

DIARY of a Wimpy Kid

CABIN FEVER



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.

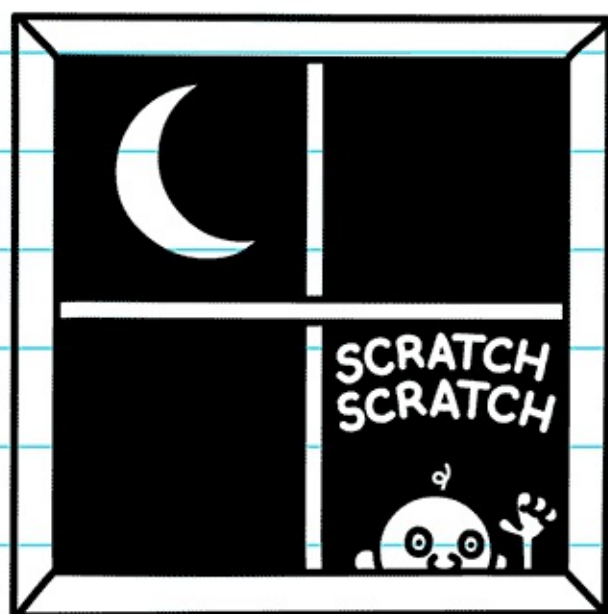
When I read my first e-book on a Kindle, I was amazed at
the possibilities. Carrying a whole library around with me on a
device I could fit in the palm of my hand? Amazing.

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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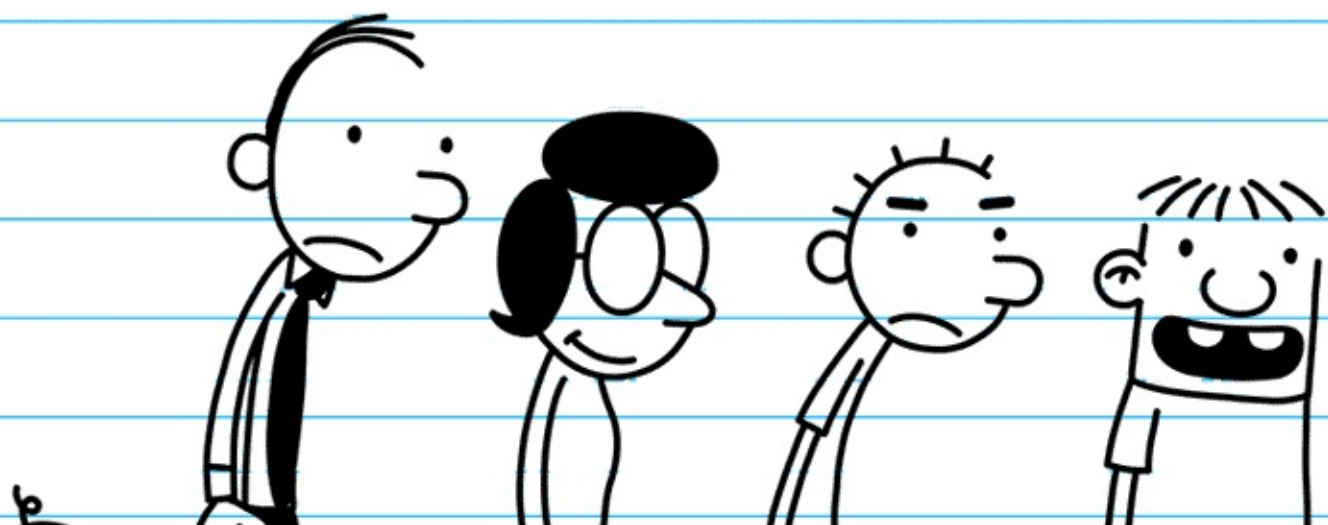
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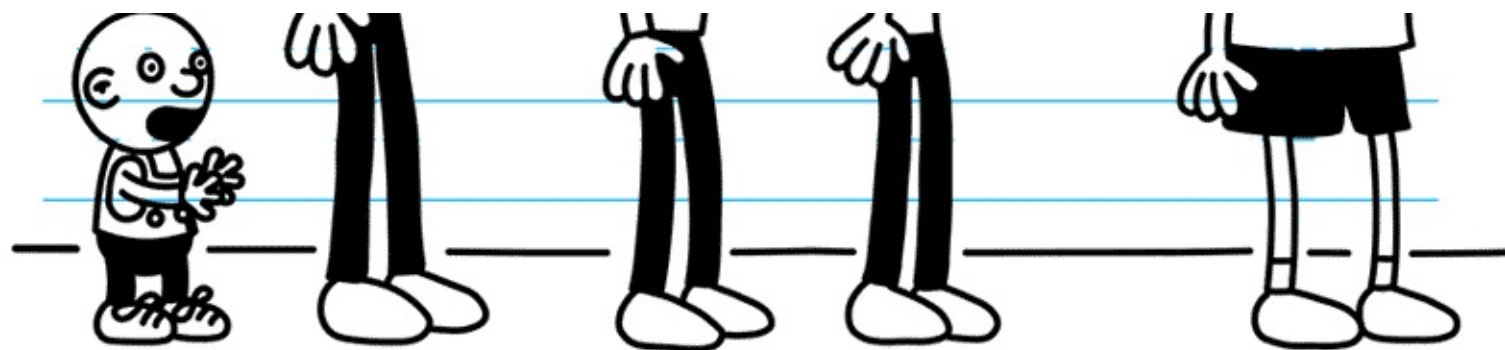
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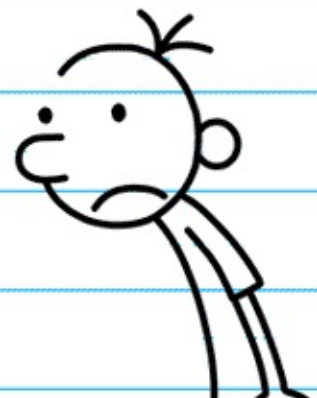




DIARY of a Wimpy Kid

CABIN FEVER

by Jeff Kinney





AMULET BOOKS

New York



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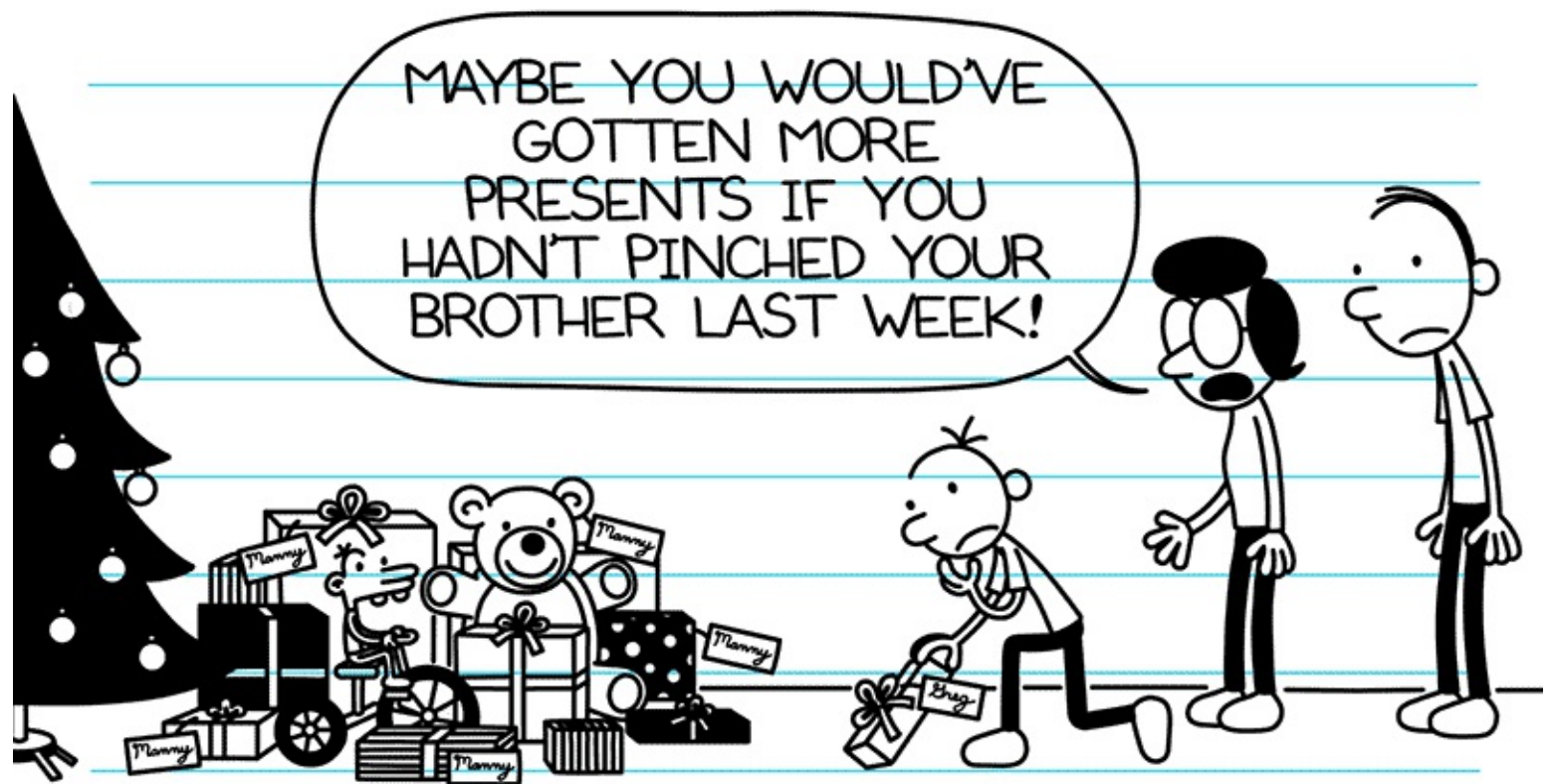
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TO TICHINO

Saturday

Most people look forward to the holidays, but the stretch between Thanksgiving and Christmas just makes me a nervous wreck. If you make a mistake in the first eleven months of the year, it's no big deal. But if you do something wrong during the holiday season, you're gonna pay for it.

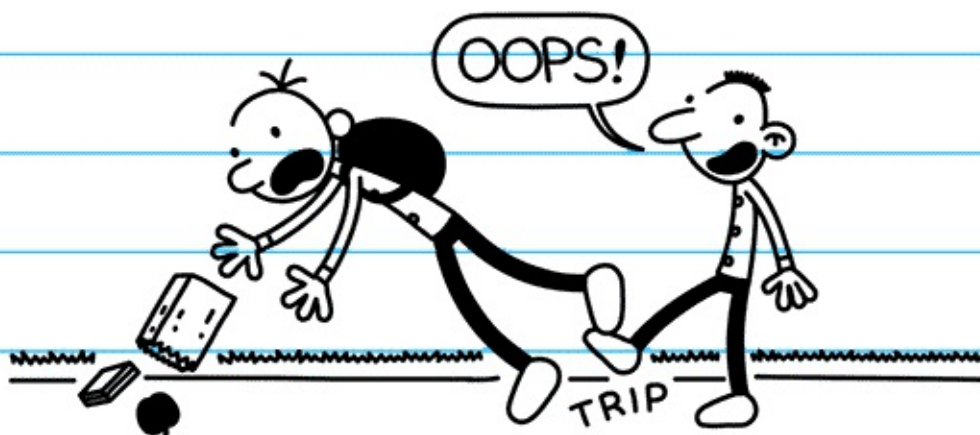


It's too much pressure to be on your best behavior for a whole month. The most I can really handle is six or seven days in a row. So if they moved

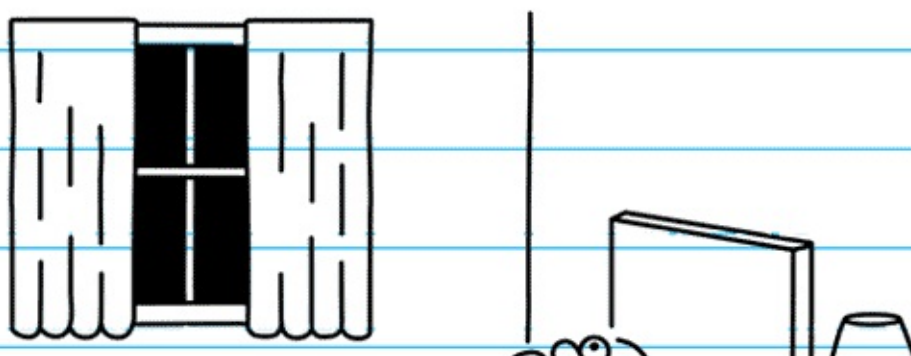
Thanksgiving to the week before Christmas, it

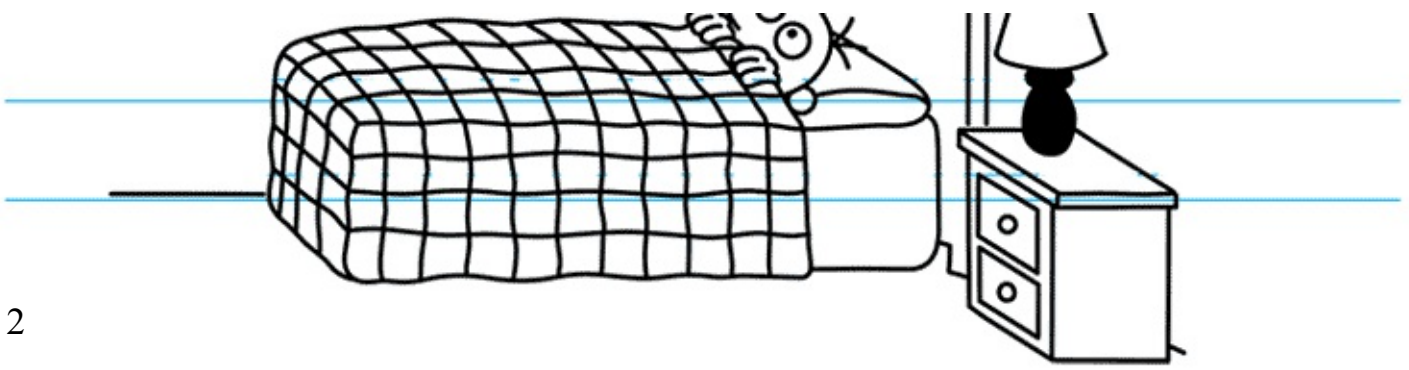
would be fine by me.

Kids whose families don't celebrate Christmas are lucky because they don't have to stress out whenever they do something wrong at this time of year. In fact, I have a few friends in that category who I think act a little extra jerky around now just because they can.



The thing that REALLY makes me nervous is this whole Santa issue. The fact that he can see you when you're sleeping and knows when you're awake really creeps me out. So I've started wearing sweatpants to bed because I really don't need Santa seeing me in my underwear.





I'm not really convinced that Santa has the time to
keep an eye on you twenty-four hours a day anyway.
I figure he can only check in on each kid once or
twice a year for a few seconds—and with my luck,
that happens at the most embarrassing moments.



If Santa really DOES see everything you do,
then I could be in trouble. So when I write him,
I don't say what I want for Christmas and all
that. I use my letters to paint myself in the best
possible light.

Dear Santa,
I did not throw a crab apple
at Mrs. Taylor's cat, even
though it might've looked

that way from a distance.

Sincerely,

Greg Heffley

Then there's this "Naughty or Nice" list they're

always talking about. You hear about it, but

you never actually get to SEE it, so it's up to

grown-ups to tell you where you stand at any

given moment. And something about that just

doesn't seem right.



I kind of wonder how accurate the list really is

anyway. There's a kid named Jared Pyle who lives

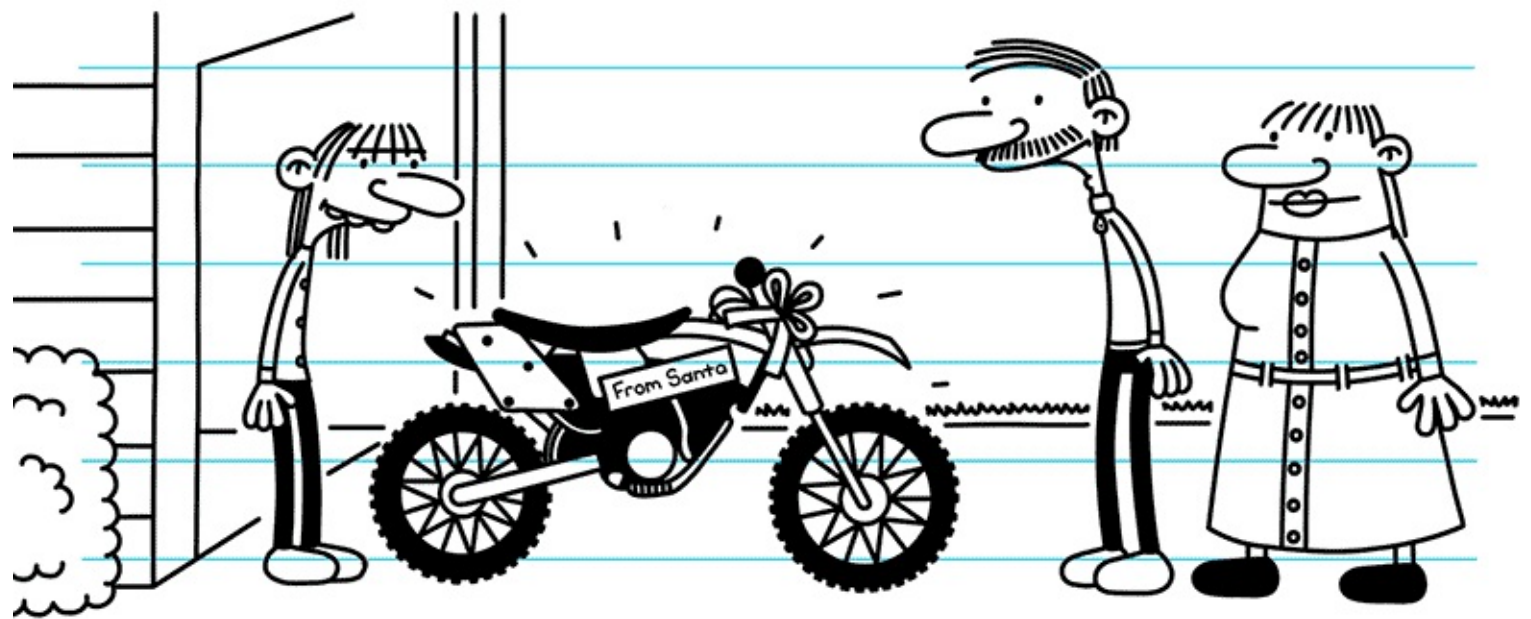
up the street from me, and if there's ANYONE

who deserves to be on the "Naughty" list,

it's him. But last year he got a dirt bike for

Christmas, so don't even ask me WHAT Santa was

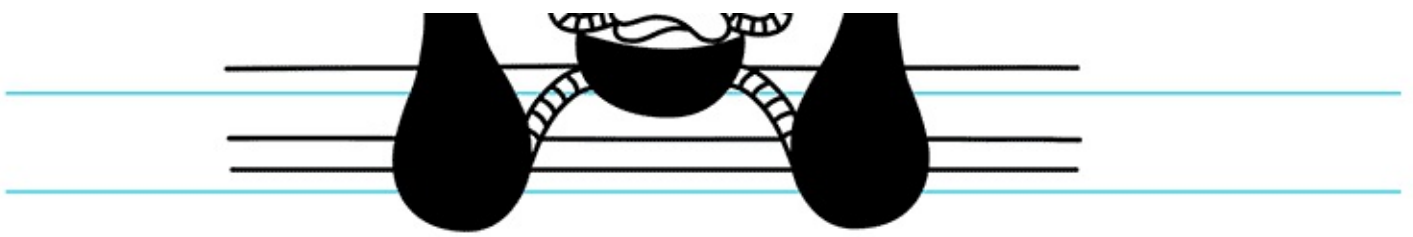
thinking on THAT one.



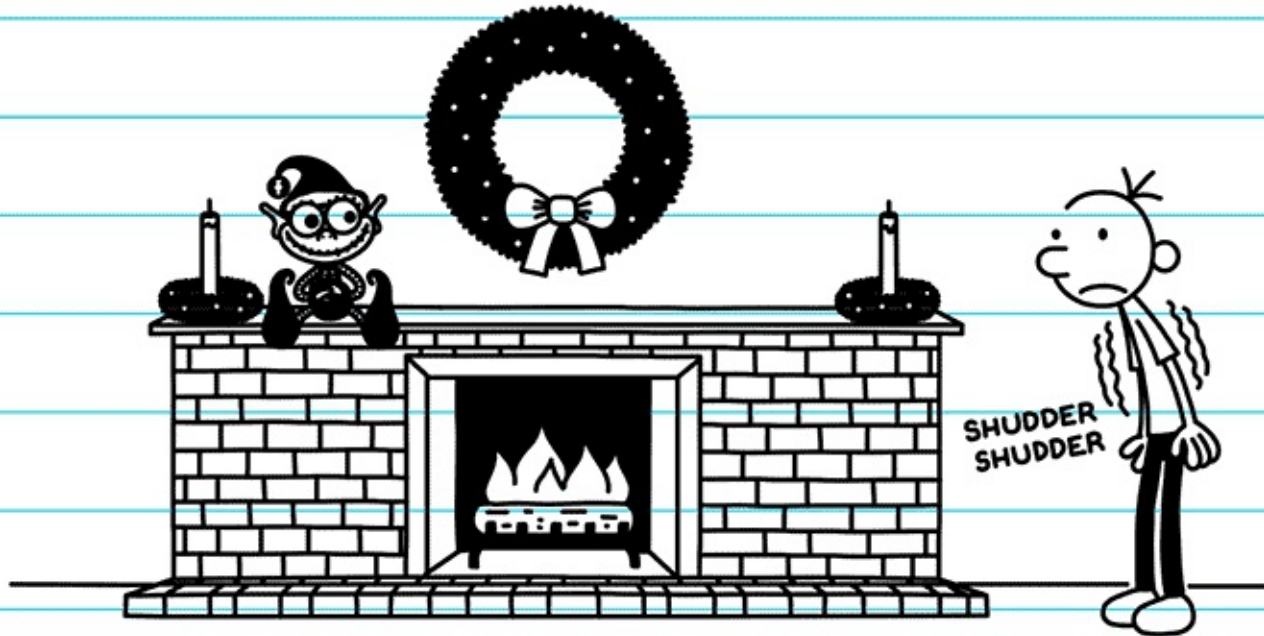
It's not just Santa I've got to worry about,
either. Last year when Mom was going through
some old boxes, she found a homemade doll from
her childhood.

Mom said the doll is called "Santa's Scout" and
that his job is to watch how kids behave and then
report back to Santa at the North Pole.

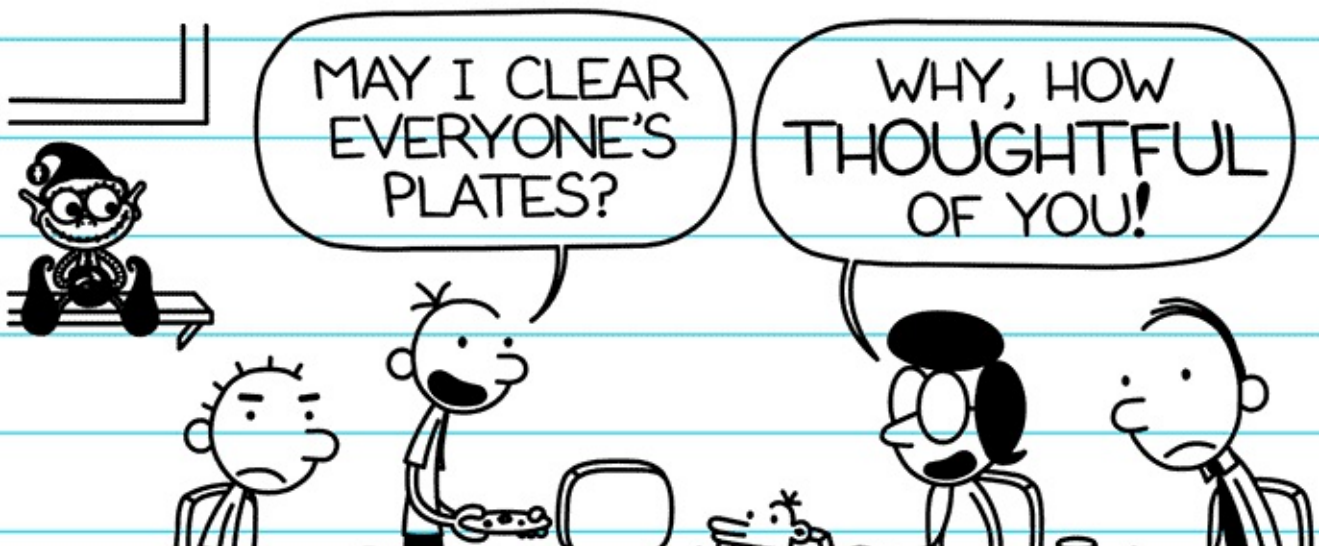




Well, I'm not a fan of that idea. First of all, I think you have a right to privacy in your own home. And second, Santa's Scout gives me the willies.



I don't really buy the idea that this doll is feeding Santa information, but just in case, I try to be extra good whenever I'm in the same room as Santa's Scout.





But it probably doesn't matter anyway, because

my older brother, Rodrick, is constantly feeding

Santa's Scout bad information about me.

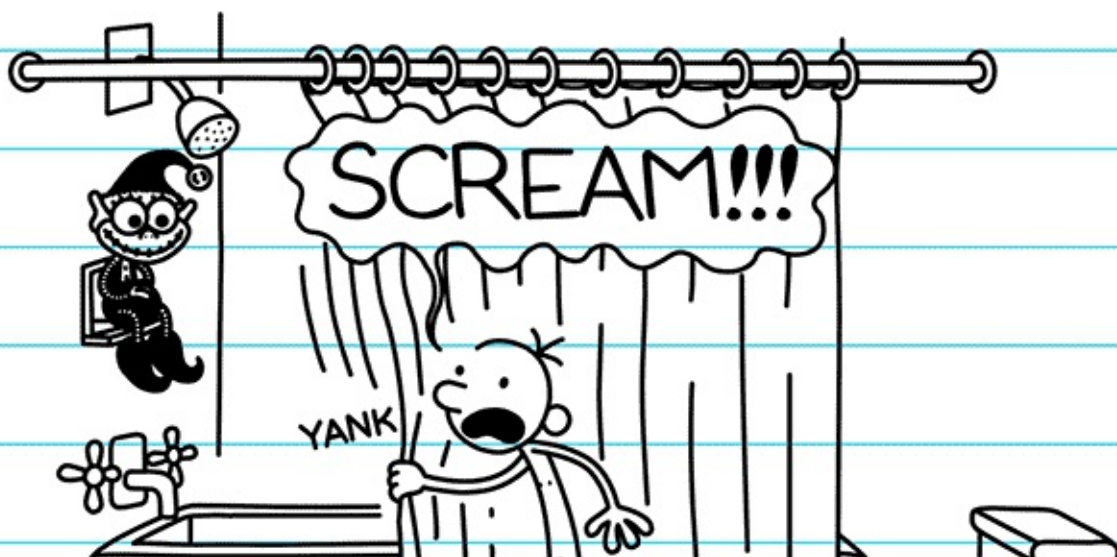


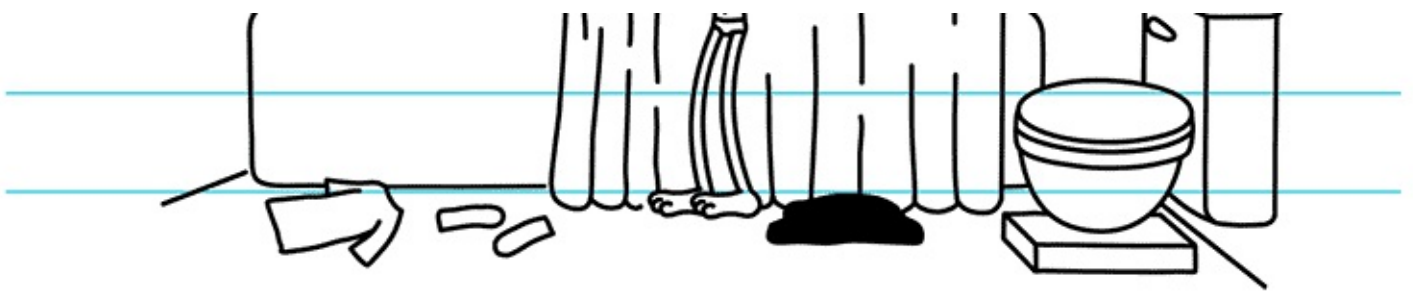
Every morning when I wake up, Santa's Scout is in

a new place, which I guess is supposed to prove that

he traveled to the North Pole overnight. But I'm

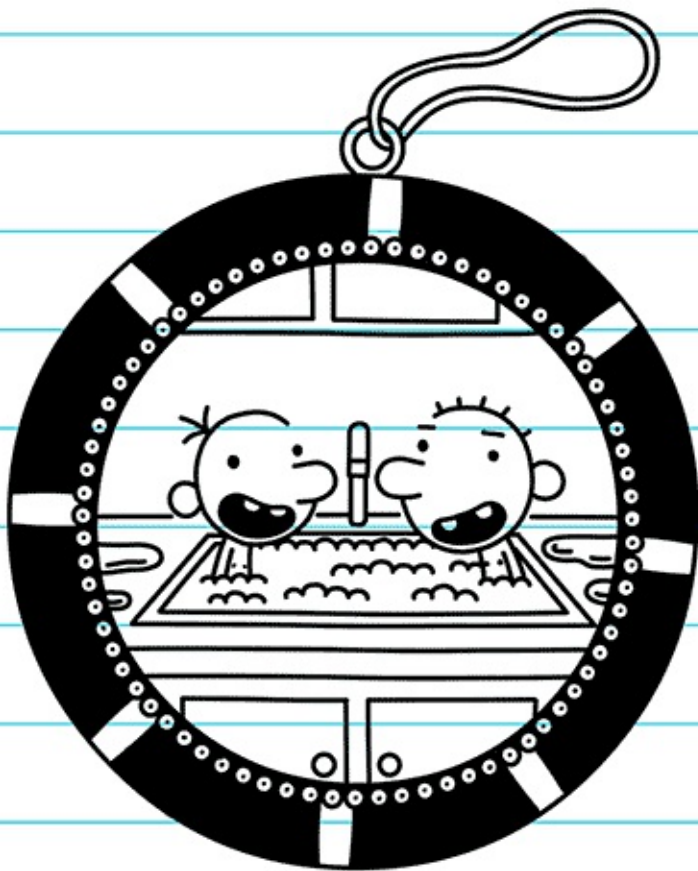
starting to wonder if it's really Rodrick who moves him.





