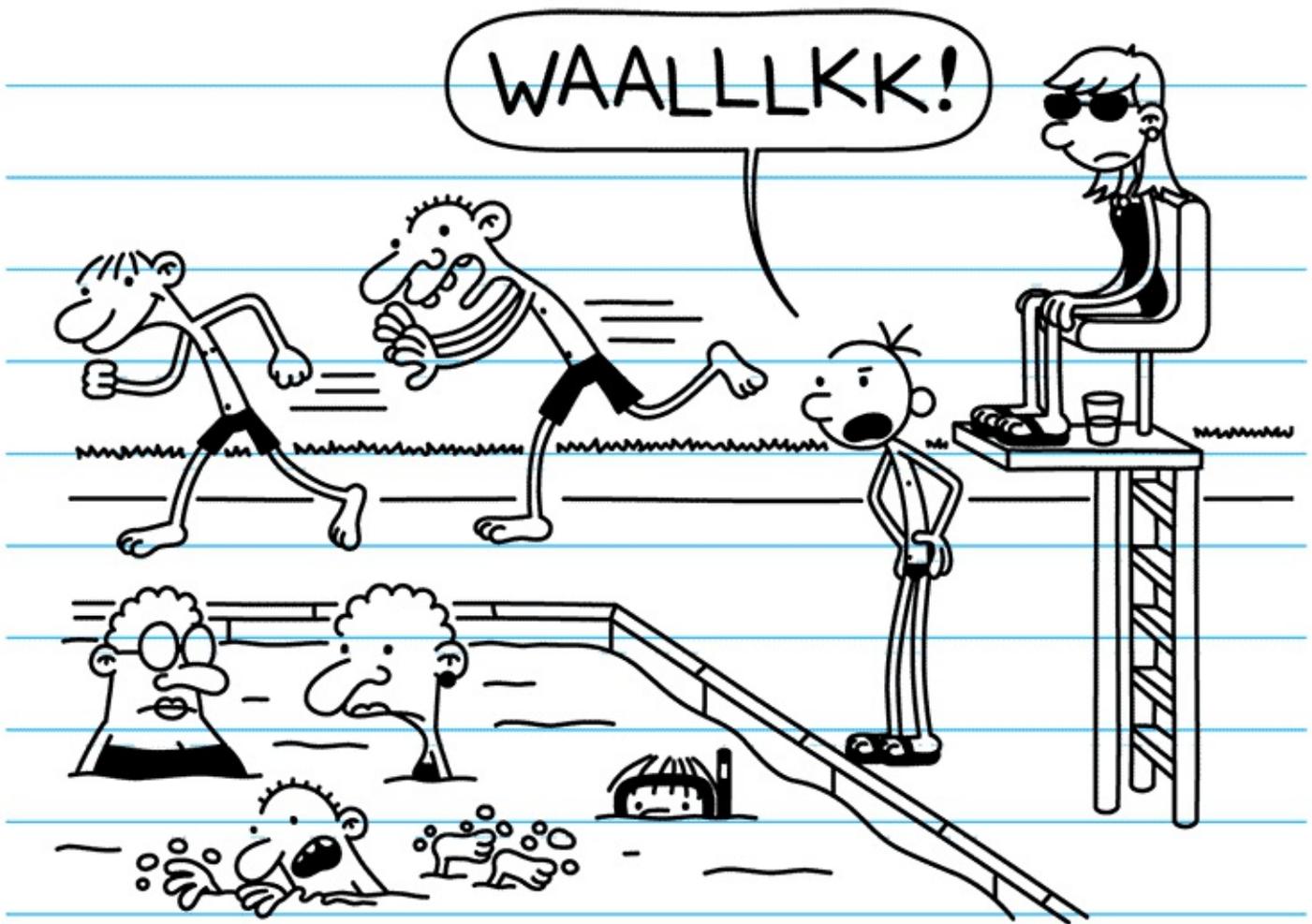
looked like she needed a refill, and every time some

kid would do something wrong, I'd speak up so

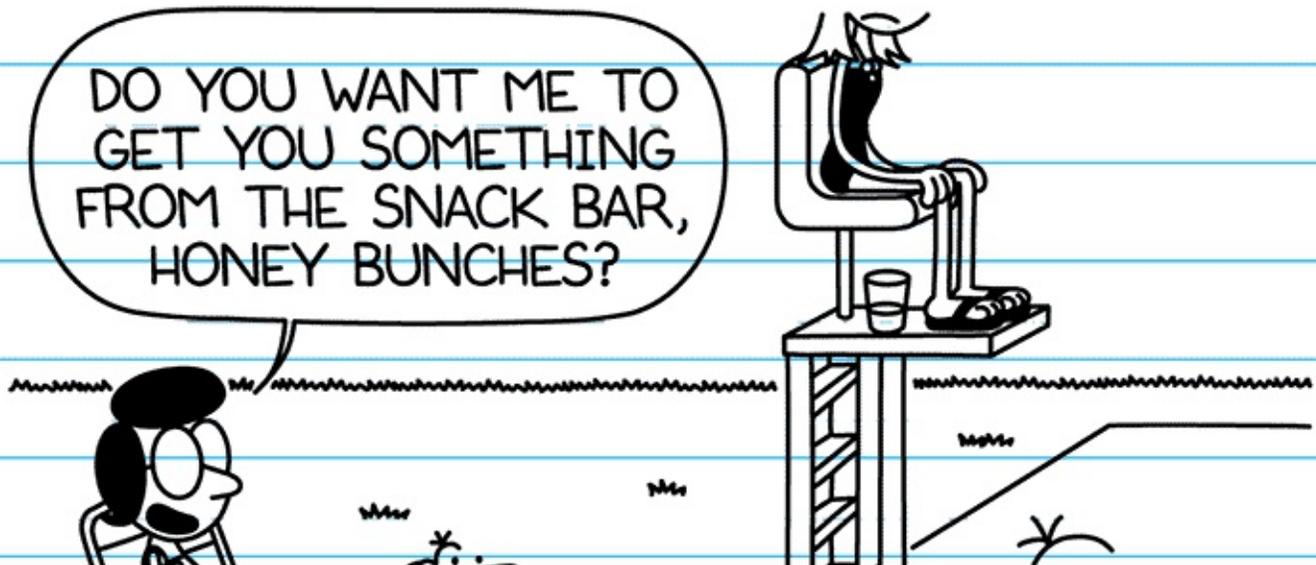
Heather didn't have to.

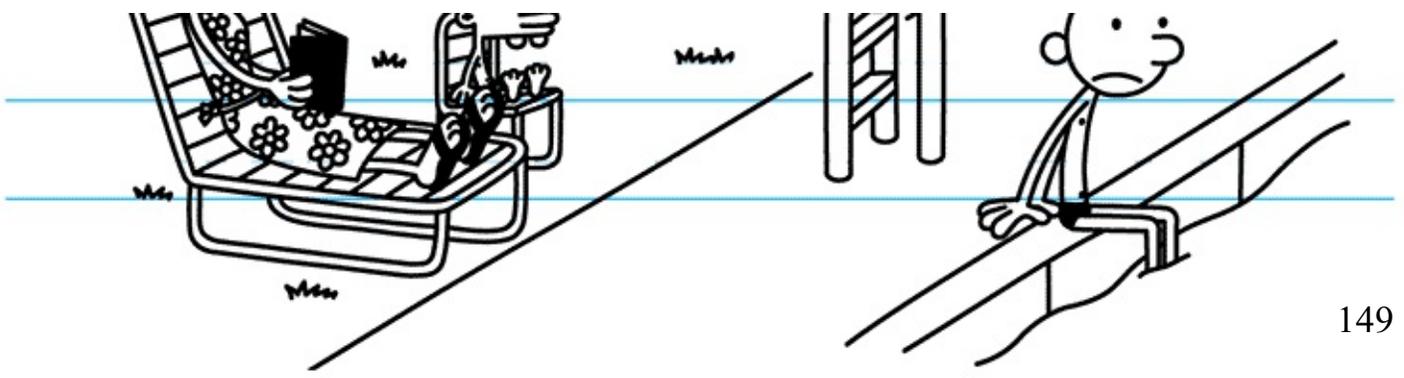
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Whenever Heather's shift ended, I'd follow her to her next station. Every fourth time, I'd end up in front of where Mom was sitting. And let me tell you, it's not easy to be smooth when your mother is sitting five feet away.





I just hope Heather knows that I would do

ANYTHING for her. If she wants someone to

put suntan lotion on her back or towel her off

after she takes a dip in the pool, I'm the man

for the job.

I basically hung out with Heather until it was

time to go. On my way home I was thinking

that if the rest of my vacation goes like today,

this Will be the best summer ever, just like

Mom predicted. In fact, the only thing that

can ruin things now is that stupid muddy hand.

I'm sure it'll show up at the exact wrong moment

and spoil everything.

GREG HEFFLEY, DO YOU
TAKE HEATHER HILLS TO
BE YOUR LAWFULLY
WEDDED WIFE?



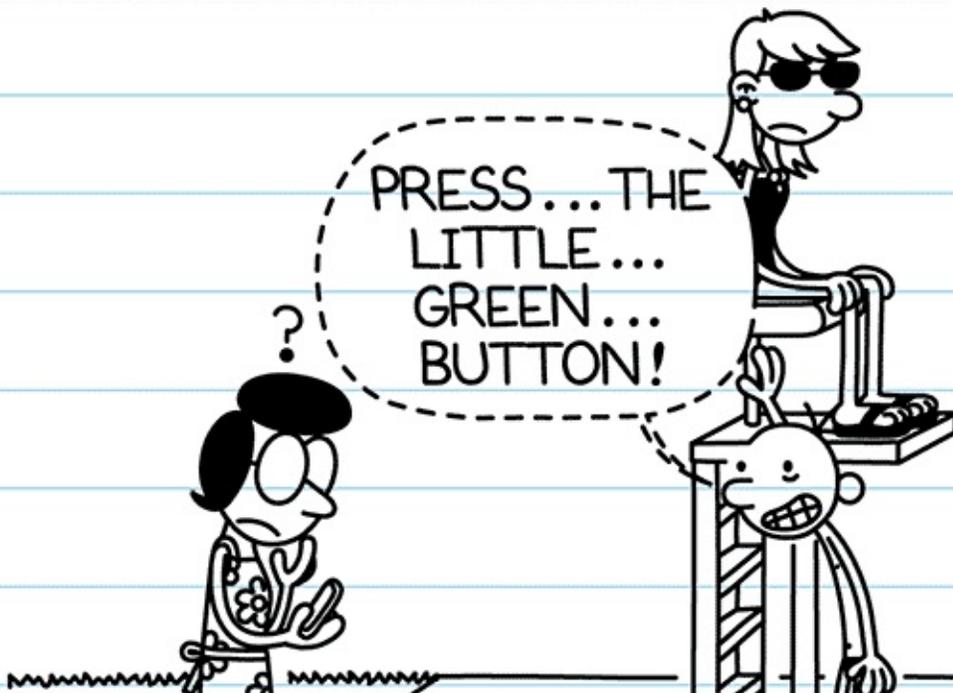


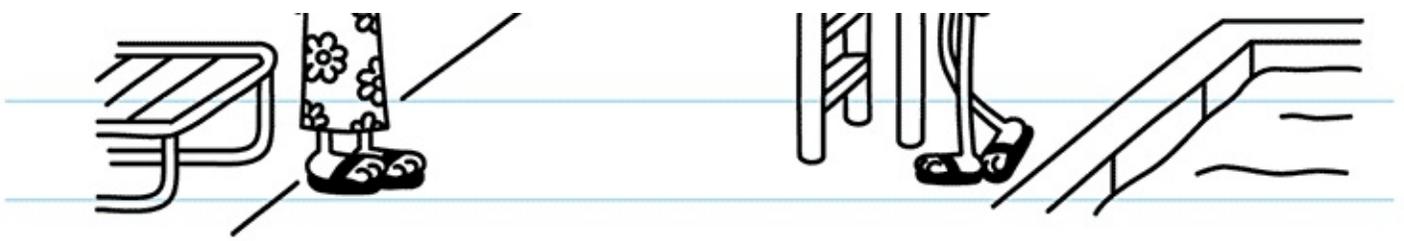
Wednesday

I've been hanging out with Heather every single day for the past week.

I realized my friends at school will never believe it when I tell them about me and Heather, so I asked Mom to take a picture of me standing next to the lifeguard chair.

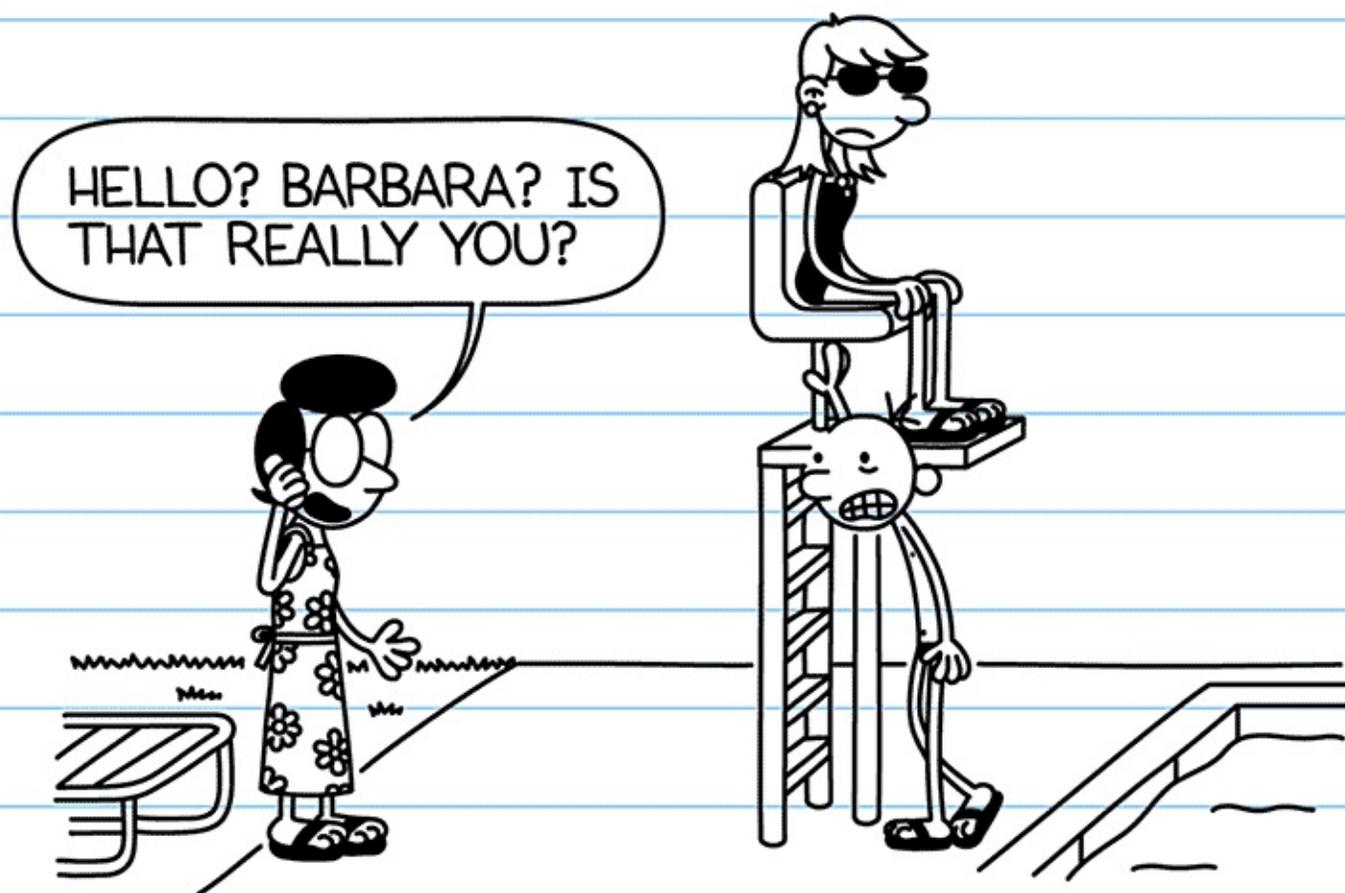
Mom didn't have her camera, so she had to use her cell phone. But she couldn't figure out how to take a picture with it, and I ended up standing there for a long time looking like a fool.





I finally got Mom to press the right button to take a picture, but when she did, the camera was pointed the wrong way and she took a picture of herself. See, this is why I always say that technology is wasted on grown-ups.

I got Mom to point the camera at me, but right at that moment her phone rang and she answered it.



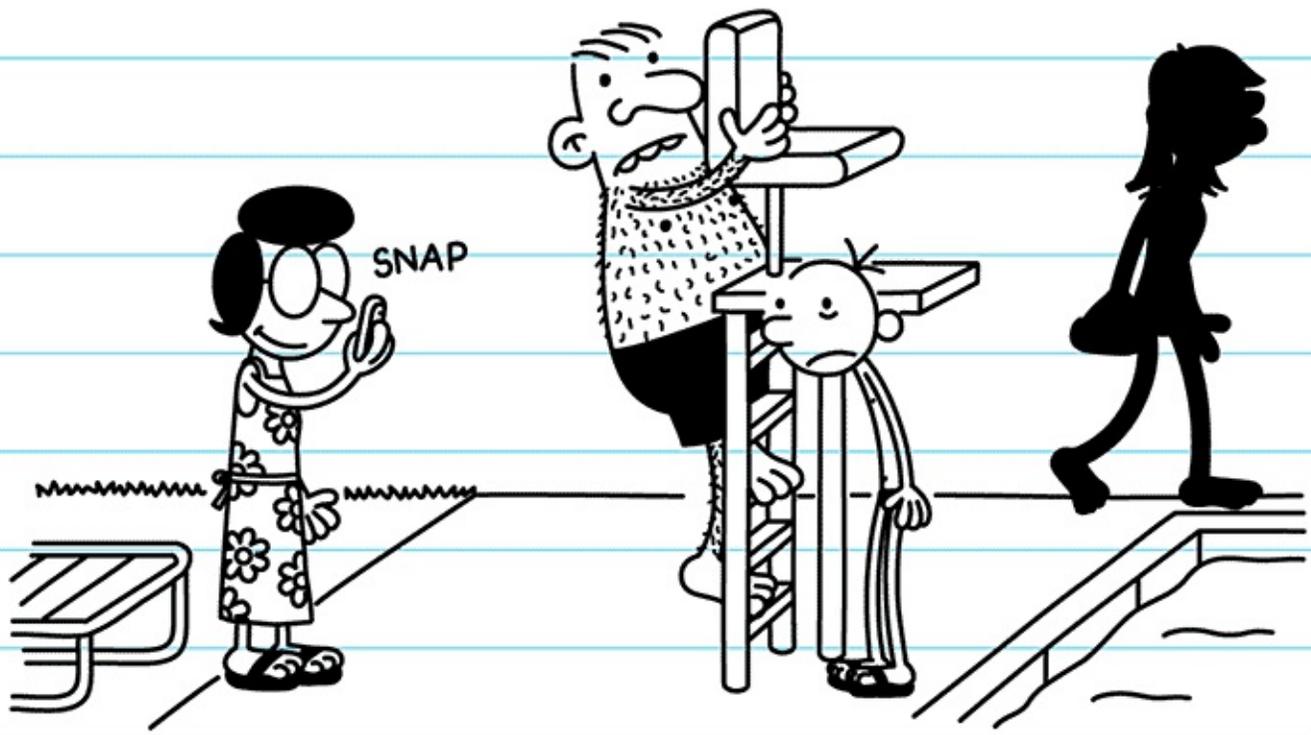
Mom talked for about five minutes, and by the time she was done, Heather was on to her next

shift. But that didn't stop Mom from taking the

picture anyway.

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Friday

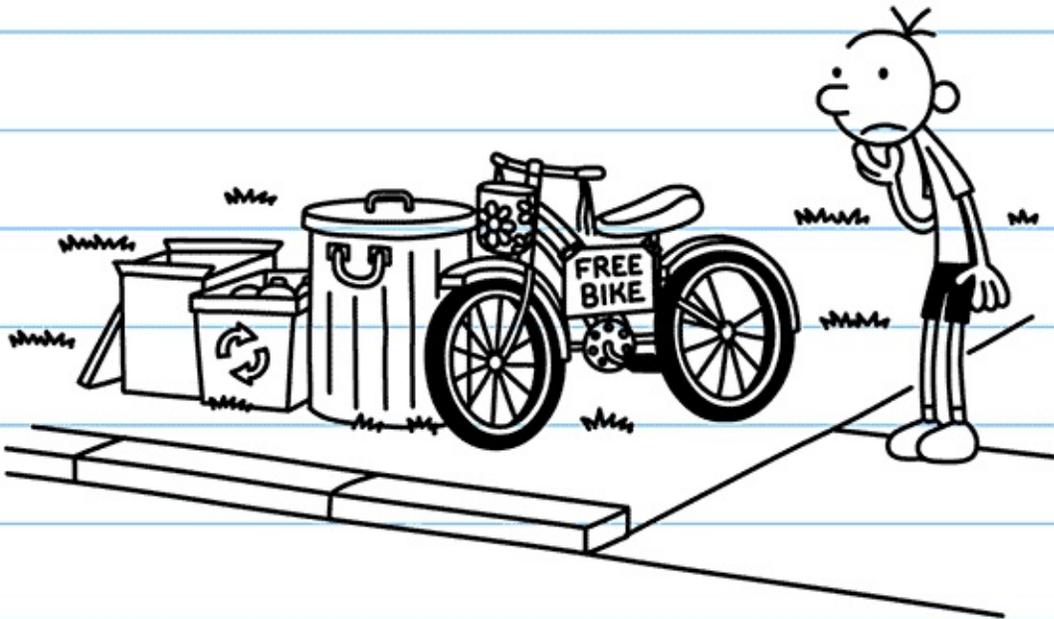
Relying on Mom for my ride to the pool is starting to become a problem. Mom doesn't want to go to the pool every day, and when she Does go, she only stays a few hours.

I like to be at the pool from the time it opens until the time it closes so I can maximize my time with Heather. I wasn't about to ask Rodrick to drive me to the pool in his van because he always makes me sit in the back, and there are no seats.

I realized I need my own transportation, _____

and luckily I found a solution yesterday. _____

One of our neighbors left a bike out by the curb,
and I took it before anyone else could.



I rode the bike home and parked it in the
garage. When Dad saw it, he said it was a “girl
bike” and I should get rid of it.

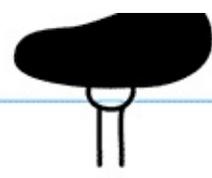
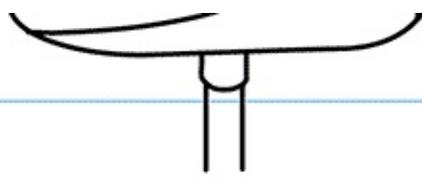
But I’ll tell you at least two reasons a girl bike is
better than a boy bike. Number one, girl bikes have
big, cushiony seats, and that’s really important
when you’re riding in your bathing suit.

GIRL SEAT



BOY SEAT

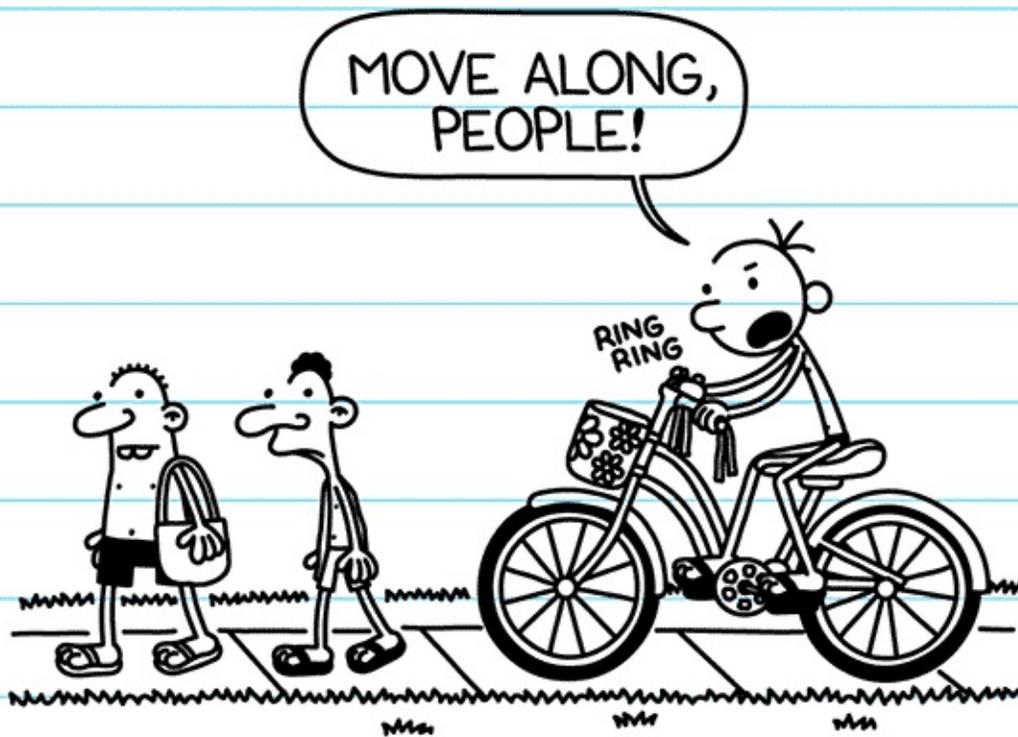




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And number two, girl bikes have those baskets on the handlebars, which are good for carrying your video games and suntan lotion. Plus, my bike came with a bell, and that ReAlly comes in handy.



Monday

I guess I should've known that a bike that was left out with the trash wasn't gonna last very long.

I was riding home from the pool yesterday, and the bike started getting all wobbly. Then the front wheel popped right off. So today I had

to ask Mom for a ride to the pool.