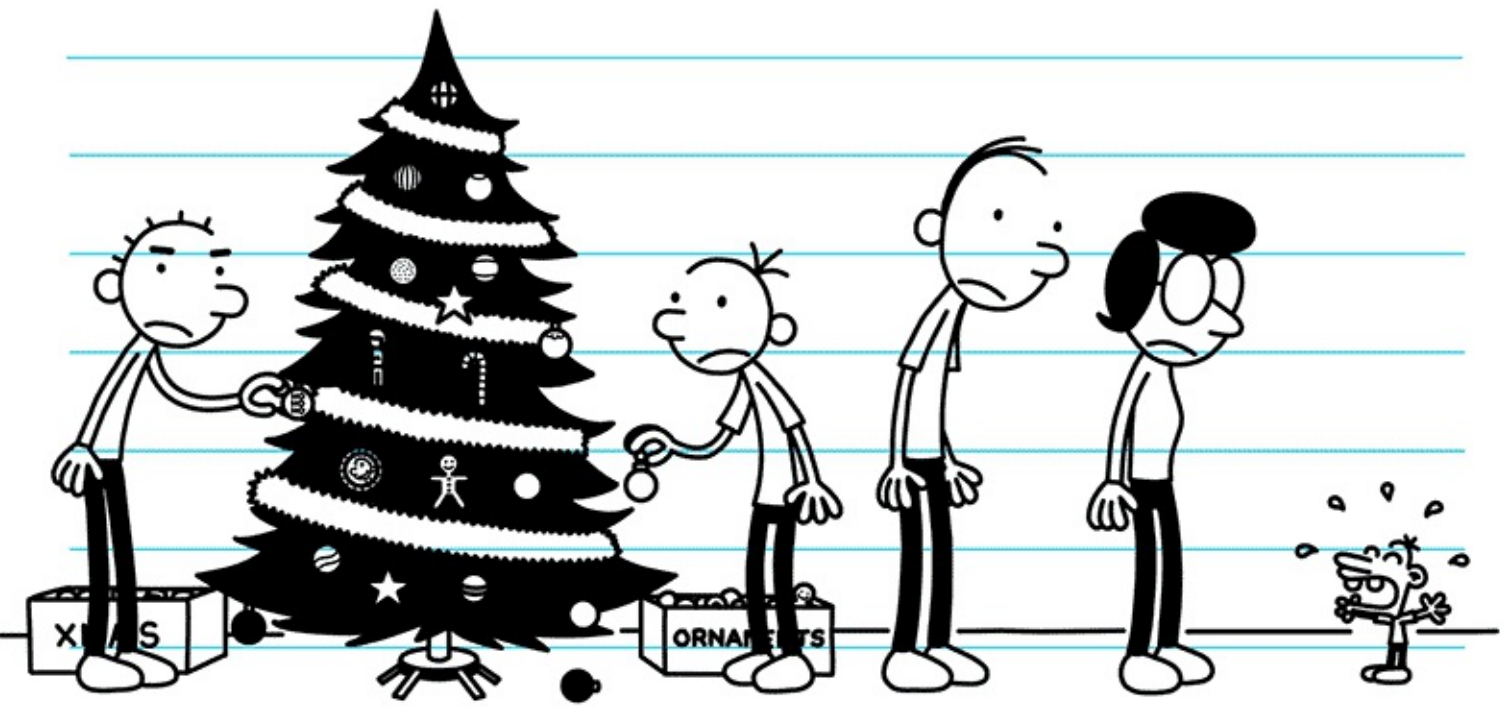
Sunday

Today we took all our Christmas decorations out of the storage room in the basement. We have boxes full of ornaments, and some of them are pretty old. There's one with a picture of me and Rodrick taking a bath in the sink that's really embarrassing, but Mom won't let me throw it out.



We put up the tree in the living room and started hanging ornaments on it. My little brother, Manny, was taking a nap upstairs, and when he woke up and found out we were decorating the

tree without him, he had a total meltdown.



The reason Manny was so upset was because
someone hung his favorite ornament, this candy
cane he really likes. So Mom took it off the tree
and handed it to Manny to hang up himself.



But Manny wanted his ornament to be the
FIRST one on the tree, so that meant we had
to take all the decorations down, just so he could

get his way.

And that's just the kind of thing that happens

in my house every single day.



Mom hasn't started to use the threat of Santa

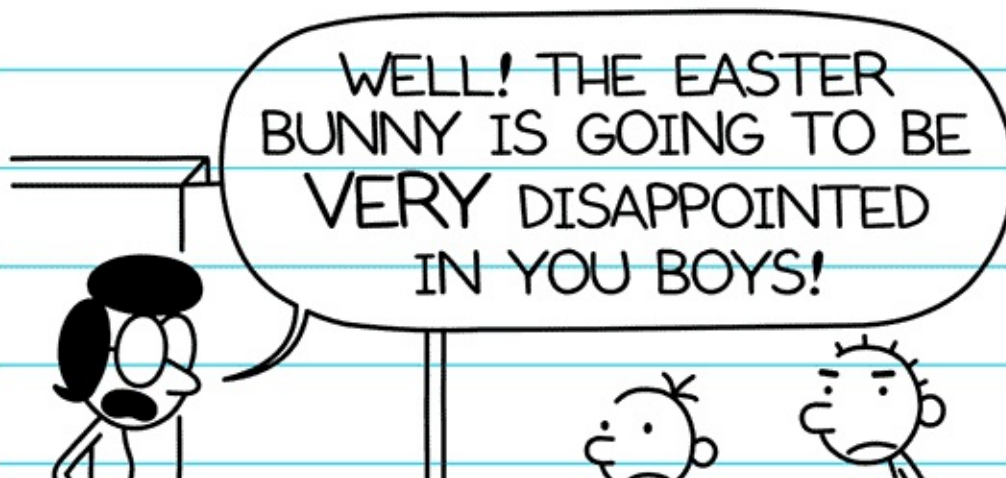
as a way of getting Manny to behave, but I'm

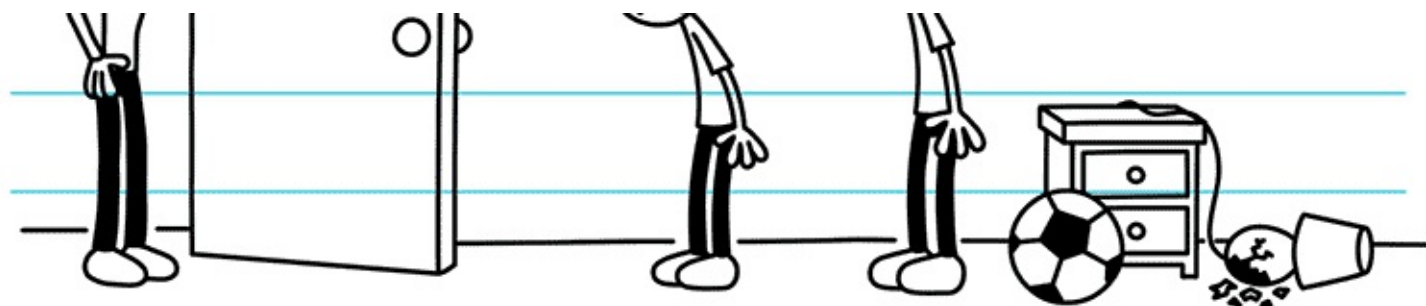
sure she will soon. I don't think it's such a good

strategy for keeping us in line, though. Because

the second Christmas is over, Mom doesn't have

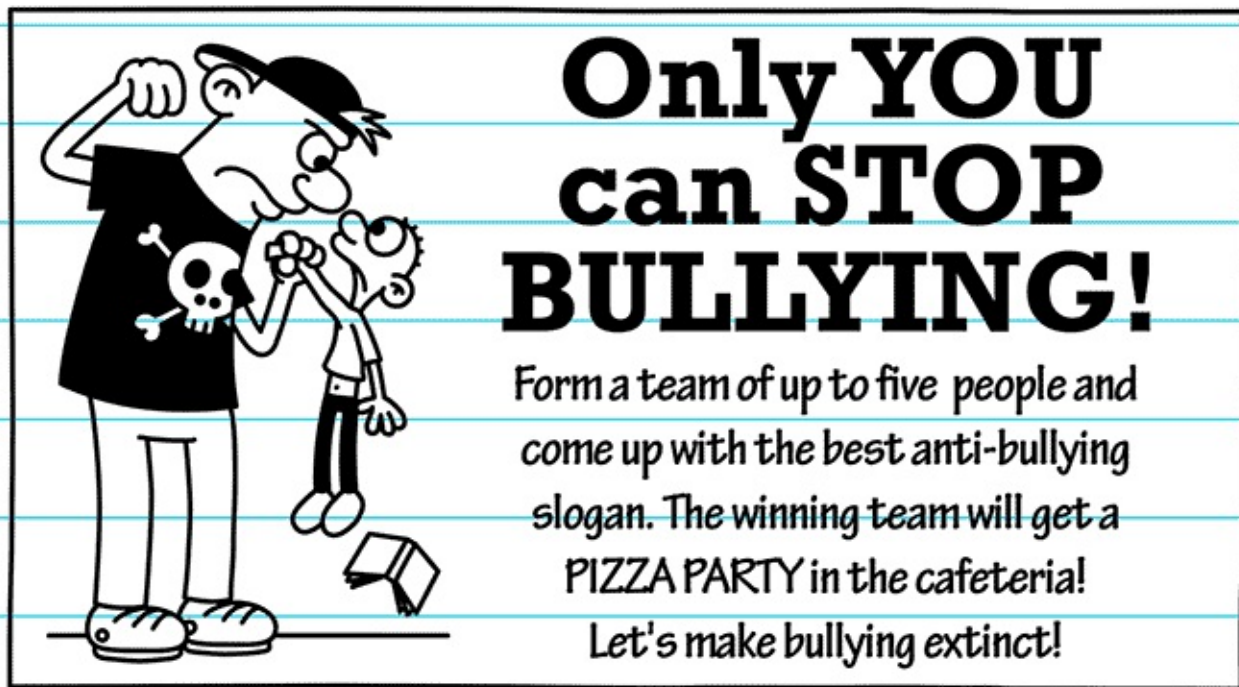
any real leverage.





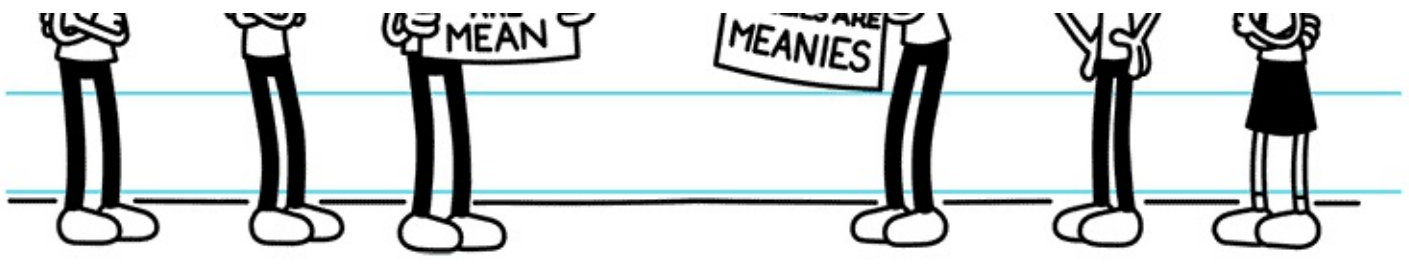
Monday

Right before Thanksgiving break, there was a contest at school to see who could come up with the best anti-bullying slogan, and the grand prize was a pizza party for the winning team.

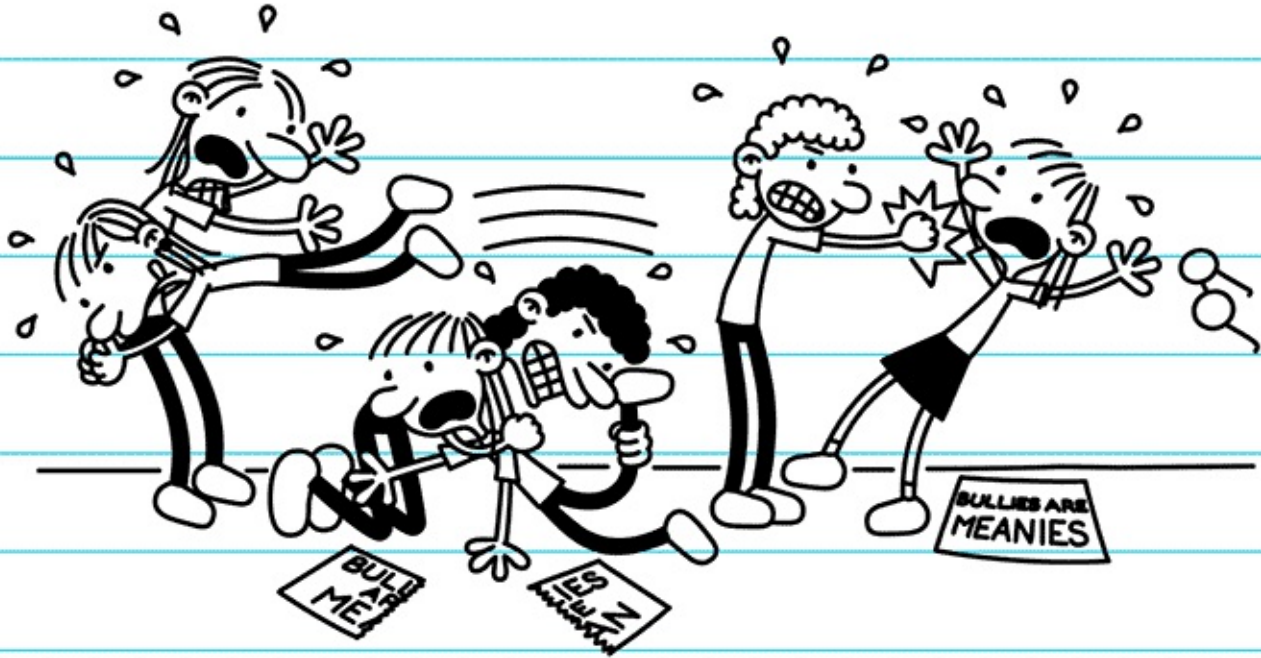


Everyone wanted that pizza party, and people didn't care WHAT they had to do to win it. Two groups of girls in my grade came up with slogans that were really similar, and each group accused the other one of stealing their idea.





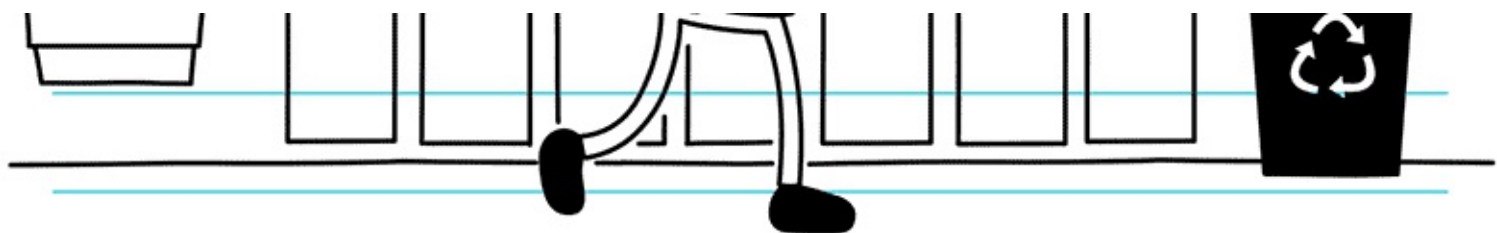
The whole situation spun out of control, and eventually the vice principal had to step in to stop it from turning into a full-scale riot.



Our school only has one legitimate bully this year anyway, and his name is Dennis Root. And with all the signs and posters everywhere, I'm pretty sure the message is getting through to him.

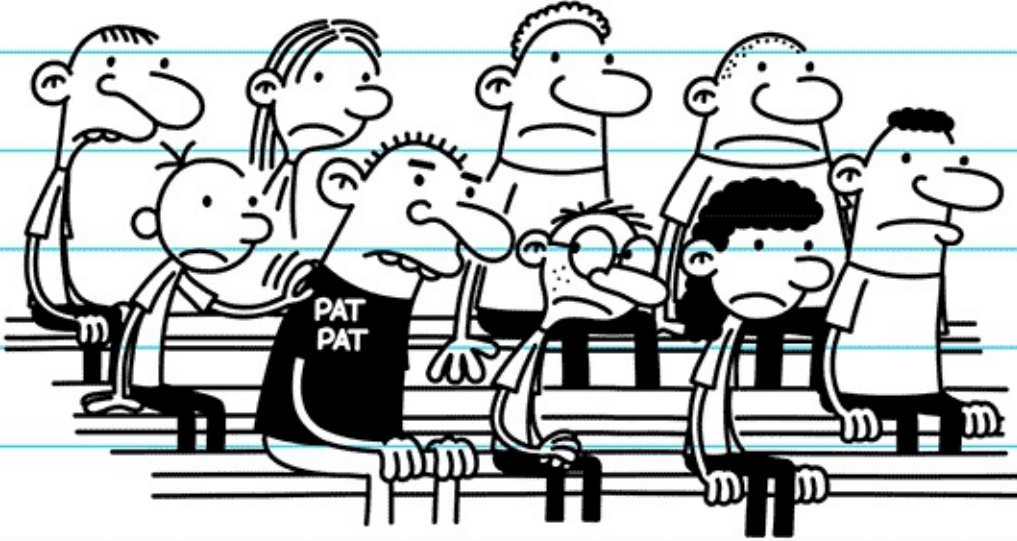
BULLDOZE  BULLYING





The day before Thanksgiving there was a big anti-bullying assembly, and everyone in the auditorium was looking at Dennis the whole time.

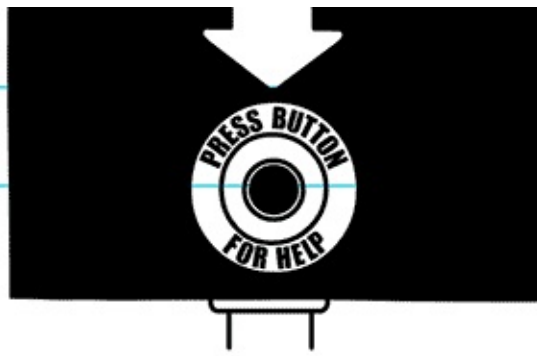
I kind of felt sorry for him, so I tried to make him feel better.



Even though Dennis is the only real bully in our school this year, we had a BUNCH of them

LAST year. People were constantly getting picked on at recess, so the teachers set up a station on the playground where kids could press a button if they needed to get a grown-up's attention.

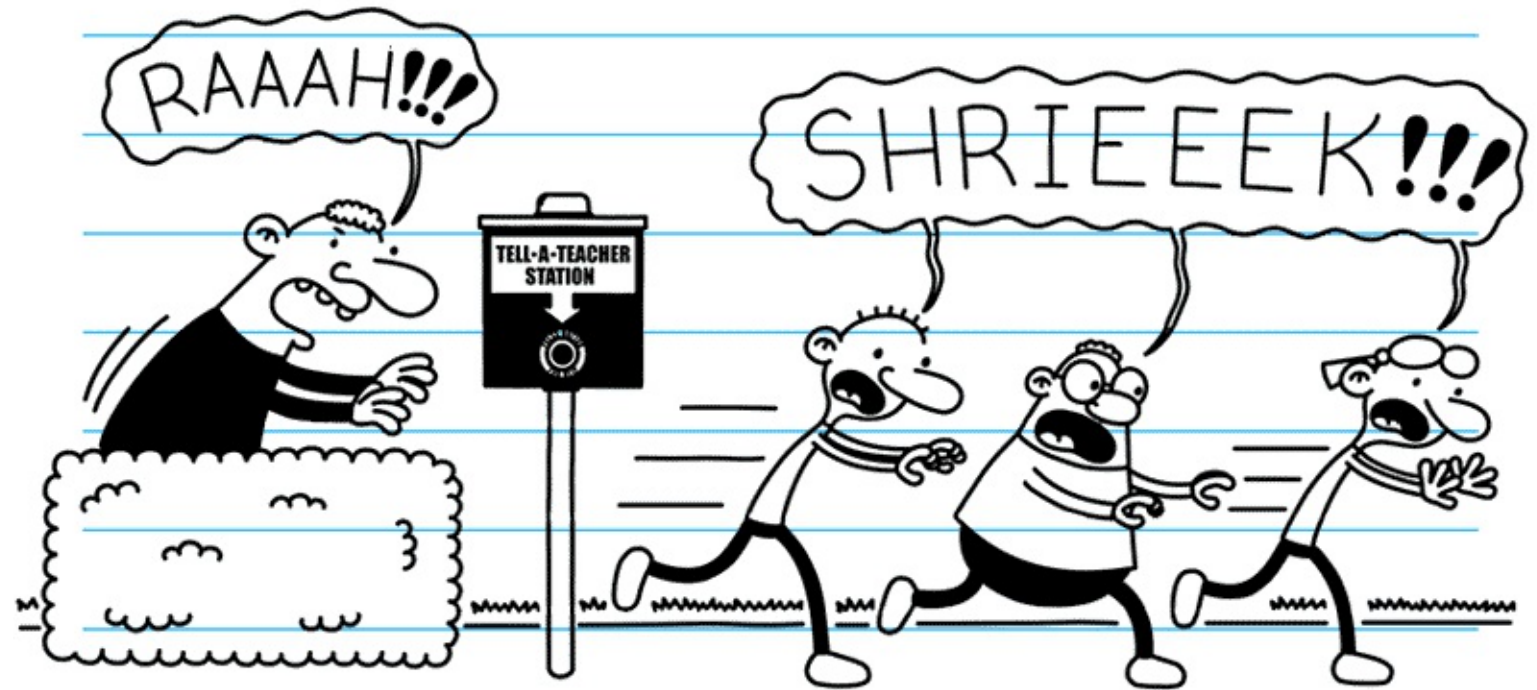




Well, the Tell-a-Teacher station just ended up

being a convenient place for the bullies to hang

out and find their next victims.



The teachers say TEASING counts as bullying,

too, but I don't think there's any way they're

gonna put a stop to THAT. Kids are always

calling each other names and that kind of thing

at my school. In fact, one of the reasons I try

to stay under the radar is because I don't want

to end up getting stuck with a nickname like

Cody Johnson did.

In kindergarten Cody stepped in some dog poop

at recess, and ever since then people have called

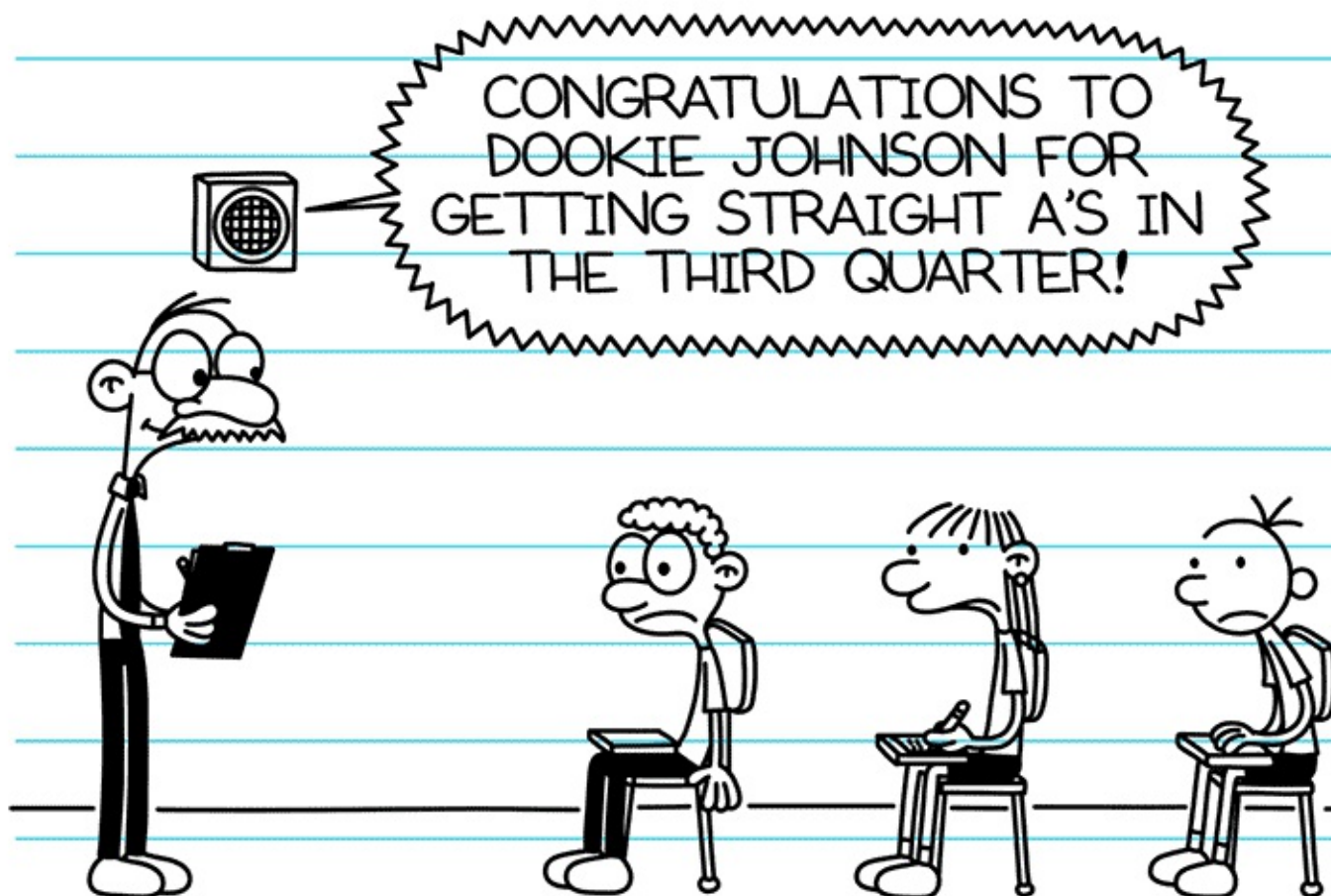
him “Dookie.”



And I'm not just talking about the kids, either.

I'm talking about the teachers and even the

PRINCIPAL.



I'll tell you this: If I ever get a nickname like

Dookie, I'll move to a different town.

But what would probably happen is that someone
from my OLD school would move to my new town
and the whole thing would just start back up again.



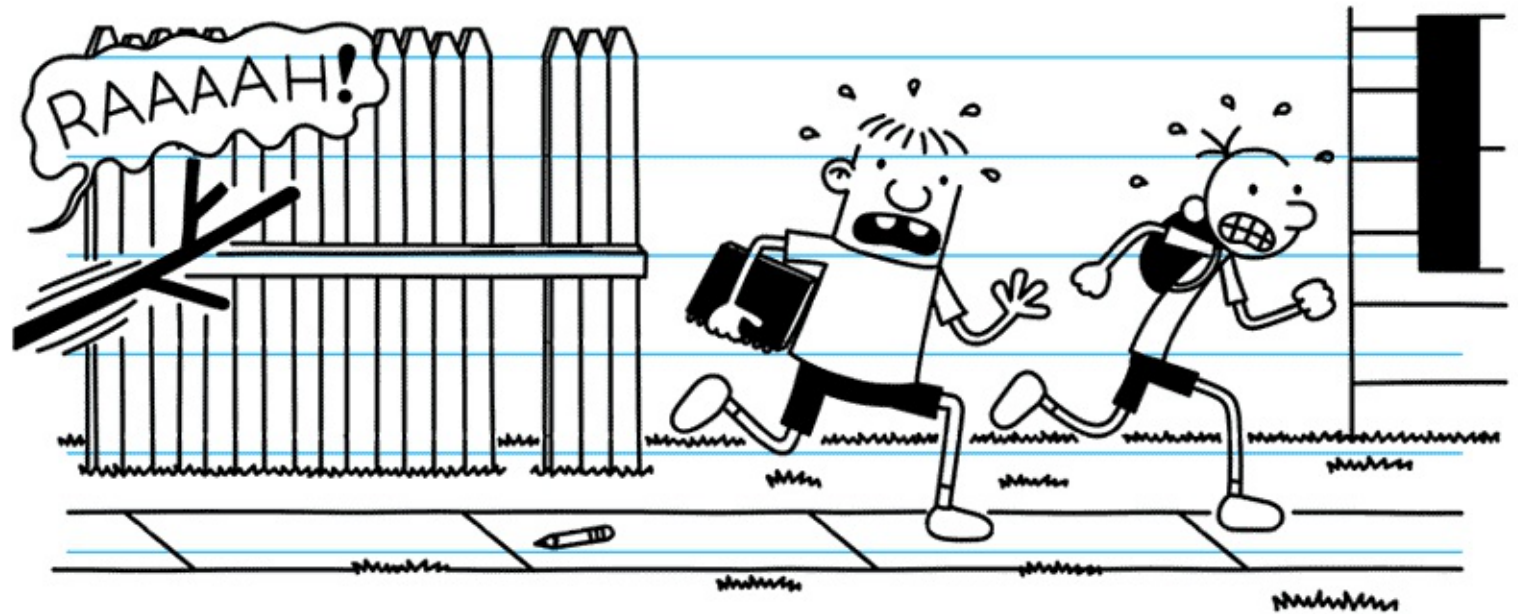
The teachers always say that when you're getting
picked on, you should tell an adult. I think that's
a good idea, but it didn't work out so well when I
was getting bullied.

There was this kid who lived in the neighborhood
next to mine, and for some reason everyone called
him "Nasty Pants."

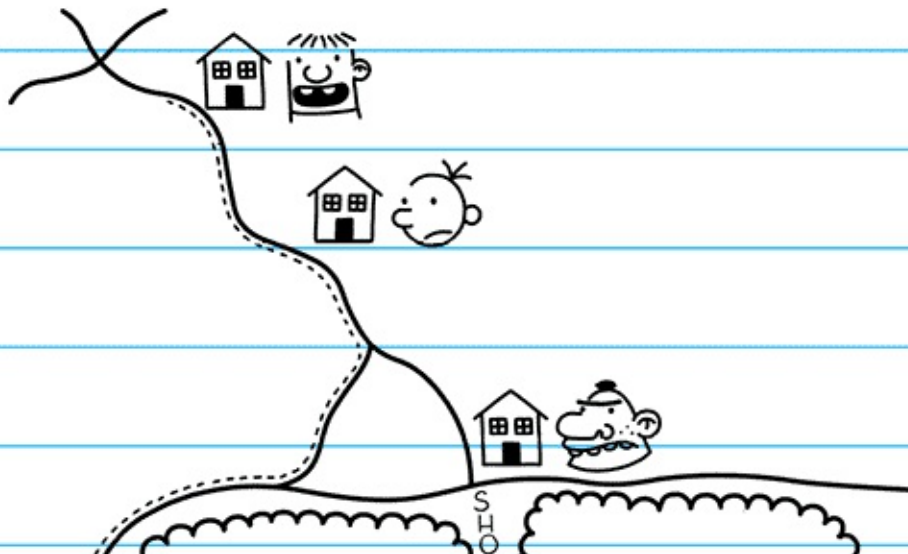


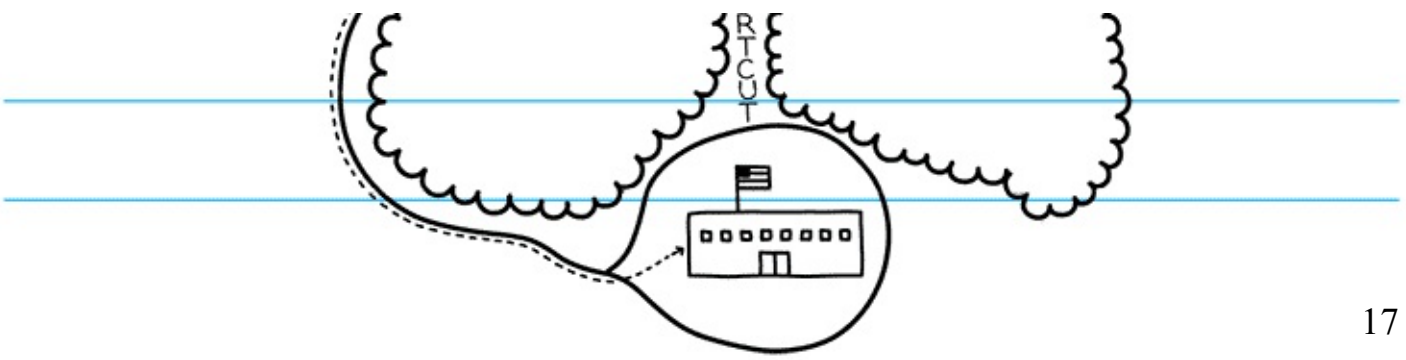


Every time me and my friend Rowley went
through Nasty Pants's neighborhood, he chased us
with a stick.



The thing that really stunk was that me and
Rowley used the woods in that neighborhood as a
shortcut to get to school. So we started having
to go out of our way to avoid getting harassed by
Nasty Pants.





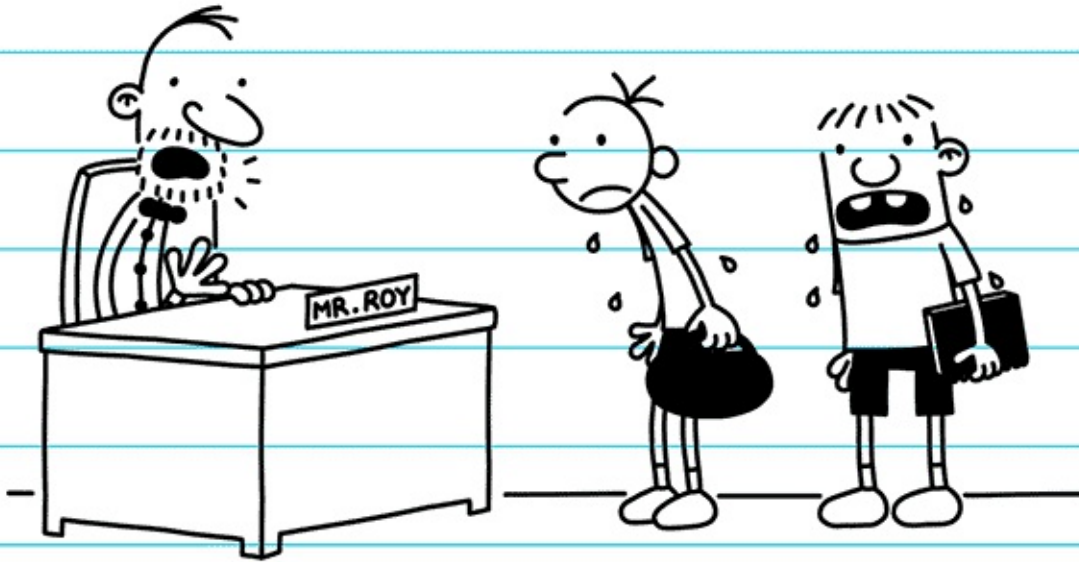
We did EXACTLY what the teachers are always

telling us to do, and complained to the vice

principal. But Vice Principal Roy said that since

Nasty Pants didn't go to our school, there was

nothing he could really do about it.



After getting chased a few more times, I

decided I'd had enough, so I told Dad about

the situation. I was afraid Dad was gonna say I

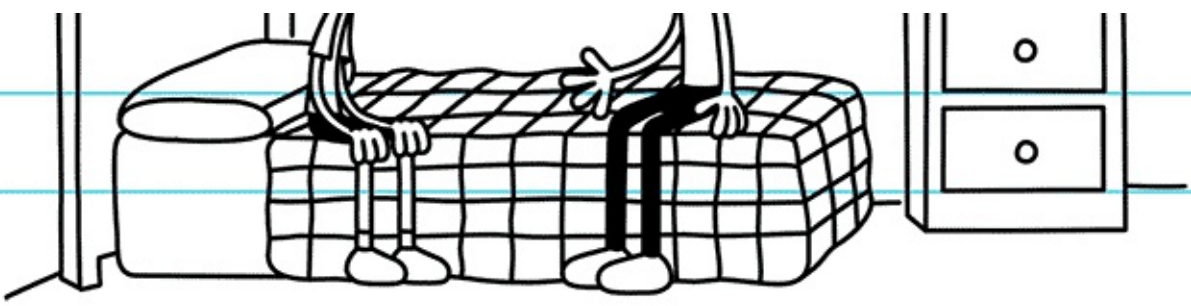
needed to toughen up and deal with the problem

myself, but he surprised me. Dad said that HE

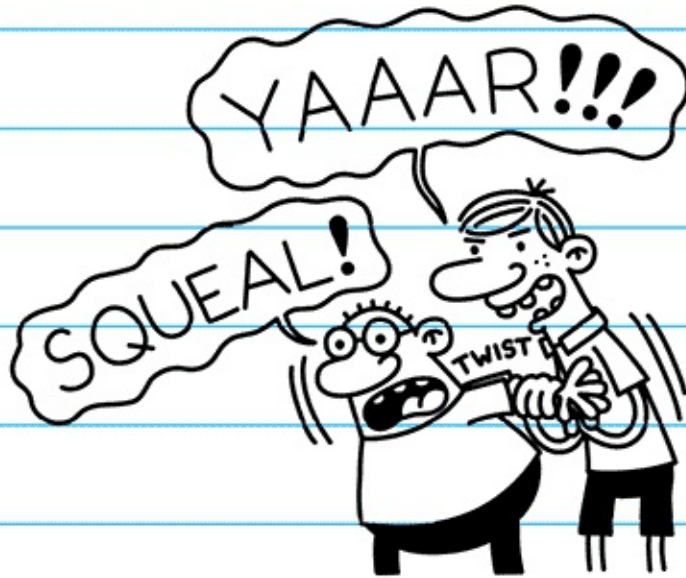
had problems with a bully at my age and he knew

just what I was going through.





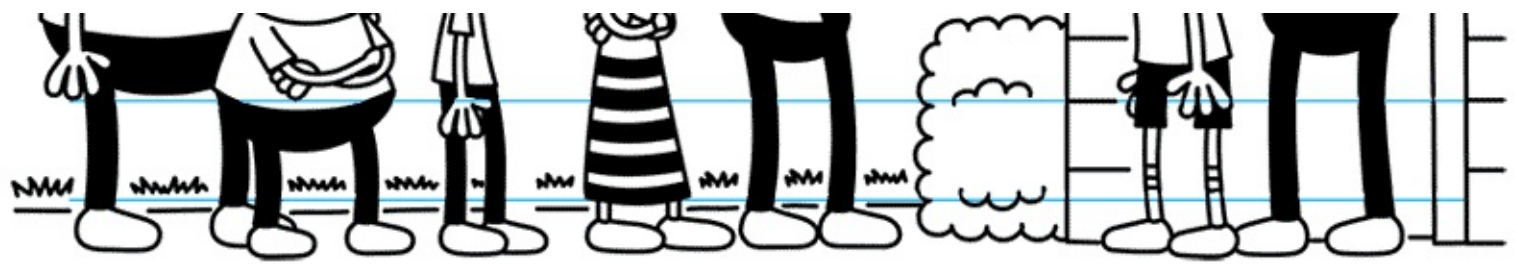
Dad's bully was named Billy Staples, and Billy's favorite thing to do was pin a kid's arm behind his back and hold it there until he cried.



Dad said that the kids in the neighborhood told their parents about Billy and they all went to Billy's house to confront his mom and dad.

Mr. Staples made Billy promise to never pick on anyone ever again, and Dad said Billy burst into tears and might have even wet his pants.





Well, after hearing that story, I don't think Billy

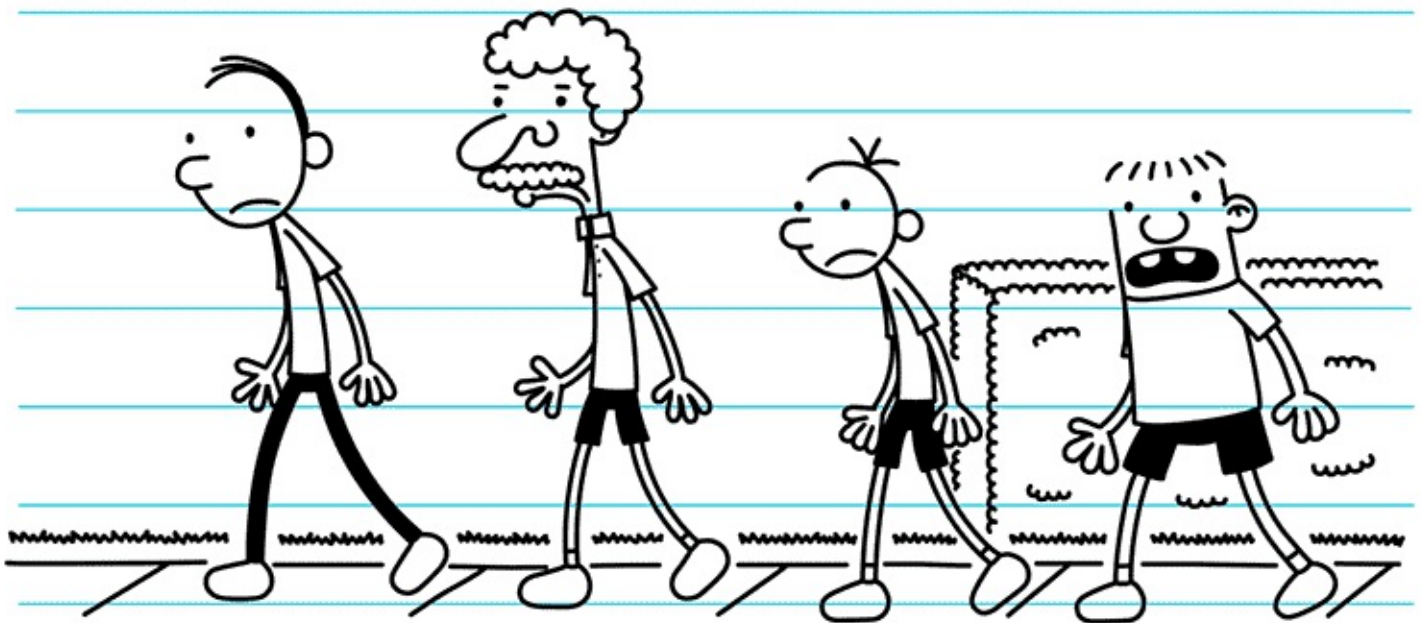
Staples would've been any match for Nasty Pants.

But I told Dad I liked the idea of complaining to

the bully's parents. I called up Rowley and told

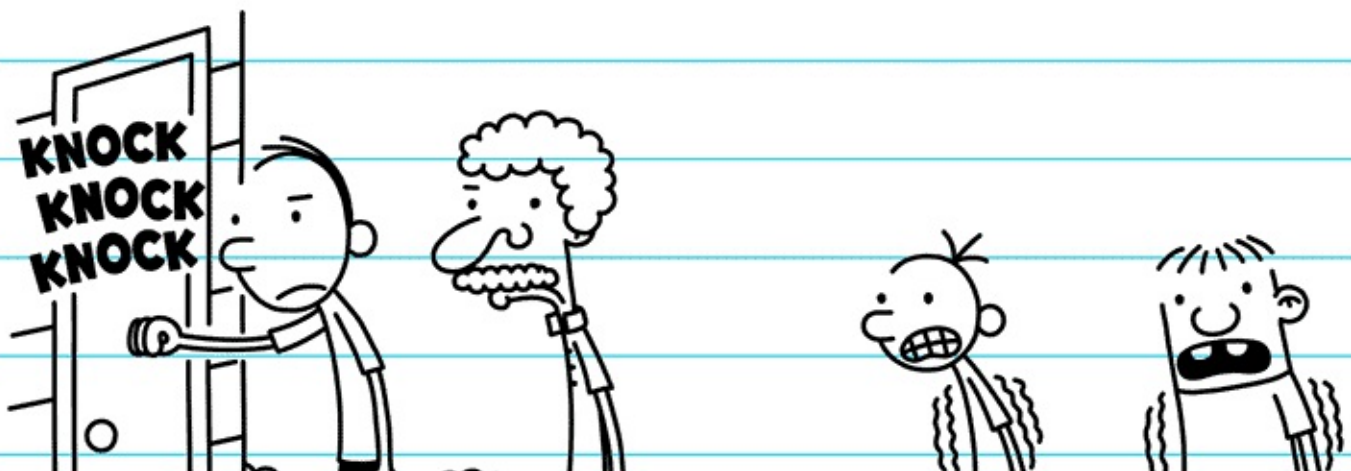
him to come over and to bring his dad, because we

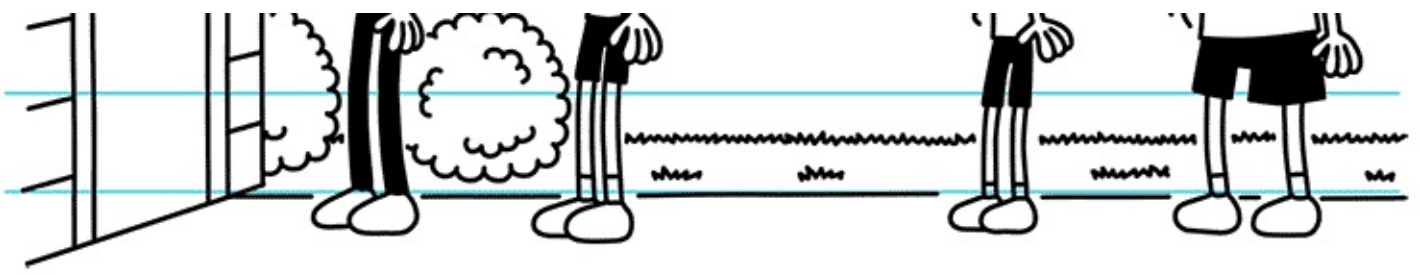
needed as much backup as we could get.



Dad knocked on Nasty Pants's door, and we

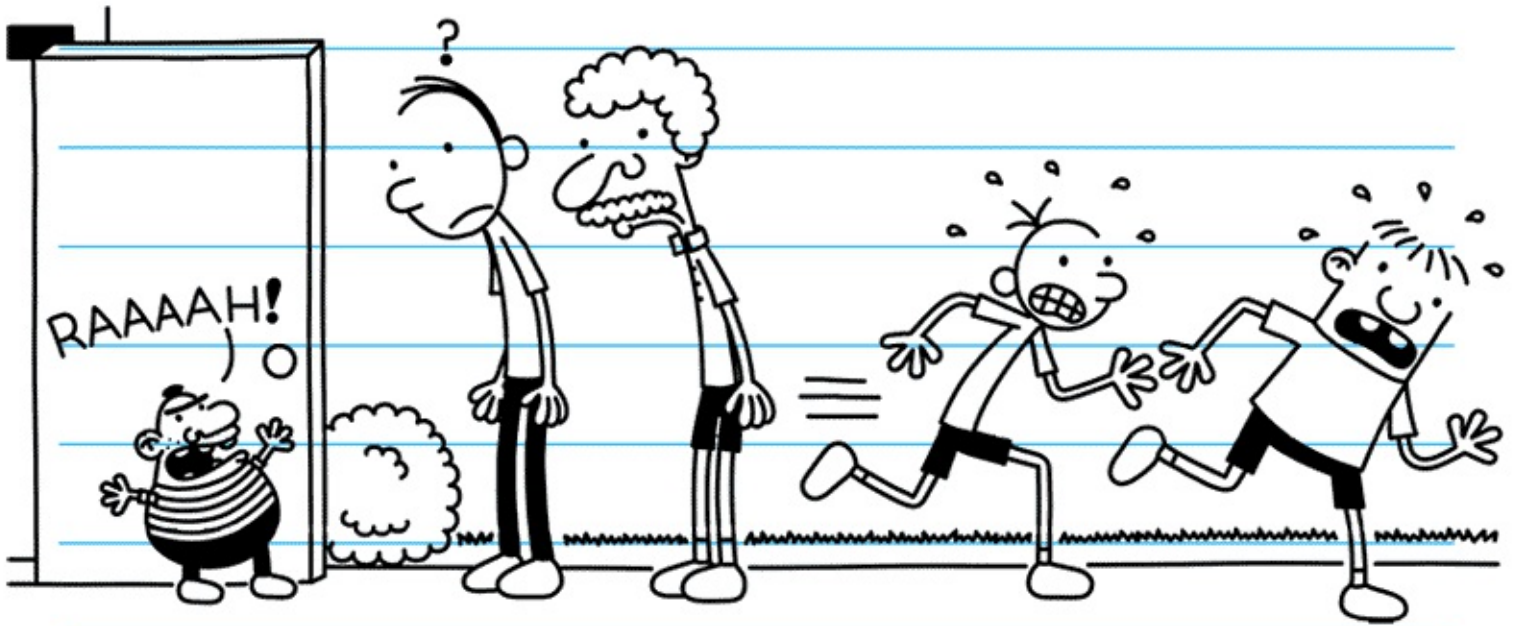
waited for one of his parents to open it.





But Nasty Pants HIMSELF came to the door,

and me and Rowley took off.



I guess I should've described Nasty Pants to

Dad, because it took him a while to understand

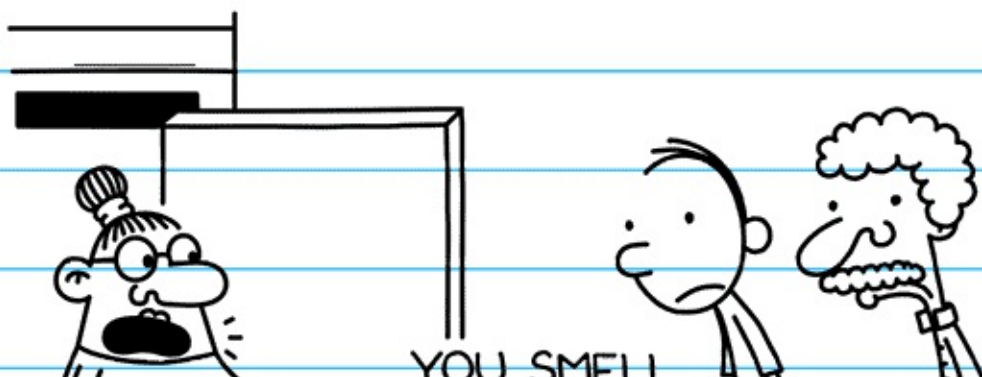
that the kid who came to the door was the one

who was causing us all that trouble.

Dad talked to Mrs. Pants, and she told Dad her

son was only five and that he just gets a little

wound up sometimes.





On the way home, Dad was pretty mad at me for

letting myself get bullied by a kid who was still in

kindergarten. But let me just say in my defense

that when some kid is chasing you with a stick,

you don't stop to ask him how old he is.

Tuesday

They took the last piece of playground equipment

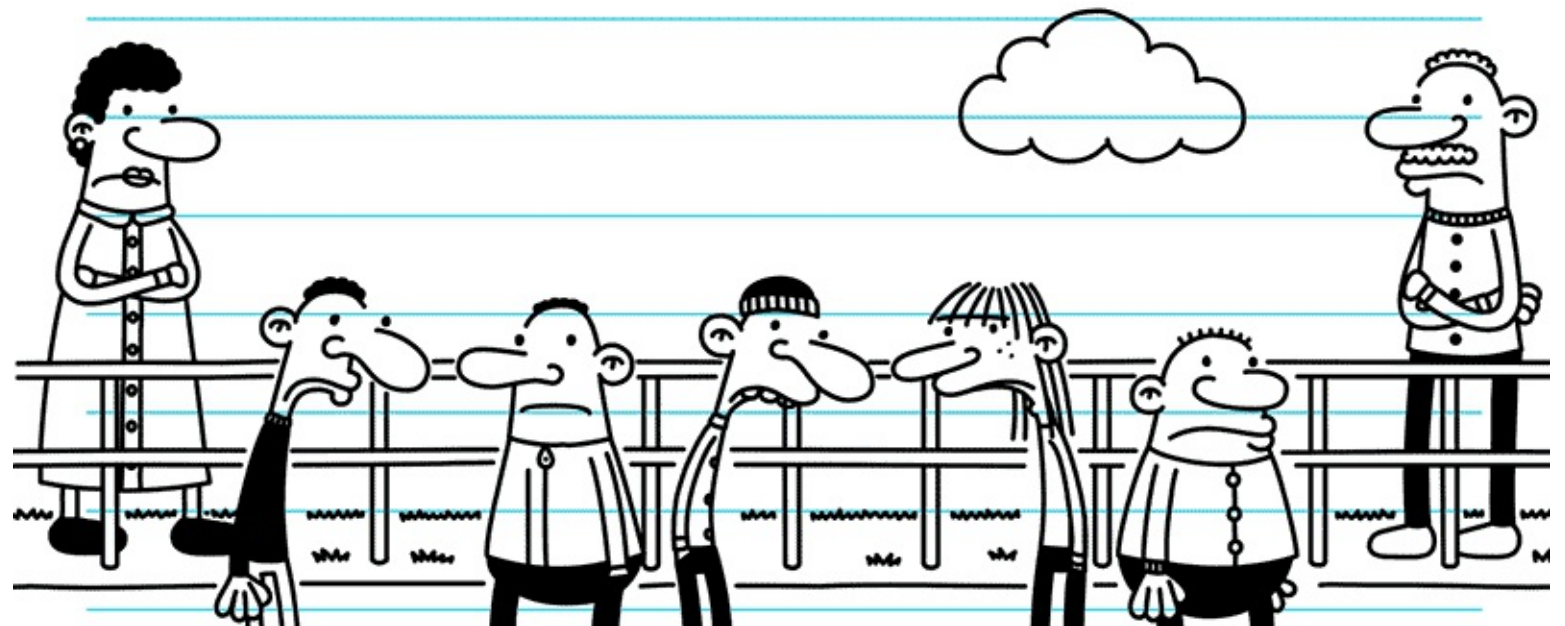
away at school today. We started off the year

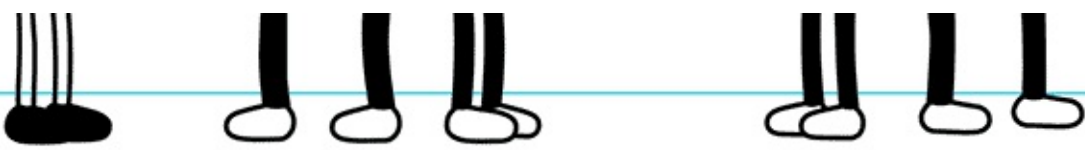
with all sorts of things, like monkey bars and

swings and stuff, but now the playground is an

empty sawdust pit.