When we got there, Mom said I had to take

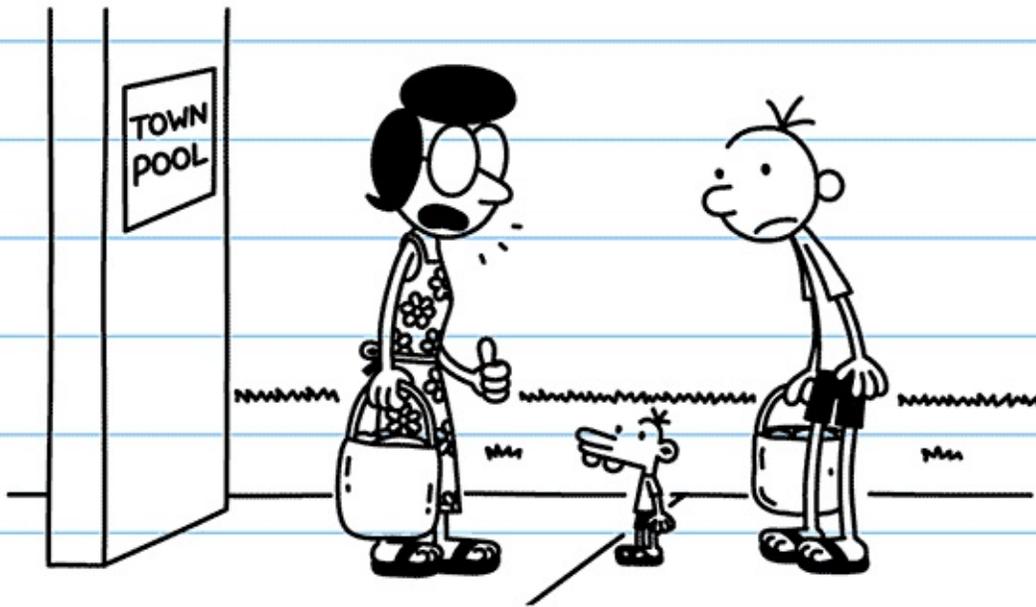
Manny with me through the locker room. She said

he's getting too old to go through the women's

locker room with her, so I guess they must have

the same shower situation in there as they do in

the men's locker room.



It should've taken about five seconds to get

Manny from one end of the locker room to the

other, but it took about ten minutes instead.

Manny goes everywhere with Mom, so he had

never actually been in a men's bathroom before.

He was really curious and wanted to check everything

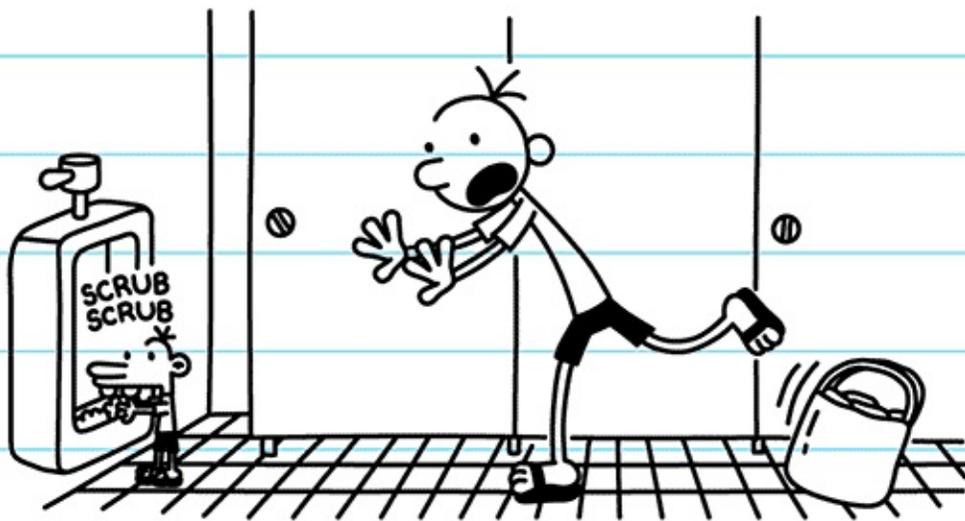
out. At one point I had to stop him from washing

his hands in the urinal because I guess he thought

it was a sink.

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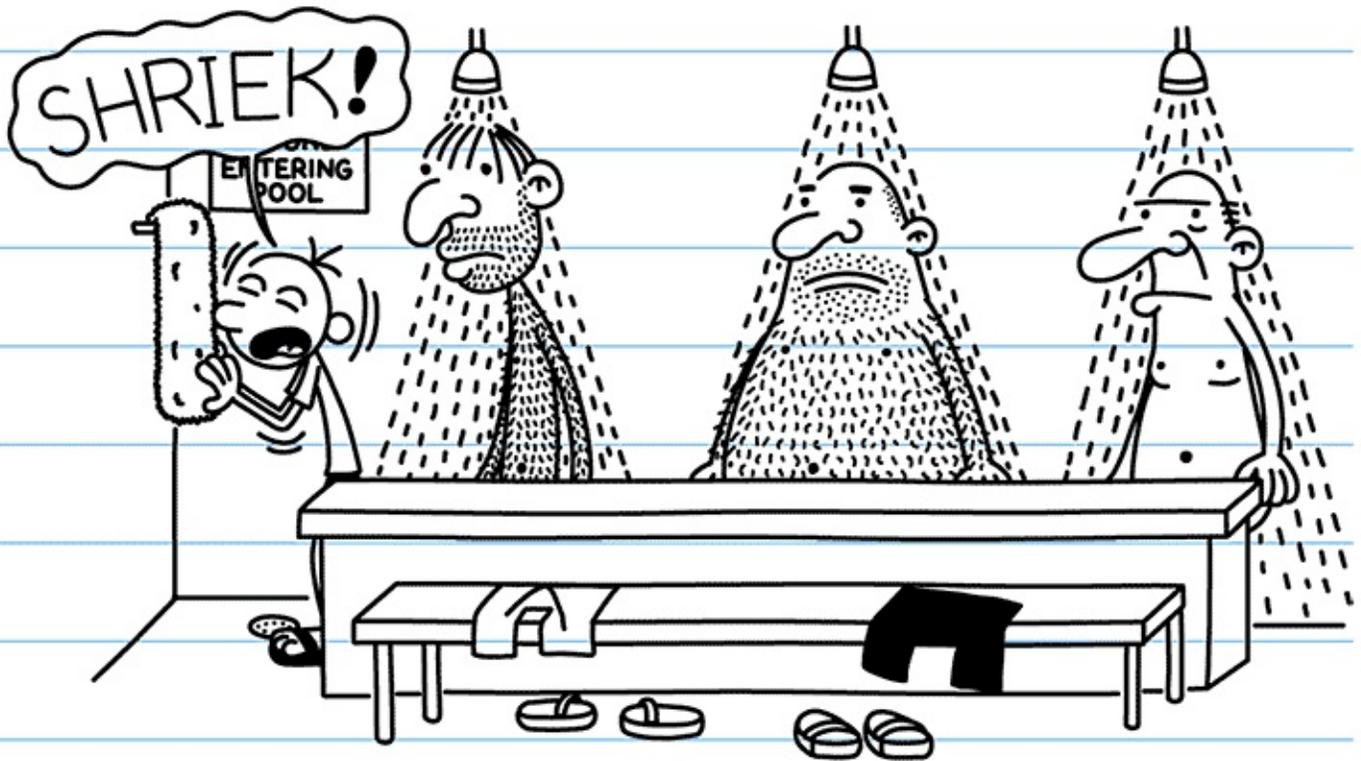
I didn't want Manny to have to walk through
the shower area and see the things I've seen. So
I got a towel out of my bag and was gonna put
it over Manny's eyes when we walked past the
shower guys. But in the two seconds it took me to
get my towel, Manny was gone. And you'll never
believe where he went.



I knew I had to rescue Manny, so I closed my

eyes as tight as I could and went in to save him.

I was really nervous about touching one of the shower guys, and for a second there I thought I did.



I had to open my eyes to find Manny, and then I grabbed him and got out as fast as I could.

When we got to the other side, Manny seemed fine, but I don't think I'll ever totally recover from that experience.





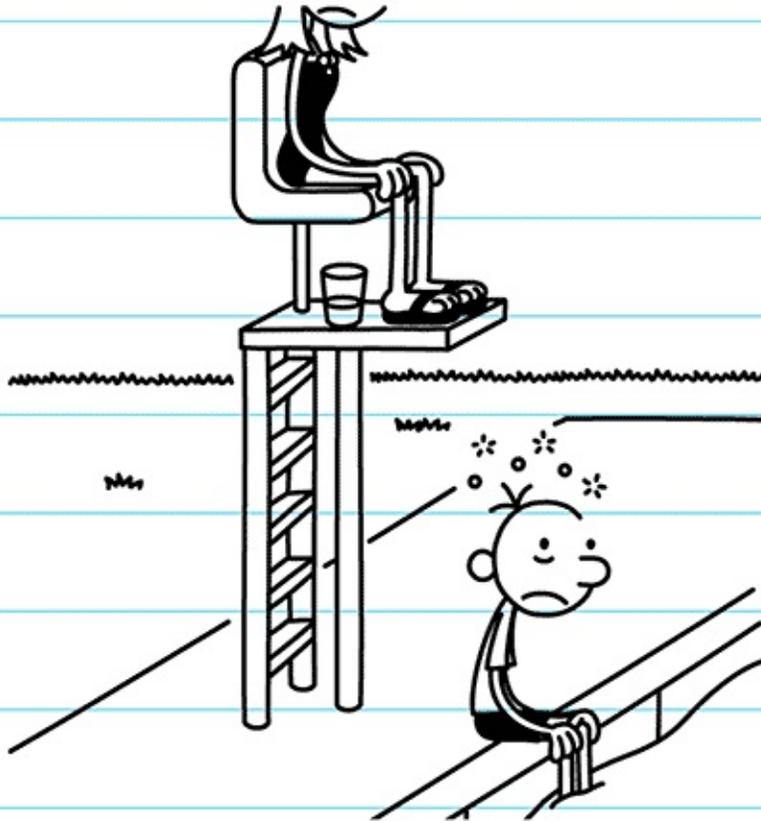
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I kind of staggered over to my spot underneath

Heather's lifeguard chair. Then I started taking

deep breaths to calm myself down.



Five minutes later some kid who must've eaten too

much ice cream threw up behind Heather's chair.

Heather looked behind her, and then she looked

down like she was waiting for me to do something.

I guess the noble thing to do was to clean up the

mess for Heather, but this was really beyond the

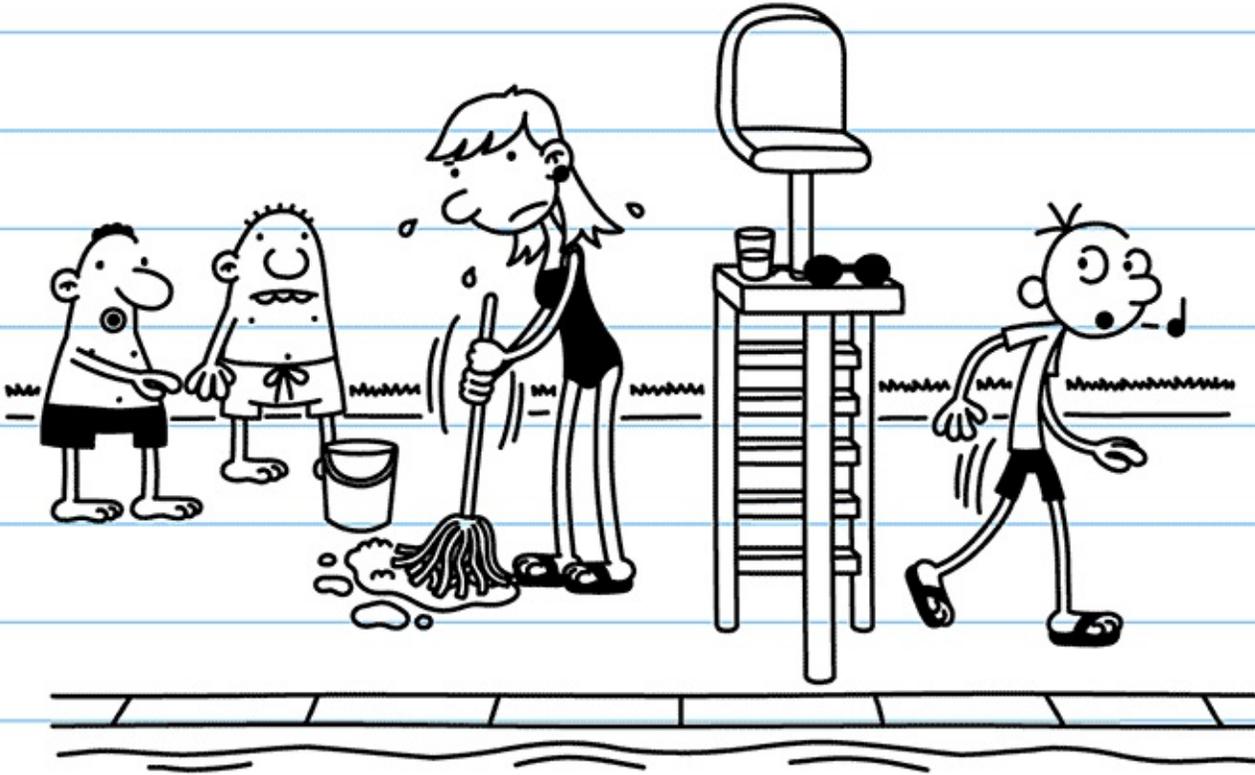
call of duty.

Anyway, I've been doing a lot of thinking lately, and

I've realized that I need to let this summer romance

cool off a little.

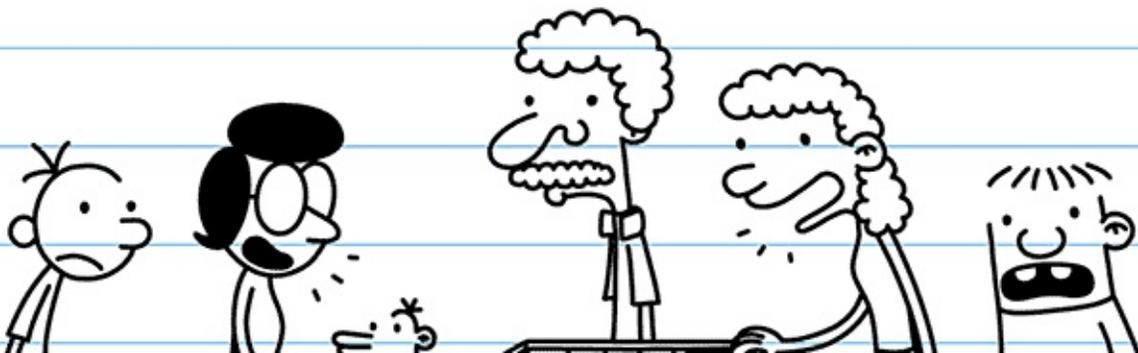
Plus, Heather's going off to college next year, and those long-distance relationships never really seem to work out.

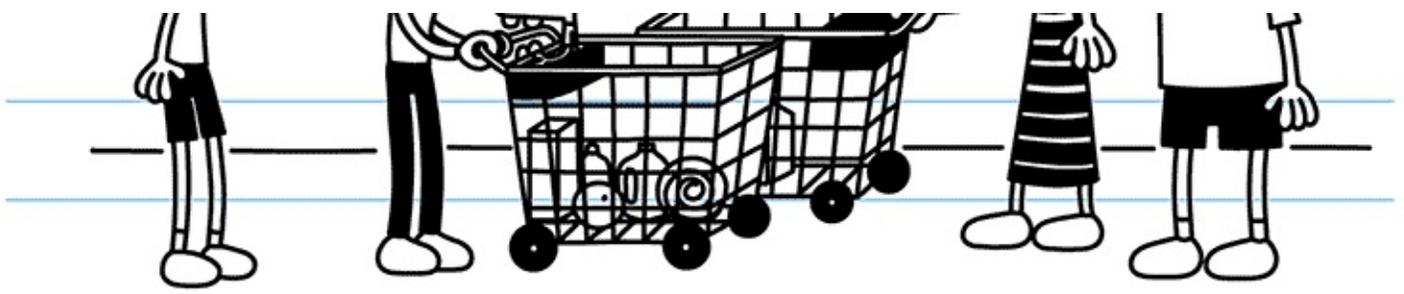


August

Tuesday

We ran into the Jeffersons at the supermarket today. Me and Rowley haven't spoken to each other in over a month, so it was kind of awkward.

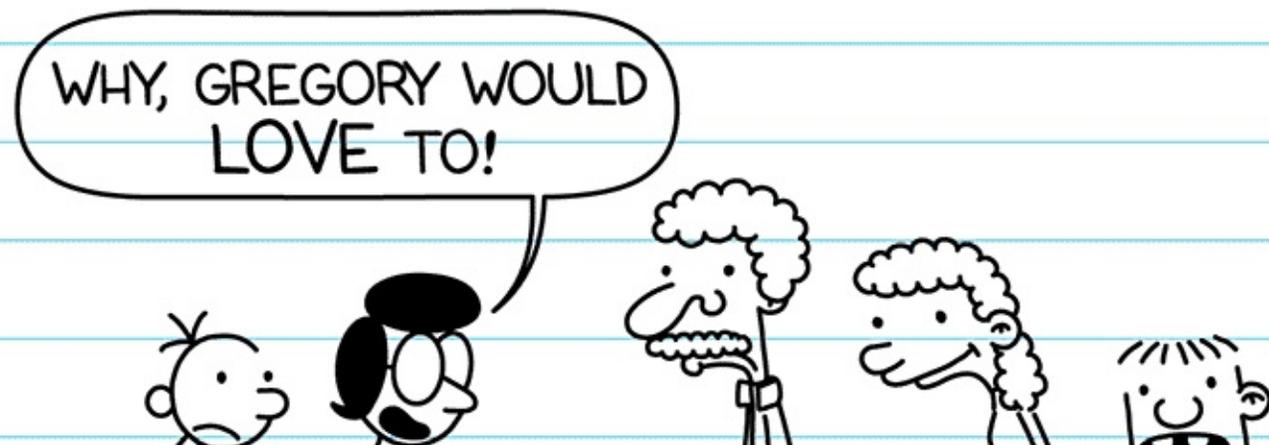




Mrs. Jefferson said they were buying groceries for their trip to the beach next week. That kind of irritated me because that's where my family was supposed to go this summer. But then Mrs. Jefferson said something that really threw me for a loop.



Mr. Jefferson didn't look too thrilled with that idea, but before he could speak up Mom chimed in.



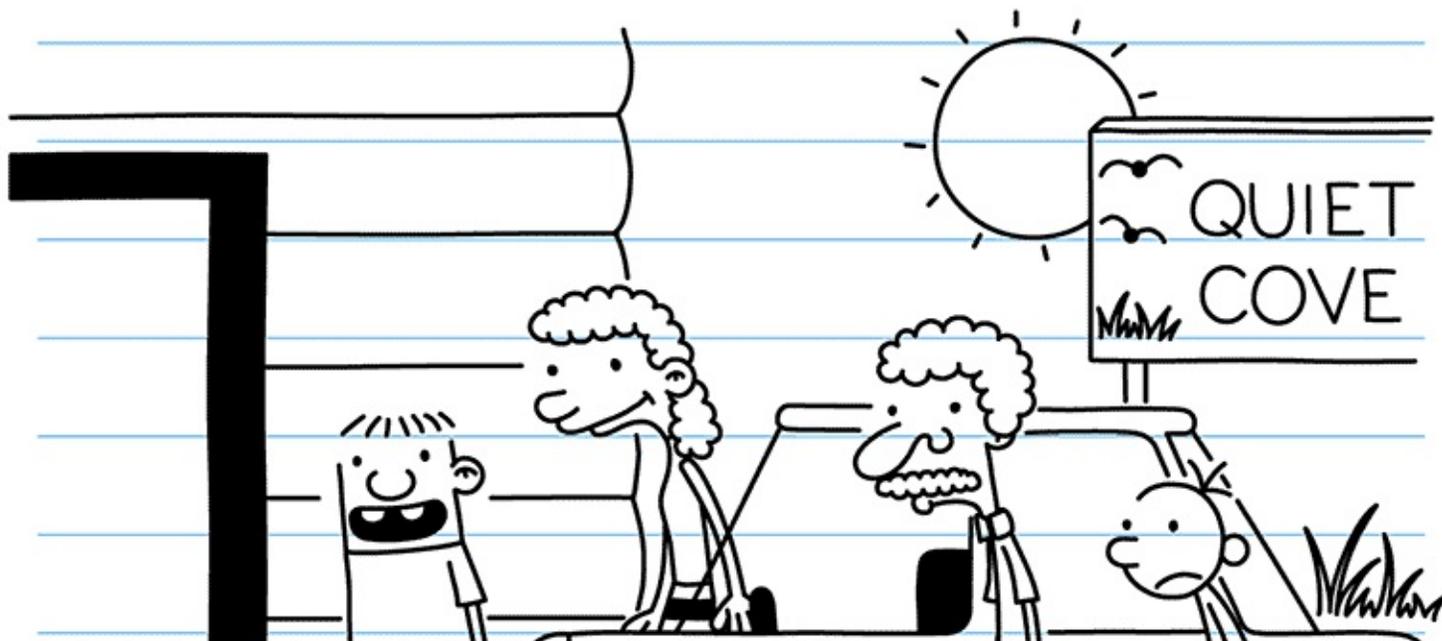


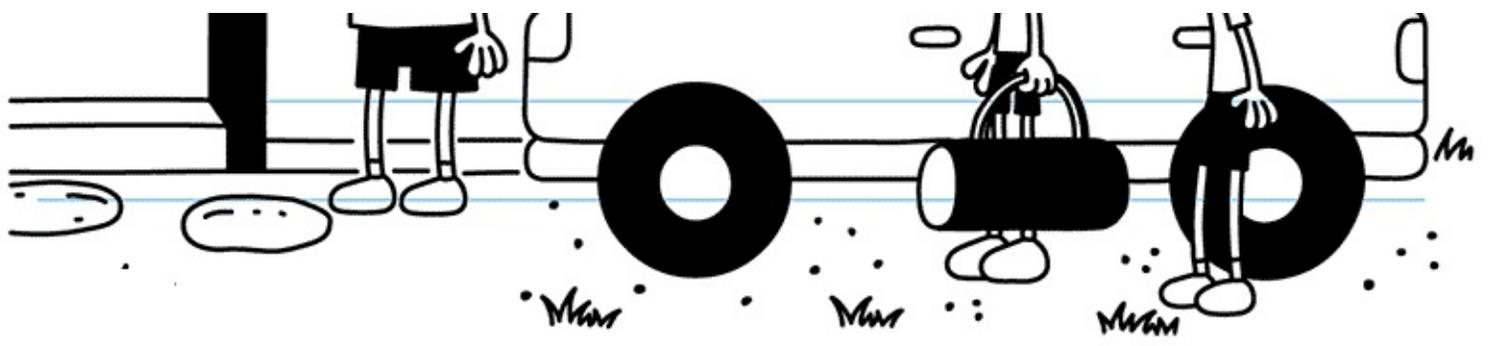
Something about the whole incident seemed a little fishy to me. I'm kind of wondering if it was a setup, with Mom and Mrs. Jefferson conspiring to get me and Rowley back together.

Believe me, Rowley's the last person I want to spend a week with. But then I realized if I went to the beach with the Jeffersons, I'd get to ride the Cranium Shaker. So maybe my summer won't be such a bust after all.

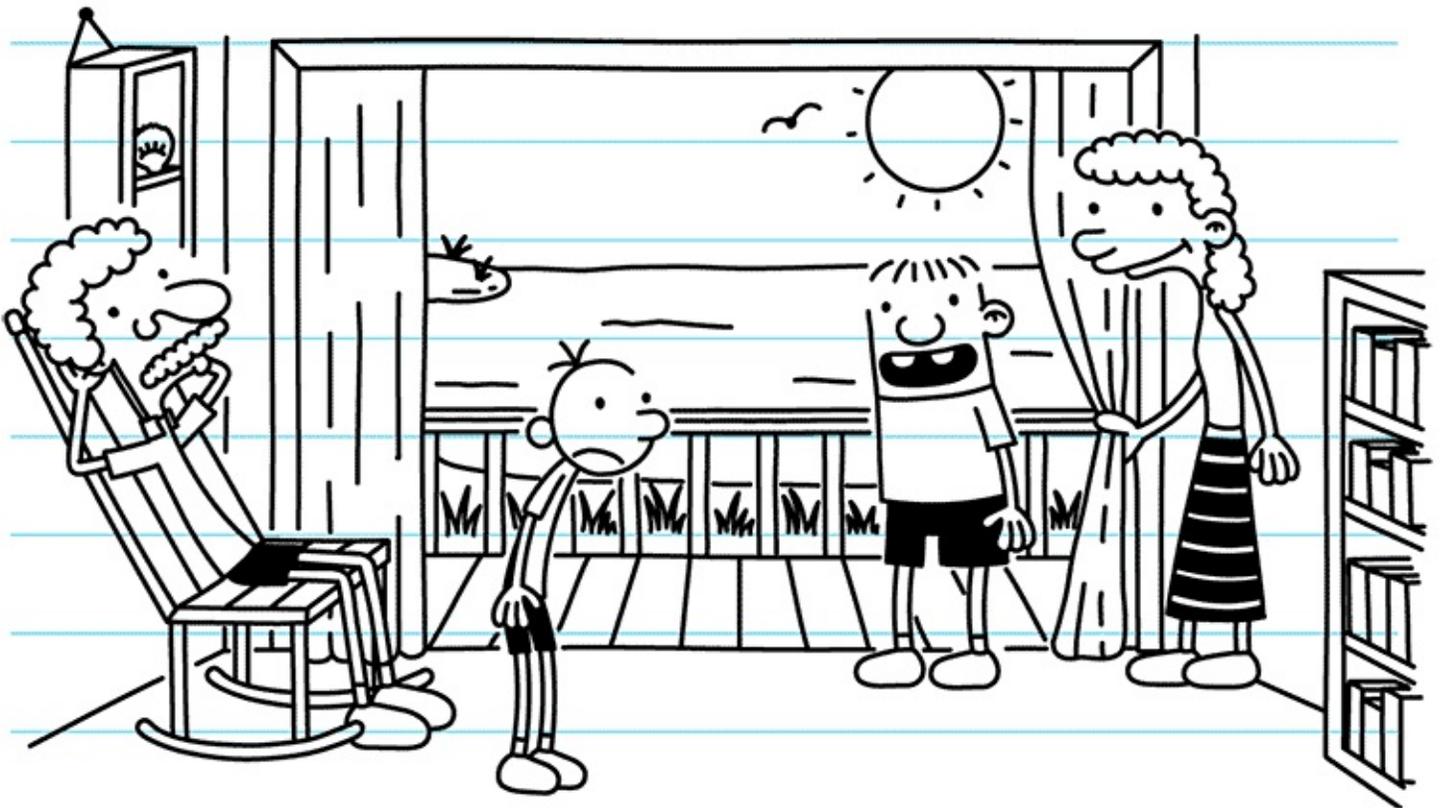
Monday

I knew I made a mistake coming on this beach trip when I saw where we were staying.





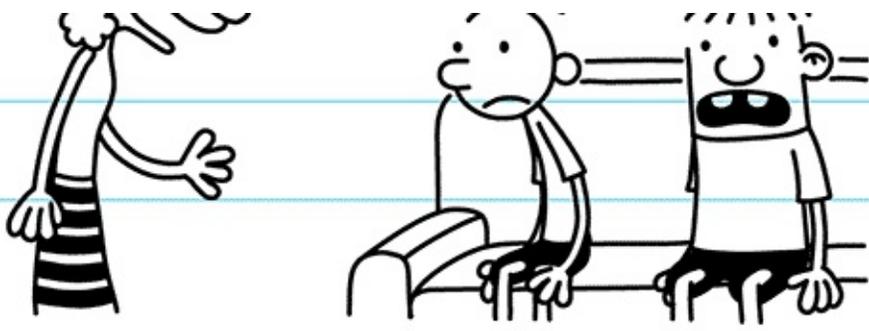
My family always rents a condo in the high-rises right near the boardwalk, but the place where the Jeffersons are staying is a log cabin about five miles from the beach. We went inside the cabin, and there was no tv or computer or anything with a screen on it.



I asked what we were supposed to do for entertainment, and Mrs. Jefferson said —

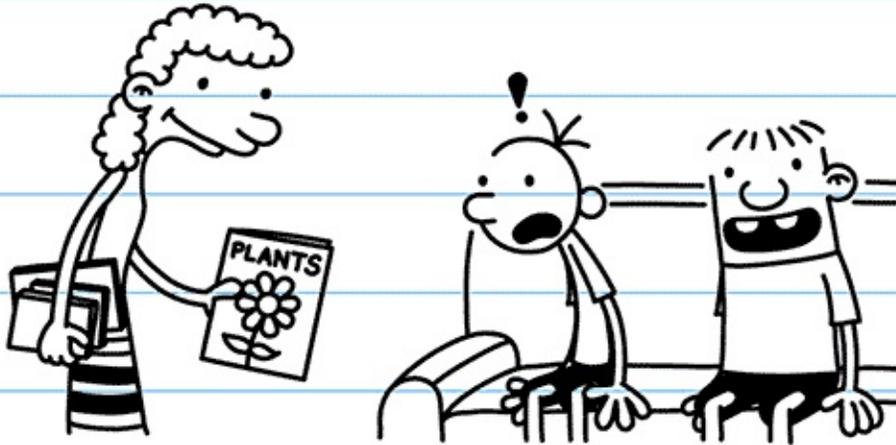
YOU COULD
READ A BOOK!





I thought that was a good one, and I was
about to tell Rowley his mom was pretty funny.

But she came back a second later with a bunch of
reading material.



So that just confirmed Mom was in on this
plan from the beginning.

All three Jeffersons read their books right up
until it was time to eat. Dinner was ok, but
dessert was awful. Mrs. Jefferson is one of
those moms who sneaks healthy food into your
snacks, and her brownies were full of spinach.

I don't think it's a good idea to grind up vegetables
and put them in kids' desserts, because then they

don't know what the real thing is supposed to

taste like.

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The first time Rowley had a regular brownie was

at my house, and believe me, it wasn't pretty.



After dinner Mrs. Jefferson called us all into the

living room to play games. I was hoping we were

gonna play something normal like cards, but the

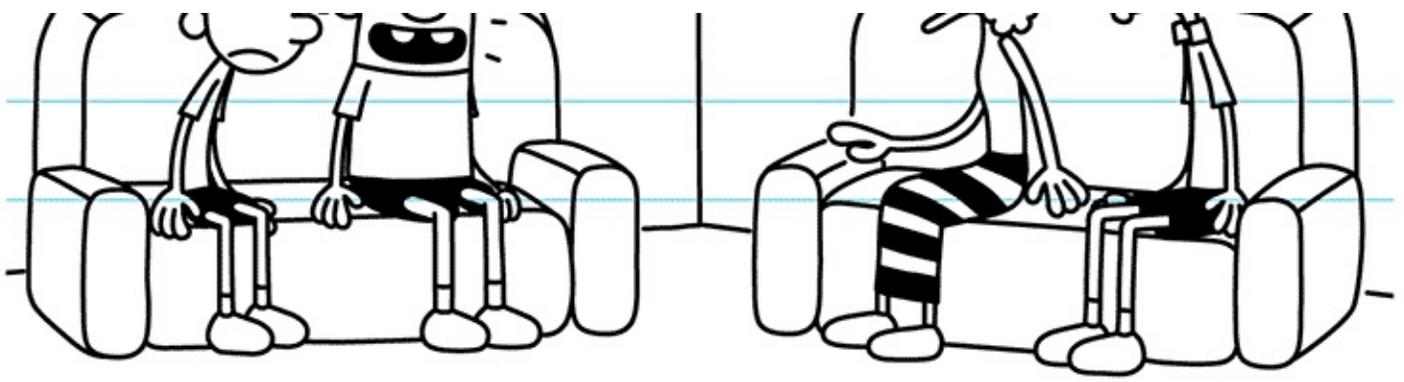
Jeffersons have their own idea of fun.

The Jeffersons played a game called "I Love You

Because," and when it was my turn, I passed.

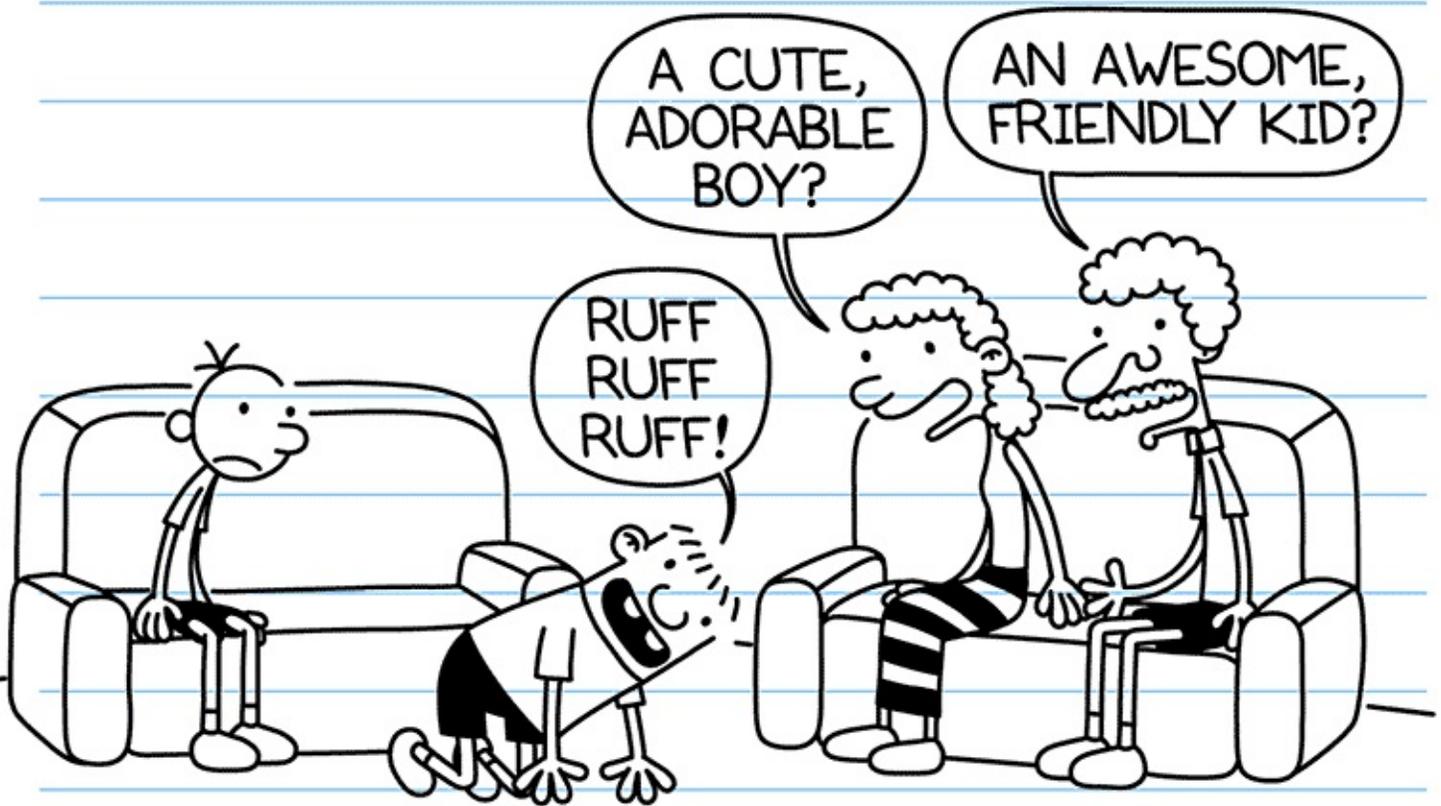
I LOVE YOU BECAUSE
YOU'RE SILLY AND
YOU MAKE ME LAUGH!





Then we played charades, and when it was Rowley's

turn, he was a dog.

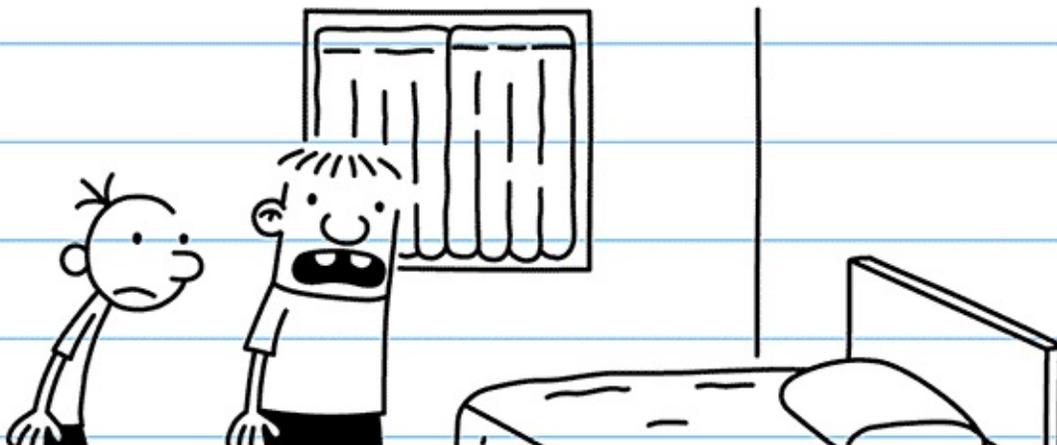


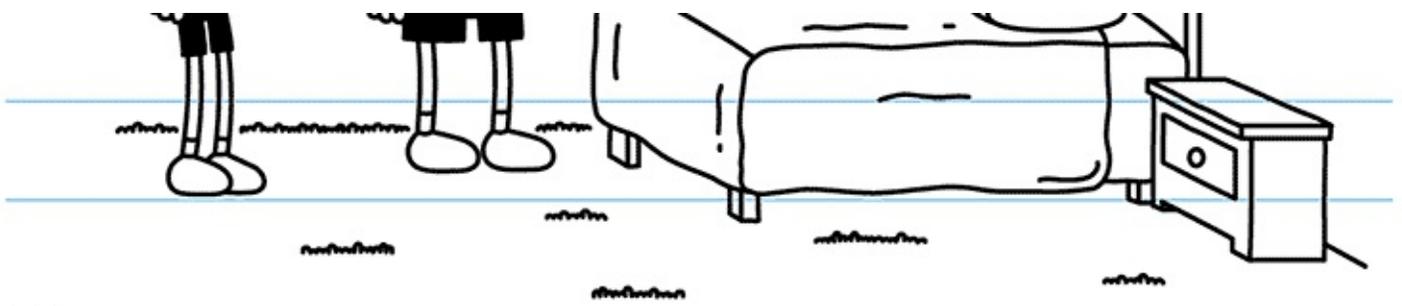
At about 9:00 Mr. Jefferson told us it was time

for bed. That's when I found out the sleeping

situation at the Jeffersons' cabin was worse than

the entertainment situation.



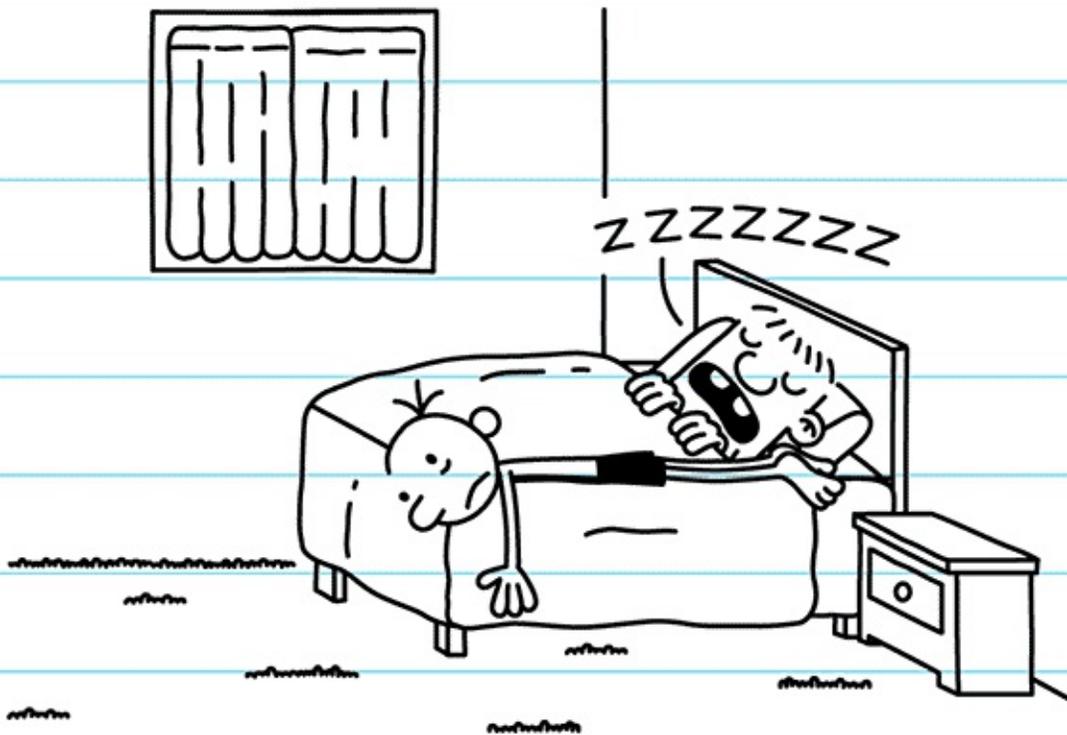


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There was only one bed, so I told Rowley we could make a deal: We'd flip a coin, and one guy would get the bed and the other would sleep on the floor.

But Rowley took a look at the crusty shag carpet and decided he didn't want to risk it. I decided I wasn't willing to sleep on the floor, either. So I got into bed with Rowley and just stayed as far away from him as possible.



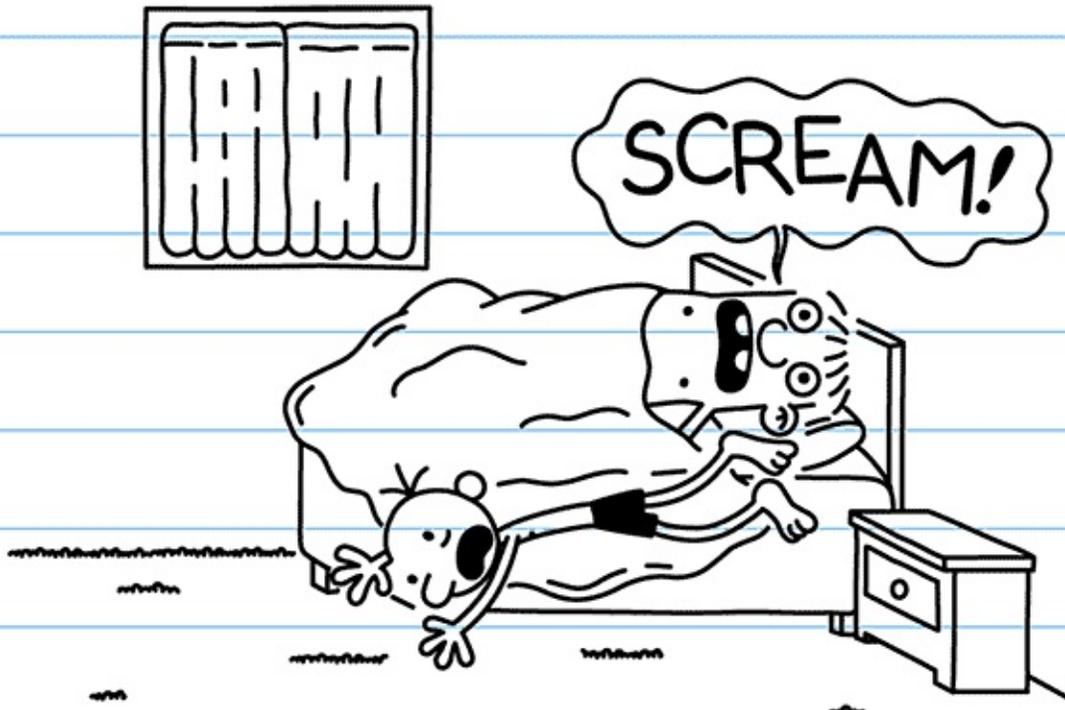
Rowley started snoring right away, but I was having trouble falling asleep with half my body hanging off the bed. I was finally starting to

drift off when Rowley let out a scream like he was

being attacked.

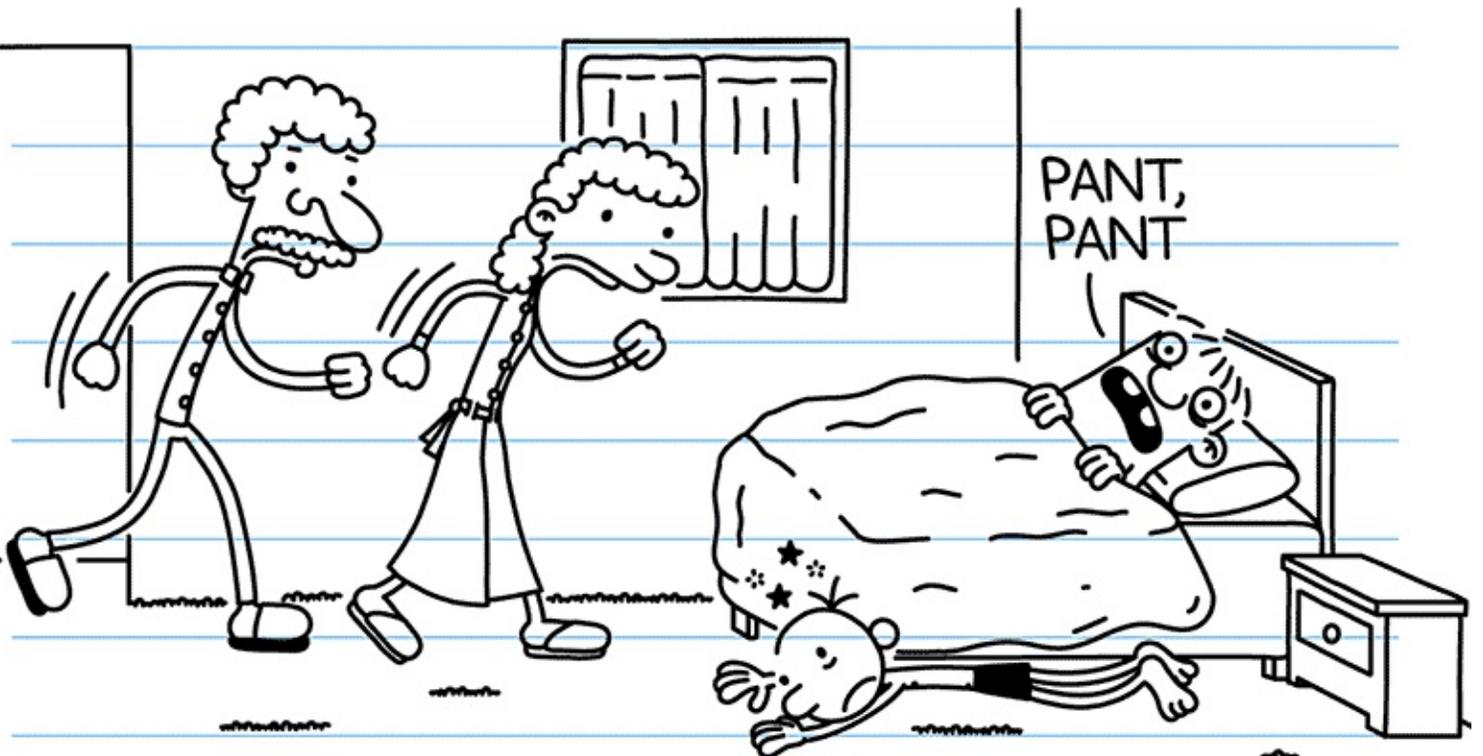
For a second there I thought the muddy hand

had finally caught up with us.



Rowley's parents came running in to see what

happened.



Rowley said he had a nightmare that there was a _____
chicken hiding underneath him. _____

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So Rowley's parents spent the next twenty minutes

trying to calm him down and telling him it was just

a bad dream and there really was no chicken.



Nobody bothered to check on how I was doing

after falling off the bed onto my face.

Rowley spent the rest of the night sleeping in his

parent' room, which was fine with me. Because

without Rowley and his chicken dreams to keep me

awake, I was able to get a good night's sleep.

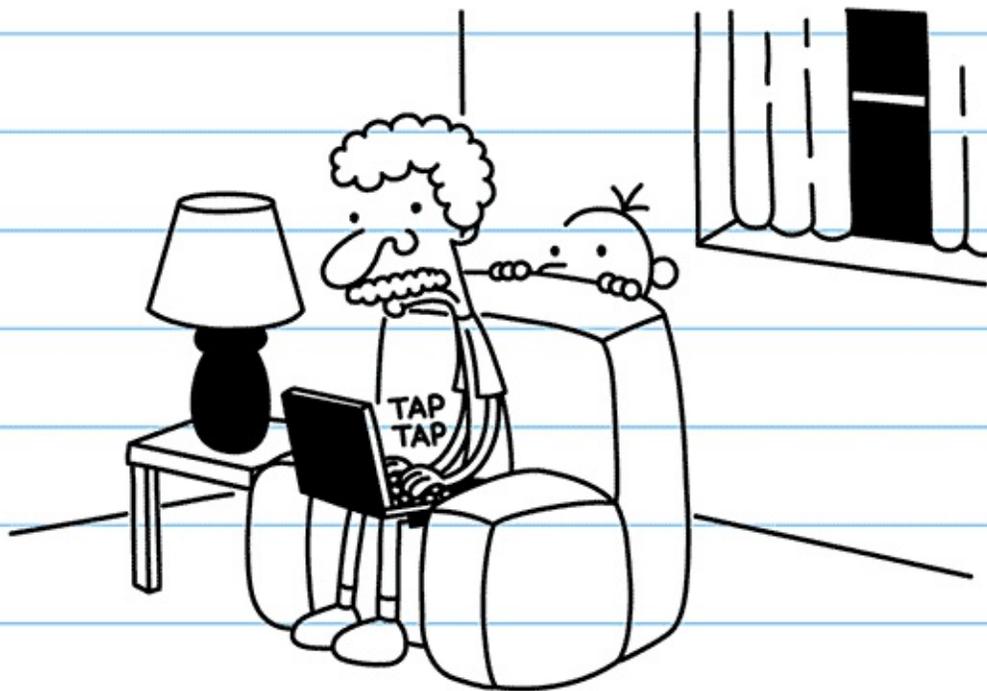
Wednesday

I've been stuck inside this cabin for three days

now, and I'm really starting to lose my mind.

I've been trying to get Mr. and Mrs. Jefferson
to take us to the boardwalk, but they say it's too
"noisy" there.

I've never gone this long without tv or computers
or video games, and I'm starting to feel kind of
desperate. When Mr. Jefferson works late at night
on his laptop, I sneak downstairs and watch him
just to get a glimpse of the outside world.



I've tried to get Mr. Jefferson to let me use
his laptop a couple of times, but he says it's his
"work computer" and he doesn't want me to mess

anything up. Last night I was at my breaking

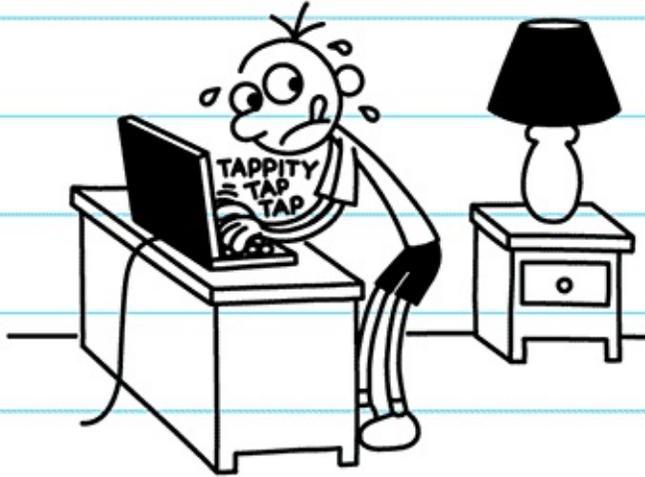
point, so I did something a little risky.

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When Mr. Jefferson got up to use the bathroom,

I jumped at my chance.



I rattled off an e-mail to Mom as quick as I

could, then ran upstairs and got into bed.