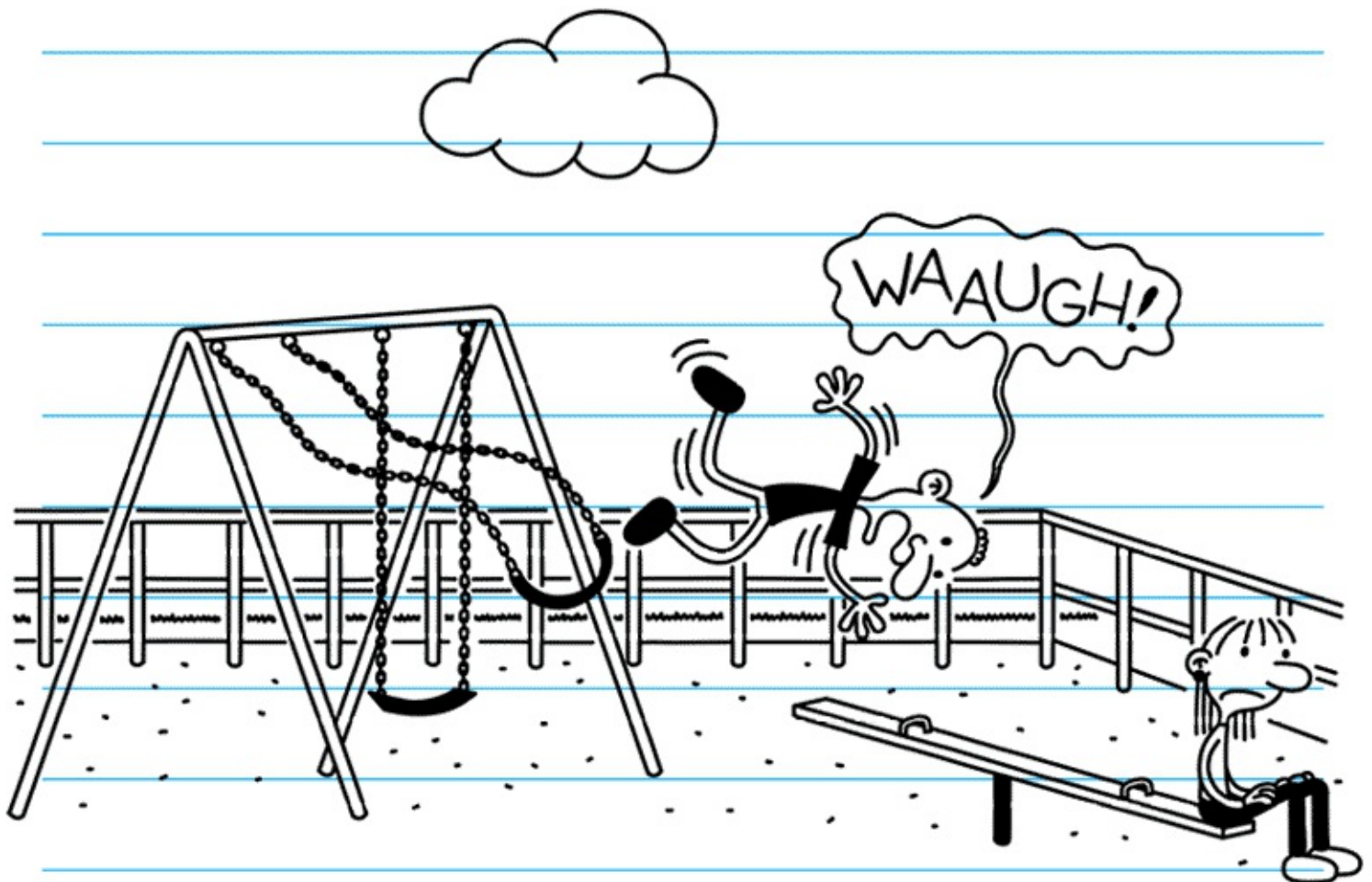
So recess is basically like a prison yard.





I heard the school was having trouble paying
the insurance for the playground, so every time
there was some kind of accident or injury on a
piece of equipment, the easiest thing to do was
just remove it.

In October, Francis Knott went flying off the
swing set and landed on the seesaw, so that took
out two big items right there.

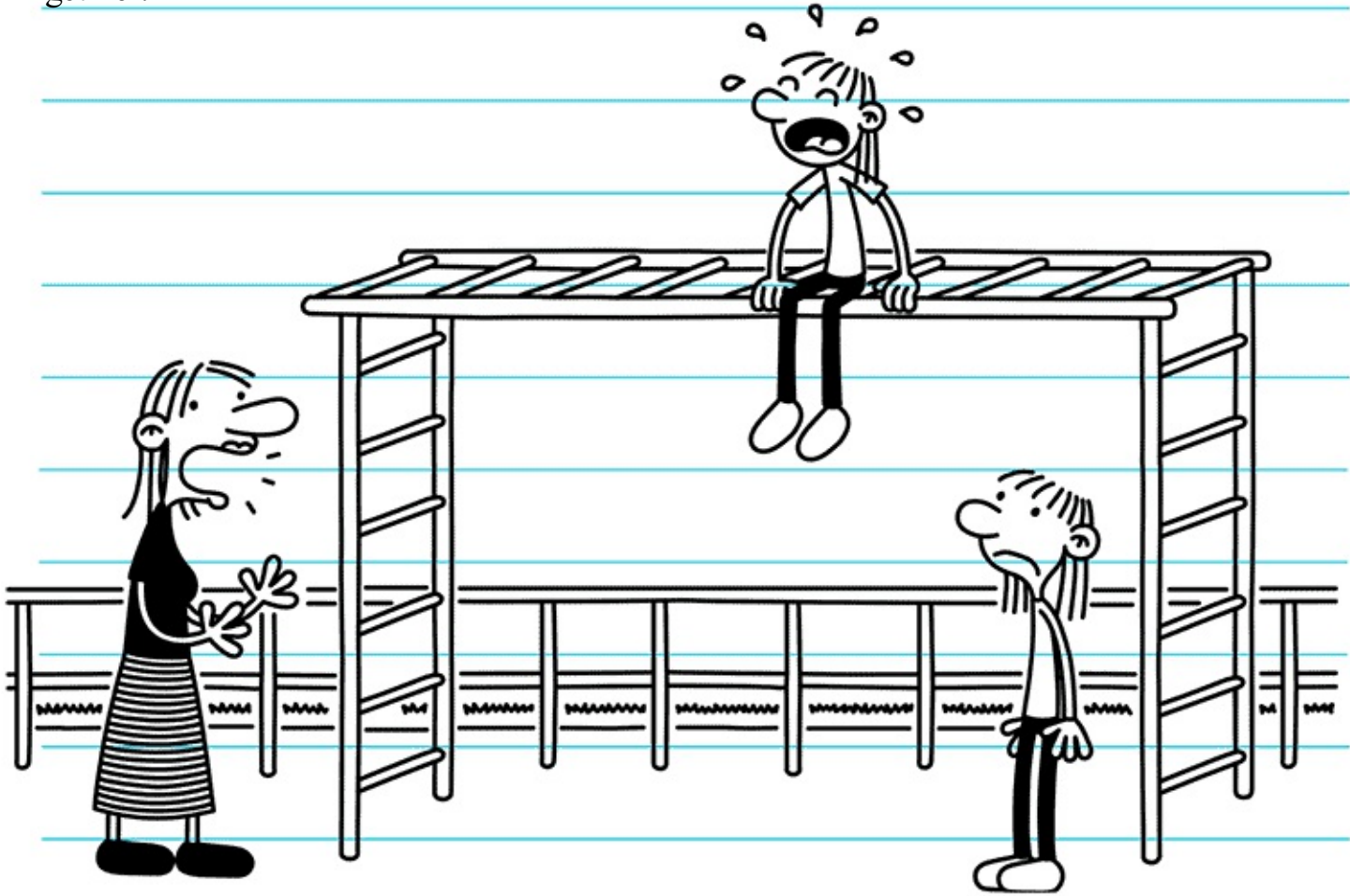


We lost the monkey bars when a girl named

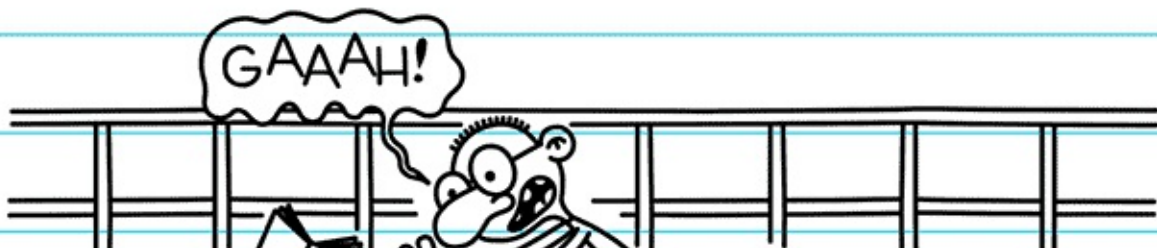
Christine Higgins climbed to the top and then got

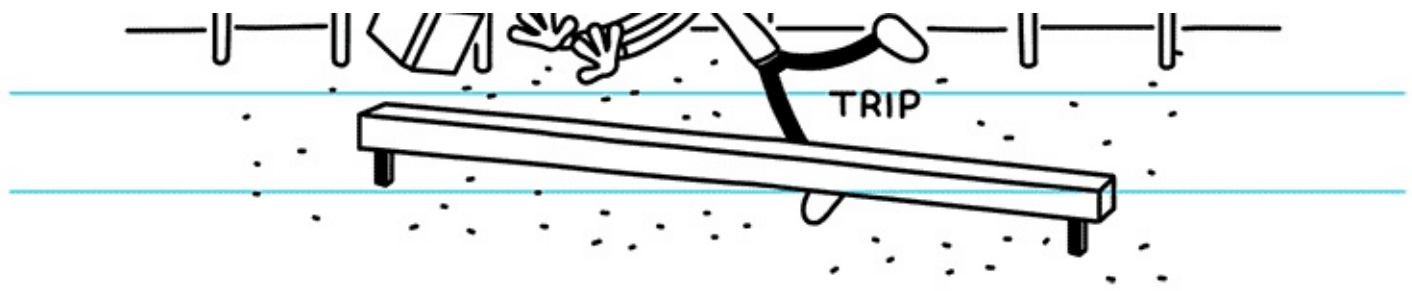
too scared to come down.

The teachers aren't allowed to touch kids, so they had to call Christine's parents to come and get her.

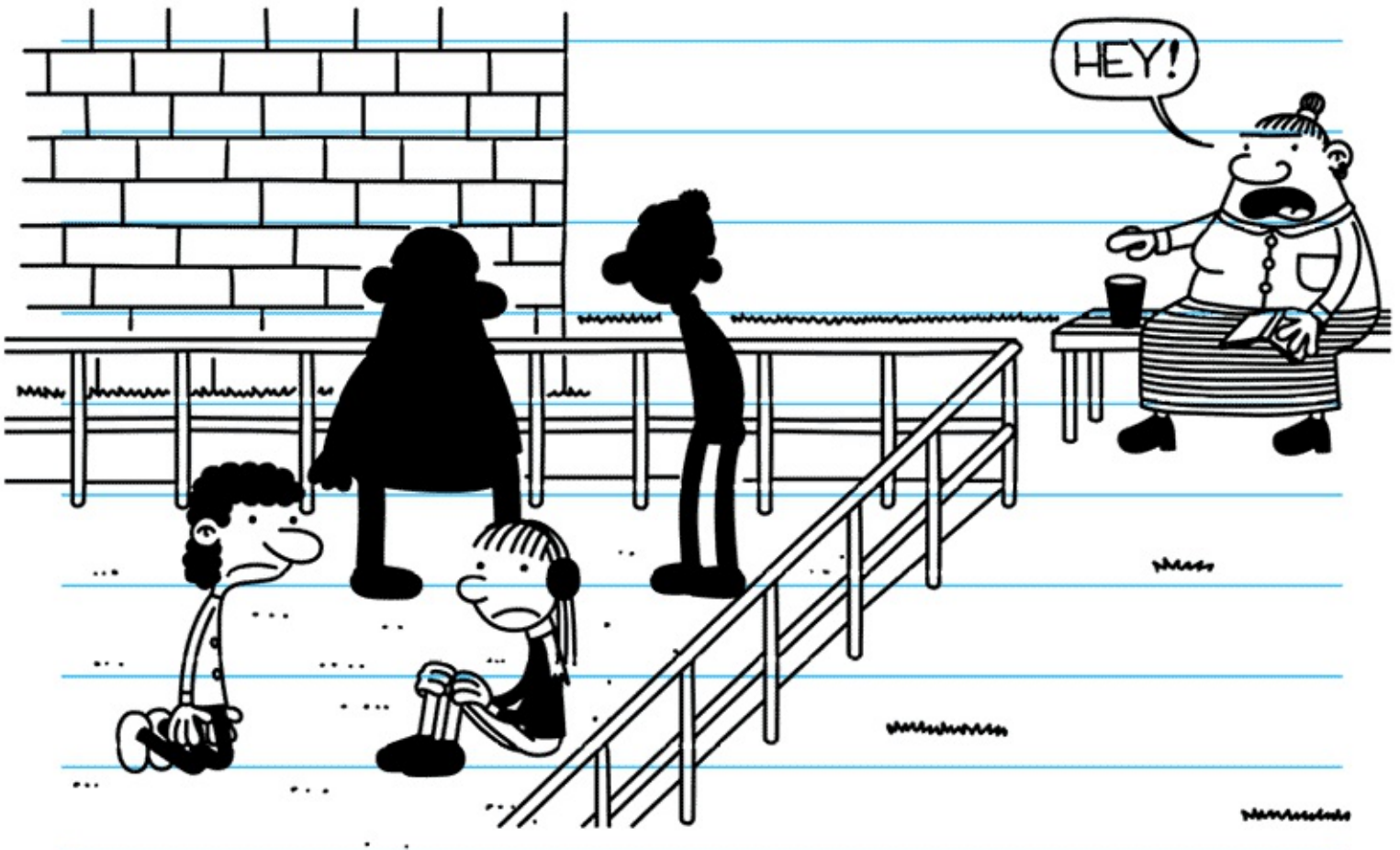


Eventually the only piece of equipment left was the balance beam, and I figured nobody could get hurt on THAT thing. But believe it or not, some idiot wasn't looking where he was going the other day, so now that's gone, too.



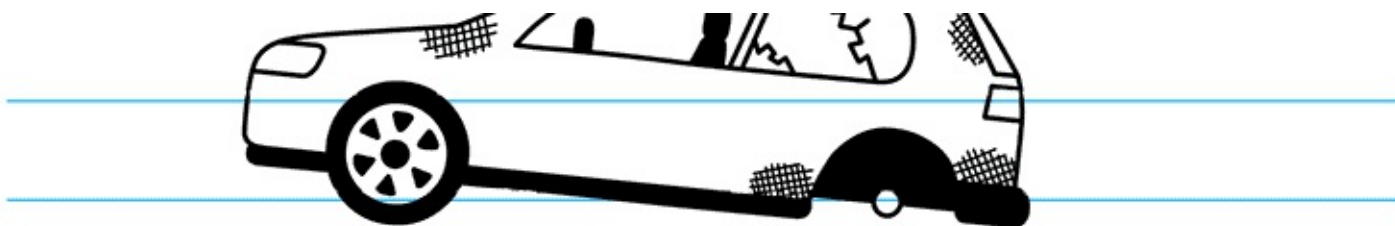


Without any playground equipment, there's really nothing for us to do. But the teachers won't even let us sit down, because they say we have to stay "active."

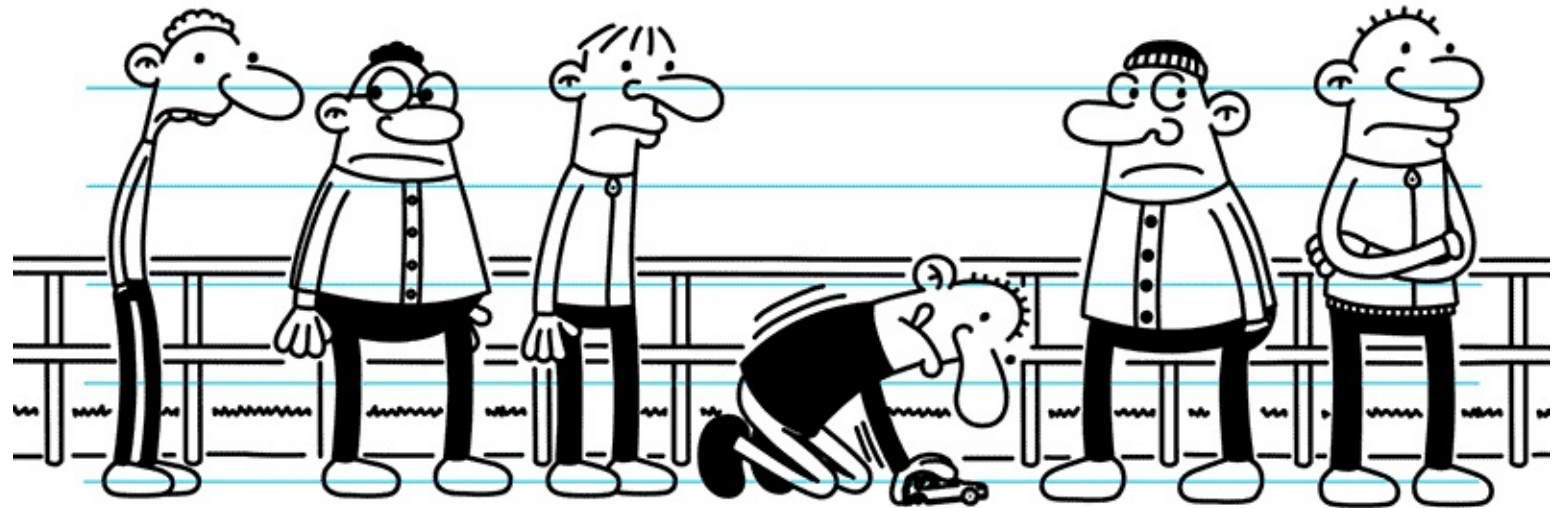


And it's not like you're allowed to bring in toys or video games to keep yourself occupied, either. In fact, if you get caught with a toy on the playground, it'll get confiscated. Last week somebody found a miniature car buried in the sawdust that looked like it had been there for years.





The car had three missing wheels, but people were
so desperate for entertainment that they lined up
to play with it while others kept lookout.



Now there's a black market for toys at our school.

Christopher Stangel brought in a bunch of Legos
from home yesterday, and I hear a single brick will
set you back fifty cents.



The teachers have banned a bunch of games we
used to play, too. Last week a group of boys were

playing Freeze Tag, but one of them got hurt

when someone shoved him from behind.

So now we're not allowed to touch each other or even run. Today people were playing "Air Tag" and getting around by speed-walking, but it wasn't really the same.



If you ask me, I think people are getting too carried away with all this safety stuff. I went to Manny's peewee soccer game, and all the kids had to wear bicycle helmets.

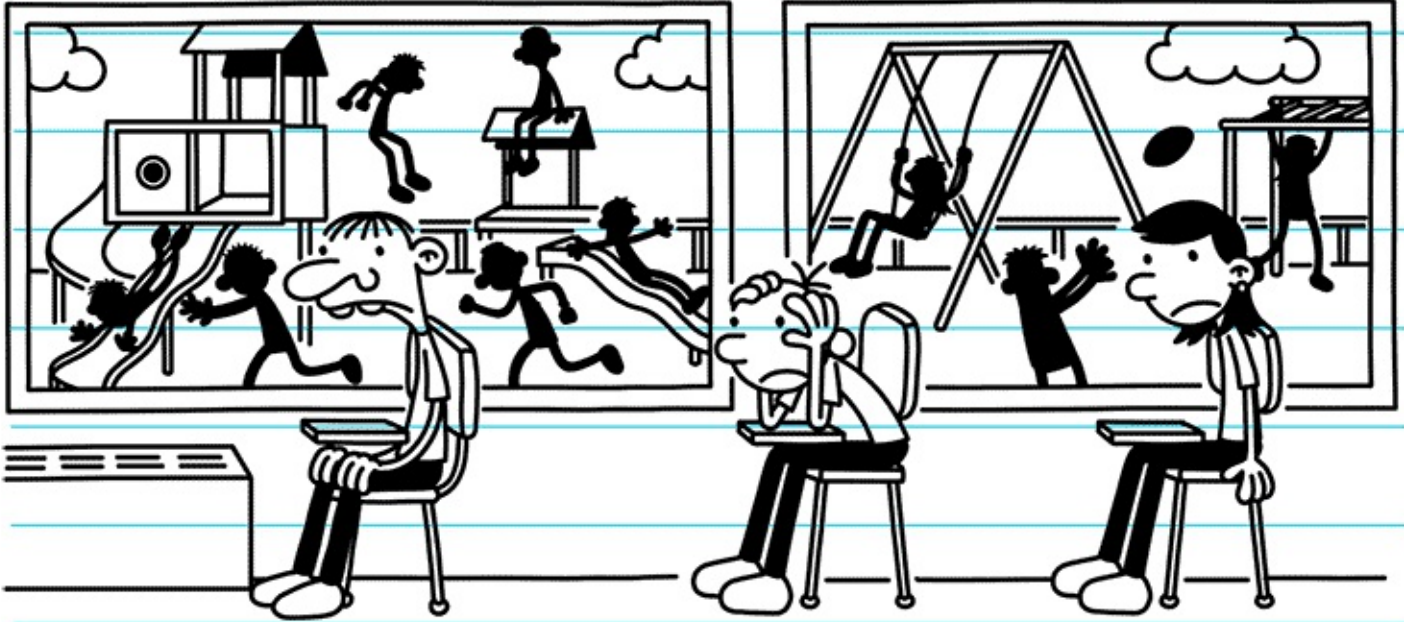


The only good thing about the playground

equipment being gone is that now I actually have

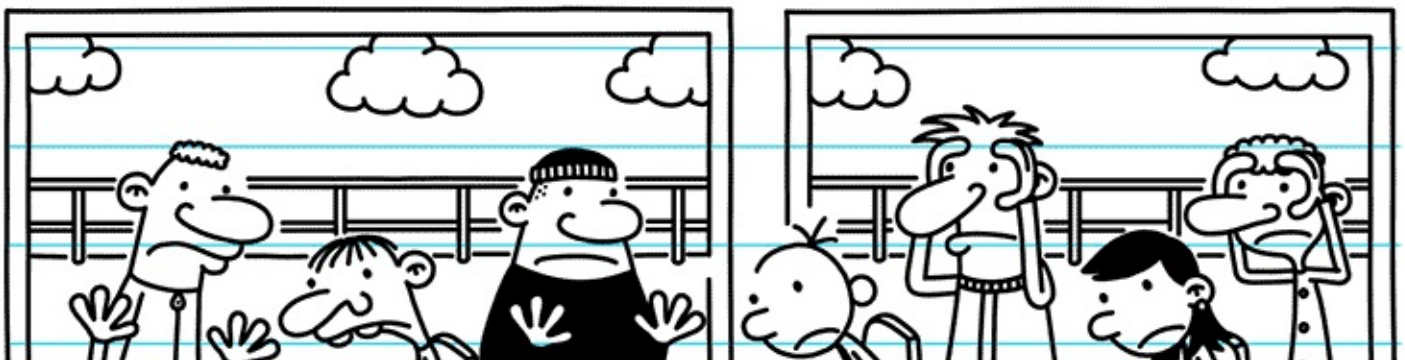
a chance to start doing well in school.

I'm one of those people who has a hard time focusing when the teacher is talking, and when another class is having recess right outside the window, it's practically impossible to pay attention.



Wednesday

OK, I take back what I said about being glad the playground equipment is gone. Now the kids at recess don't have anything to do, so they just stare in through the windows. And that's seriously distracting when you're trying to take a test.





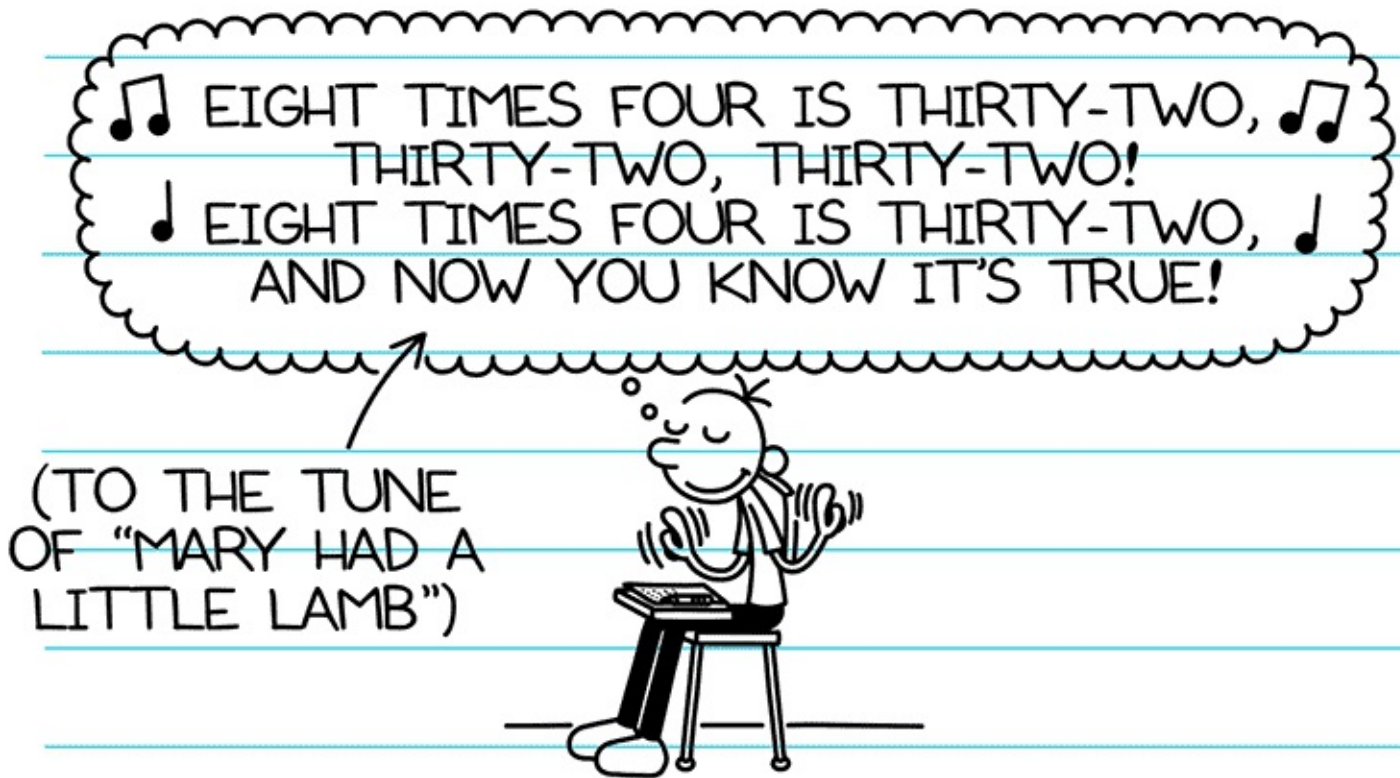
It doesn't help that I'm not exactly the fastest

test-taker. In third grade I had a teacher

named Mrs. Sinclair who taught us all these great

tricks for remembering multiplication facts. But

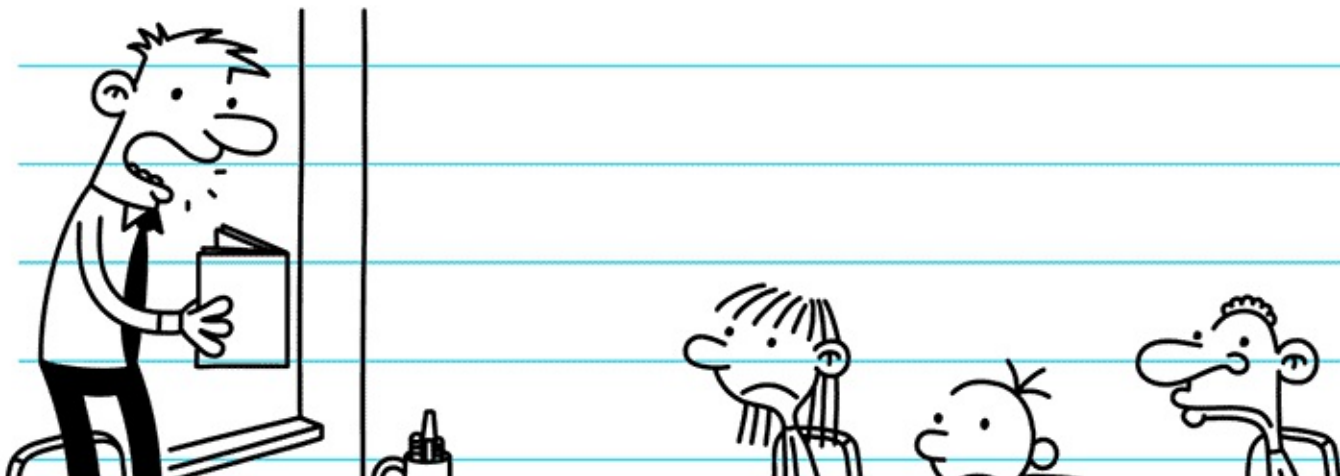
they seriously slow me down.