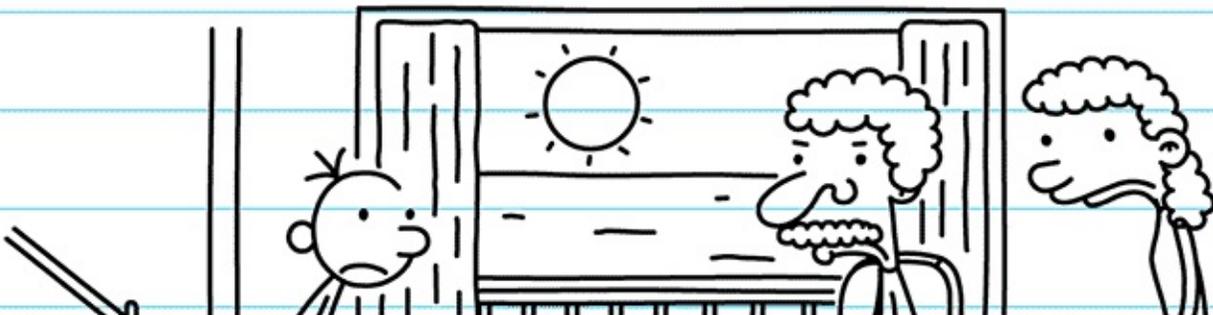
TO: Heffley, Susan

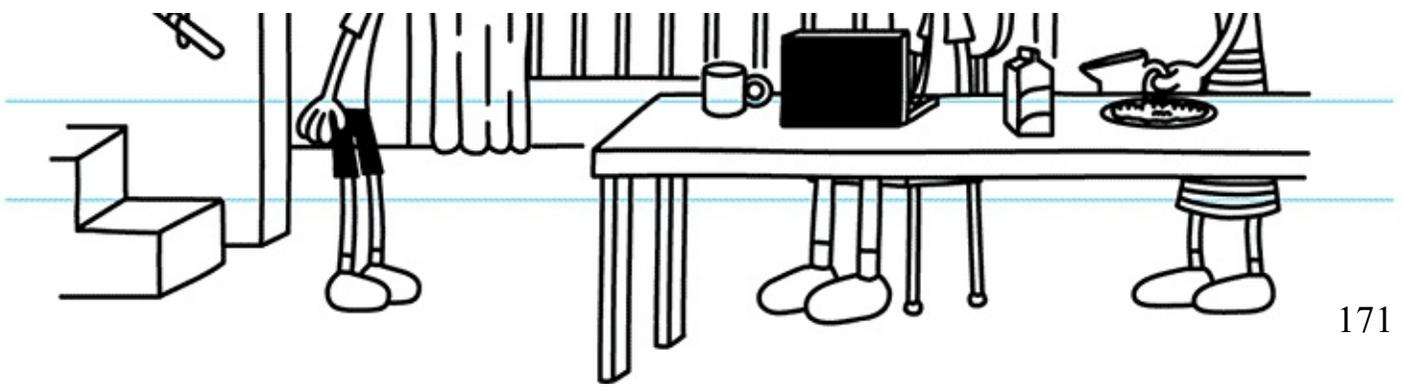
SUBJECT: SOS

**HELP HELP GET ME OUT OF HERE THESE
PEOPLE ARE DRIVING ME CRAZY**

When I came downstairs for breakfast this morning,

Mr. Jefferson didn't look too happy to see me.





It turns out that I sent that e-mail from Mr.

Jefferson's work account, and Mom answered back.

TO: Jefferson, Robert

SUBJECT: RE: SOS

**Family vacations can be a challenge!
Is Gregory not behaving himself?**

- Susan

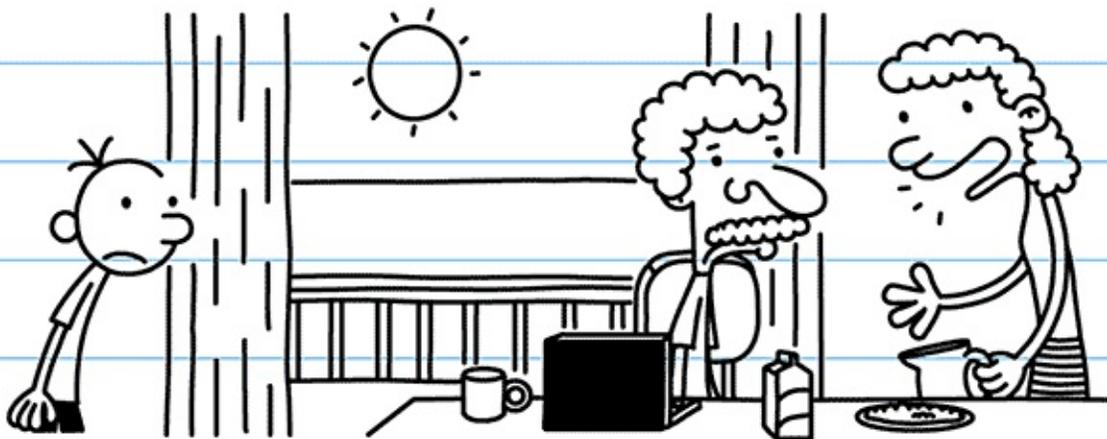
I thought Mr. Jefferson was gonna really let me

have it, but he didn't say anything at all. Then

Mrs. Jefferson said maybe we could go to the

boardwalk later on this afternoon and spend an

hour or two there.



Well, that's all I was ever asking for. A few

hours is all I really need.

172



If I can just ride the Cranium Shaker once, I'll

feel like this trip wasn't a total waste of time.

Friday

I'm back home from the beach two days early, and

if you wanna know the reason why, it's kind of a

long story.

The Jeffersons took me and Rowley to the

boardwalk yesterday afternoon. I wanted to go

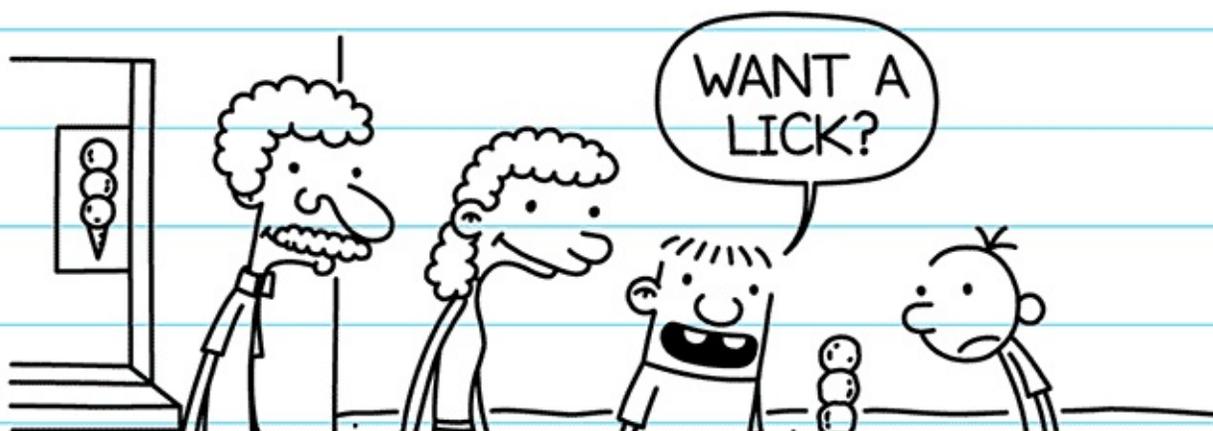
on the Cranium Shaker right away, but the line

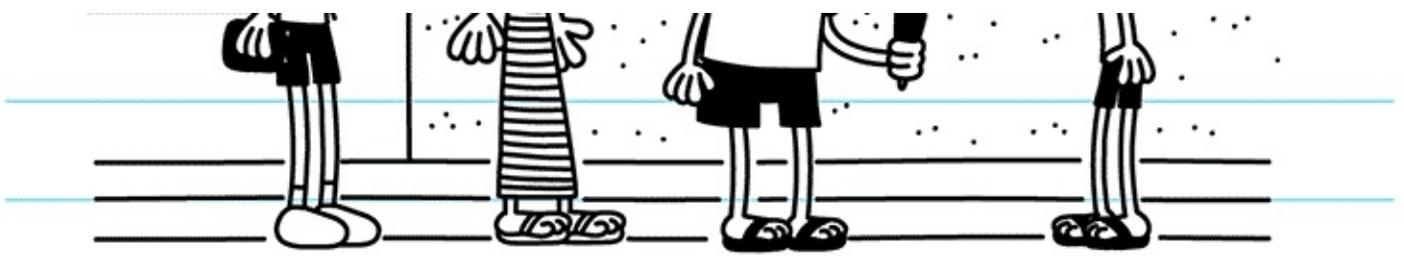
was too long, so we decided to get some food and

come back later.

We got some ice cream, but Mrs. Jefferson only

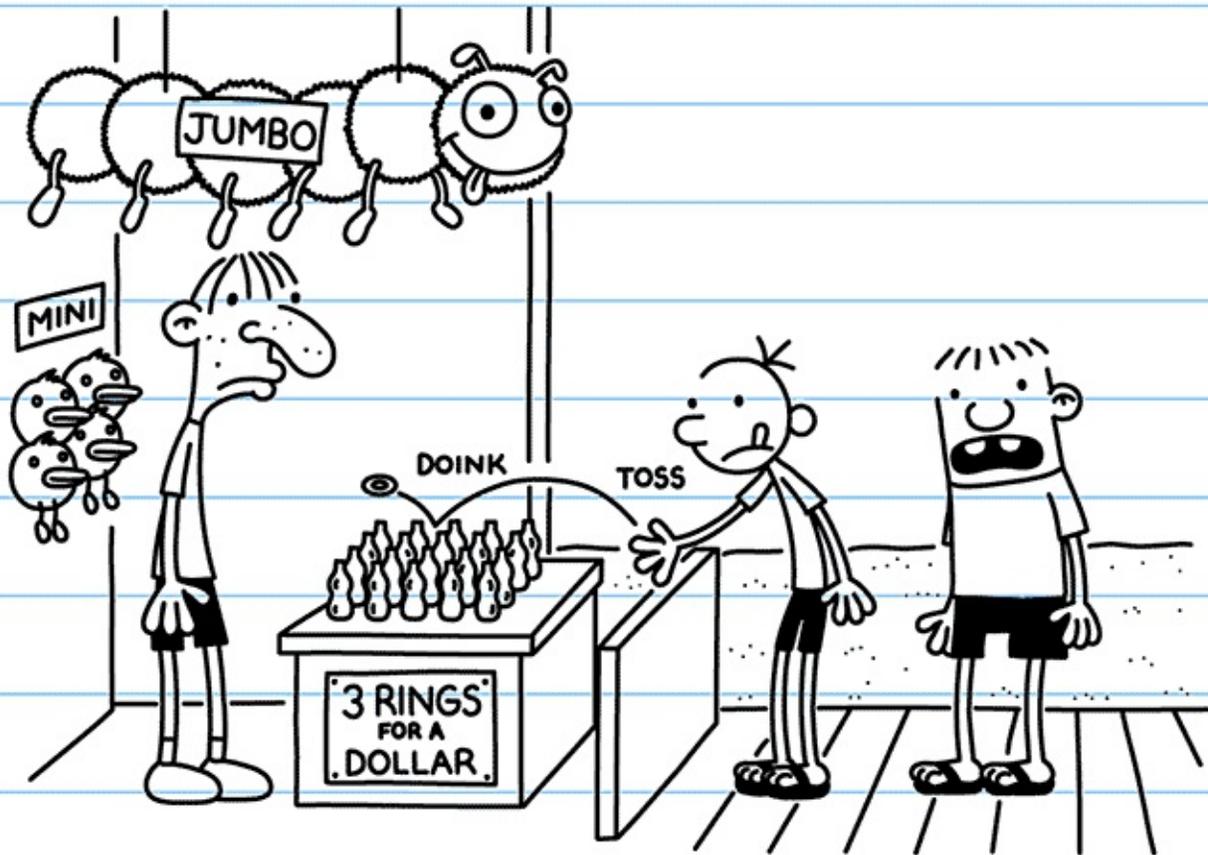
ordered one cone for the four of us to share.





Mom gave me thirty dollars to spend at the beach, and I blew twenty of it on this one carnival game.

I was trying to win a giant stuffed caterpillar, but I think they have those games rigged so you can't succeed.

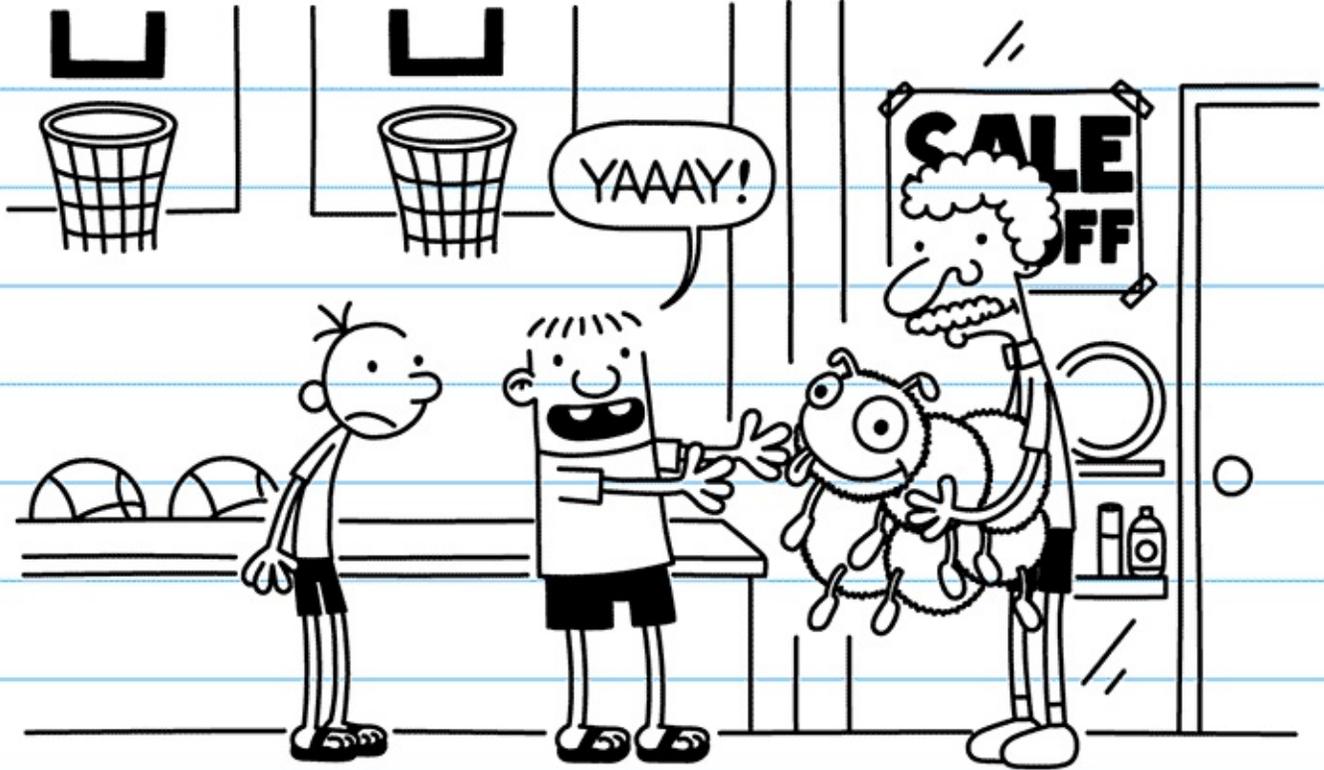


Rowley watched me blow my twenty dollars, and then he asked his dad to buy him the exact same giant caterpillar at a shop next door. And the thing that really stinks is that it only cost

him ten bucks.

174

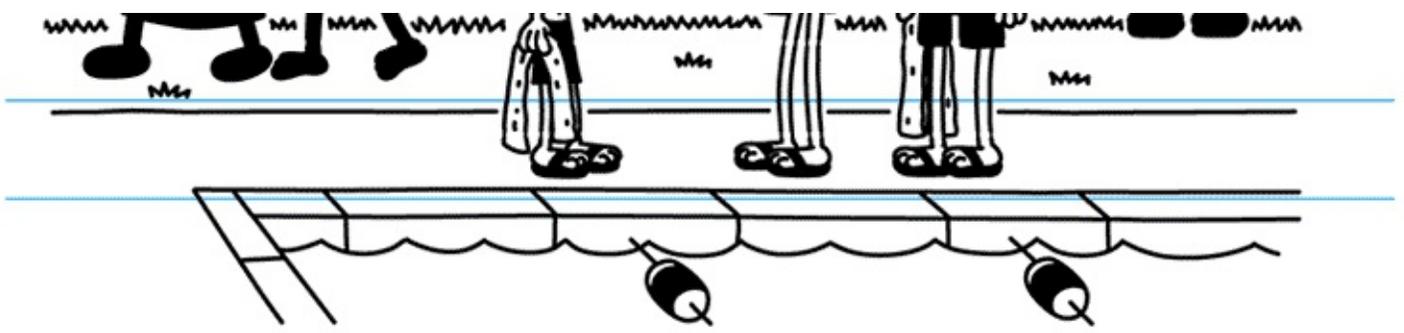




I think Mr. Jefferson is making a big mistake
with a move like that. Now Rowley feels like a
winner even though he isn't.

I've had my own experience with that sort of
thing. Last year when I was on the swim team,
they had this special swim meet I got invited to
on a Sunday.





When I showed up, I realized none of the

Good swimmers were there. It was only the

kids who had never won a ribbon before.

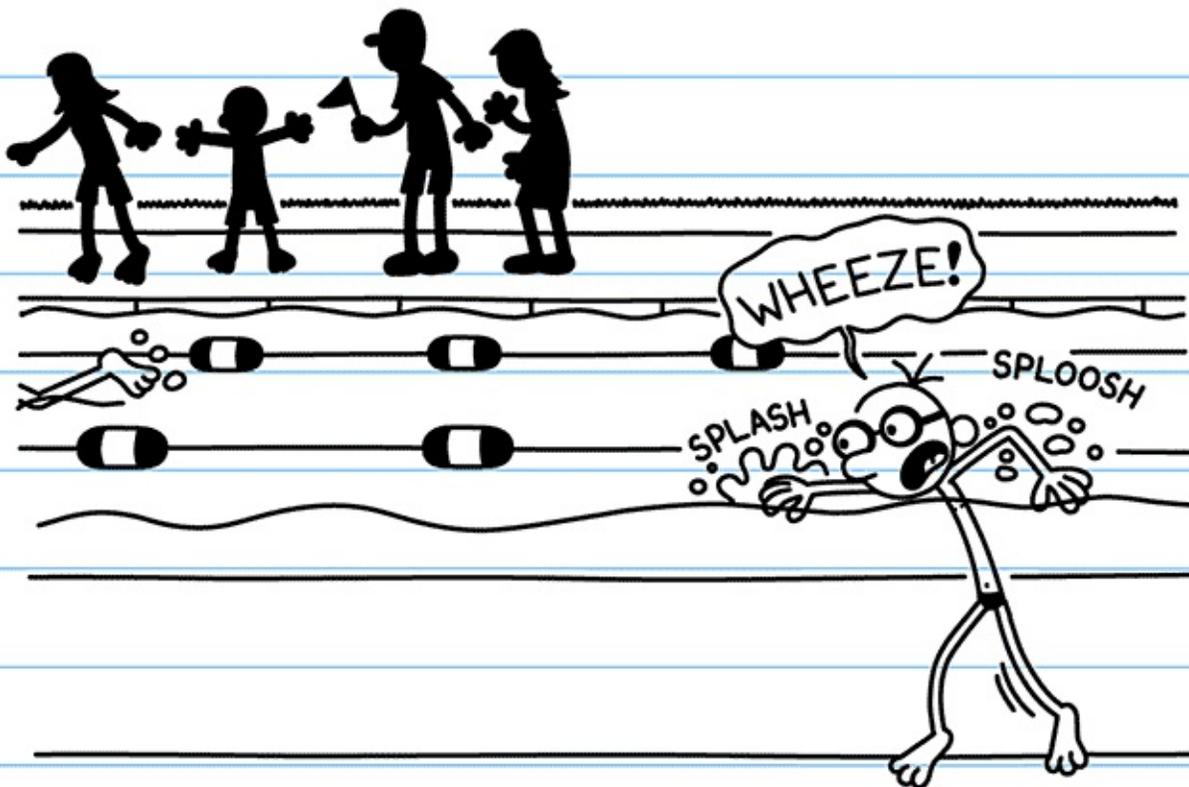
At first I was pretty happy, because I thought

I might actually WIN something for once.

I still didn't do well, though. My event was the

100-meter freestyle, and I got so pooped that

I had to WALK the last lap.



But the judges didn't disqualify me. And at the

end of the night, I got a first-place ribbon, _____

which my parents handed to me. _____

176



In fact, everyone walked away with first-place ribbons, even Tommy Lam, who got turned around in the backstroke and swam the wrong way.



When I got home, I was confused. But then Rodrick saw me with my first-place Champions ribbon, and he gave me the scoop.

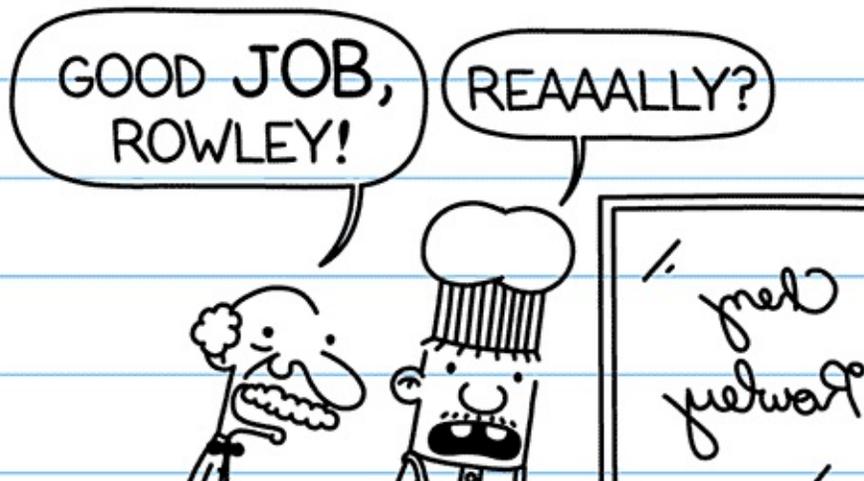
Rodrick told me the Champions meet is just a scam put on by parents to make their kids feel like winners.



I guess parents think they're doing their kids a favor by going through with all that, but if you ask me, I think it just causes more problems down the road.

I remember when I used to be on the tee-ball team and everyone would cheer even when I struck out. Then the next year, in junior baseball, all my teammates and the other parents would boo me off the field if I dropped a pop fly or something.

All I'm saying is, if Rowley's parents wanna make him feel good about himself, they can't do it now when he's a kid and then walk away. They've gotta stick with him all the way through.



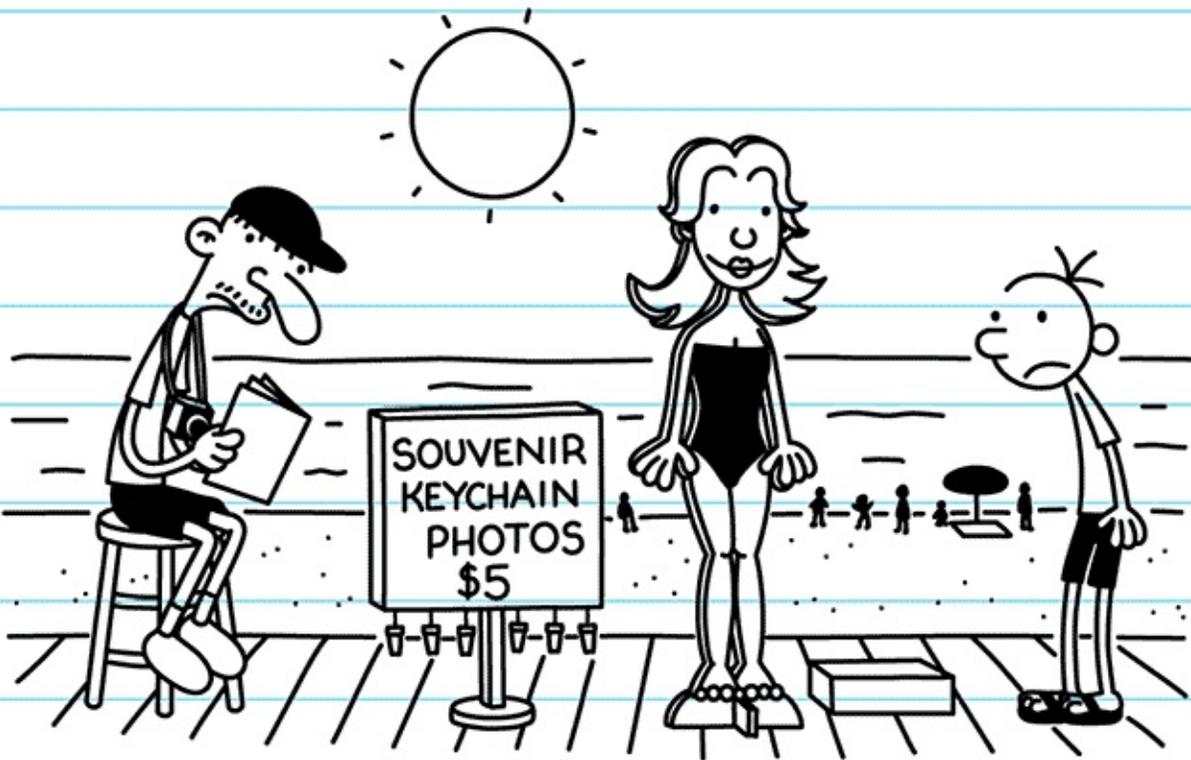


After the caterpillar thing we just walked up and down the boardwalk, waiting for the line for the Cranium Shaker to go down. Then I saw something that got my attention.

It was that girl from Rodrick's keychain picture.

But here's the thing: She wasn't a real person.

She was a CARDBoARD Cutout.



I felt like an idiot for ever thinking that she was a real girl. Then I realized I could buy my OWN keychain picture and impress all the guys at school.

I might even be able to make some money by

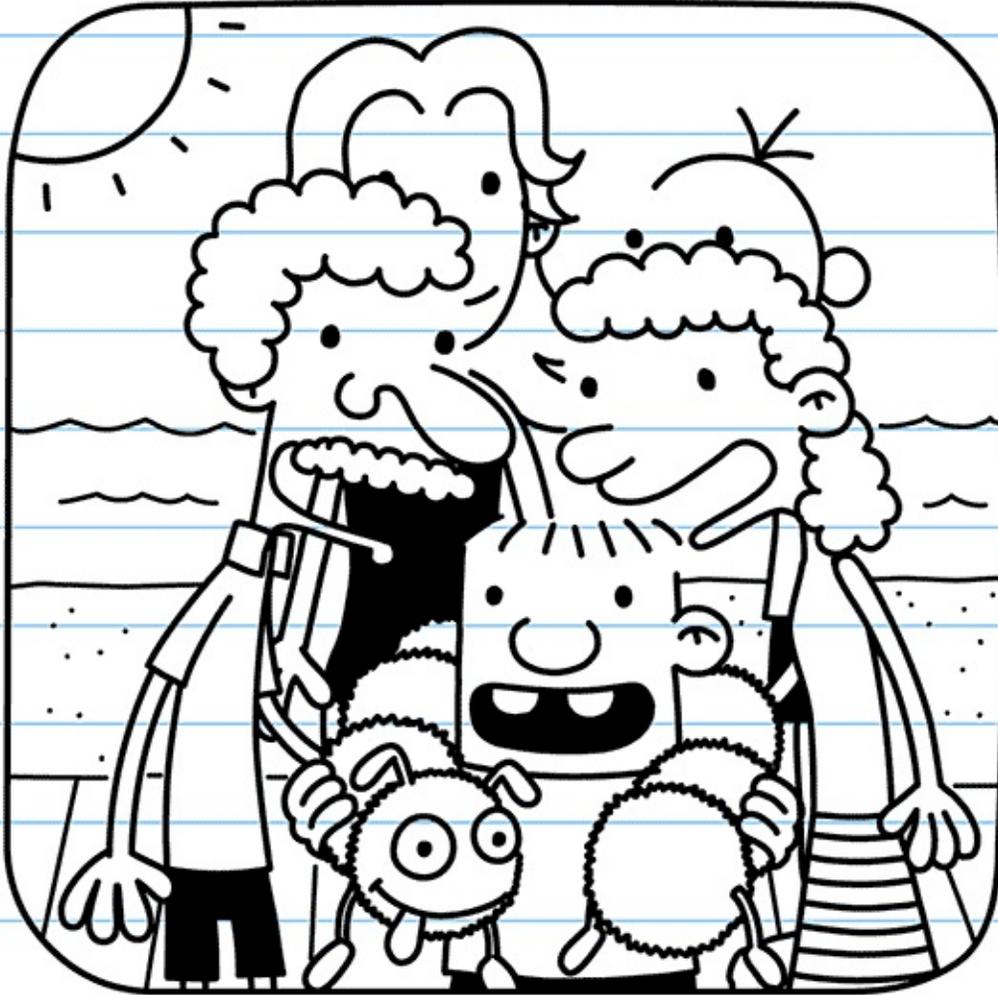
charging them to look at it.

I paid my five bucks and posed for my photo.

Unfortunately, the Jeffersons got into the picture

With me, so now my souvenir keychain is pretty

much worthless.



I was really mad, but I forgot all about it when

I saw that the line for the Cranium Shaker was

down to a few people. I ran over to the ride and

used my last five dollars to pay for a ticket.

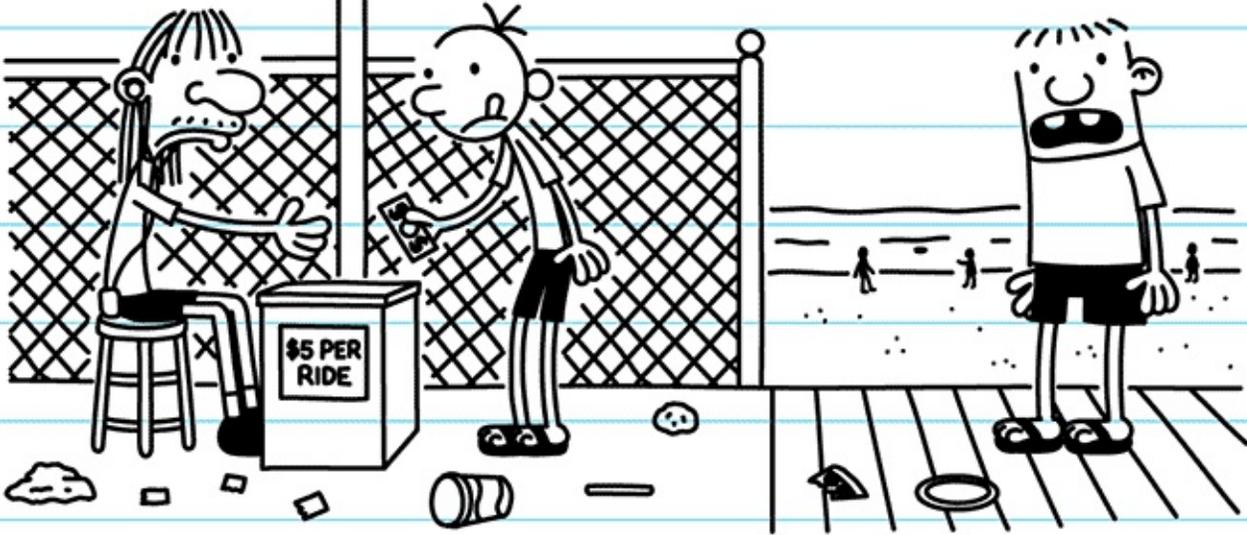
I thought Rowley was right behind me, but he

was hanging back about ten feet. I guess he was _____

too scared to go on. _____

180 _____

KEK

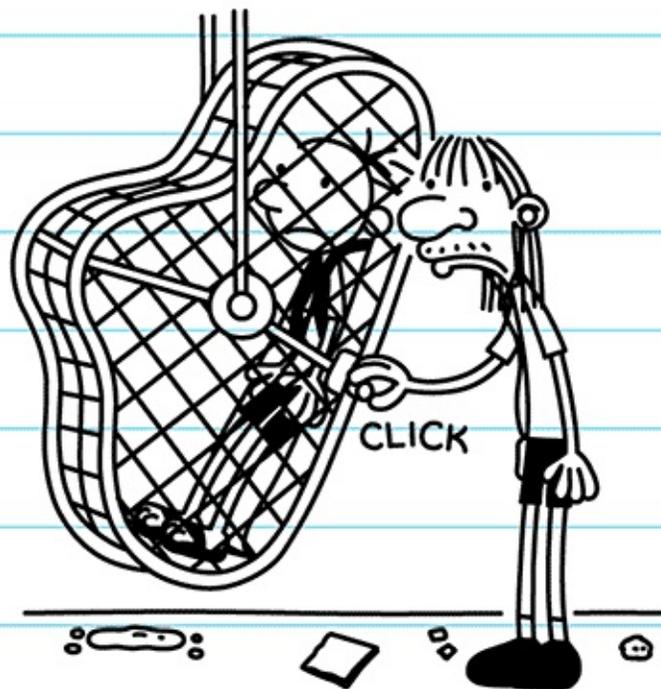


I was starting to have second thoughts myself,

but it was too late. After the ride operator

strapped me in, he locked the cage and I knew

there was no turning back.



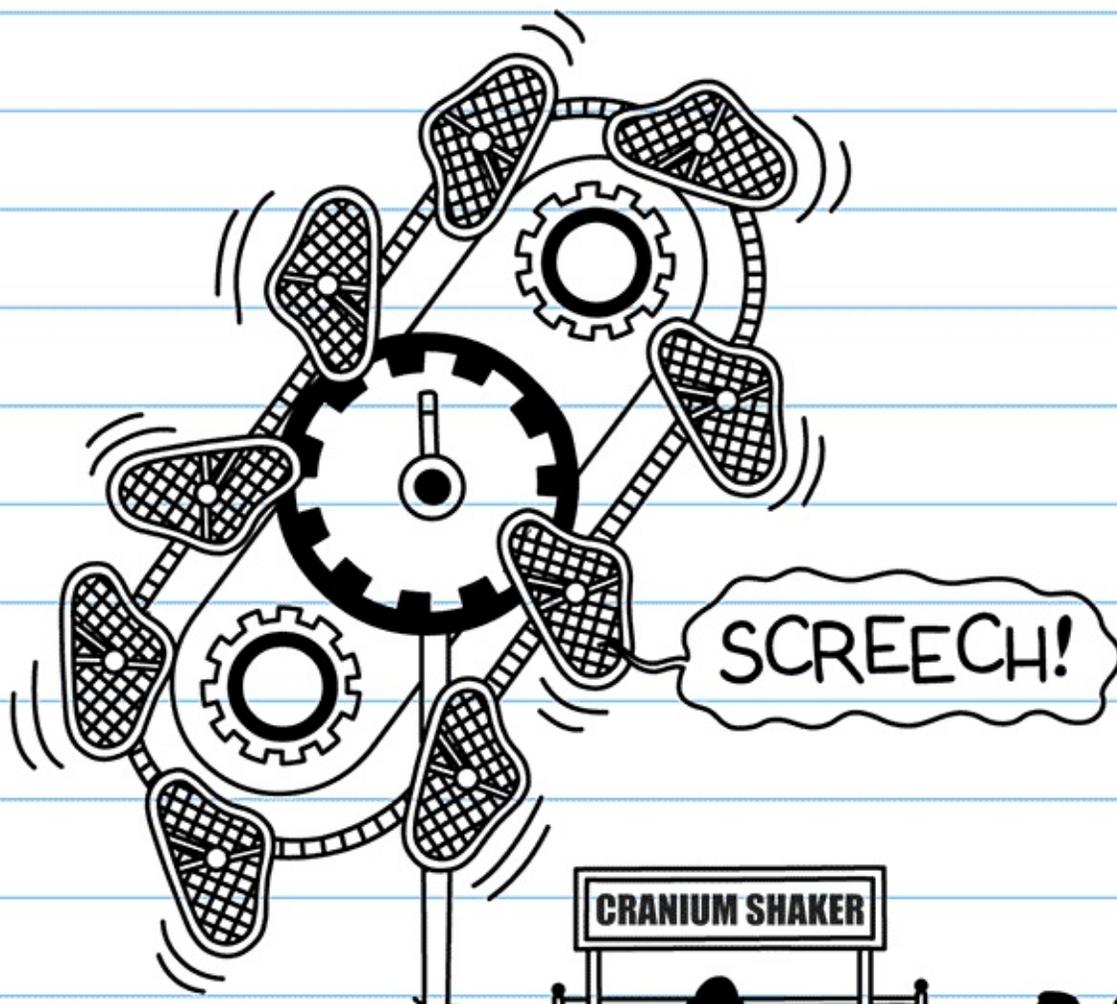
Well, I wish I had spent more time watching what

the Cranium Shaker actually DID to a person, _____

because I never would've gotten on if I had. _____

It flips you upside down about a million times and
then throws you toward the ground so your face is
about six inches from the pavement. Then it sends
you spinning backward up to the sky again.

And the whole time the cage you're in is creaking,
and all the bolts look like they're about to come
loose. I tried to get someone to stop the ride,
but nobody could hear me over the pounding heavy
metal music.





182



It was the most nauseous I've ever felt in my life.

And when I say that, I mean even more than

after I had to get Manny out of the shower area

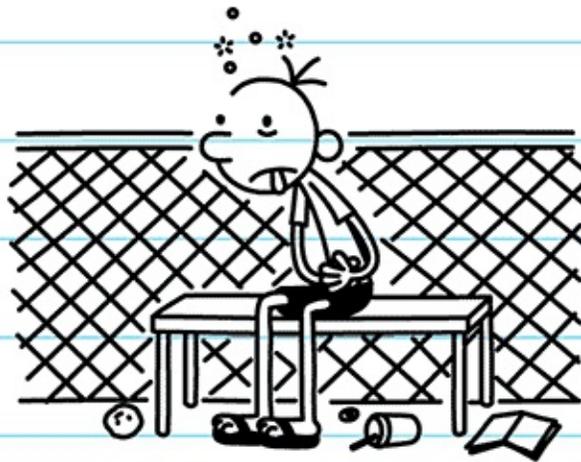
at the town pool. If this is what it takes to be a

"man," I am definitely not ready yet.

When the ride finally ended, I could barely walk.

So I sat down on a bench and waited for the

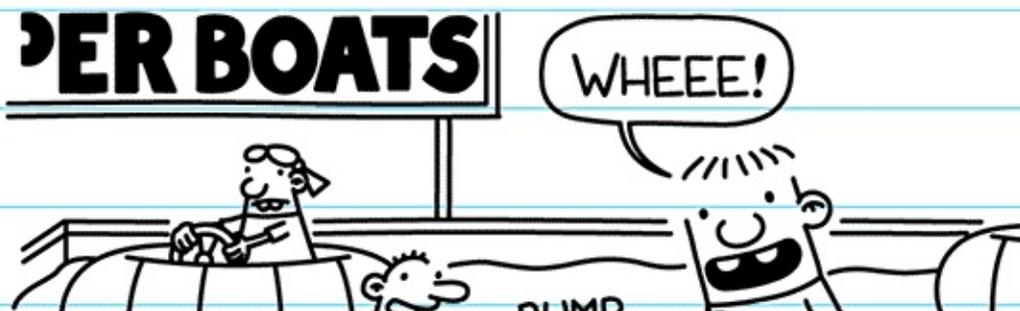
boardwalk to stop spinning.

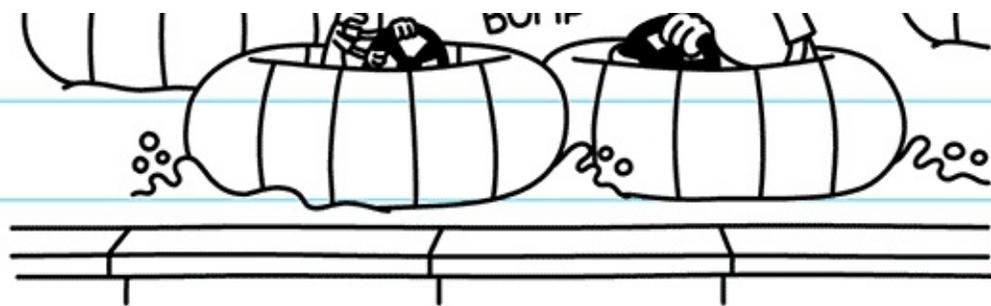


I stayed there a long time and focused on trying

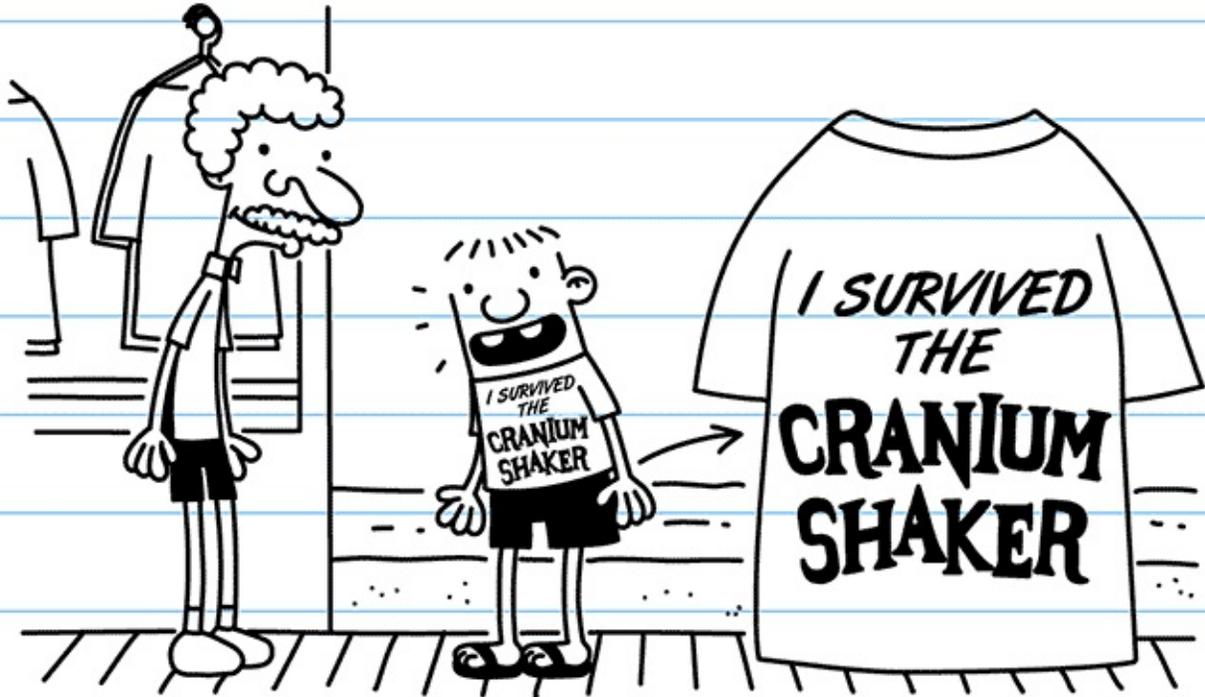
not to throw up, while Rowley rode some rides

that were more his speed.





After Rowley was done with his kiddie rides, his dad bought him a bobby balloon and a shirt from the souvenir shop.



A half hour later I was finally ready to try standing up and walking around again. But when I got on my feet, Mr. Jefferson said it was time to go.

I asked him if we could just play a few games in the arcade, and he said ok even though he didn't seem happy about it.

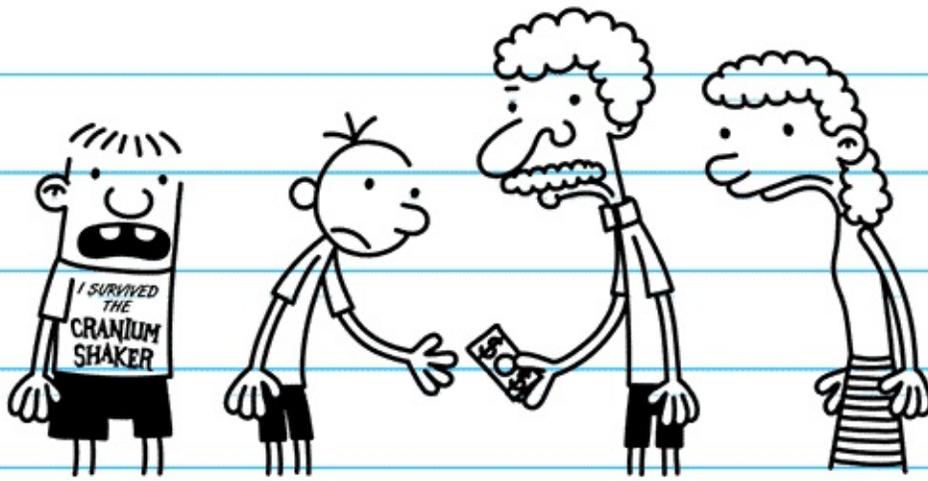
I had spent all the money Mom gave me, so I told

Mr. Jefferson twenty dollars would probably do it. _____

But all he was willing to offer me was a dollar. _____

184





I think the arcade was too loud for Mr. and Mrs.

Jefferson, so they didn't want to go inside. They

told us to go in by ourselves and meet them outside

in ten minutes.

I went to the back of the arcade, where they

have this game called Thunder Volt. I spent about

fifty dollars on that game last year, and I got

the high score. I wanted Rowley to see my name

at the top of the list, because I wanted to show

him what it was like to win something without it

being handed to you.





Well, my name was still at the top of the list, but

the person who got the next highest score

must've been jealous they couldn't beat me.

HIGH SCORES	
1. GREG HEFFLEY.....	25320
2. IS AN IDIOT	25310
3. JARHEAD 71	24200
4. RECKLESS	22100
5. CRAVEN1.....	21500
6. POKECHIMP88.....	21250
7. WILD DOG.....	21200
8. ZIPPY.....	20300
9. SNARL CARL.....	20100
10. LEIGHANDREW	19250

I unplugged the machine to try and wipe out the

high scores, but they were burned into the screen

permanently.

I was gonna just spend our money on some other

game, but then I remembered a trick Rodrick

told me about, and I realized we could make the

dollar last a lot longer.

186



Me and Rowley walked outside and went underneath

the boardwalk. Then I slipped the dollar bill up

between the planks of wood and waited for our

first victim.

Eventually, a teenager spotted the dollar sticking

out of the boardwalk.



When he went to grab it, I pulled the dollar bill
through the slat at the last second.

show me some of the moves he learned in karate so

we could handle those guys if they found us.

But Rowley said he's a gold belt in karate and he

wasn't going to teach his moves to a "no belt."



We hid there a while more, but the teenagers

never showed up, and eventually we decided the

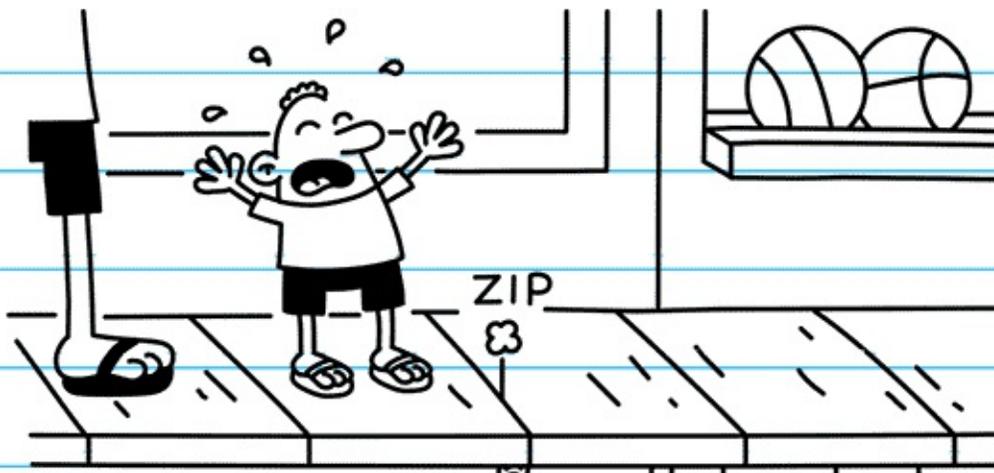
coast was clear. That's when we realized we were

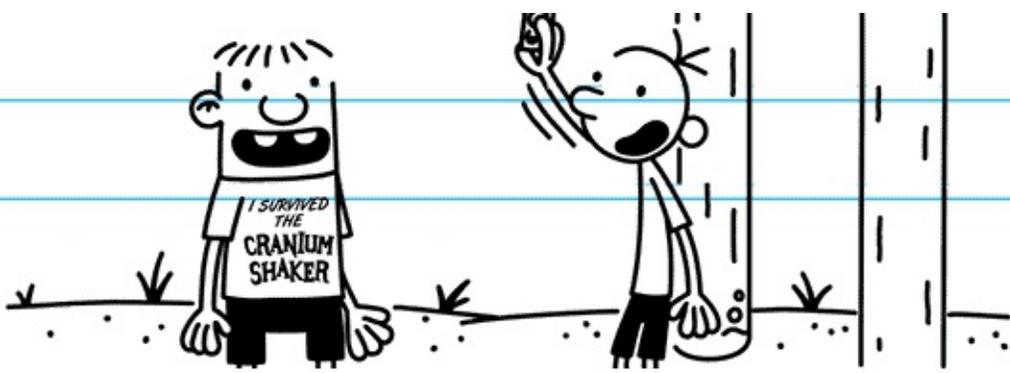
underneath Kiddie Land, so there was a whole new

batch of victims for our dollar bill trick right above

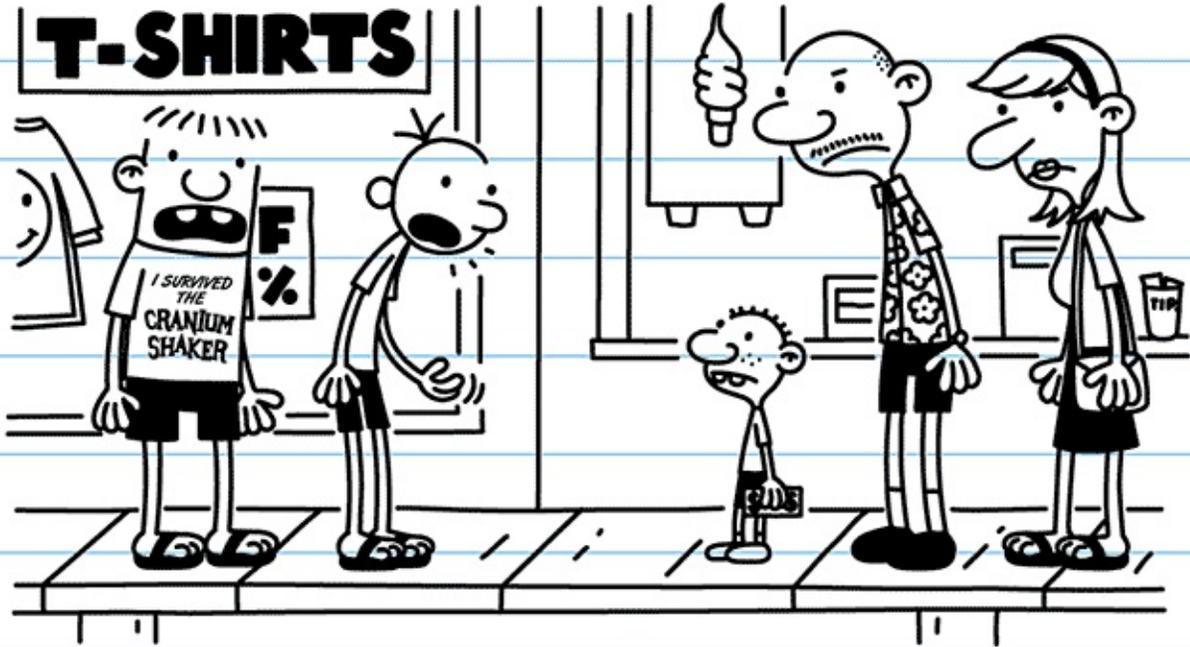
our heads. And we got a muCH better reaction

out of those kids than we did from the teenagers.





But one of the kids was really fast, and he grabbed the dollar before I could pull it down. So me and Rowley had to go up on the boardwalk to get it back.



This kid wasn't budging, though. I tried to explain the concept of personal property to him, but he still wouldn't give us our money.

I was getting pretty frustrated with this kid, and that's when Rowley's parents showed up. I was pretty glad to see them because I figured if ANYONE could talk some sense into this kid, it

was Mr. Jefferson.