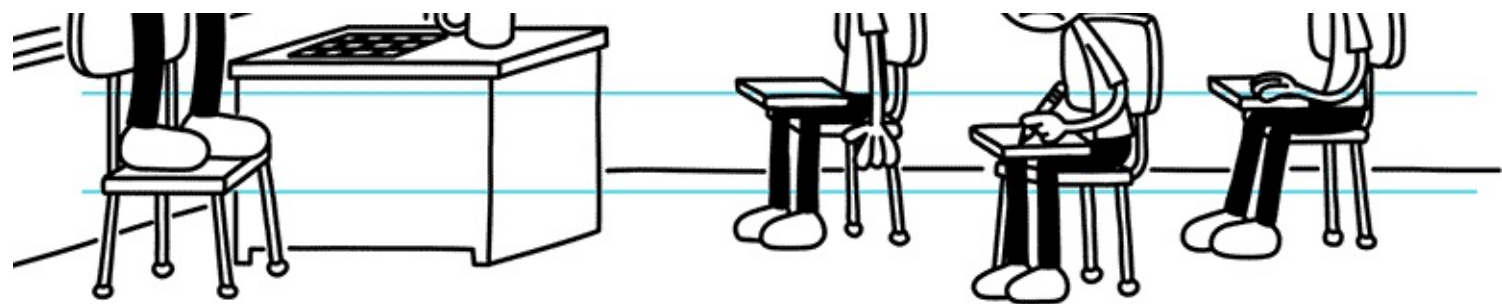


Earlier this year we had a math teacher named Mr.

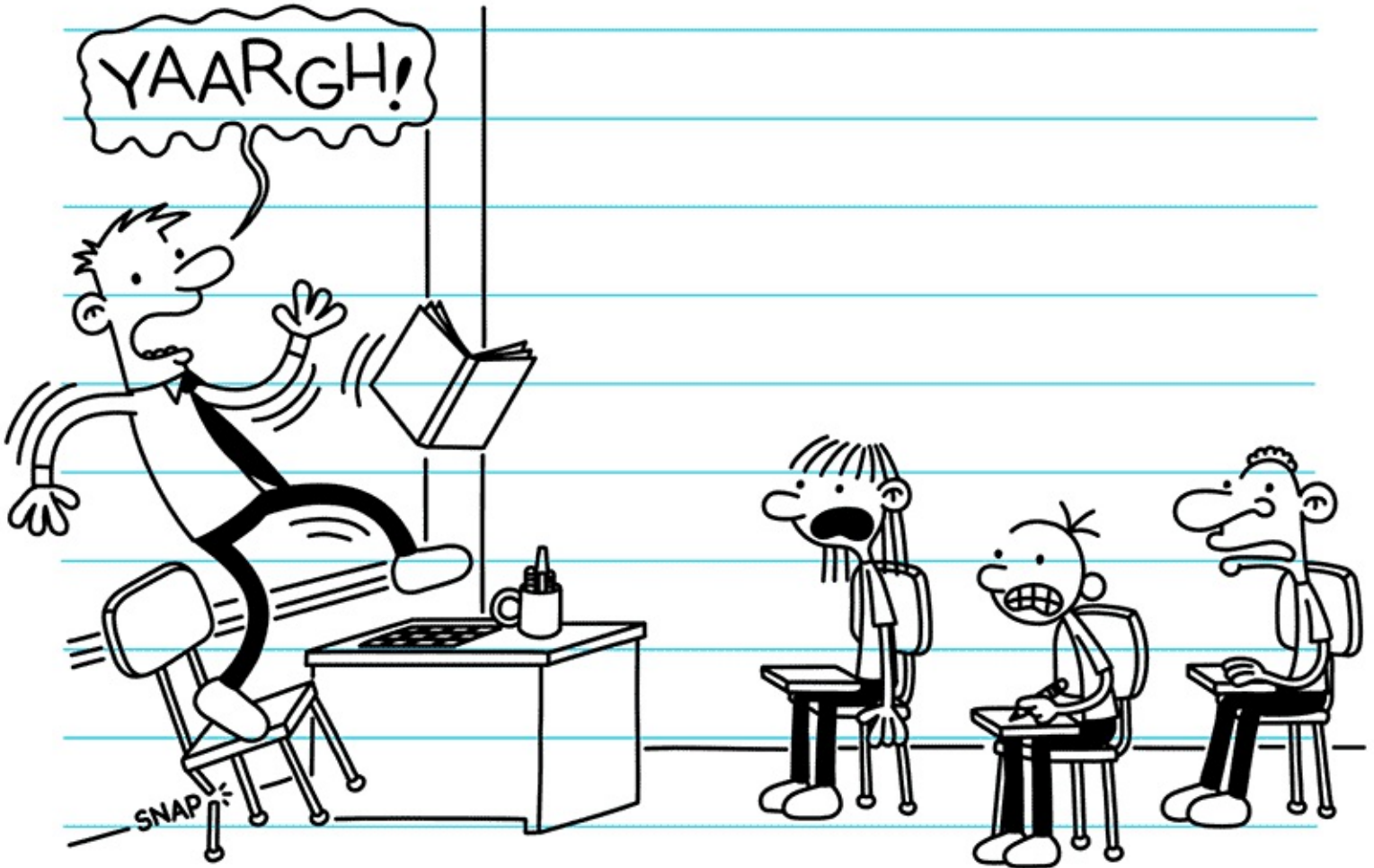
Sparks who used to stand on his chair every time

he wanted us to remember something important.





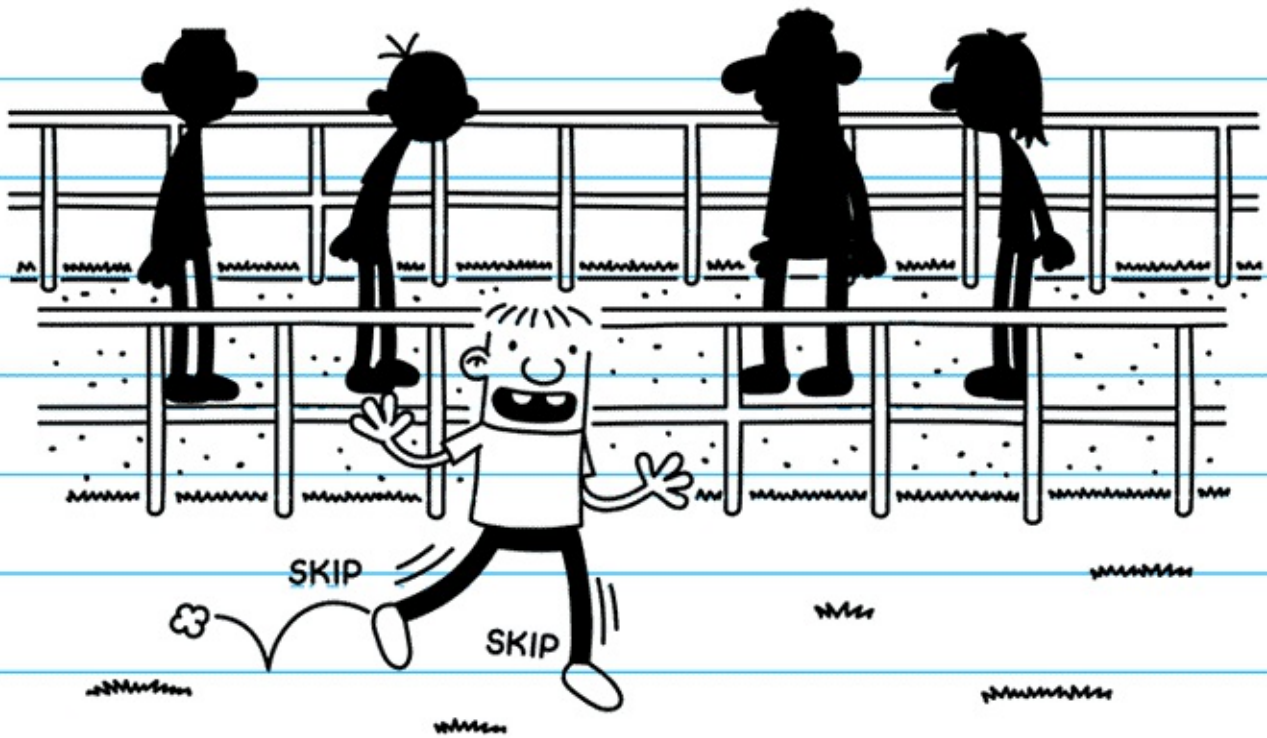
But once when Mr. Sparks was trying to get us
to remember a math concept, one of the legs on
his chair broke and he fell.



Mr. Sparks broke his collarbone, and I heard he's
suing the school over it. I don't remember the
concept he was trying to teach us that day, but I
do always remember never to stand on the furniture.

During recess today everyone was just waiting
to go back inside, but then Rowley got up and

started skipping around the playground.



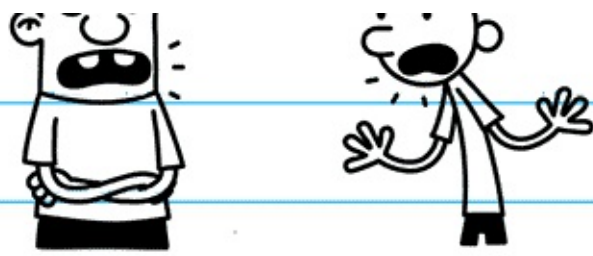
A few people started cheering and clapping.

They must've thought Rowley was protesting all the new rules by skipping instead of running, but the truth is, skipping is just something Rowley likes to do.

For some reason it really gets on my nerves when Rowley skips, so it bugged me to see him prancing around the playground like that. Skipping is actually a real sore subject between the two of us.

Rowley says I'm jealous of him because I don't know how to skip, but I think it just looks stupid.



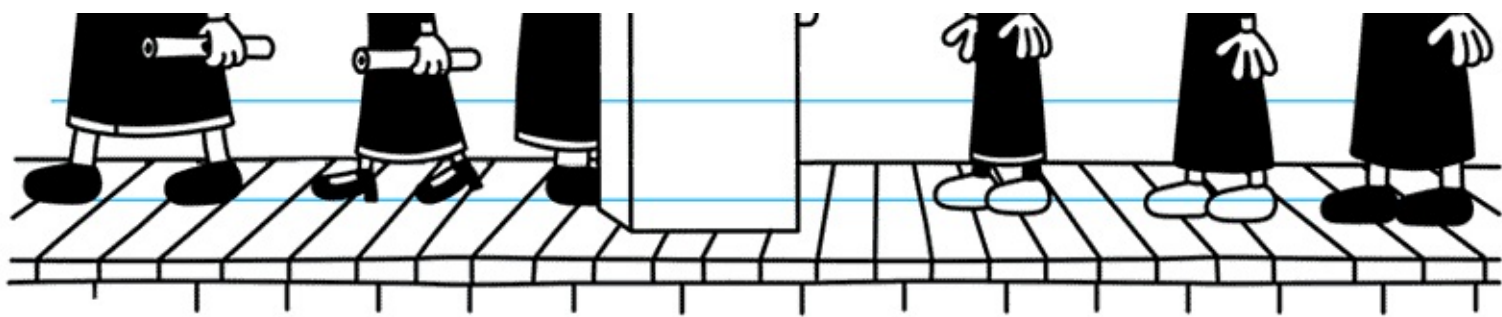


I will admit that I never exactly got the hang
of skipping. In fact, I was the only kid in first
grade who couldn't do it.



I was afraid I'd be held back until I learned how
to skip, but luckily they let me move on to second
grade. Still, I'm worried it's gonna come back to
haunt me later on.





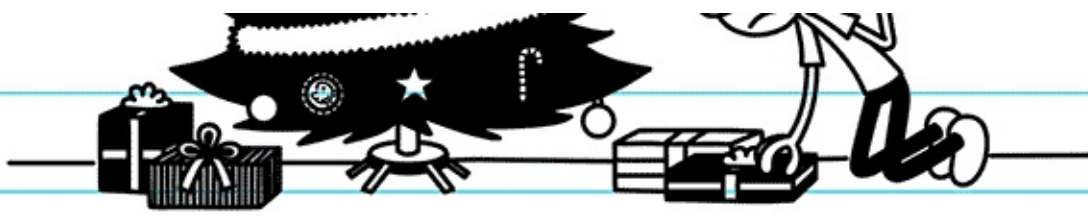
Sometimes I wonder how me and Rowley ended
up being friends in the first place, since we're so
different. But at this point I figure we're stuck
with each other, so I just try to overlook the
things he does that annoy me.

Thursday

The thing that stinks about having Santa's
Scout watching my every move at home is that
I can't get away with the things I used to do
during the holidays.

A few years ago Mom and Dad put some gifts
under the tree a week before Christmas, and it
was driving me crazy not knowing what they were.





One of the gifts had my name on it, and I was pretty sure it was a video game. I made a tiny little tear in the wrapping paper to see, and sure enough, it was a game I'd asked for.

But then it was bugging me that a game I wanted was sitting right there under the tree and I couldn't play it. So I went one step further and made a slit along the top of the packaging and slid the box out.

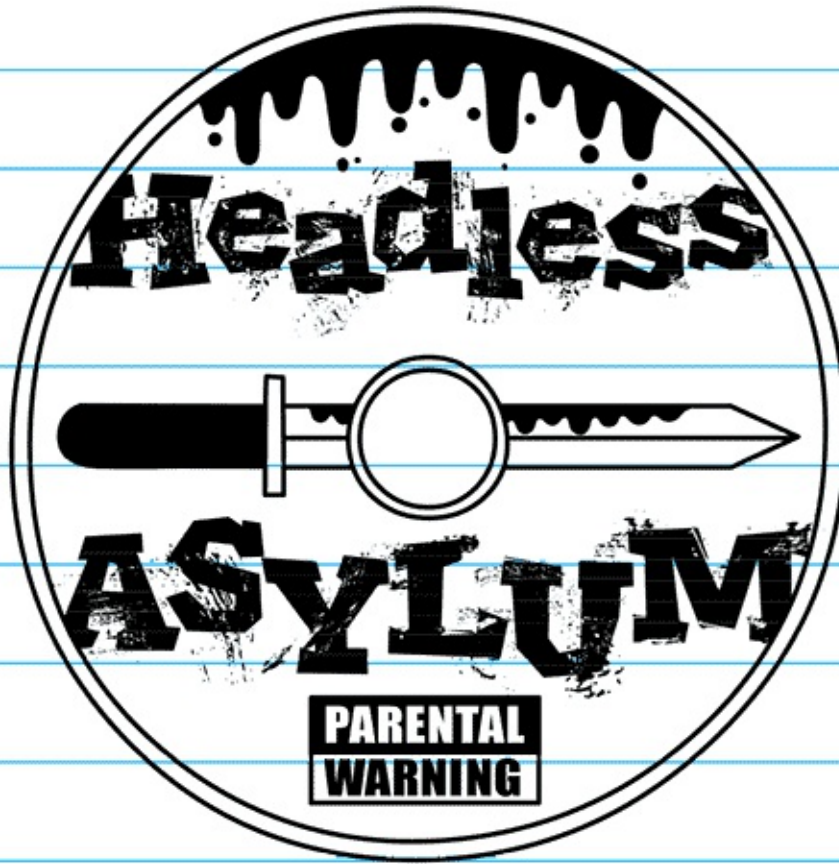


I opened the plastic case and removed the game, then put the box back in the wrapping paper and taped it closed.

But I started to get paranoid that Mom was gonna pick up the present and notice it felt lighter, so I opened it back up and put one of

Rodrick's heavy metal CDs inside the box to make

it the same weight it was before.



I played the video game every night after Mom

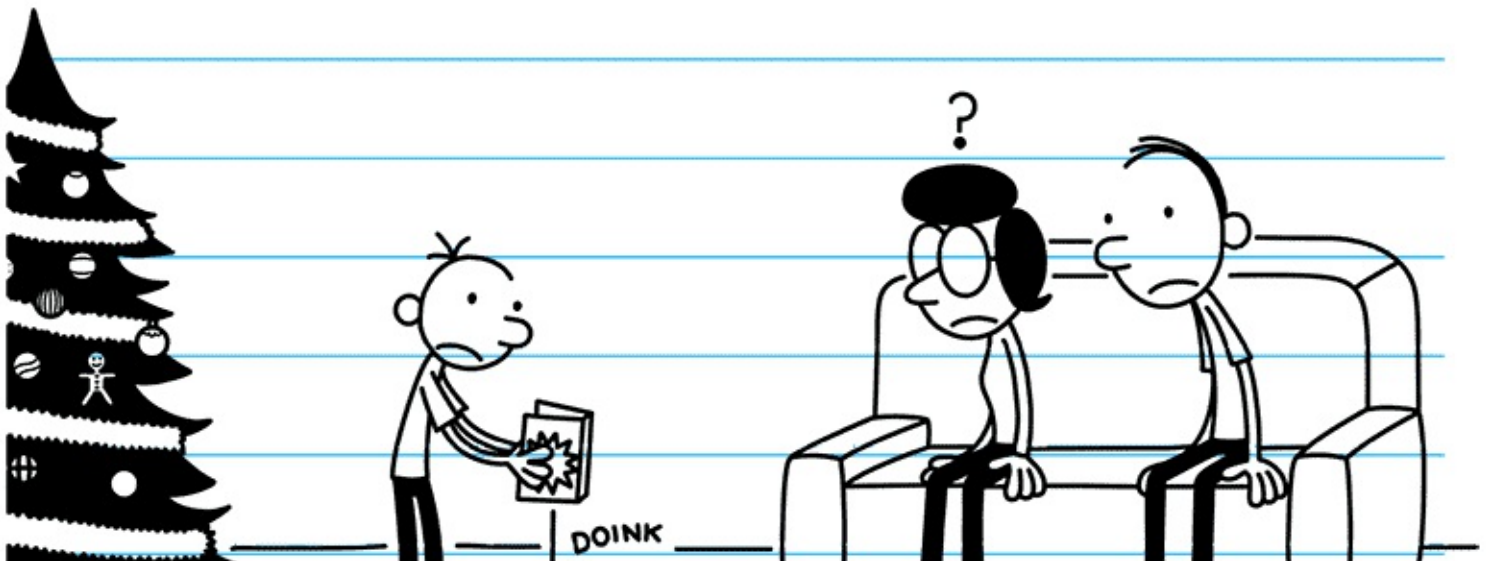
and Dad went to bed, and I actually beat it.

But I forgot to put it back in the box, and on

Christmas, when I opened my present in front of

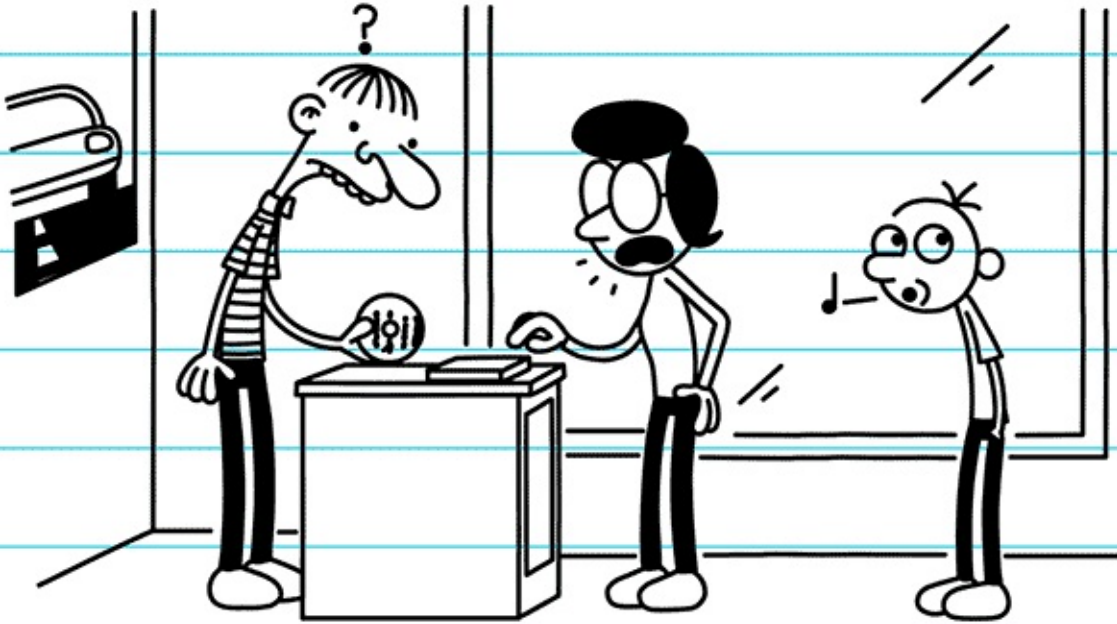
Mom and Dad, Rodrick's CD slipped out and rolled

onto the floor.





The day after Christmas, Mom took the CD to
the Game Hut and chewed the clerk out for selling
her material that was “inappropriate” for kids.



I just don't like not knowing what I'm getting
for Christmas, and sometimes I can't help myself.

Last year I went on Mom's e-mail account and
wrote to all our relatives to see if I could find out
what they were getting me.

**TO: Gammie, Uncle Joe, Uncle Charlie,
Gramma, Grandpa, Uncle Gary, Joanne,
Leslie, Byron, 23 more**

SUBJECT: Gifts

Hey, everyone-

Let me know what you're buying for
Greg this year, so we can coordinate.

Thanks, Susan

But Mom keeps her e-mail on the computer in the kitchen, and it's hard to get onto her account when Santa's Scout is watching me like a hawk.

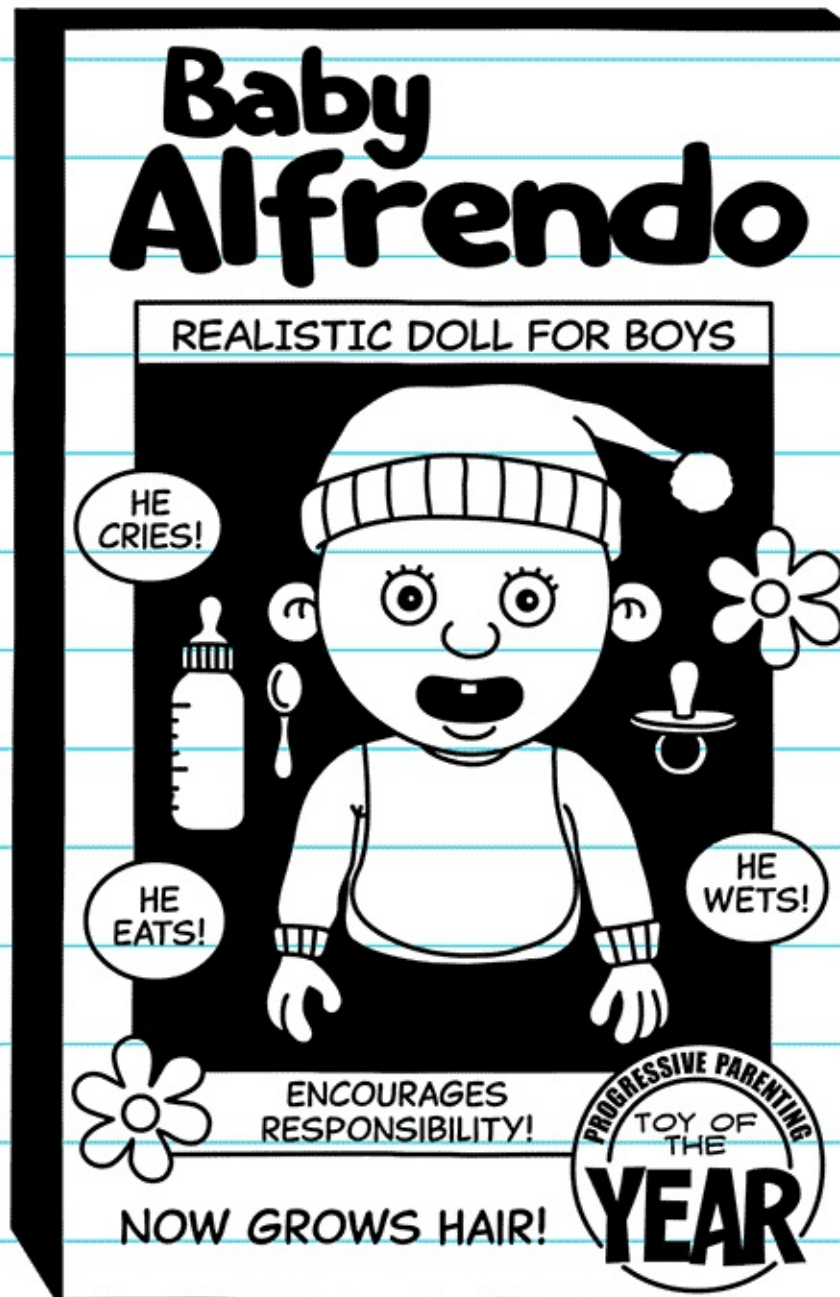
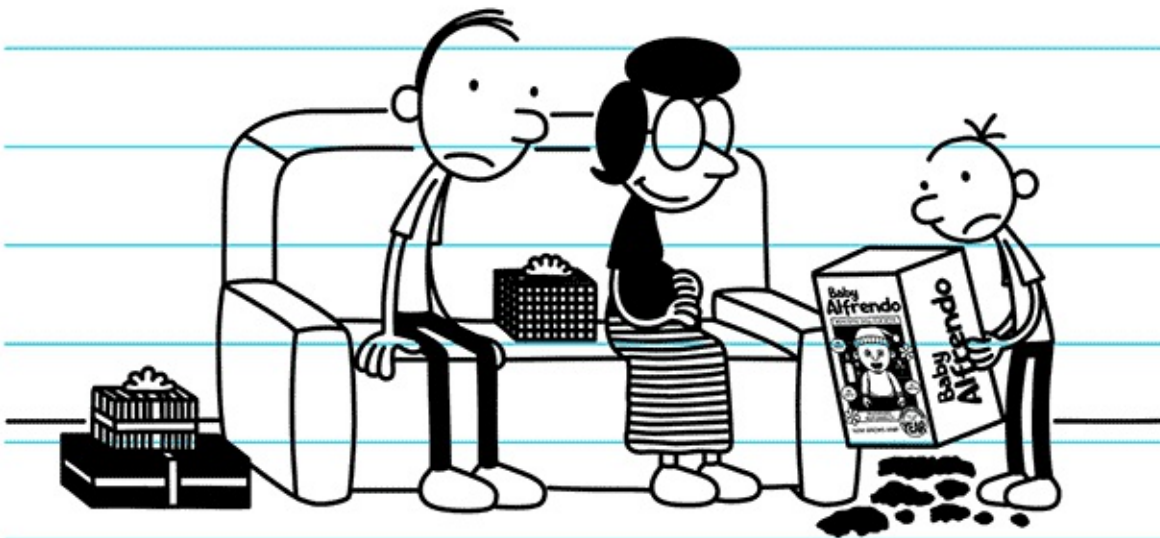


Tonight I spent some time trying to decide what to put on my Christmas wish list this year. I try to be as specific as possible when I make my list, because whenever I leave my gifts up to Mom and Dad, I get some crazy stuff.

A few years ago I forgot to write out a wish list, and I paid the price for it. Mom was pregnant with Manny, and she wanted me to get

ready for having a baby brother.

So for Christmas, Mom got me a DOLL.