190



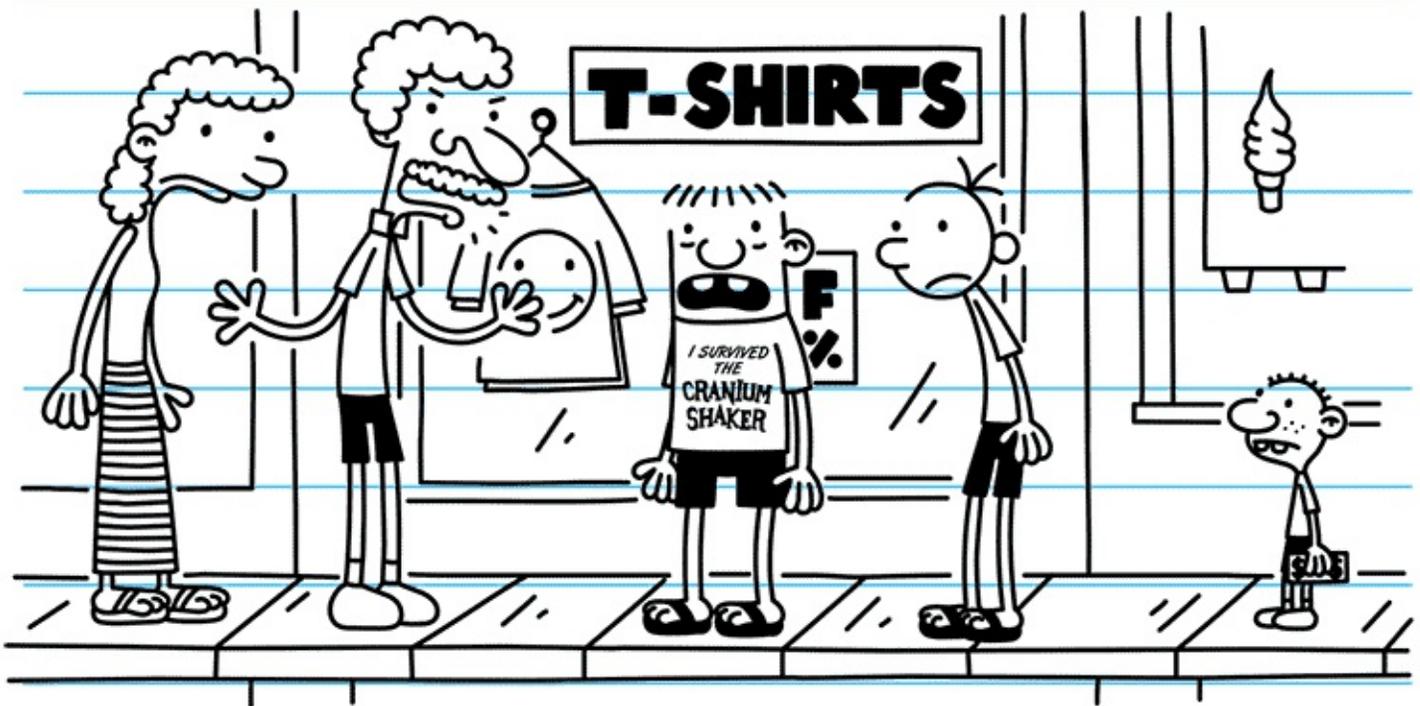
But Mr. Jefferson was mad, and I mean

ReALLY mad. He said he and Mrs. Jefferson

had been looking all over for us for the past

hour and they were ready to call the police to

report us missing.



Then he told us we had to get in the car. But

on the way to the parking lot, we walked past

the arcade. I asked Mr. Jefferson if we could

please have another dollar since we never did get

to spend that one he gave us.

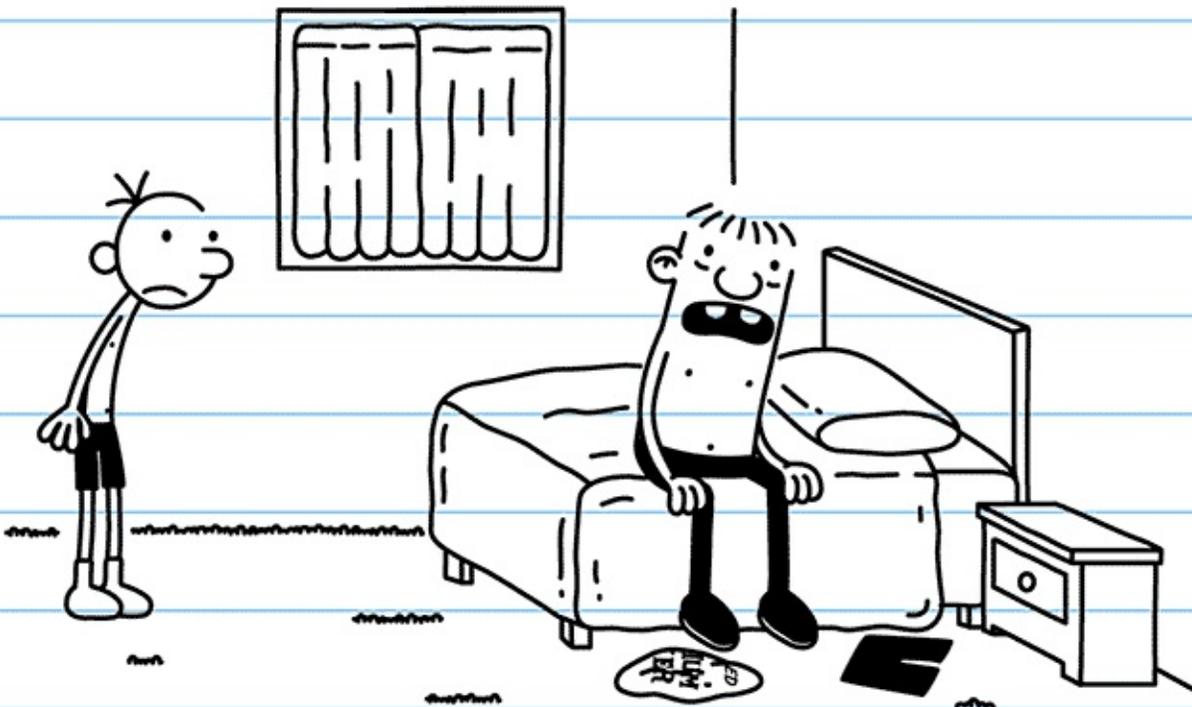
But I guess that wasn't the right thing to

ask, because he took us back to the car without

saying a word.

When we got back to the cabin, Mr. Jefferson
said me and Rowley had to go straight to our
room. That really stunk, because it wasn't even
8:00 and it was still light outside.

But Mr. Jefferson said we had to go to bed and
that he didn't want to hear a peep out of us
until morning. Rowley was taking it really hard.
From the way he was acting, I don't think he's
ever been in trouble with his dad before.

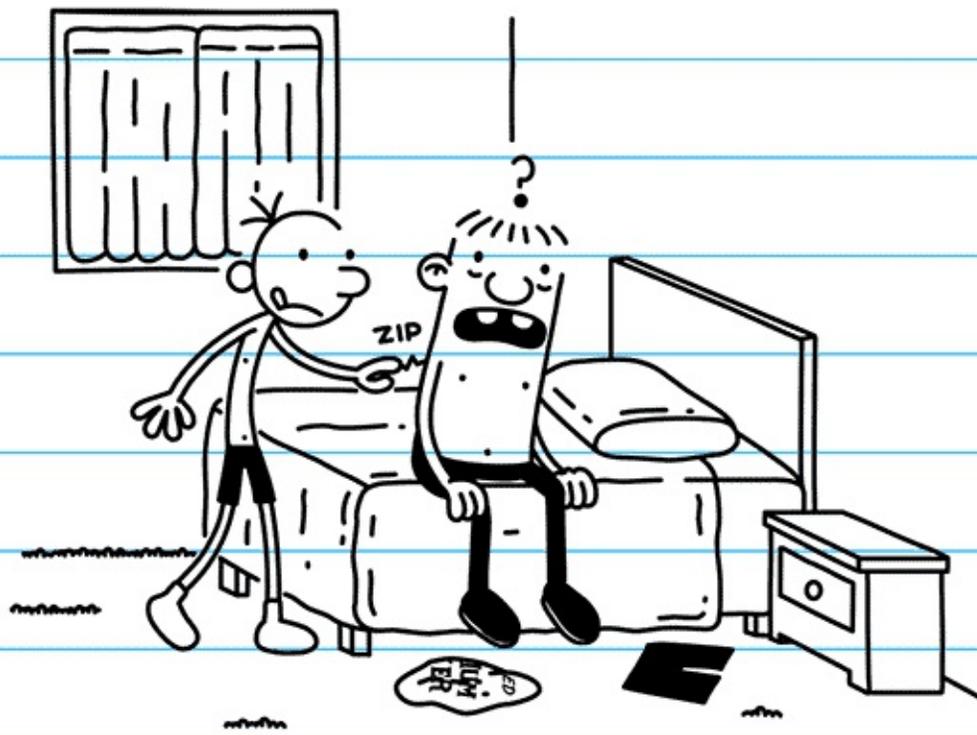


I decided to lighten the mood a little bit. I
walked around on the shag carpet and then gave

Rowley a static electricity shock as a joke.

192



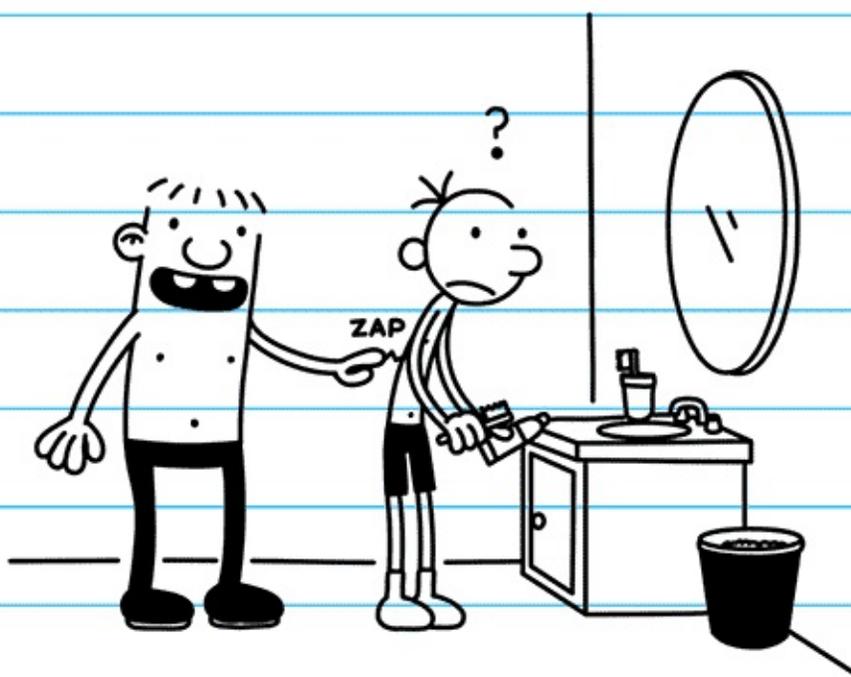


That seemed to get Rowley to snap out of it.

He walked around in a circle for about five minutes

rubbing his feet on the carpet, and then got me

back while I was brushing my teeth.



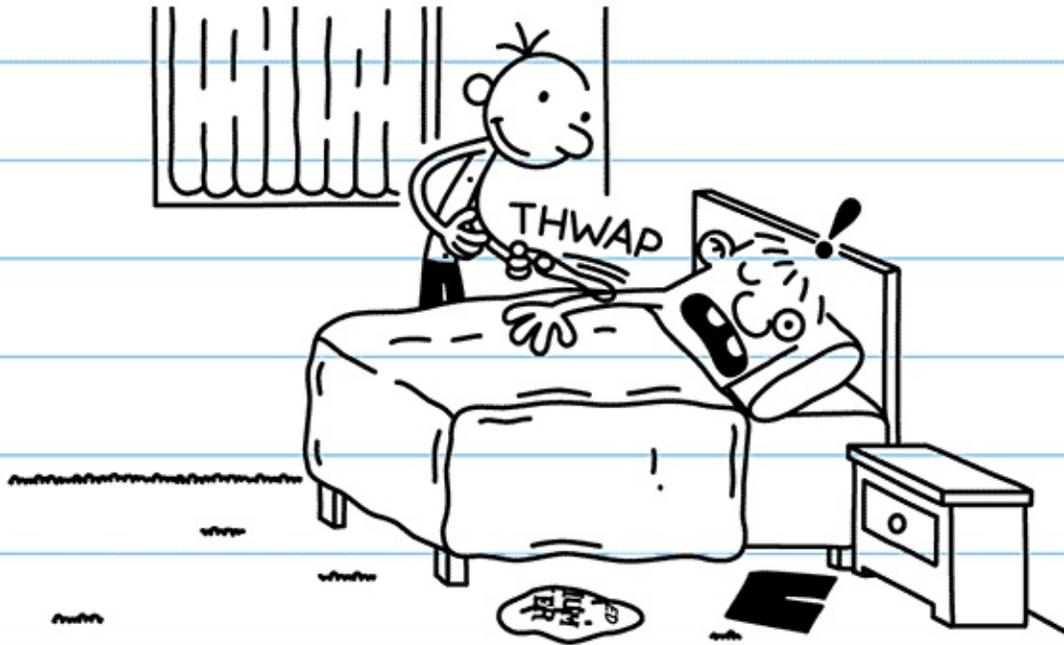
I couldn't let Rowley one-up me like that, so

when he got into bed I got his boppy balloon,

pulled back the giant rubber band, and let it rip.

If I had to do it again, maybe I wouldn't have

pulled back so hard.

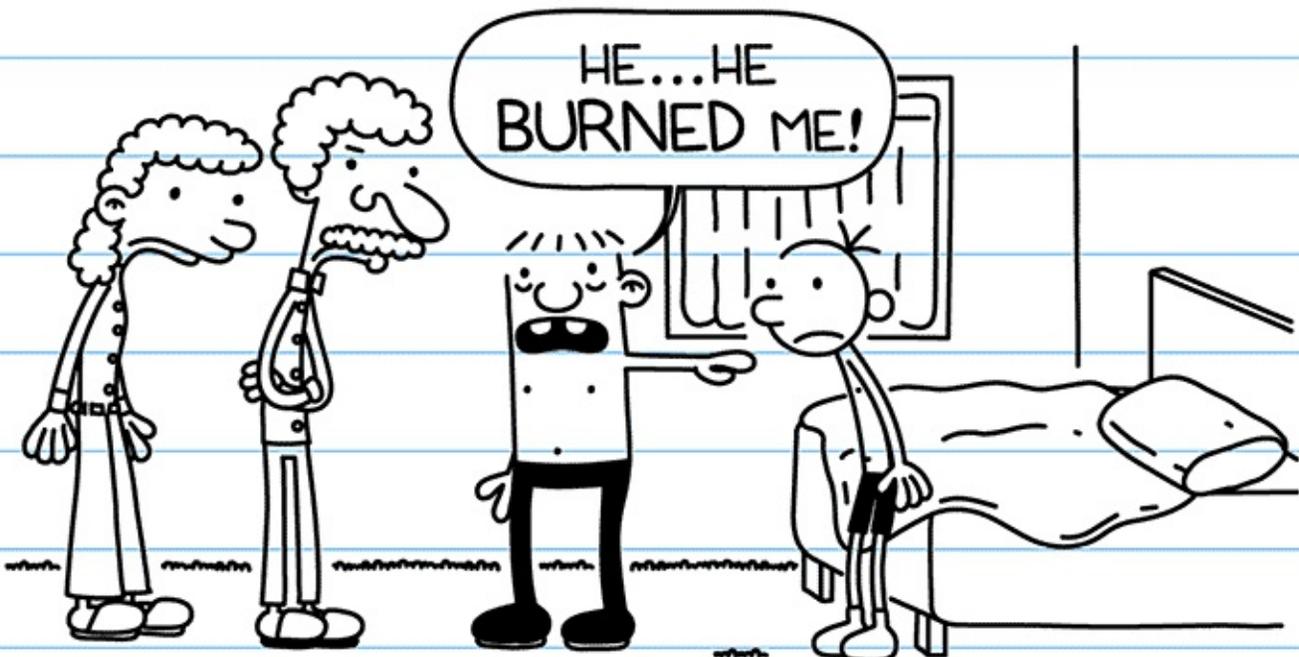


When Rowley saw the red mark on his arm he

screamed, and I knew that was gonna attract

attention. Sure enough, his parents were up in our

room in five seconds.



I tried to explain that the mark on Rowley's

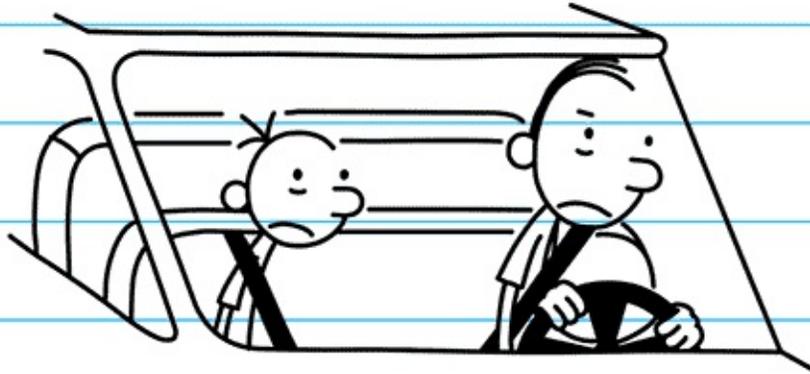
arm was from a rubber band, but that didn't

seem to matter to the Jeffersons.

194



They called my parents, and two hours later Dad was at the cabin to pick me up and take me home.



Monday

Dad's really mad that he had to drive four hours round-trip to come get me. But Mom wasn't mad at all. She said the incident between me and Rowley was just "horseplay" and she was glad we were "pals" again.



But Dad is still mad, and it's been really chilly between us ever since we got back. Mom's been trying to get the two of us to do something like go to the movies together so we can "make

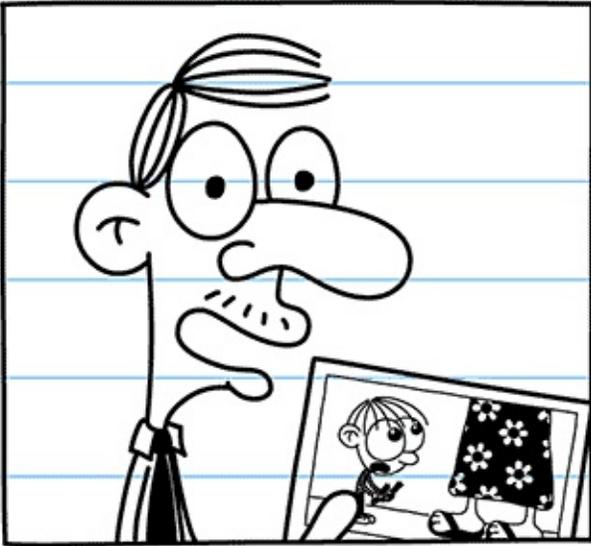
peace,” but I think right now it's best for me

and Dad to just stay out of each other's way.

I think Dad's bad mood is here to stay, though,
and part of it has nothing to do with me. When
I opened up today's paper, here's what I saw in
the Arts section —

Arts

Beloved comic to continue



*“Li'l Cutie” to be carried on
by original cartoonist's son*

In a stunning development, Tyler Post, the son of “Li'l Cutie” cartoonist Bob Post, will take up the pen and carry on his father's enduring one-panel comic.

“I didn't really have a job or any big plans, so one day I said, ‘How hard can it be?’” said Tyler, who, at 32, is living with his father. It is widely believed that the Li'l Cutie character is based

See CUTIE, page A2

*Related: Leisure Towers
residents rejoice, page A3*

Tyler Post will pen new “Li'l Cutie” comics, the first of which will appear in the paper a week from Sunday.

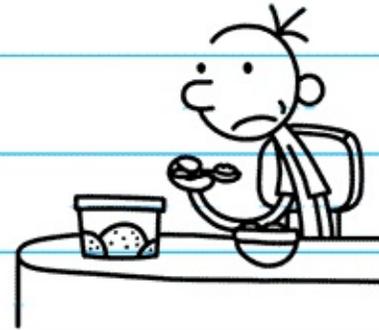
Last night Dad came into my room and talked to
me, which was the first time we spoke to each
other in about three days. He said he wanted to
make sure I was around on Sunday, and I said
I would be.

Later on I heard him talking to someone on the _____
phone, and he seemed to be acting kind of secretive. _____

196



YES...AND I'LL LEAVE HIM
WITH ENOUGH FOOD AND
WATER FOR A WEEK.



After that I asked Dad if he was taking me
anywhere in particular on Sunday, and that
seemed to make him really uncomfortable. He said
no, but he wouldn't look me in the eye.

Now I knew Dad wasn't telling the truth, so I
started to get kind of worried. Dad was willing to
ship me off to a military academy before, and I
wouldn't put anything past him.

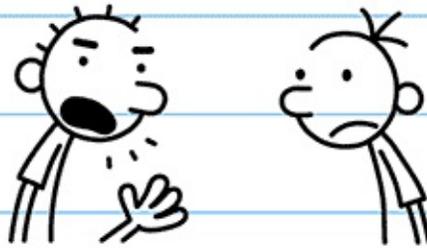
I didn't know what to do, so I told Rodrick
what was going on and asked him if he had any
theories about what Dad was up to. He told me

he'd think about it, and a little while later he

came up to my room and shut the door.

Rodrick told me he thought Dad was so mad about

the Rowley thing that he was gonna get rid of me.



I wasn't sure if I believed him, because Rodrick's

not always 100% reliable. But Rodrick told me if

I didn't believe him I should go check out Dad's

day planner and see for myself. So I went into

Dad's office and opened his calendar to Sunday,

and here's what I found —





I'm pretty sure Rodrick was pulling my leg,
because it looked an awful lot like his handwriting.

But Dad's kind of an unpredictable guy, so I
guess I'll just have to wait until Sunday to know
for sure.

Sunday

The good news is Dad didn't sell me or give me
away to an orphanage today. The bad news is,
after what happened, he probably will.

At about 10:00 this morning, Dad said to get in
the car because he wanted to take me into the city.

When I asked what for, he said it was a "surprise."



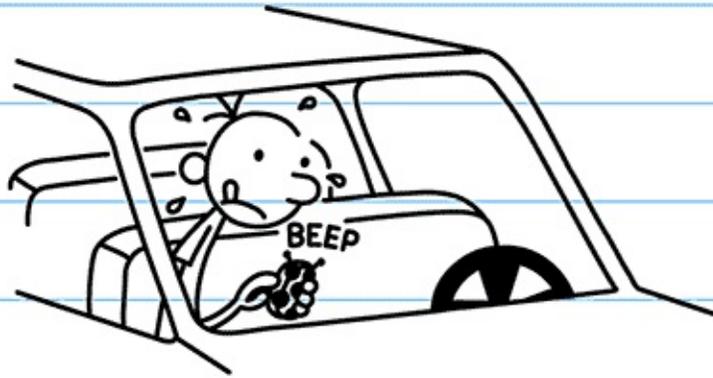
On the way into the city we stopped for gas. Dad
had left a map and directions on the dashboard of

the car, so now I knew where we were going: 1200

Bayside Street.

Well, I was pretty desperate, so for the first

time ever I used my Ladybug.



I finished my call right before Dad came back to

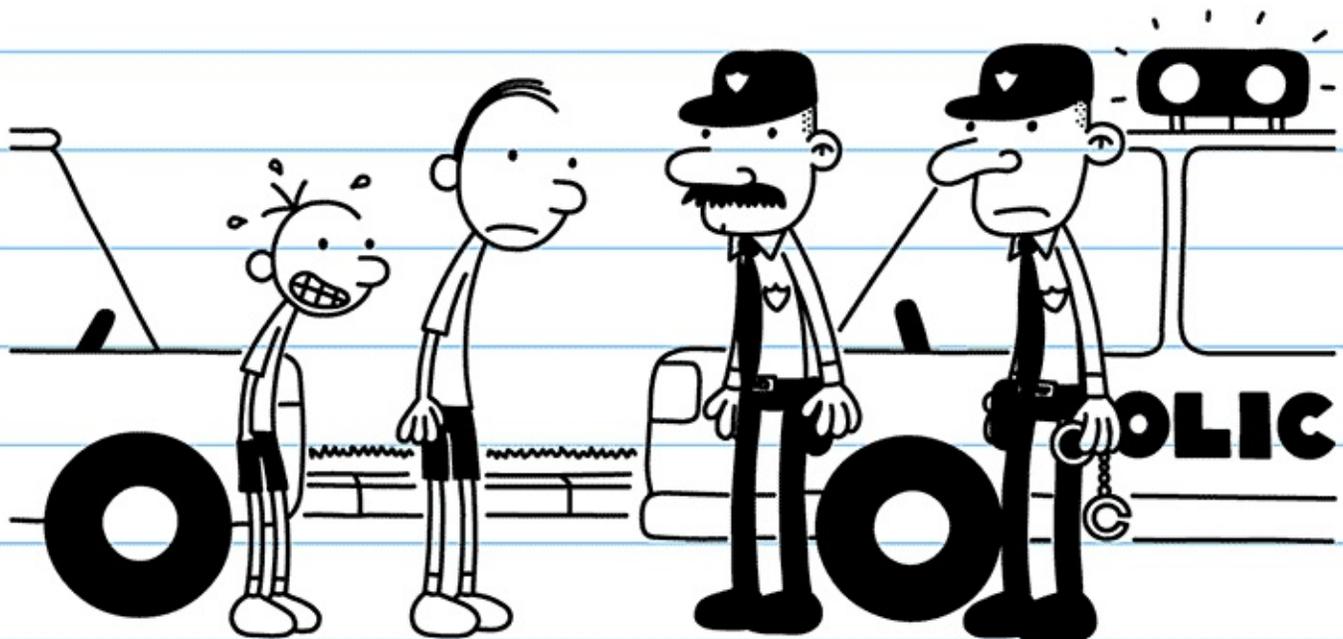
the car, and we headed into the city. I just

wish I took a better look at that map, because

when we pulled up to Bayside Street, I realized

it was the parking lot for the baseball stadium.

But by then it was too late.



It turns out Mom had bought us tickets to the

baseball game for some special father-son bonding

and Dad was trying to keep it a surprise.