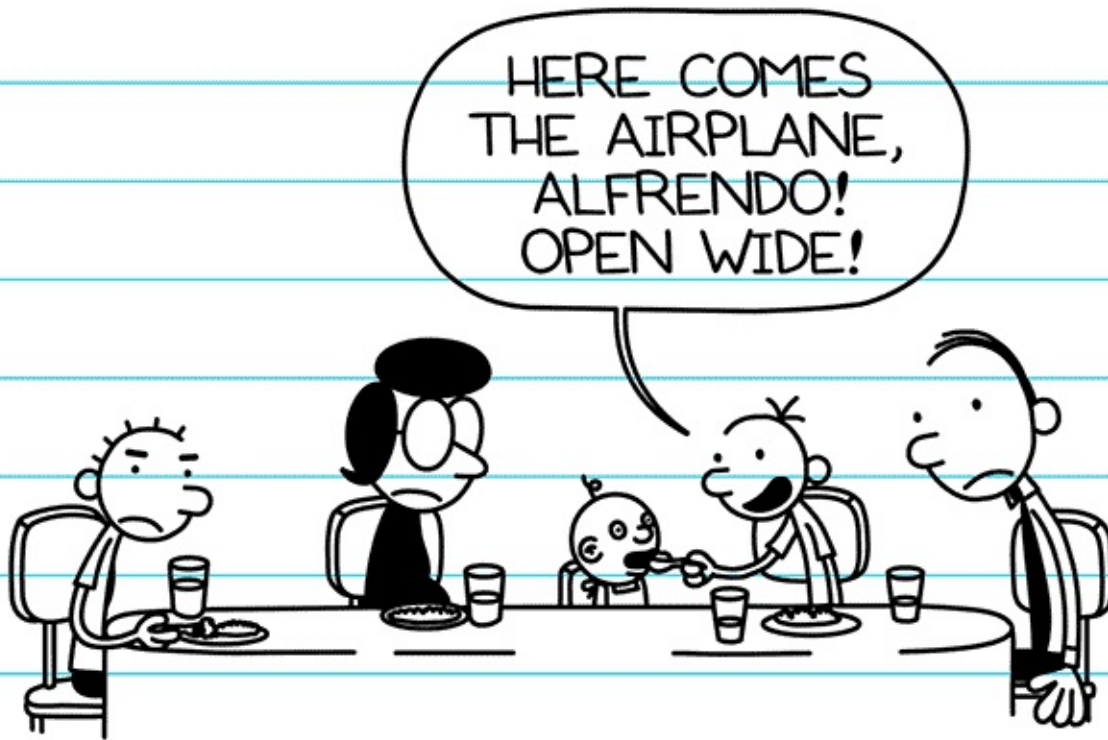
At first I didn't want anything to do with it.

Then I realized having a doll you could FEED

came in handy. In fact, I don't think a

vegetable touched my lips for a month after I

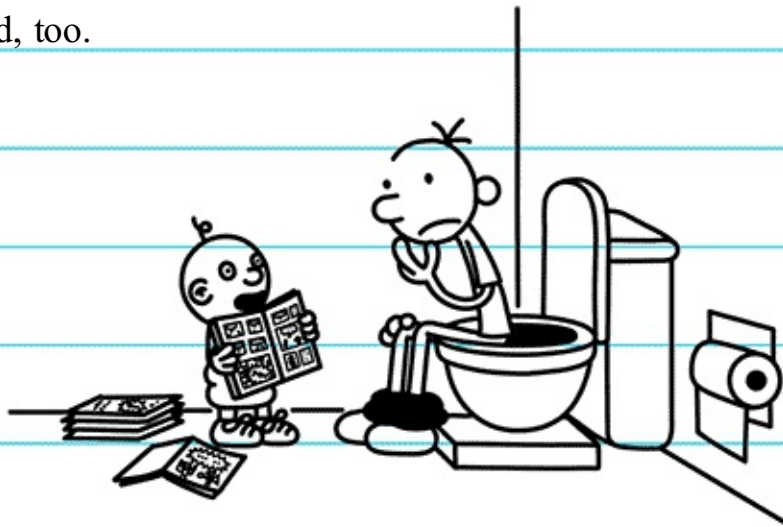
got Alfrendo.



But that wasn't the only thing I used that doll

for. I found out that he made a really excellent

comic book stand, too.



I have to admit, after a few months I got

really attached to that doll.

Since I didn't have a pet, it was kind of nice to

have something to take care of for once.



But one day I came home from school and I

couldn't find Alfrendo ANYWHERE. I searched

the house from top to bottom, but there was no

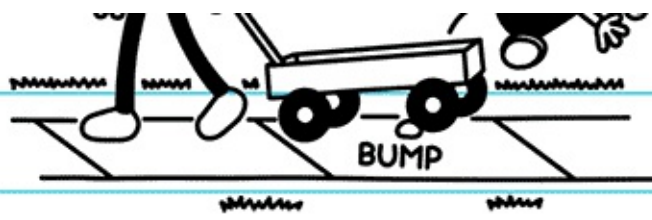
trace of him.

The only thing I could think of was that I

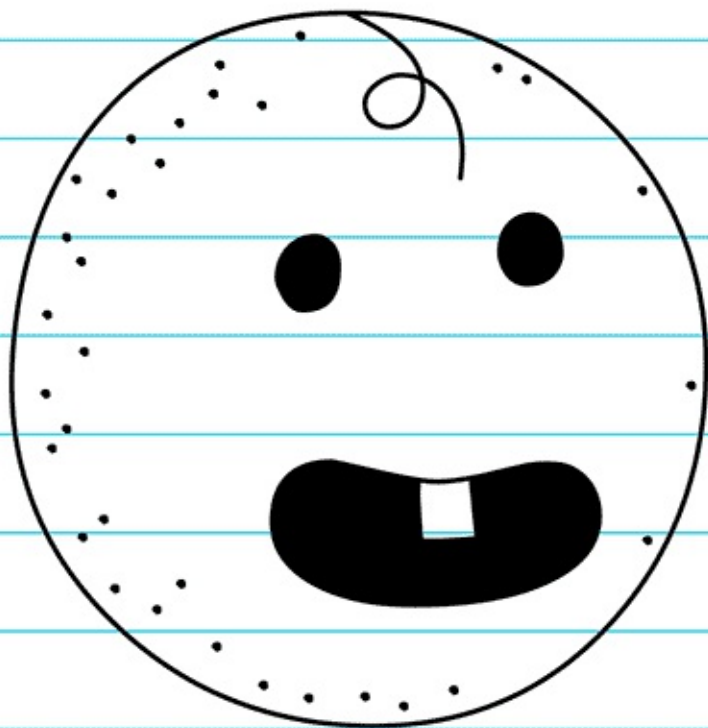
dropped Alfrendo at some point and somehow

didn't notice.



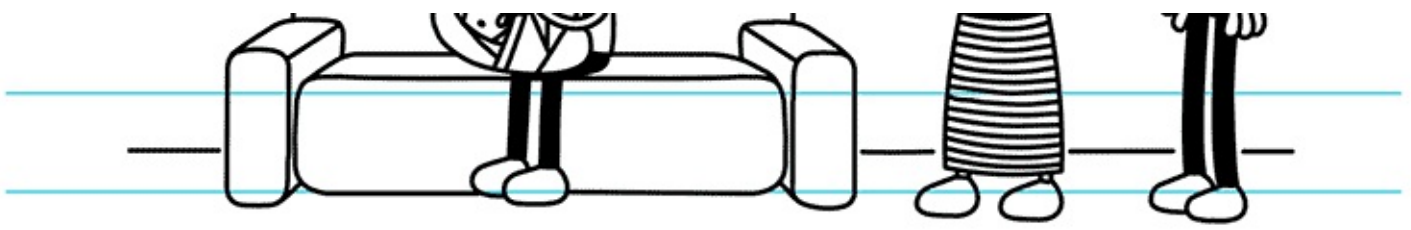


I was pretty torn up about losing my doll, but what I was REALLY worried about was Mom thinking I couldn't be trusted around my new baby brother. So I got a grapefruit out of the fridge and drew a face on it with a marker.

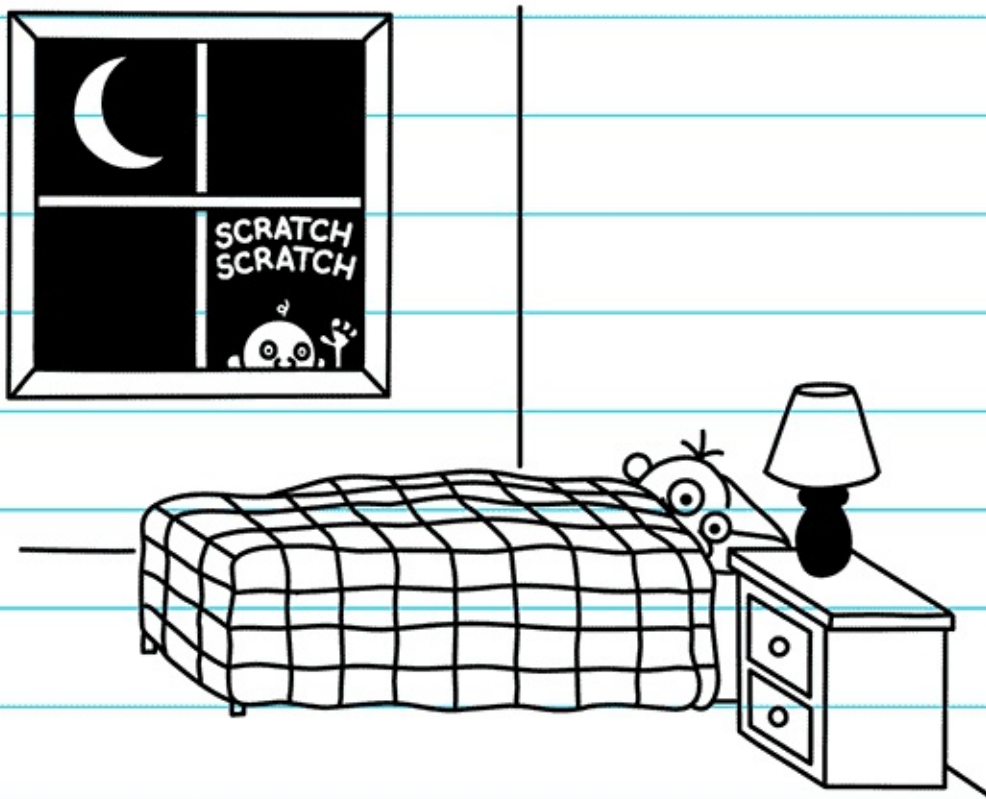


Then I wrapped the grapefruit in a dish towel, and for the next three months I pretended it was my doll.





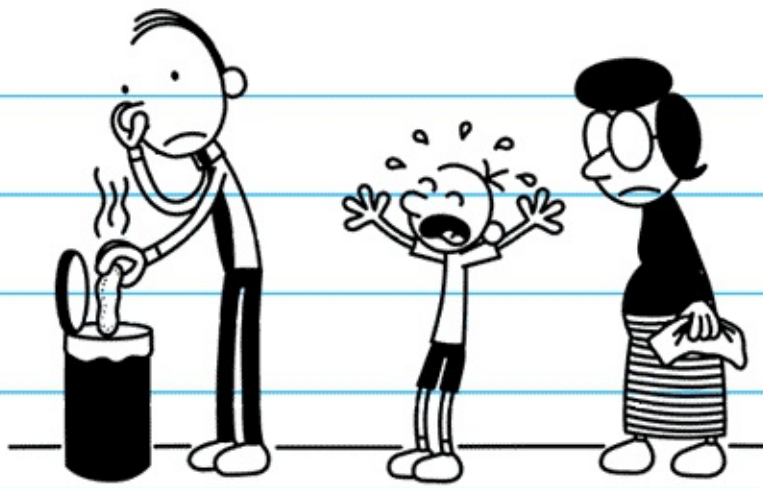
Mom and Dad didn't seem to notice. But I was terrified by the idea that the REAL Alfredo was gonna find his way back home and get his revenge on me for abandoning him and replacing him with a fruit.



In fact, I still worry about that to this day. It's the reason I always check to make sure my window is locked before I go to bed at night.

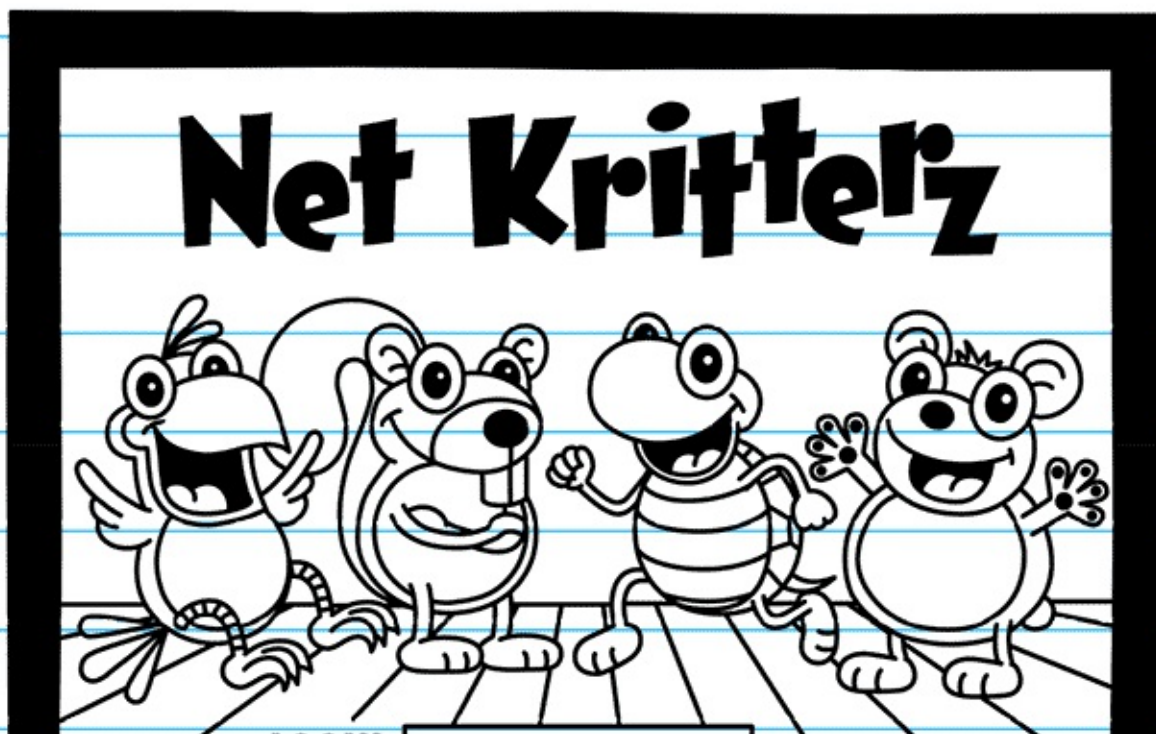
I'm a little embarrassed to say this, but I actually got attached to that GRAPEFRUIT, too. But after a while it started to rot, and Dad

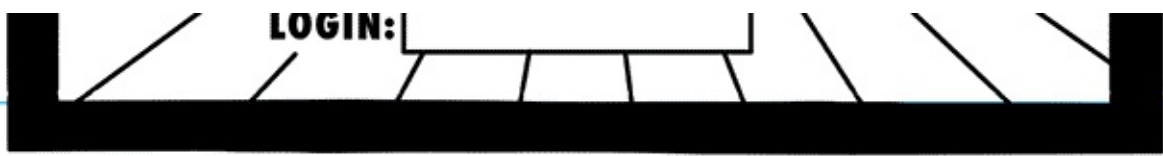
traced the weird smell back to my Alfrendo decoy.



Mom didn't seem too upset that I'd lost my doll,
but I will say she's never left me alone in the
house with Manny for more than fifteen minutes.

Like I said, though, it was nice to have
something to take care of, and I missed that
feeling. So these days I've been spending a lot of
time playing this game called Net Kritterz.





In fact, I've been playing Net Kritterz every
free second I get. The basic idea is that you have
to feed your pet and keep it happy. And if your
pet is happy, you get tokens so you can buy it
clothes and furniture and stuff like that.

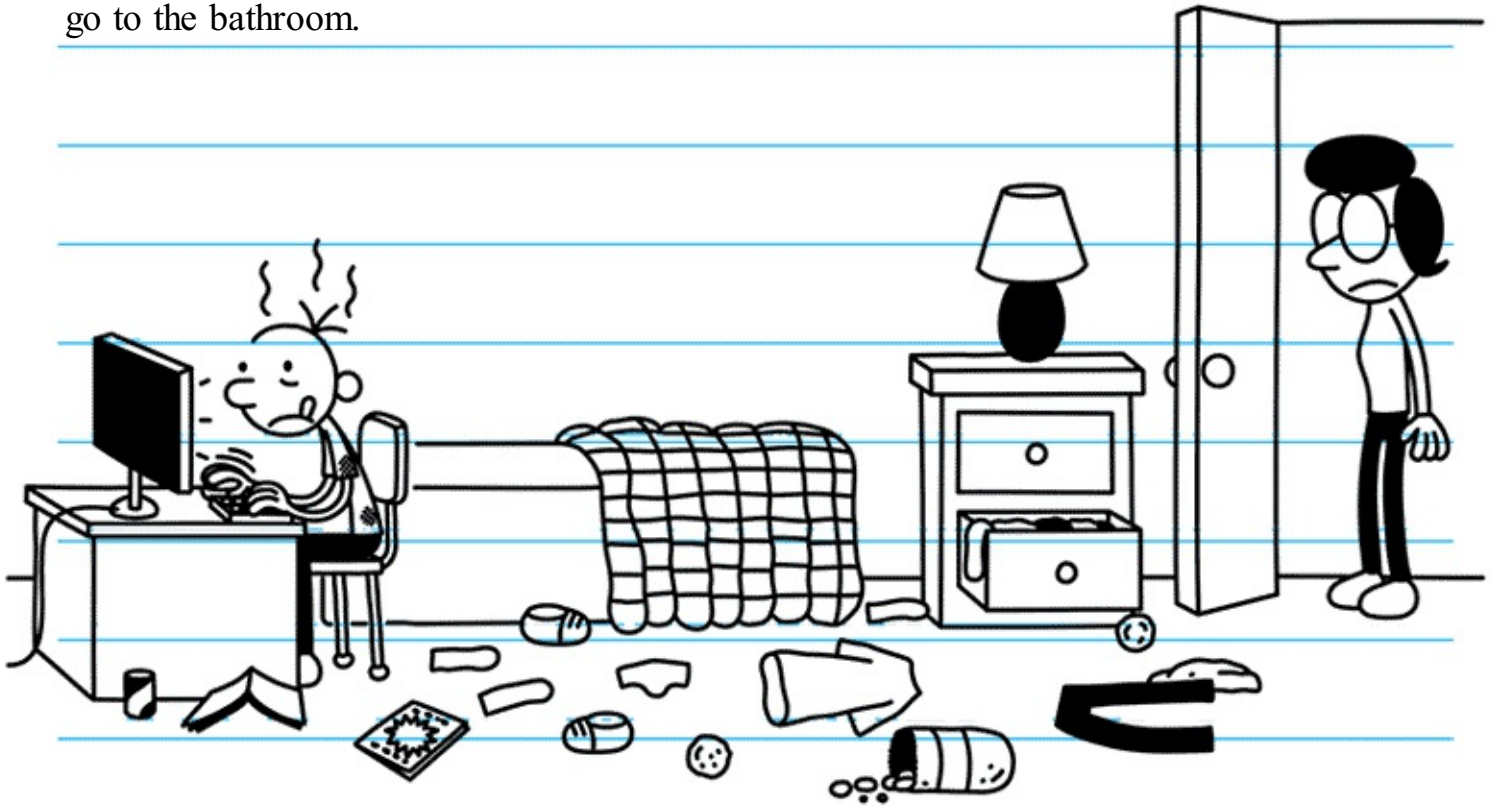
I've played so much that my pet Chihuahua has
a mansion with an indoor swimming pool, a bowling
alley, and about 150 different outfits.

The only thing I'm not happy about is his
name. Mom's the one who set up my account,
and I can't figure out how to change the name
she registered with.



**GREGORY'S LITTLE
FRIEND**

Mom says I take better care of my virtual pet
than I do myself, and I guess I can't
argue with her there. Over the weekend I played
for sixteen hours without even taking a break to
go to the bathroom.



But if you don't keep getting your pet new
stuff, it starts to look unhappy, and that really
stresses me out.

MOOD METER
**GREGORY'S
LITTLE
FRIEND IS
FEELING:**



QUEASY



The problem is you can only earn a certain number

of tokens, and after that you have to buy them

with real money. Unfortunately, I don't have my

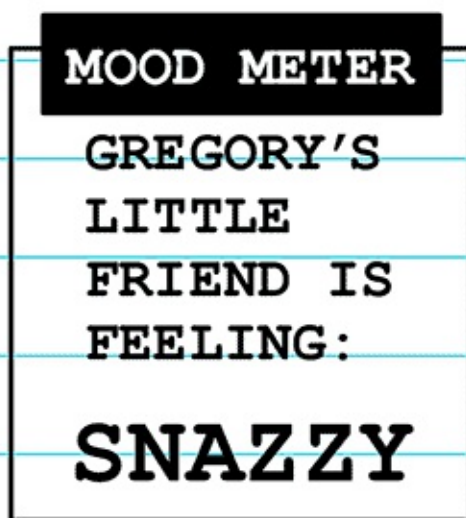
own credit card, so that means I have to beg

Mom and Dad to use theirs.

And it's not real easy to convince Dad to break

open his wallet so you can buy a fancy outfit for

your virtual pet.



This year I'm gonna ask for a bunch of Kritterz

Kash for Christmas. But I'm still trying to figure

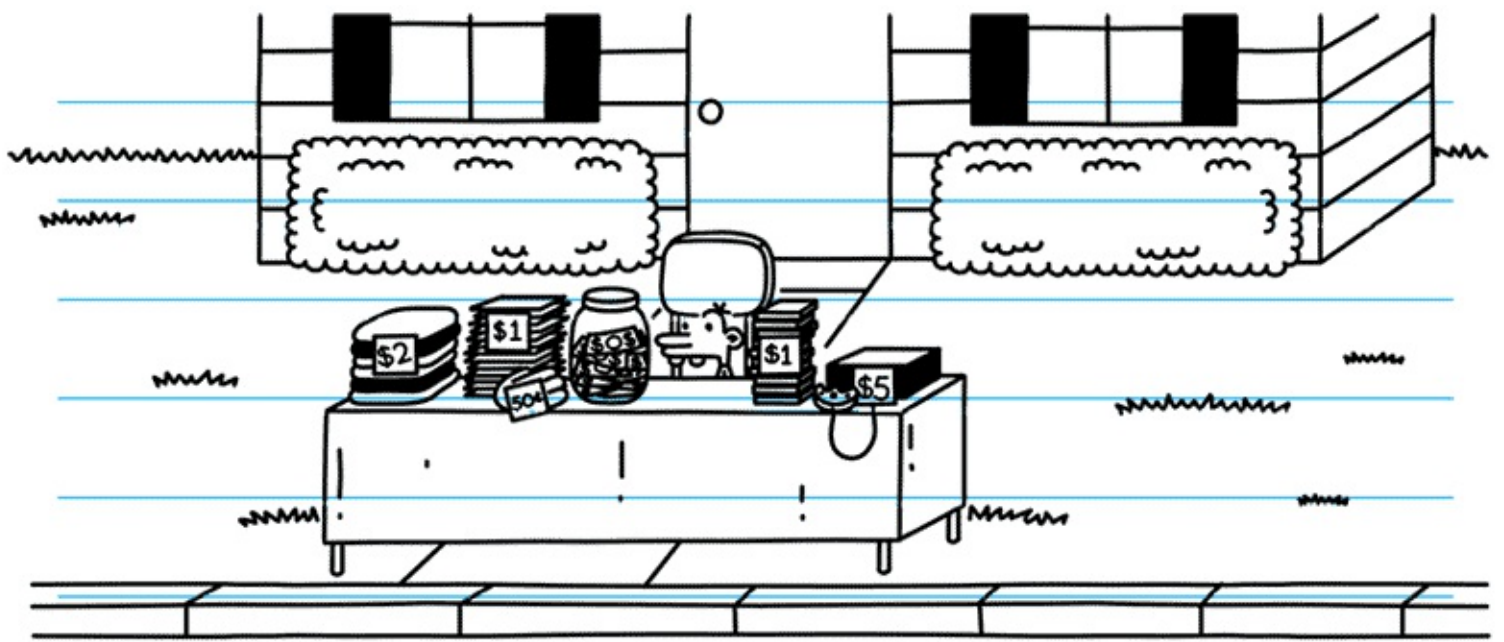
out what to put on the rest of my wish list.

I could actually use a lot of different things,

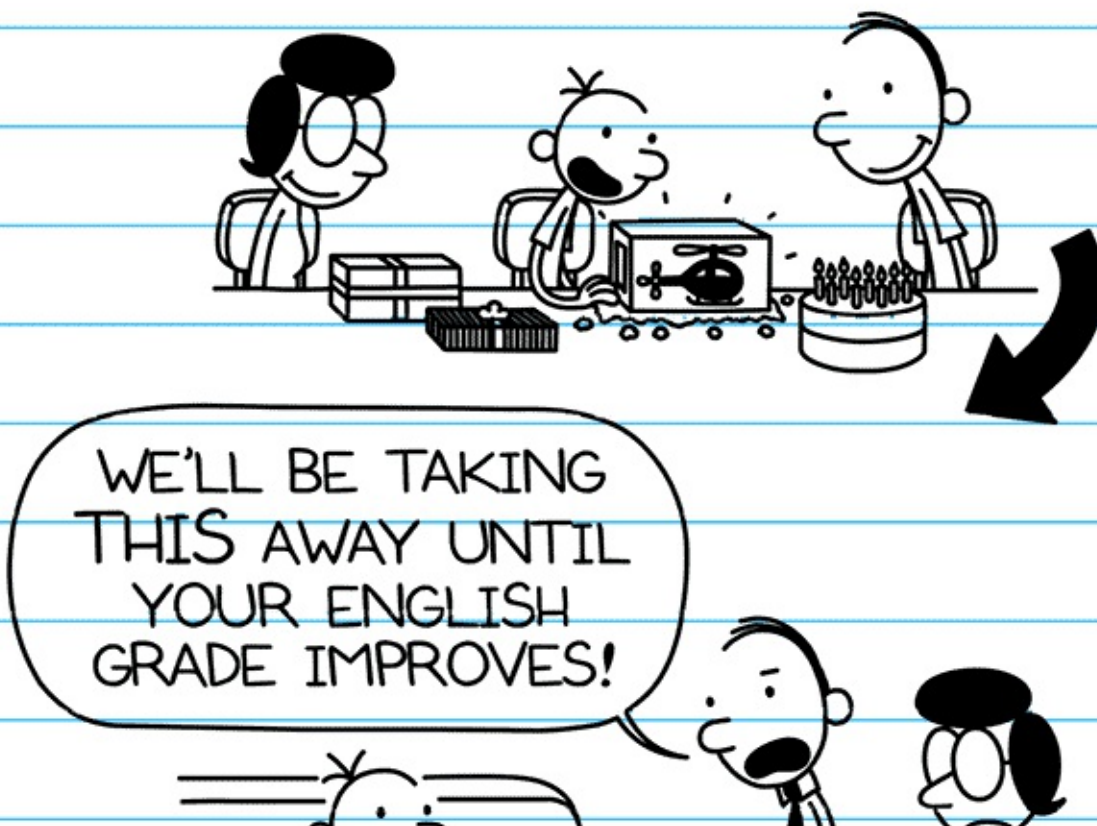
because a couple weeks ago when I spent the

night at the hospital getting my tonsils out,

Manny sold half of everything I owned.



But I'm not so sure I should ask for a normal
gift like a video game or a toy this year. What
I've realized is that every time you get something
cool for your birthday or for Christmas, within a
week it's being used against you.





One thing I know for sure is that this year

I'm only accepting store-bought presents. Last

Christmas, Mom gave me a really nice hand-knit

blanket, and I had that thing wrapped around

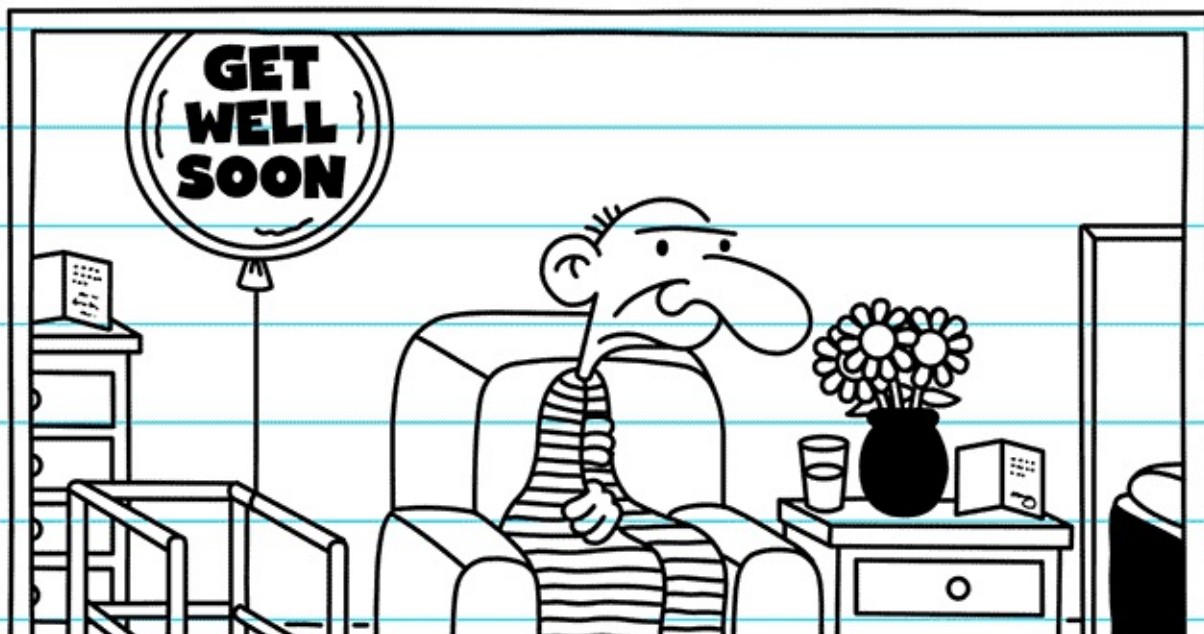
me for half the winter.

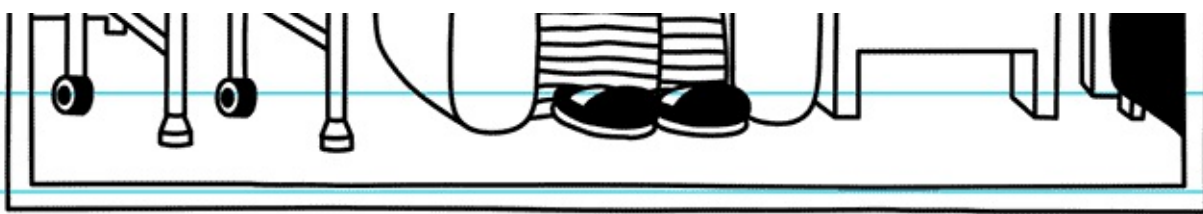


But I found a picture of the same blanket on Great

Uncle Bruce, who passed away a few years ago, so I

pawned it off on Rodrick for his birthday.



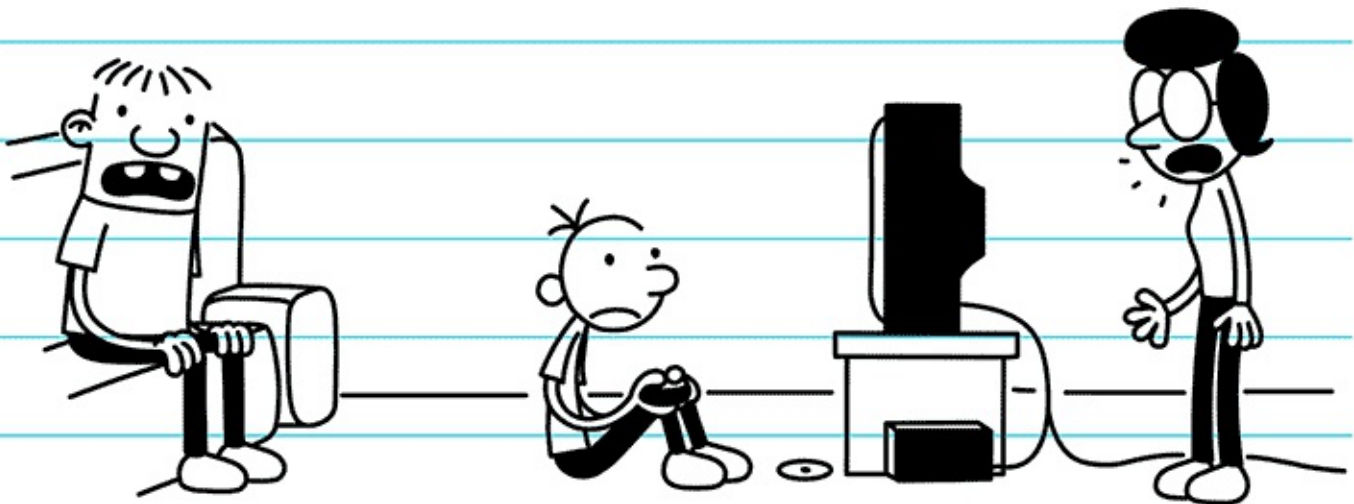


Sunday

I was gonna play Net Kritterz all weekend,
but yesterday Mom said the amount of time I'm
spending playing that game is "unhealthy" and
that I had to interact with a "real live person."

So I called up Rowley and asked him to come
over, even though I was still a little bothered by
the whole skipping thing.

When Rowley got to my house, we sat down in
front of the TV to play video games, but Mom
said we had to shut off the machine and interact
"face-to-face."



But one of the things that makes my friendship

with Rowley work is that he doesn't MIND

watching me play video games.

Plus, the reason our ancestors invented technology

in the first place was so they didn't HAVE to

interact with one another.

Mom sent me and Rowley down to the basement,

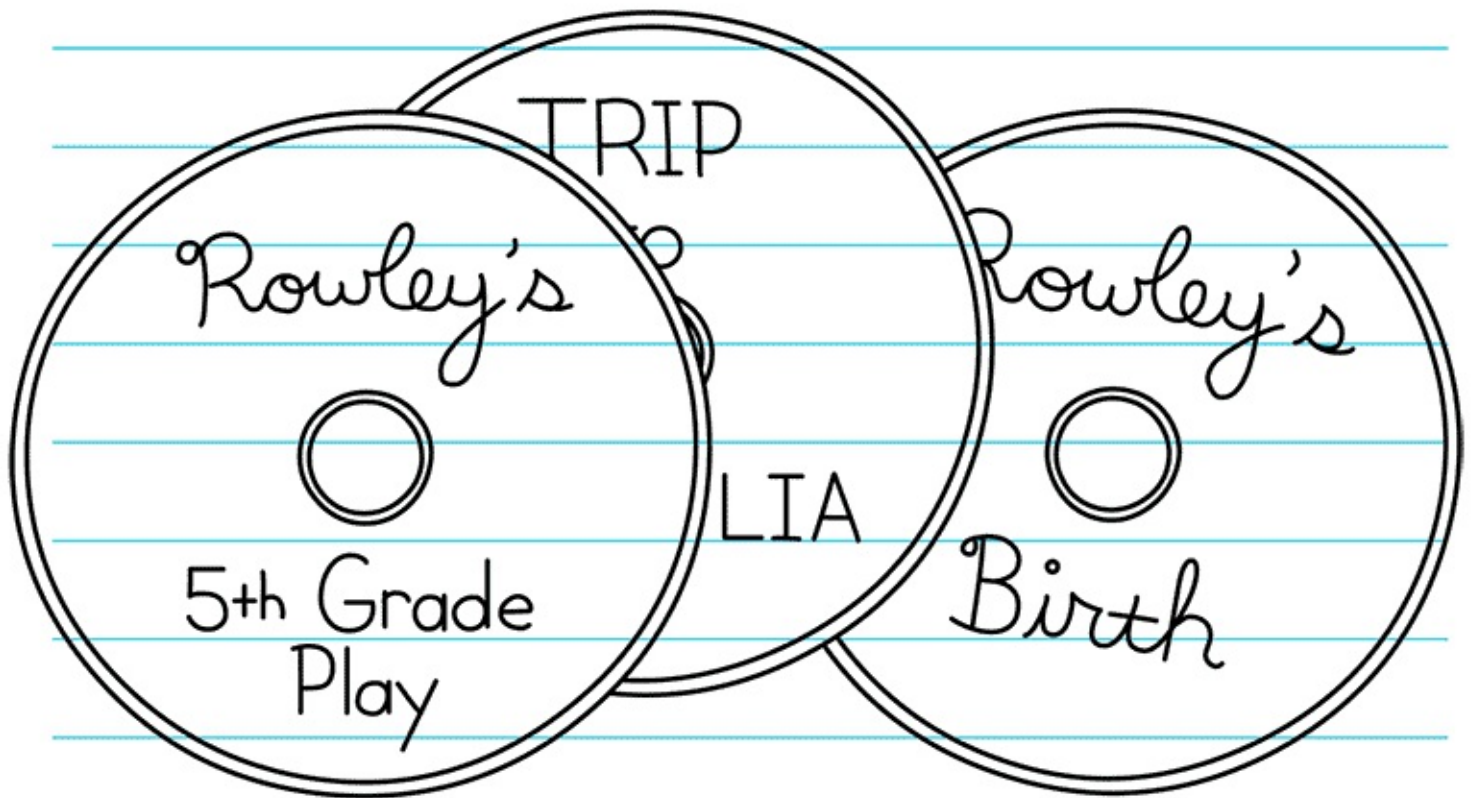
and the two of us tried to figure out what to do.

I'd asked Rowley to bring some DVDs with him so

we could stay up late watching movies.

But he only brought HOME movies, and you

couldn't PAY me to watch THOSE.

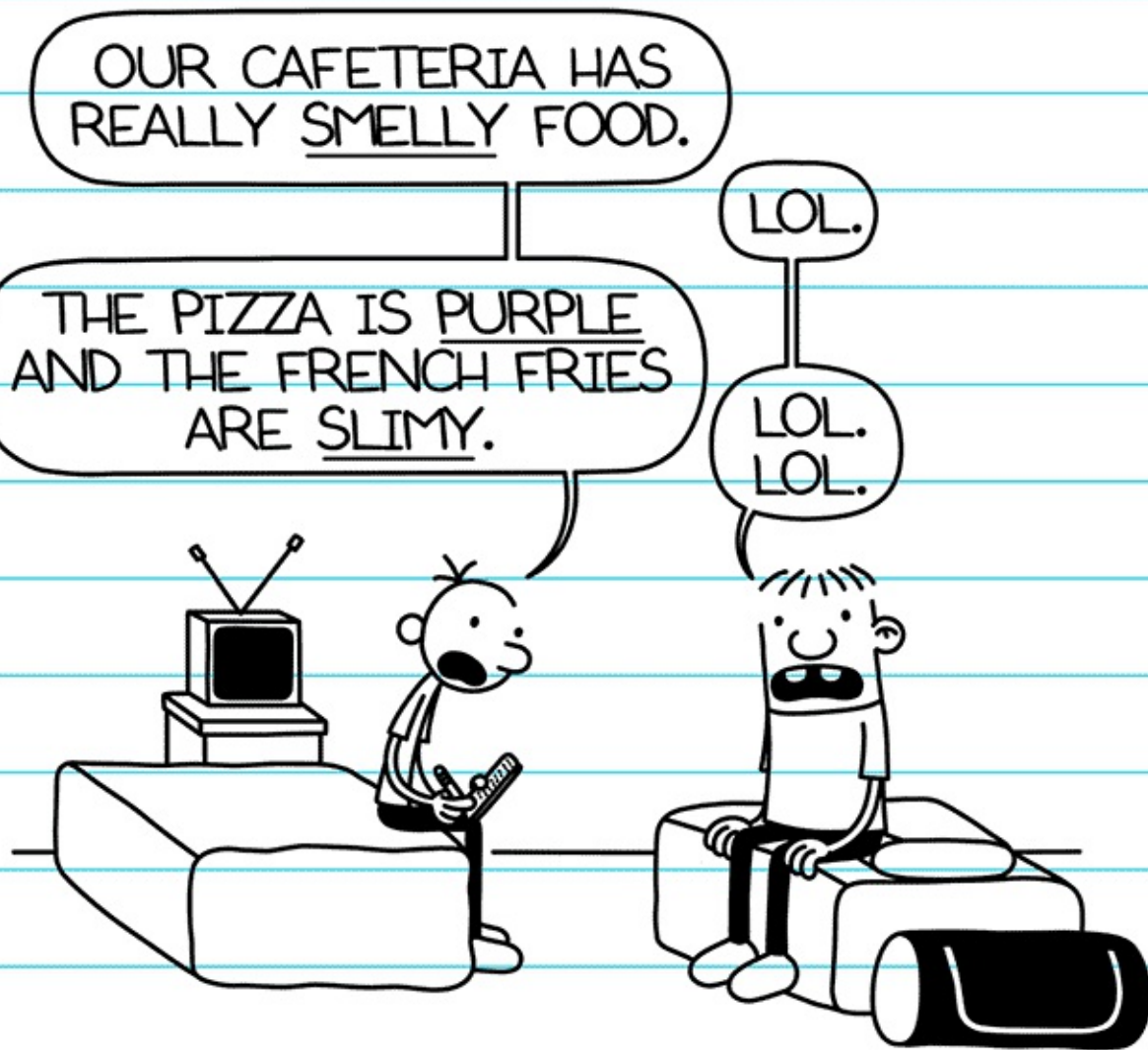


Mom brought us down some "Wacky Sentences"

books, where you fill in the blanks to create

funny phrases.

For the first round, Rowley came up with the words and I wrote them down in the blanks. The phrases we made were actually pretty funny, but what wasn't funny was Rowley's new habit of saying "lol" instead of laughing.

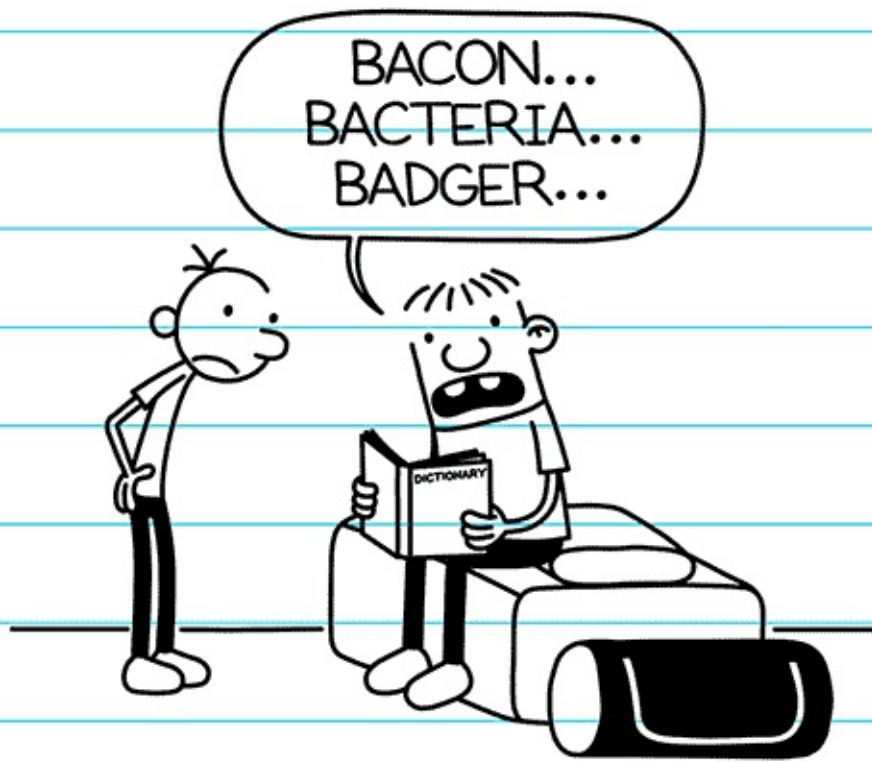


It was really driving me crazy. So we switched roles, and I came up with the words instead. Rowley started by asking me for the name of a sport, so I said "volleyball." But he told me it's "bolleyball," with

a “b.” So then we got into this huge argument about

what letter “volleyball” starts with.

I found a dictionary and handed it to Rowley and told him to look it up himself. But instead of flipping to the letter “v,” Rowley read every single word in the “b” section. And when he couldn’t find “bolleyball,” he started over from the beginning.



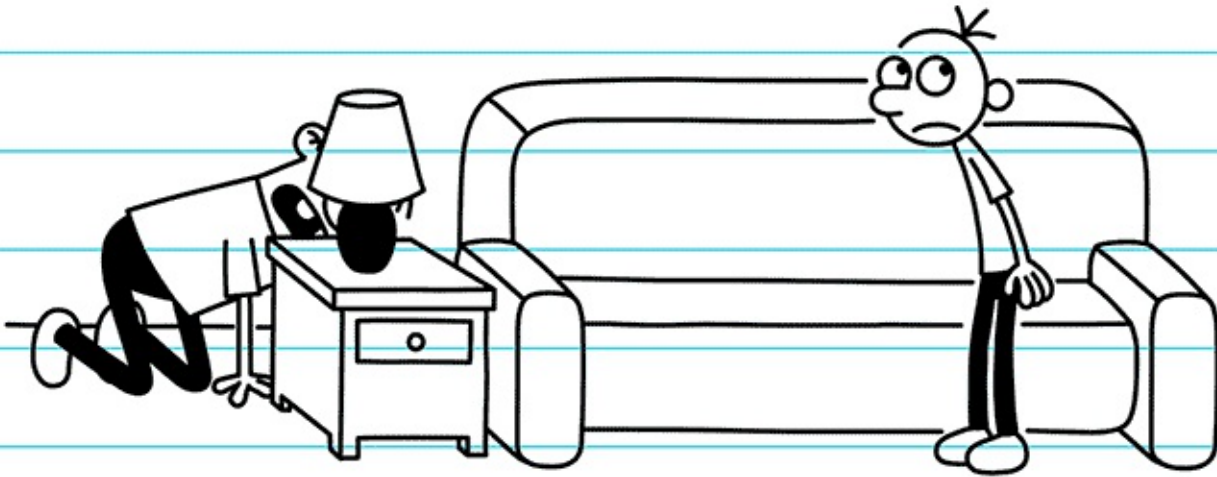
Rowley accused me of having an outdated dictionary and said that’s why “bolleyball” wasn’t in it, so then we got into an argument about what year volleyball was invented.

By this point Rowley was really getting on my

nerves, and I realized we'd better change gears

or we were gonna end up in a fight, as usual.

I told Rowley maybe we should do something different, and he said he wanted to play Hide-and-Seek. But the problem with playing Hide-and-Seek with Rowley is he thinks that when he can't see you, you can't see him. So that makes him really easy to find.



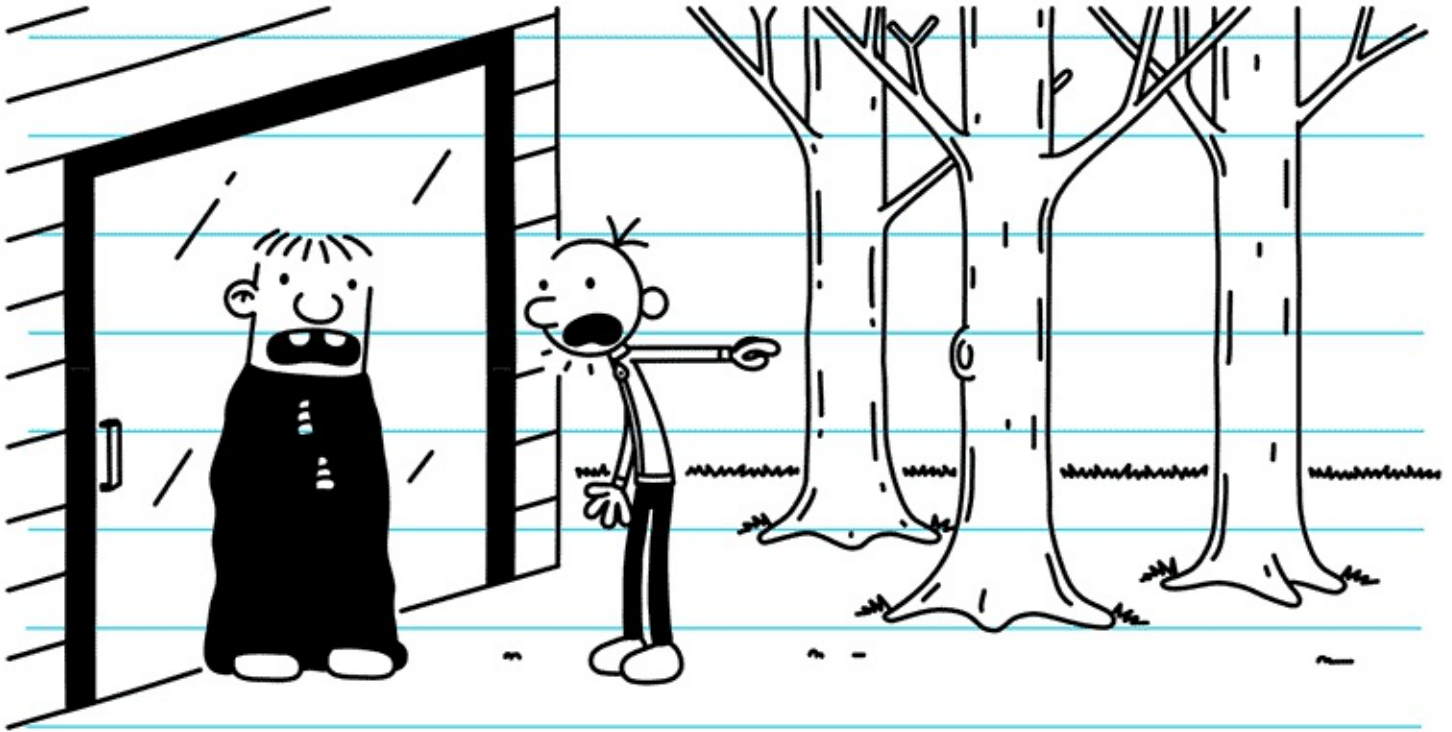
I decided we just needed a break from each other, so I came up with an idea. I told Rowley we were gonna see who was braver, me or him, and we stepped out the sliding glass door.

Each of us had to walk into the woods and write our name on the tree fort we built last summer.

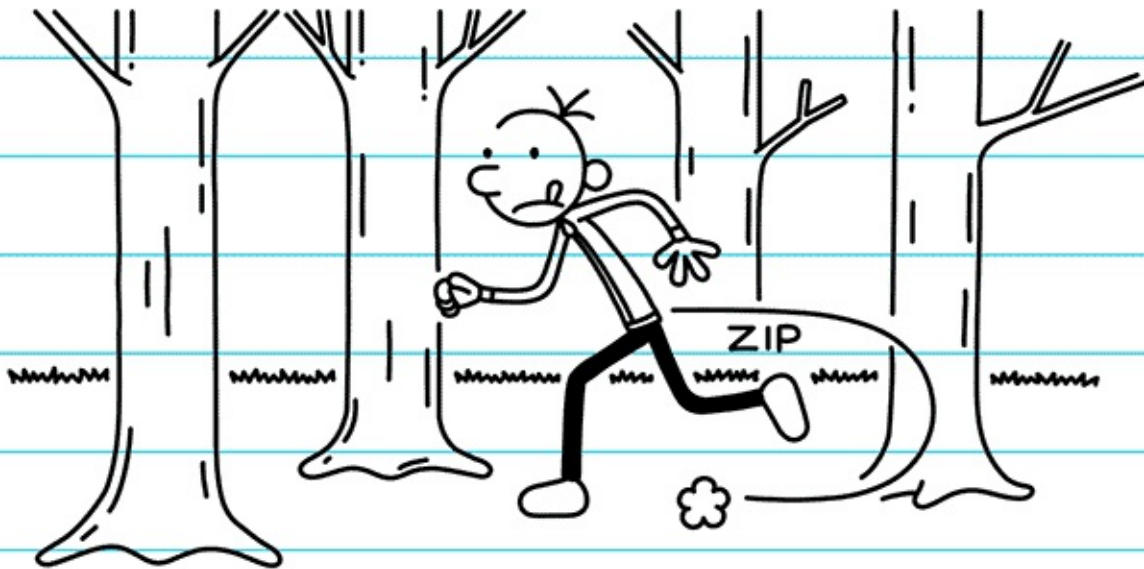
And whoever chickened out was wrong about volleyball and had to call the other guy “sir” for

the rest of his life.

Rowley seemed to think that was a fair deal.



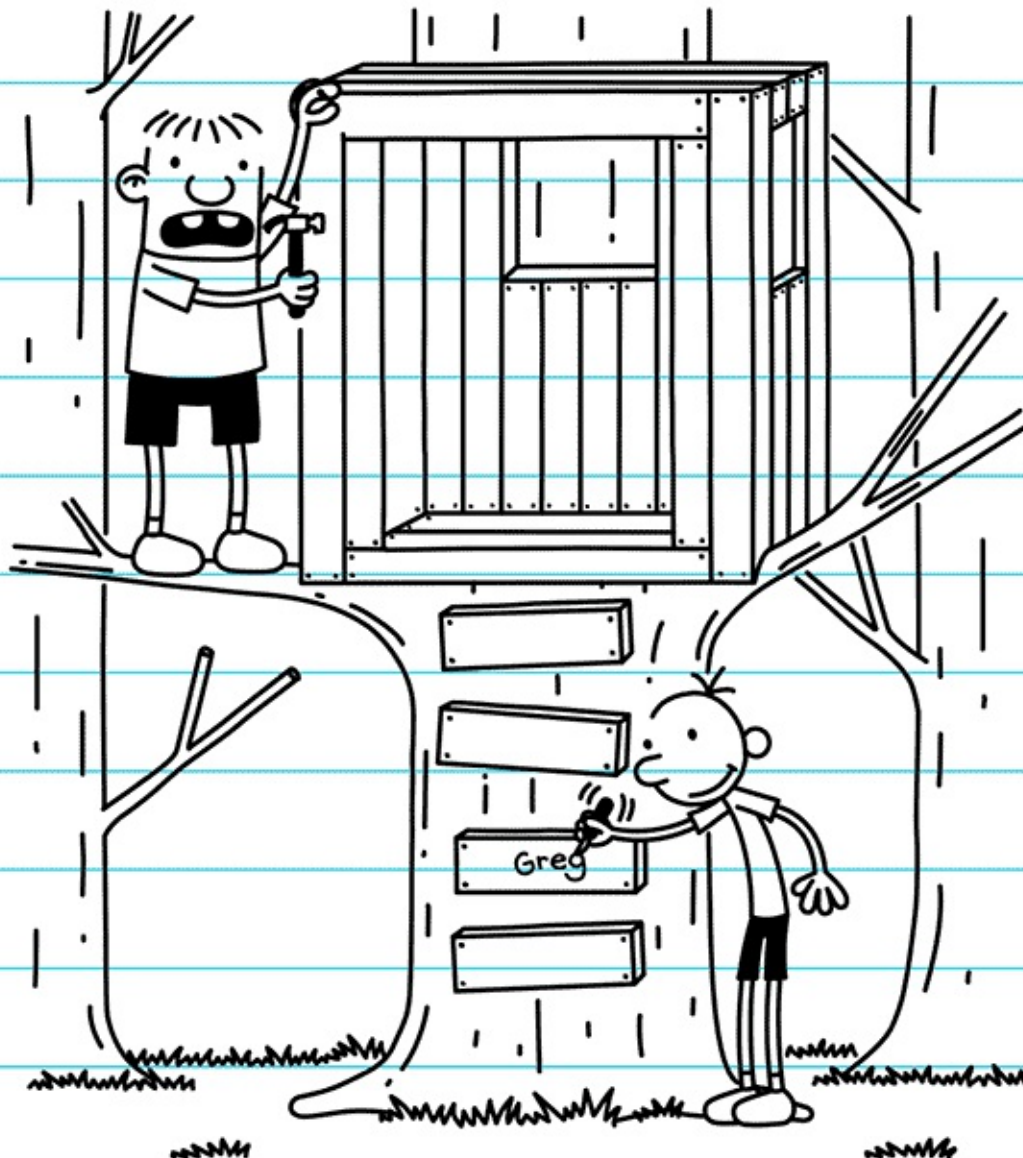
I told Rowley I'd go first, and I walked into
the woods. But as soon as I knew he couldn't see
me, I ran around to the front of my house.