200

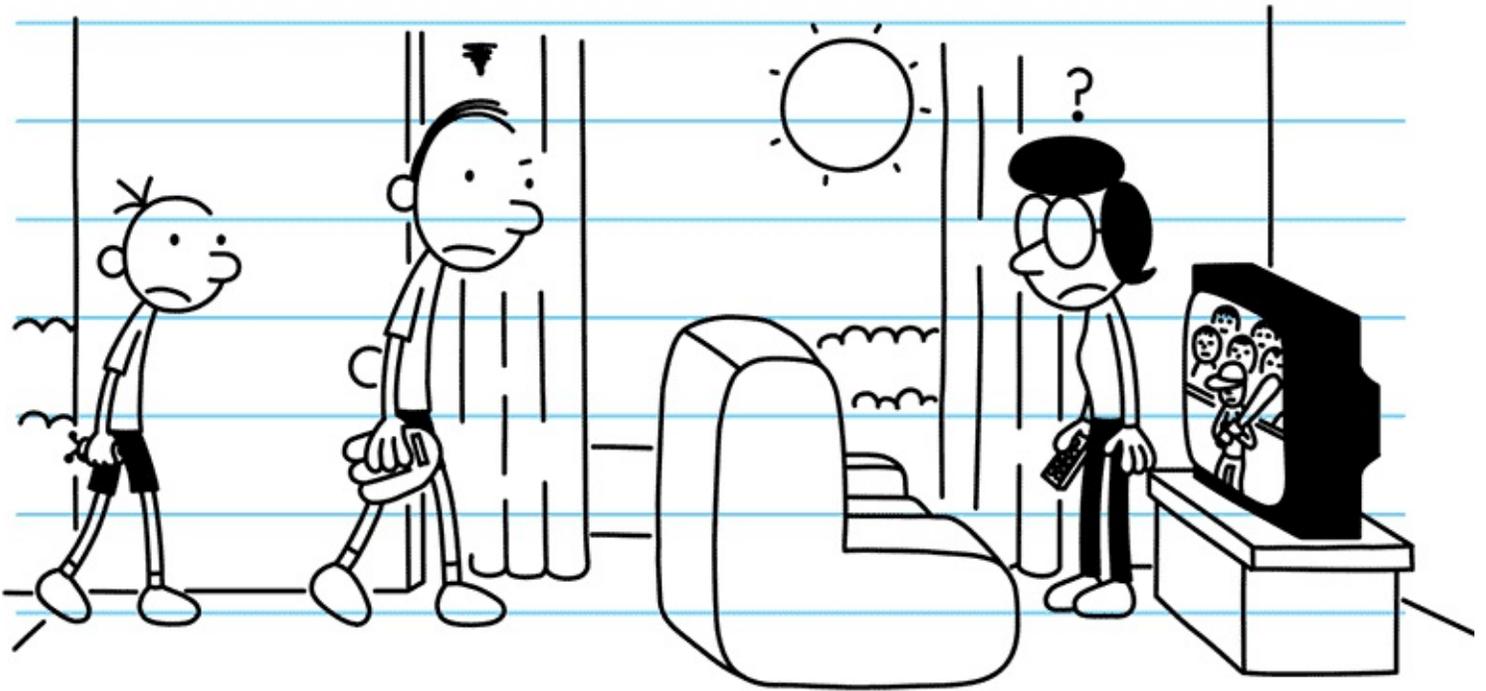


But it took Dad a long time to explain all of

that to the cops. After he cleared things up

with the police, Dad wasn't in the mood for a

baseball game, so he just took me home.

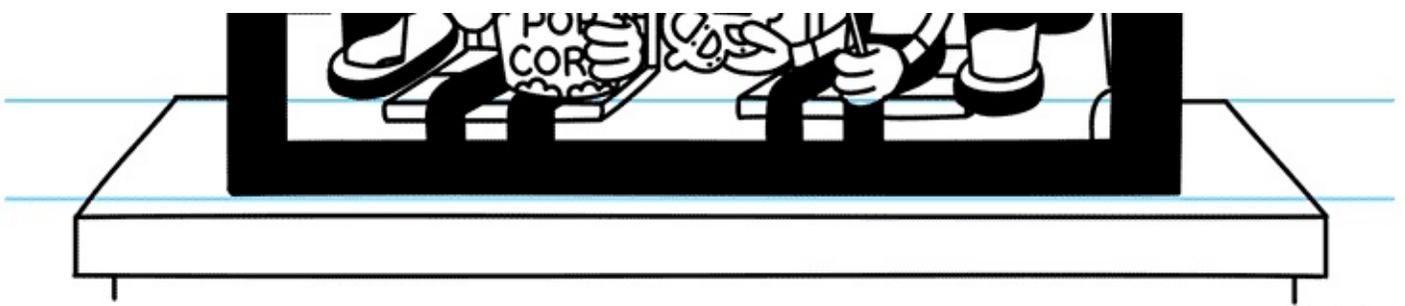


I felt kind of bad because the seats Mom got us

were in the third row, and it looked to me like

they cost a fortune.

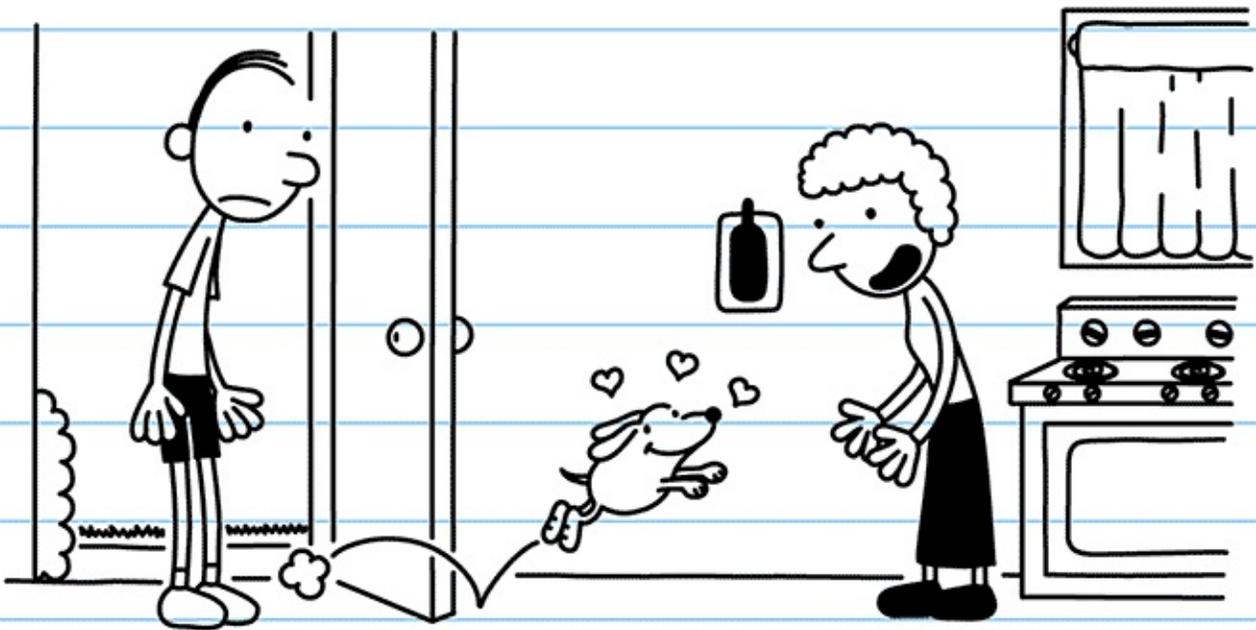




Tuesday

I finally found out what that phone call was all about the other day. Dad had been on the phone with Gramma, and they were talking about Sweetie, not me.

Mom and Dad had decided to give the dog to Gramma, and Dad dropped Sweetie off on Sunday night. To be honest with you, I don't think anyone's really gonna miss him around here.



Me and Dad haven't talked to each other since then, and I've been looking for excuses to stay out of the house. I found a really good one yesterday. There was a commercial on tv for

this store called the Game Hut, which is where

I buy all my video games.

202



They're having a competition where you play at

your local store, and if you win you get to

advance to the national playoffs. And the winner

of that gets a million bucks.

The competition at my local store is on Saturday.

I'm sure there are gonna be a ton of people at

that thing, so I'm gonna go super early to make

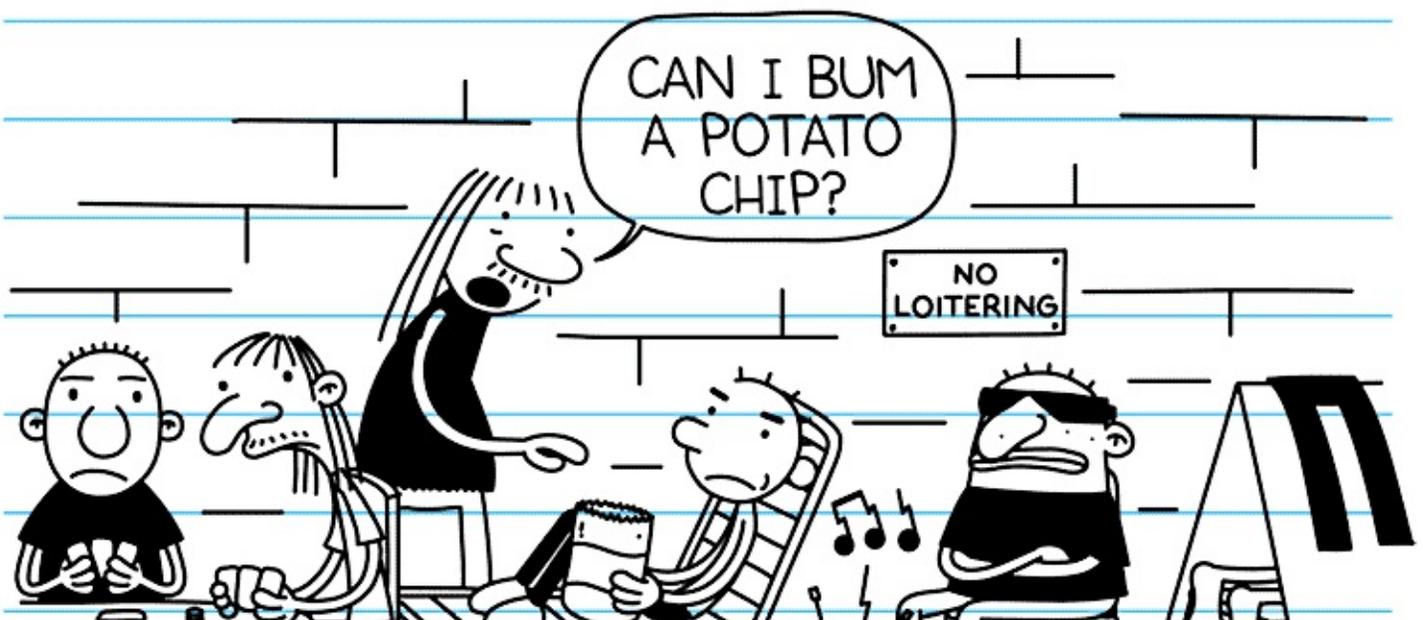
sure I get a good place in line.

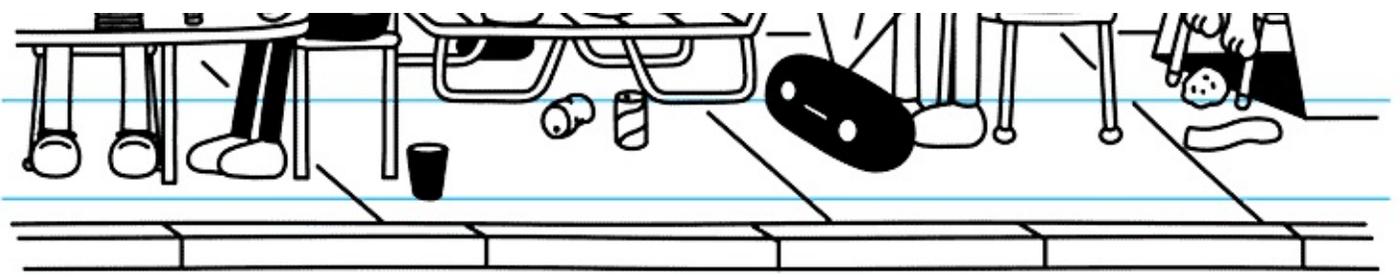
I learned that trick from Rodrick. Whenever he

wants to get tickets to a concert, he camps out

the night before. In fact, that's where he met

his band's lead singer, Bill.





Rowley and his dad go camping all the time, so

I knew he had a tent. I called Rowley and told

him about the video game contest and how we

could win a million bucks.

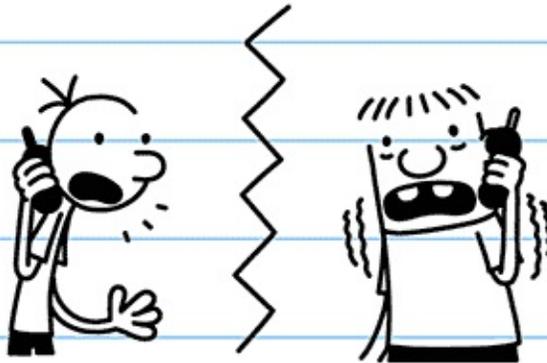
But Rowley was acting nervous on the phone. I

think he was still worried that I had electrical

superpowers or something, and the only way to

get him to calm down was to promise I wouldn't

use them on him.



Even after we were past that, Rowley didn't

seem comfortable with the campout idea. He said

his mom and dad banned him from seeing me for

the rest of the summer.

I pretty much figured that, but I had a plan

to get around it. I told Rowley that I'd tell

my parents I was going up to his house to spend

the night, and he could tell his parents he was _____
going to Collin's. _____

204



Rowley still didn't seem sure, so I told him

I'd bring him his very own box of gummy bears if

he came along, and that sold him.

Saturday

Last night we met at the top of the hill at 9:00.

Rowley brought the camping equipment and the

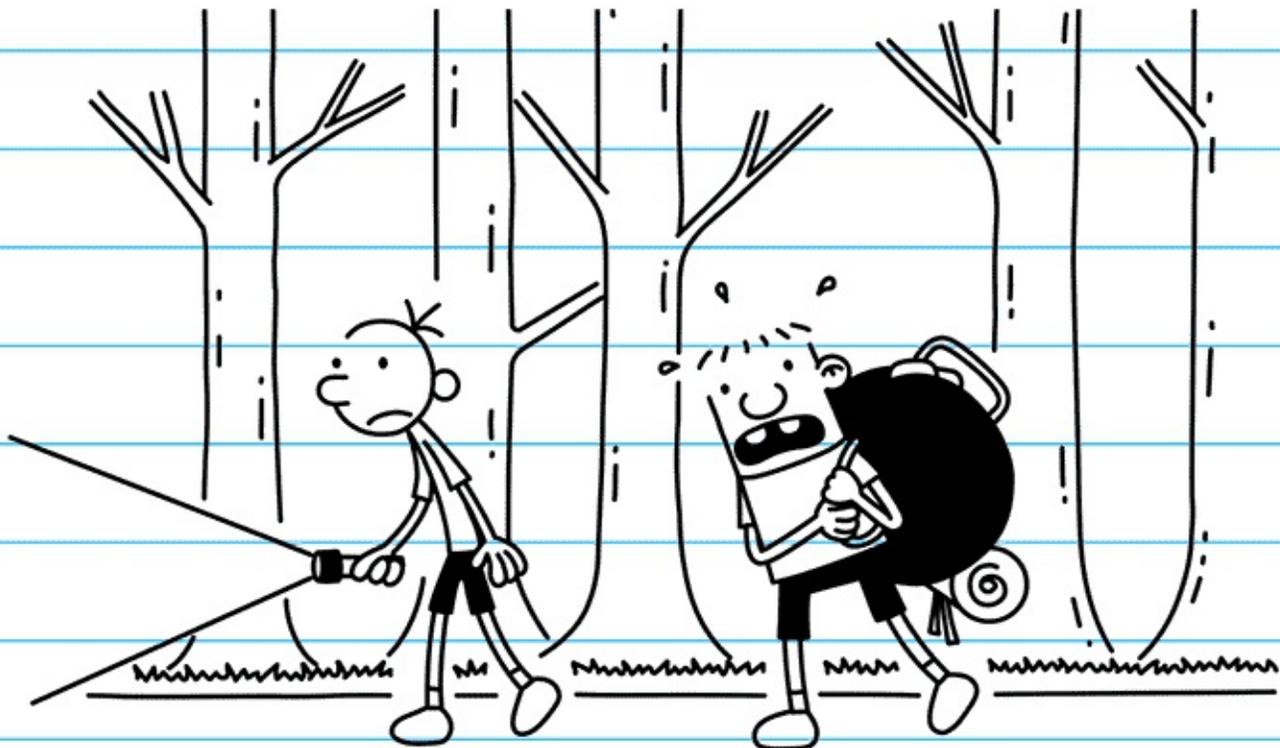
sleeping bag, and I brought the flashlight and

some chocolate energy bars.

I didn't have the gummy bears right at that

moment, but I promised Rowley I'd buy him some

the first chance I got.



When we got to the Game Hut we were the only

people there, and I couldn't believe our luck.

So we pitched our tent in front of the store

before anyone else could take our spot.



Then we watched the door to make sure no one

tried to cut in front of us.



I figured the best way to save our place in line

was to sleep in shifts. I even offered to take

the first shift and let Rowley sleep, because

that's just the kind of person I am.

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After my shift was over I woke Rowley up for

his turn, but he fell back asleep in about five

seconds. So I shook him awake and told him he

needed to stay alert.

Rowley didn't even bother trying to defend himself.



I decided it was up to me to make sure nobody

got in front of us, so I stayed up all night. I

was starting to have trouble keeping my eyes open

around 9:00 in the morning, and I ate both of

the energy bars I packed to keep myself going.

I got chocolate all over my hands, and that gave

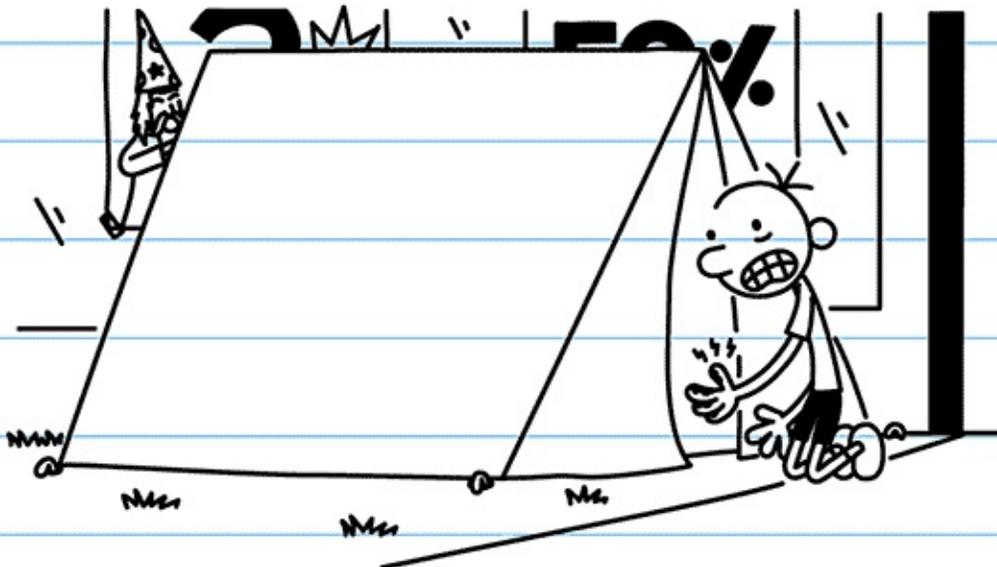
me an idea. I opened the tent flap, then slipped

my hand inside and made it crawl like a spider.

I thought it would be funny to make Rowley think it was the muddy hand. I didn't hear any noises coming from inside the tent, so I thought Rowley was still sleeping. But before I had a chance to open the flap and check, my hand got crushed to smithereens.



I pulled my hand out of the tent, and my thumb was already starting to turn purple.



I was really ticked off at Rowley. Not because

he smashed my hand with a mallet, but because

he thought that it could stop the muddy hand.

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Any fool knows you have to either use fire or acid

to stop a muddy hand. All a mallet's gonna do is

make it angry.

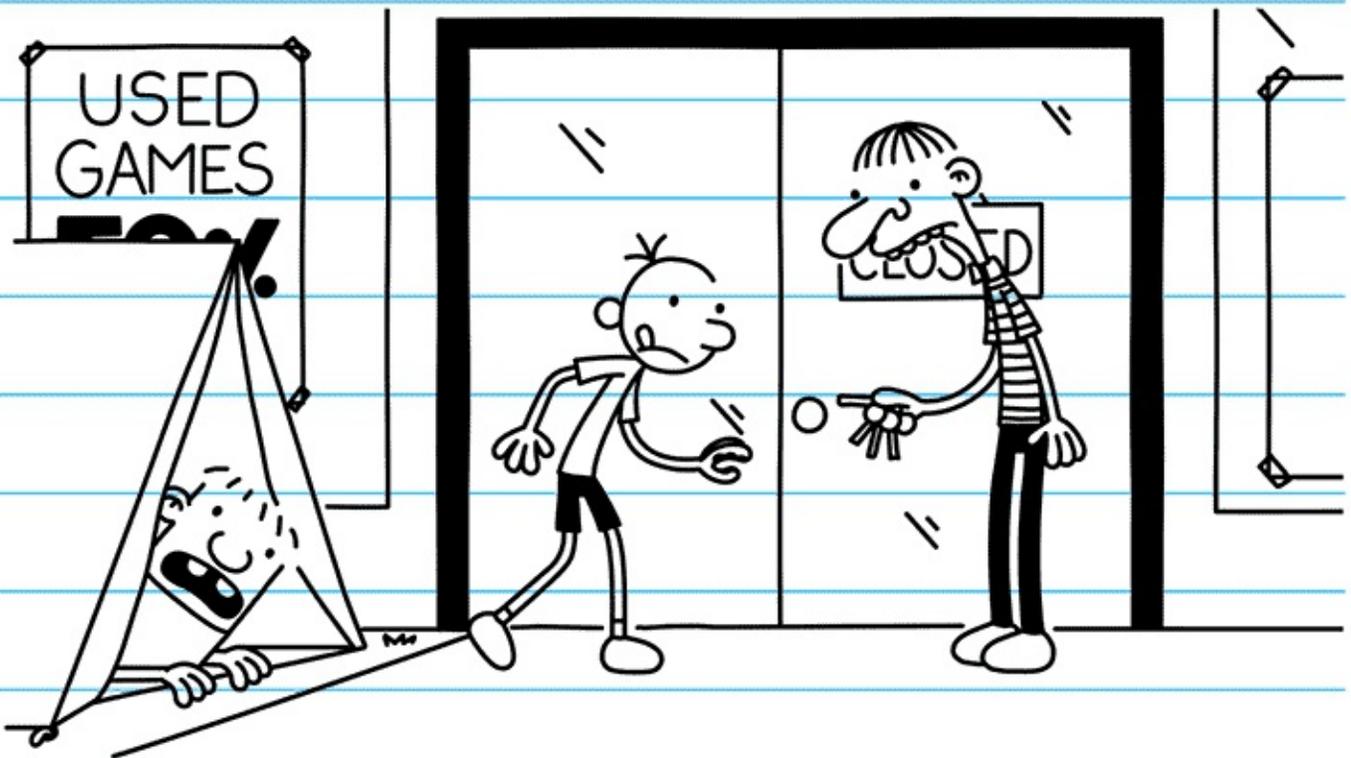
I was about to give Rowley a piece of my mind,

but right then the guy from the Game Hut came

and opened the front door. I tried to ignore

the throbbing pain in my thumb and focus on the

reason we came here.



The Game Hut guy wanted to know why we

had a tent in front of the store, so I told

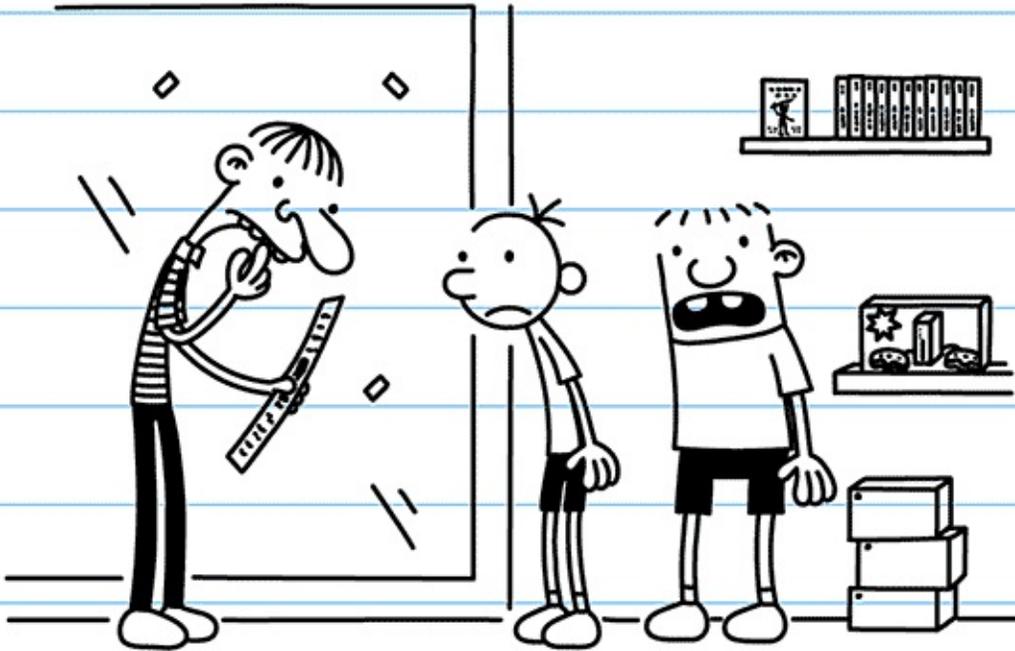
him we were there to compete in the video

game contest. But he didn't even know what

I was talking about.

So I had to show him the poster from the window

to get him up to speed.



The clerk said the store wasn't really set up for

a video game tournament but since there were

only two of us, maybe we could just play each

other in the back room.

I was a little irritated at first, but then I realized

all I needed to do to win this tournament was to

beat Rowley. So the clerk set us up to play a

death match in Twisted Wizard. I almost felt

sorry for Rowley, because I'm pretty much an

expert at that game. But when we started to

play, I realized my thumb was so messed up I _____

couldn't press the buttons on the controller. _____

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All I could do was run around in circles while

Rowley shot me over and over.



Rowley ended up beating me 15-0. The clerk

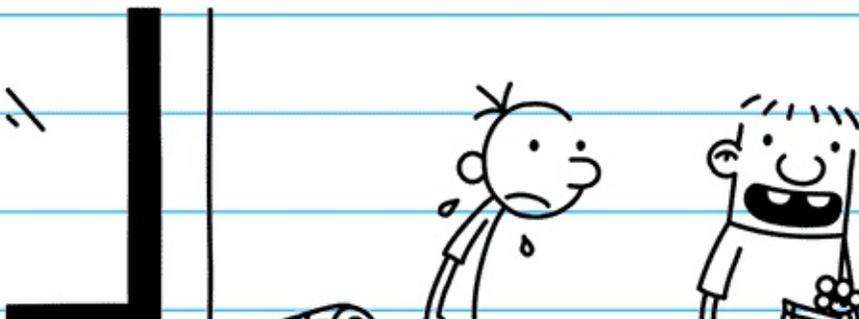
told Rowley he won the competition and had a

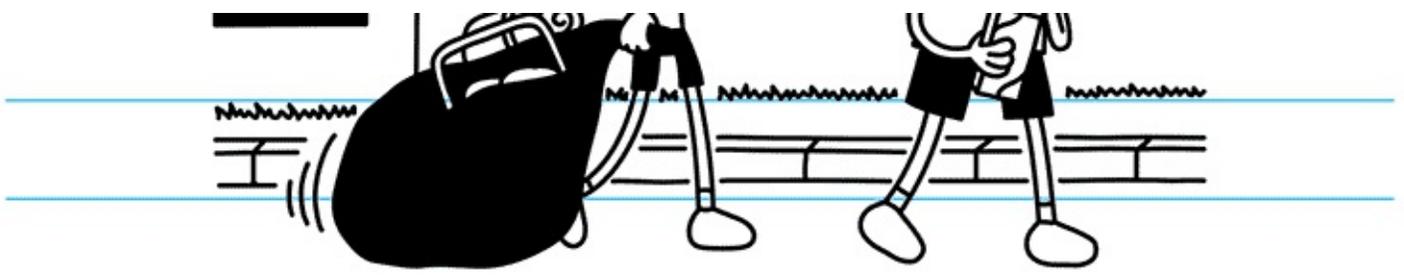
choice: He could either fill out the paperwork to

go to the national tournament, or he could get a

giant box of chocolate-covered raisins.

I'll bet you can guess which one Rowley picked.

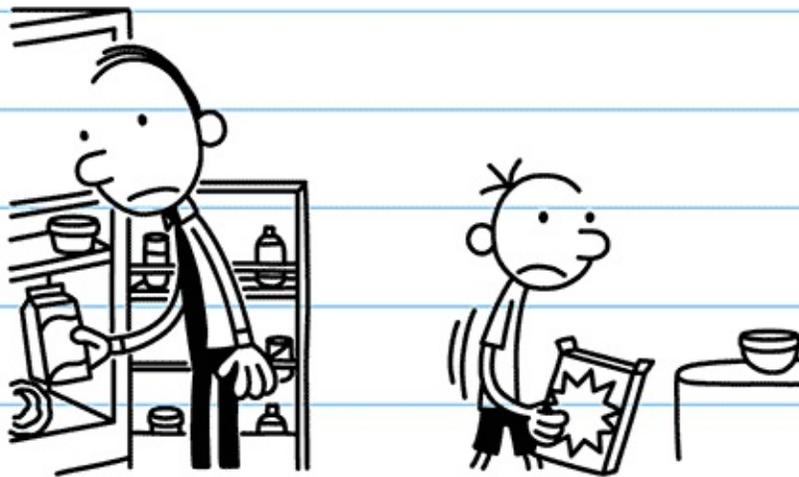




Sunday

You know, I should have just stuck with my original plan and stayed inside this summer, because all my trouble started the minute I stepped out of the house.

I haven't seen Rowley since he stole that video game competition from me, and Dad hasn't spoken to me since I almost got him arrested.



But I think things started to turn around for me and Dad today. You remember that article about how “Li’l Cutie” was being passed on from the father to his son?

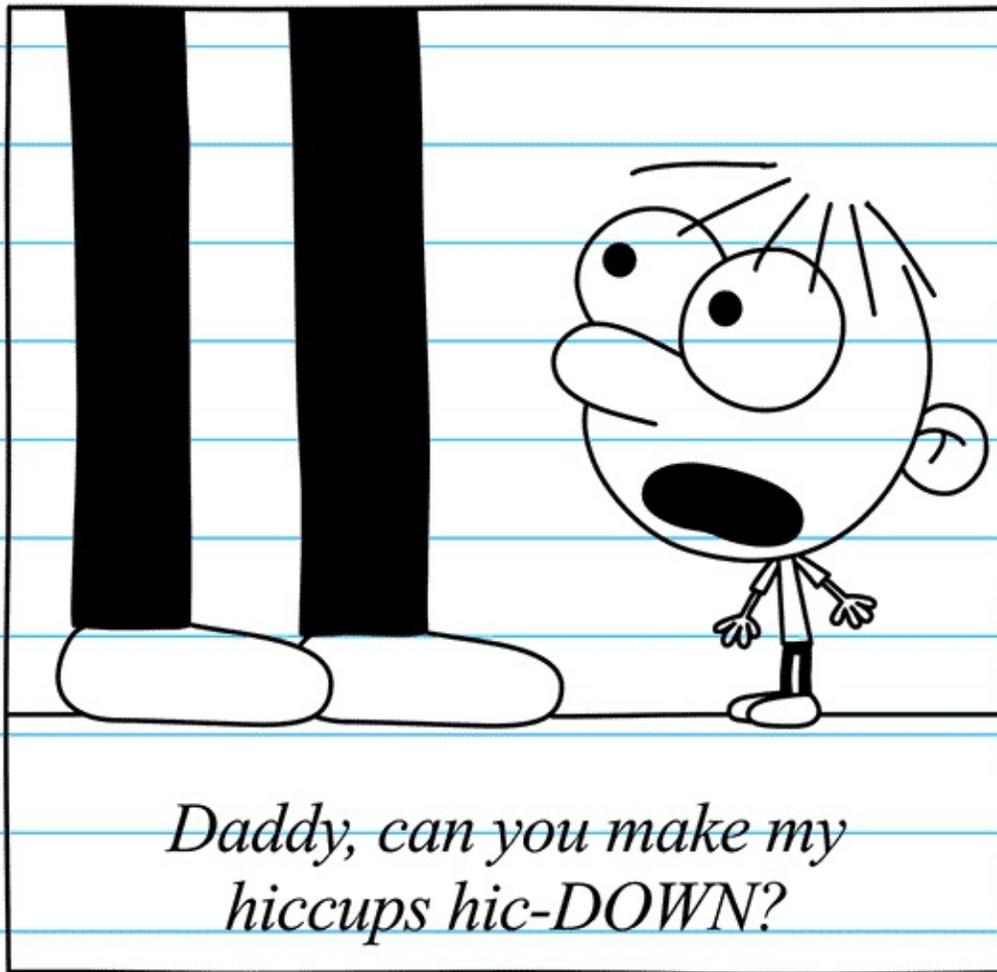
Well, the son's first comic came out in the paper

today, and it looks like the new “Li’l Cutie” is

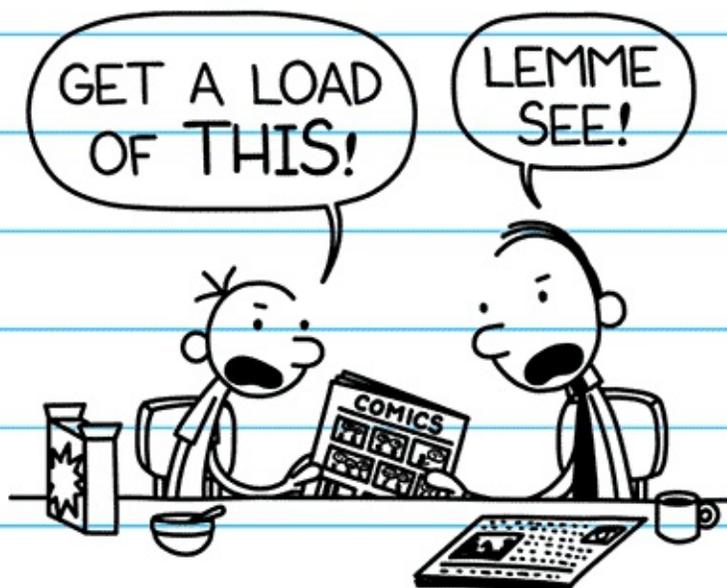
gonna be even worse than the original.

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I showed Dad, and he agreed with me.



That's when I realized things are gonna be ok

between the two of us. Me and Dad might not

agree on everything, but at least we agree on

the important stuff.

I guess some people would say that hating a comic

is a pretty flimsy foundation for a relationship,

but the truth is me and Dad hate lots of the

same things.

Me and Dad might not have one of those close

father-son relationships, but that's fine with

me. I've learned that there is such a thing as

too close.



I realized vacation was pretty much over when

Mom finished up with her photo album today. I

flipped through it, and to be honest with you, I

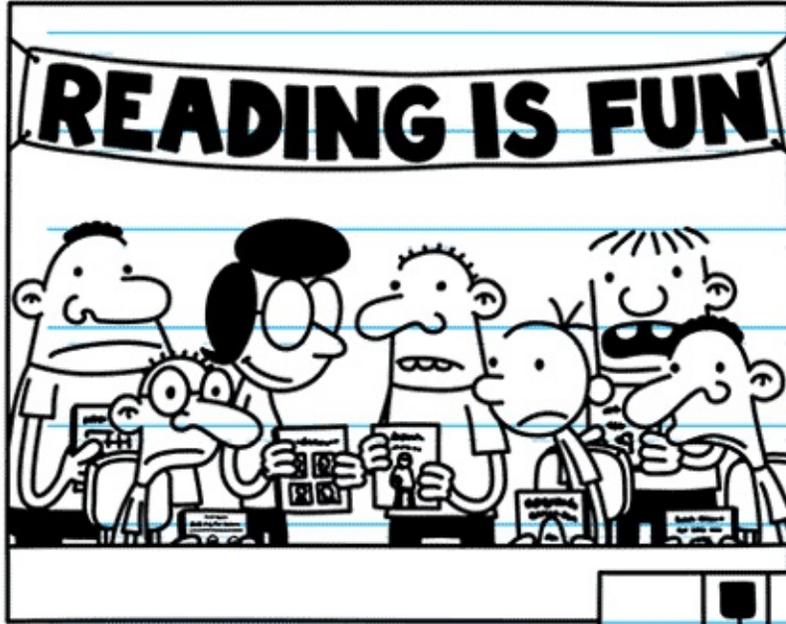
don't think it was a very accurate record of our

summer. But I guess the person who takes the

pictures is the one who gets to tell the story.

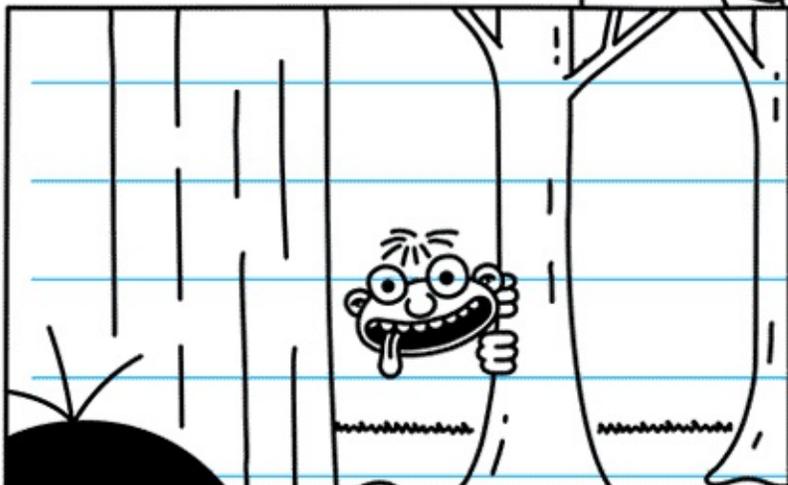
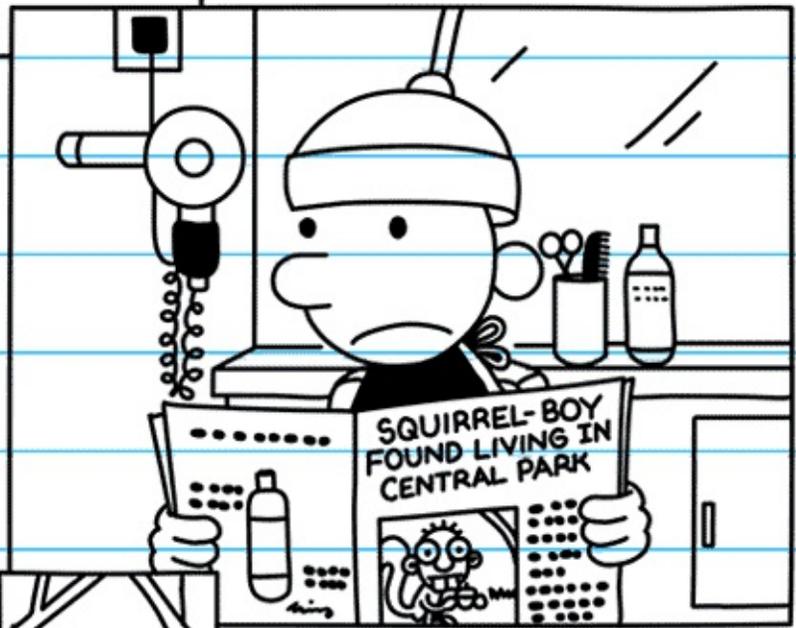
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"Best Summer Ever!"

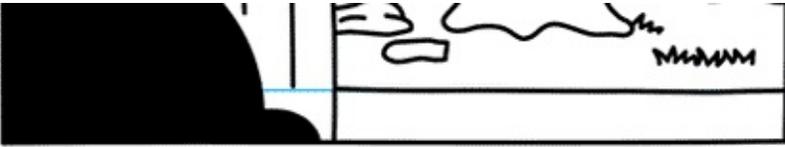


The "Reading Is Fun" gang says "no" to video games.

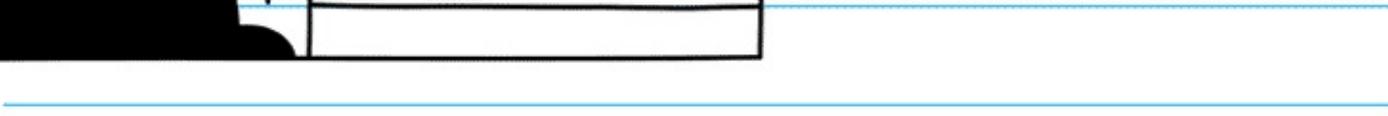
Now Gregory can't stop reading!



Gregory plays a game of hide 'n' seek with a summer pal



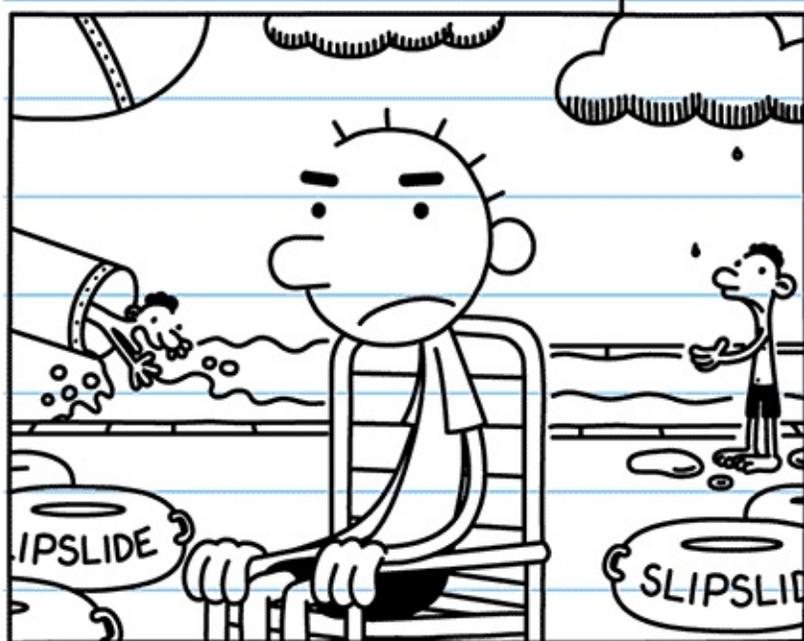
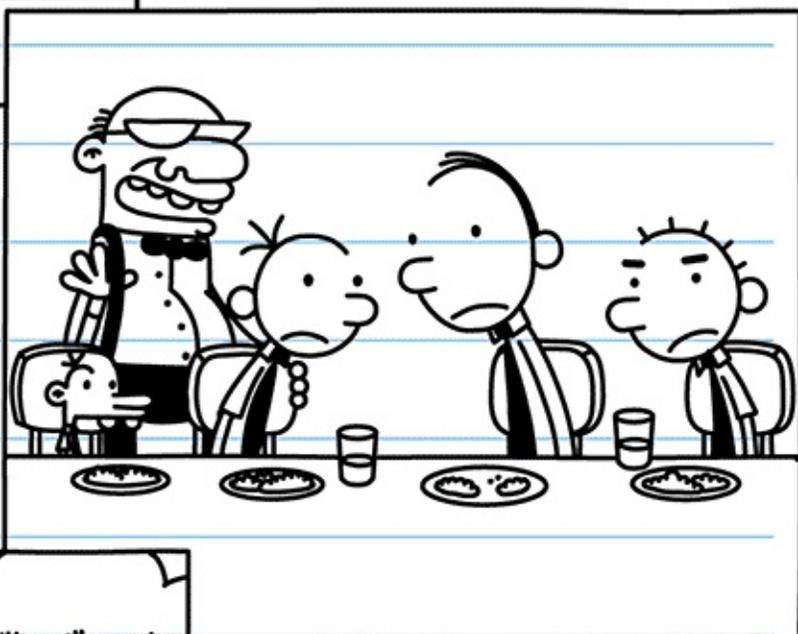
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"Just what I wanted!"

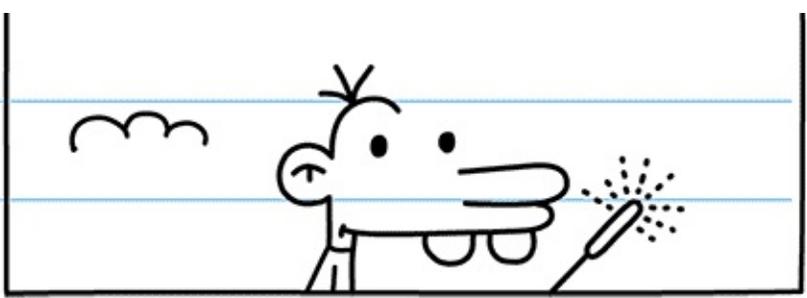
Three generations of Heffley men bond over brunch.



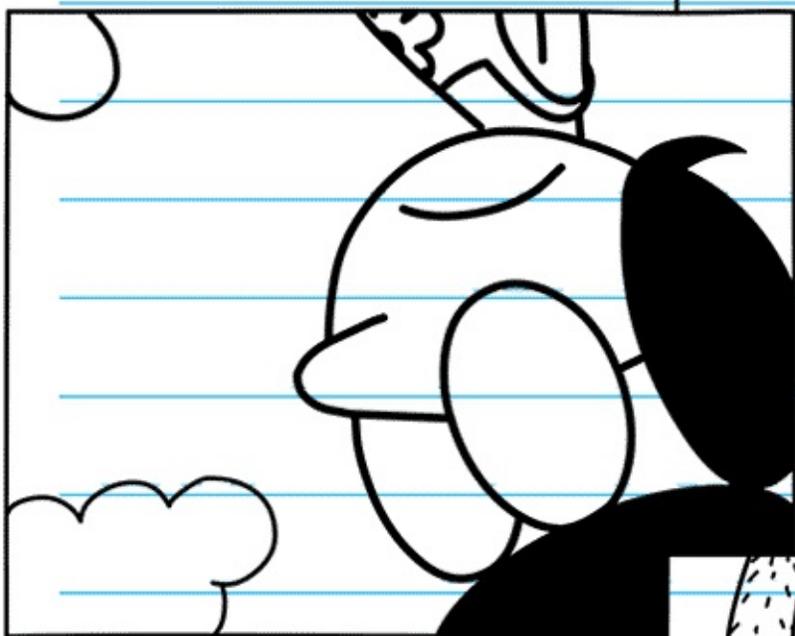
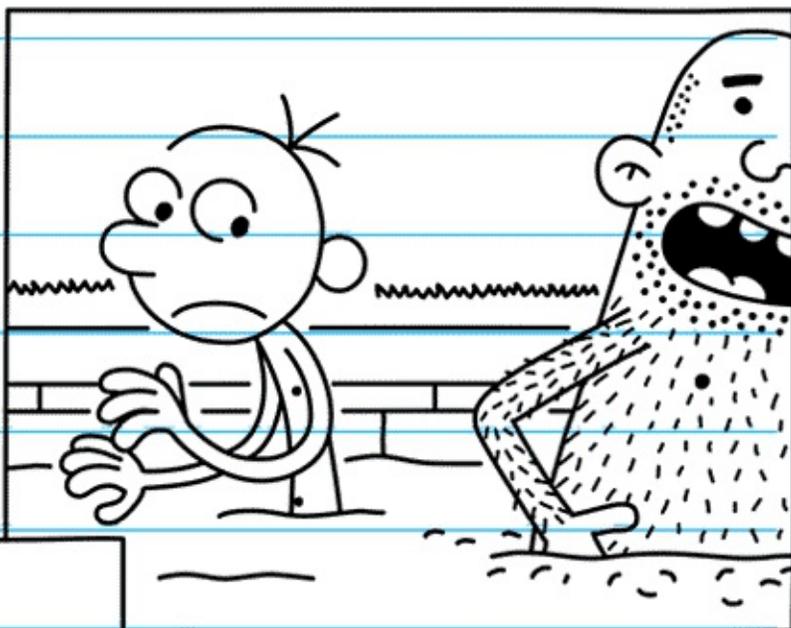
Rodrick says, "Who needs the beach?"

A magical Fourth

of July.

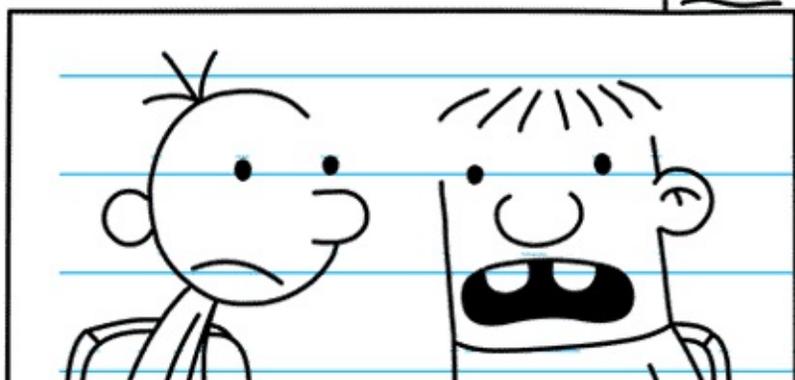
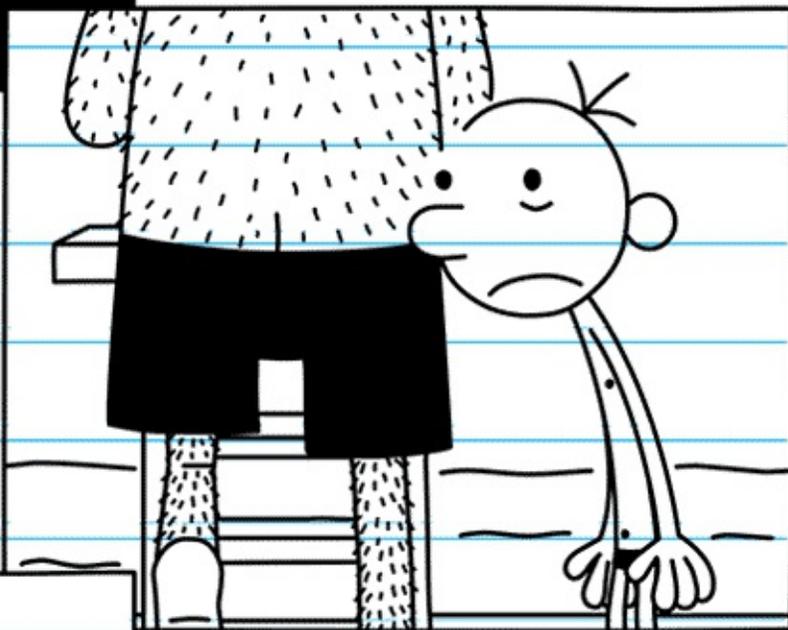


Splish, splash!
Gregory has a blast
at the pool.

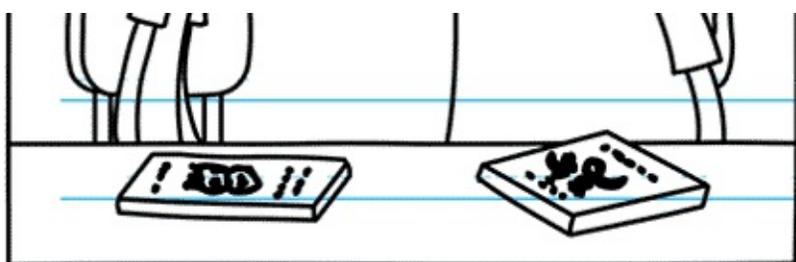


Oops! Mom gets in
the picture.

Gregory feels "cool"
hanging out with
a lifeguard pal.



Best friends!



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Jeff Kinney is an online game developer and designer, and a #1 *New York Times* bestselling author. In 2009, Jeff was named one of *Time* magazine's 100 Most Influential People in the World. He spent his childhood in the Washington, D.C., area and moved to New England in 1995. Jeff lives in

southern Massachusetts with his wife and their two sons.



It's summer vacation—the weather's great, and all the kids are having fun outside. So where's Greg Heffley? Inside his house, playing video games with the shades drawn.

Greg, a self-confessed "indoor person," is living out his ultimate summer fantasy: no responsibilities and no rules. But Greg's mom has a different vision for an ideal summer . . . one packed with outdoor activities and "family togetherness."

Whose vision will win out? Or will a new addition to the Heffley family change everything?

**Praise for the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series—
the *USA Today*, *Publishers Weekly*, *Wall Street Journal*,
and #1 *New York Times* bestsellers:**

★ "Genre-busting series . . . spot-on humor and winning formula."

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

"*Diary of a Wimpy Kid* is bent on world domination."

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—*Washington Post*

"Has taken the word 'reluctant' out of 'reluctant readers.'"

—*USA Today*

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