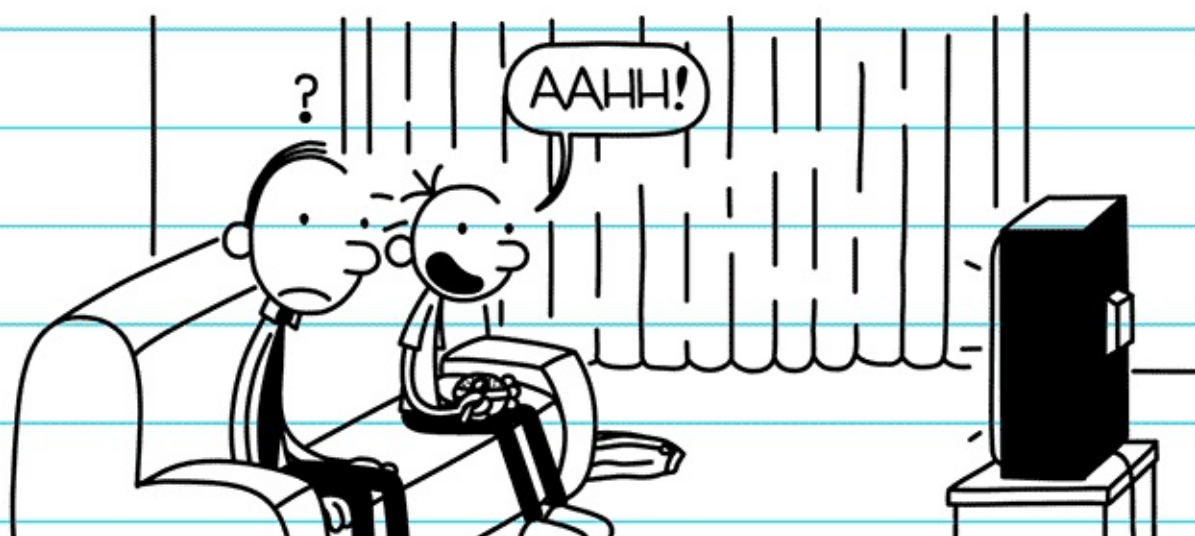
There's no way I was gonna go into those
woods by myself at night. I had written my name
on the tree fort when me and Rowley built it over

the summer, and that's the reason I came up

with the dare.



I walked in the front door, made a bowl of ice cream, and relaxed for a while. And I have to say, some time to myself was just what I needed.





Once I finished my ice cream, I walked around
the side of the house, rubbed some dirt on my face
and clothes, then came running out of the woods.



I probably shouldn't have added that last part,
because Rowley totally gave up on the dare after that.

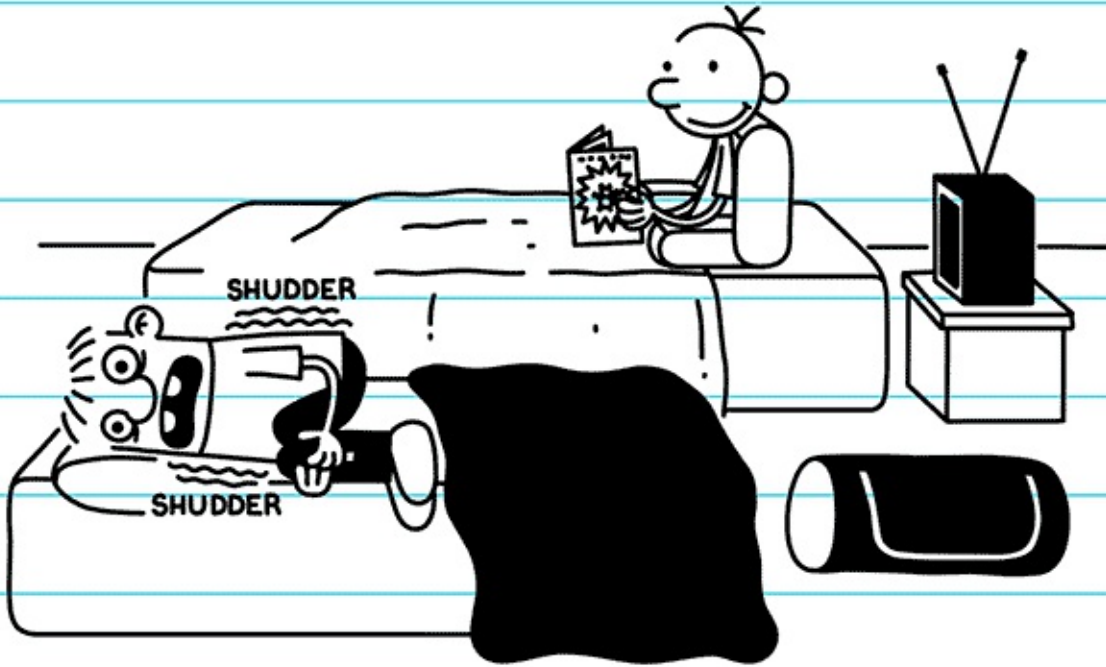




Anyway, that break was just what the doctor

ordered, and the rest of the night was

argument-free.



This morning my family headed to church, and

Rowley came with us. I don't think Rowley's

family really goes to church that much, so he's

not used to all the rules about what you're

supposed to do and when. So I always have to

tell him when you need to kneel and stand and

all that.

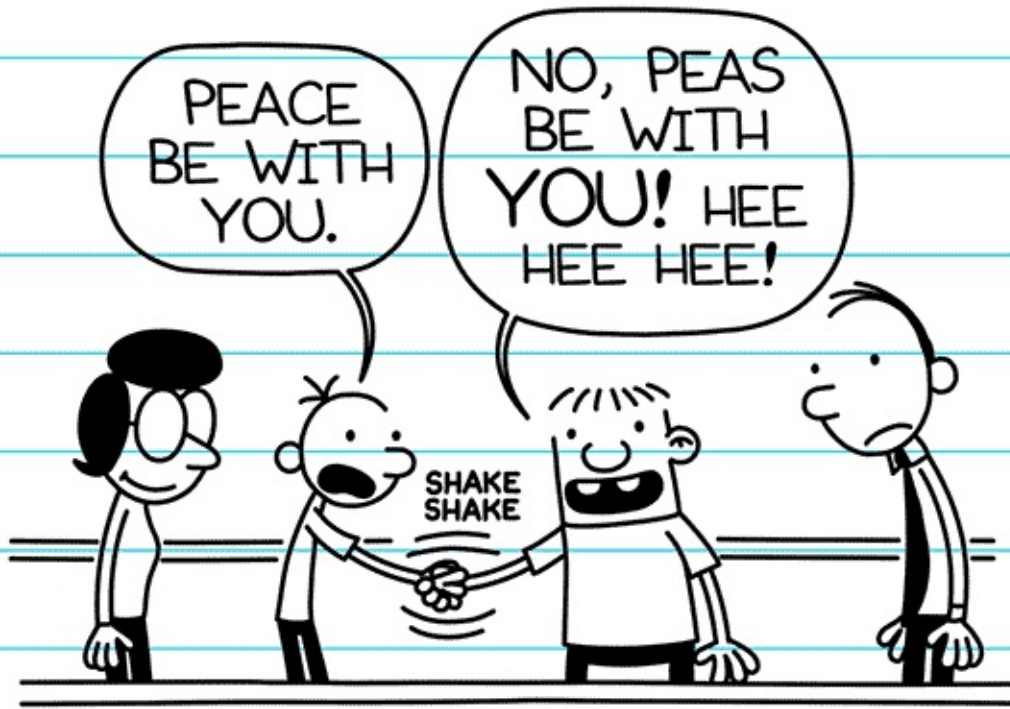
Toward the end we all did the "Peace be with you"

part, where you're supposed to shake everyone's

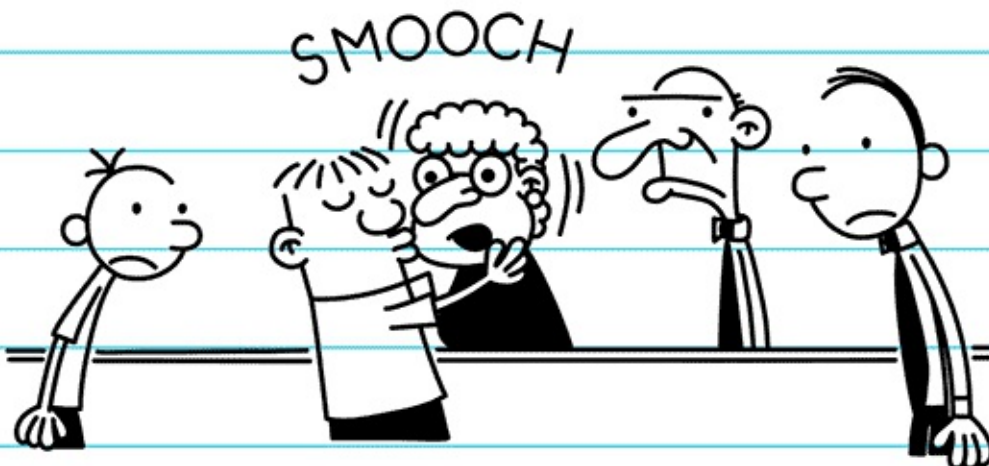
hand. I said "Peace be with you" to Rowley, but

he started giggling.

I think he must've thought I said "Peas be with you," like the vegetable.



I don't think Rowley totally understood that you're just supposed to shake hands with people, either, because when the woman in the pew behind us said "Peace be with you," Rowley gave her a big wet kiss on the cheek.

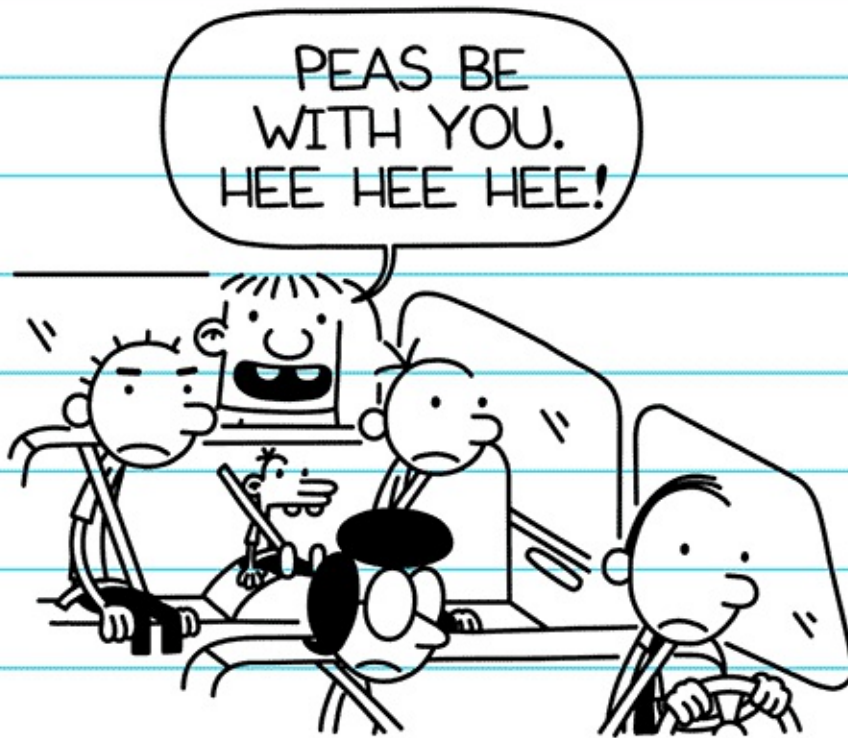


After church we dropped Rowley off at his house,

and I was glad he was gone and that I could go

back to playing my game.

And something tells me Mom felt the same way.

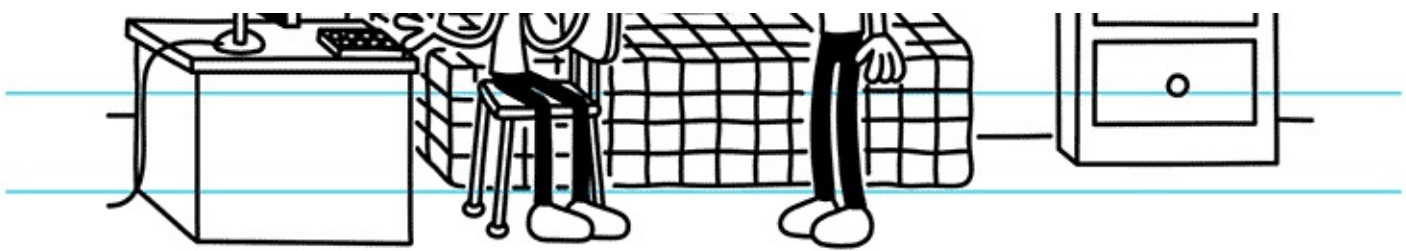


DECEMBER

Tuesday

Today I was playing Net Kritterz in my room,
and Mom walked in. She watched for a while, then
asked what I was doing in the game. I explained
that I was watching my Chihuahua watch TV,
because if your virtual pet watches at least two
hours of commercials a day, it makes him happy and
you get twenty bonus tokens.





Then I asked Mom if she wouldn't mind spotting
me ten bucks because the Net Kritterz store
just started carrying trampoline shoes and I was
pretty sure Gregory's Little Friend would really
like to have them.

But I guess I picked the wrong time to ask Mom
for a loan, because it seemed like she was in a bad
mood. She said I didn't have any appreciation for
the "value of money" and that if I wanted to pay
for my Net Kritterz "habit," it was gonna have
to come out of my own pocket.



I told Mom I didn't have any money of my own
and that's why I kept hitting up her and Dad.
But she said there were plenty of things I
could do to earn some. She said it's supposed to

snow tonight and I could go out and shovel our

neighbors' driveways tomorrow.

I really don't feel comfortable knocking on

doors and asking our neighbors for money. My

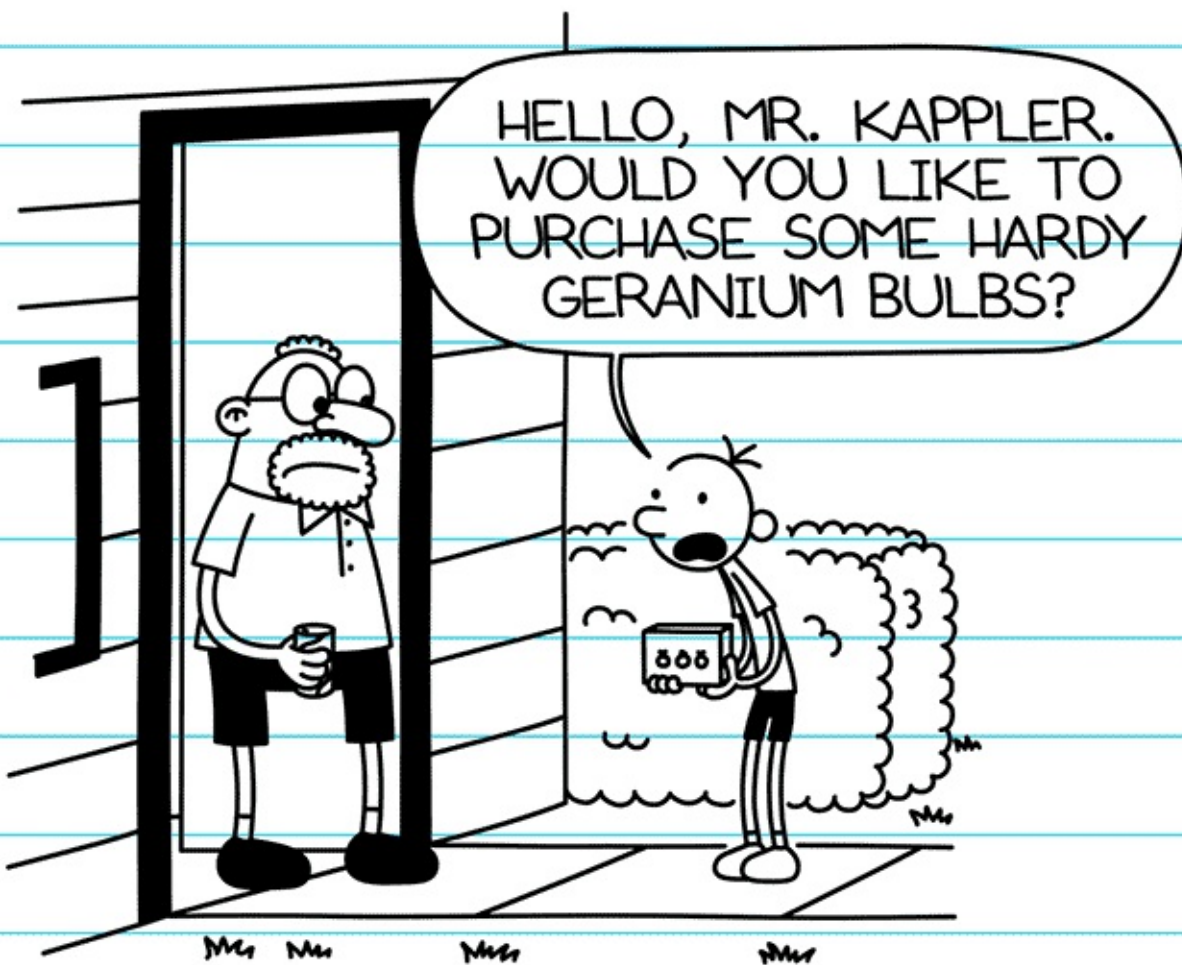
school has three fundraisers a year, and I have

to go from house to house begging people I

hardly know to buy something from me.

And half the time I don't even really know what

it is I'm selling.



I wish the school would give us something useful

to sell, like candy bars or cookies. The Girl Scouts

are lucky, because at least they get to sell stuff

people actually want.

The way the system works with these fundraisers

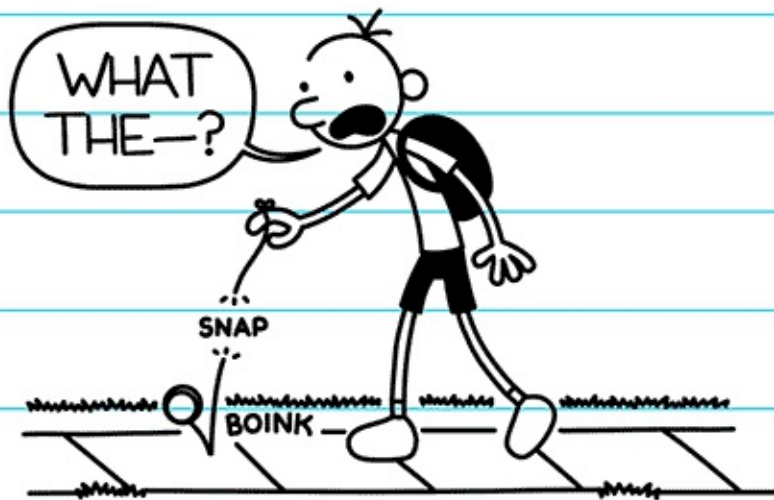
is that us students do all the work and the

school gives us these junky prizes as rewards.

One time I sold twenty dollars' worth of gourmet

coffee beans, and all I got was a cheap yo-yo

that broke before I even got off school property.



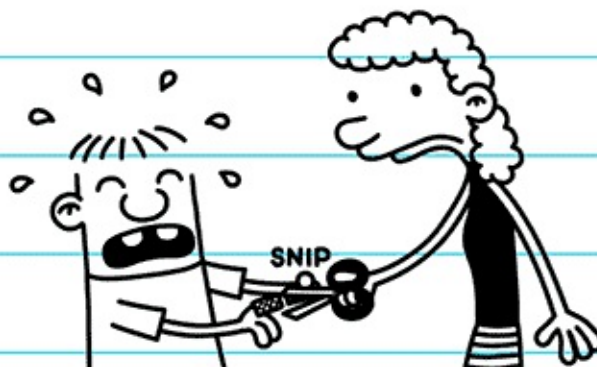
But Rowley really got stiffed. He sold \$150

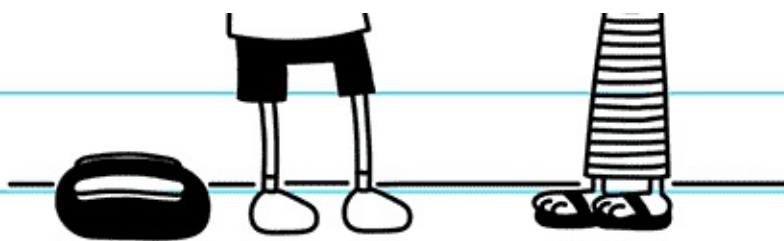
worth of beans and got a Chinese finger trap as

his prize. It actually worked like it was supposed

to, but Rowley couldn't get his fingers out, and

his mom had to cut it off when he got home.

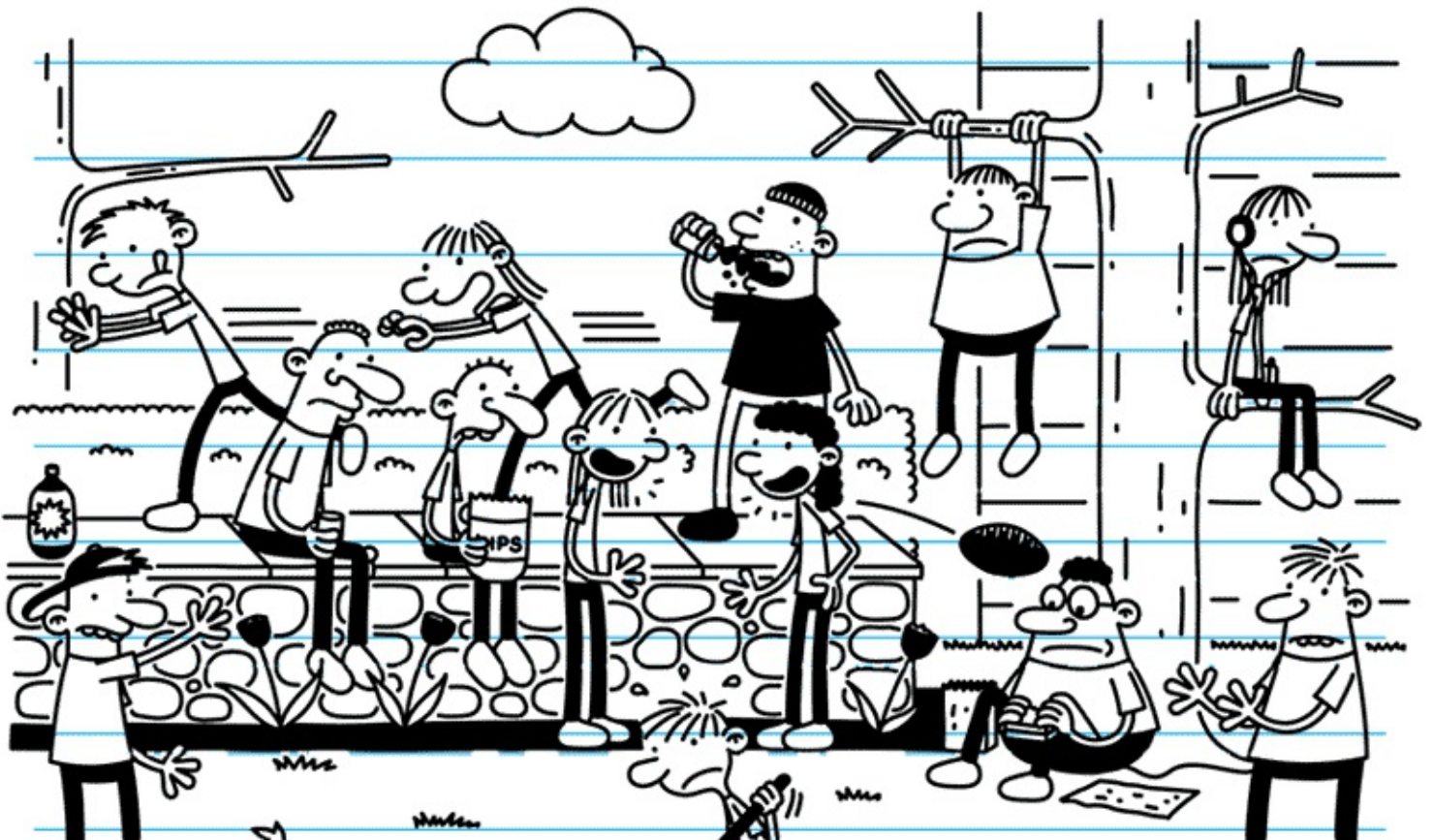




Last year the school tried something different.

They had us sell raffle tickets, and whoever won the raffle would get a spring yard cleanup from the seventh-grade class.

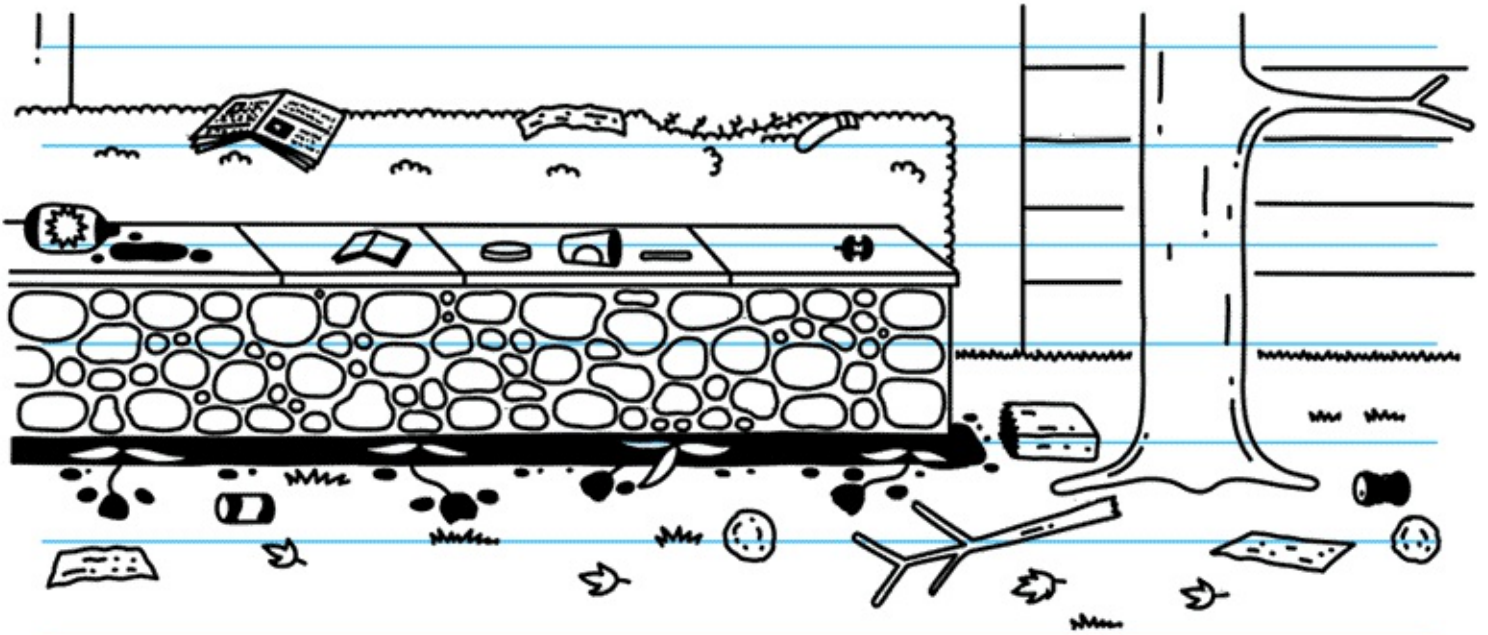
Mrs. Spangler, who lives down the street from me, won the raffle, and on the first day of spring the whole seventh grade showed up at her house. But there were only two rakes for all those kids, so most of the class just ended up sitting around with nothing to do.





And by the time the “spring cleanup” was done, Mrs.

Spangler’s yard was worse off than when it started.



The new thing the school is doing is these

Walkathons. The idea is that we’ll walk around

the track at school a certain number of times, like

one hundred or two hundred laps, and get our

neighbors to sponsor us for each lap we complete.

WALKATHON Sponsor Sheet	
\$0.25/lap	
Name	# of laps
1. <i>Georgette Kramer</i>	100
2. <i>Tony Sinclair</i>	150
3. <i>Henry Nielson</i>	50
4. <i>Leslie Simpson</i>	100

5. Barbara Preston	150
6. Lavar Collison	100
7.	
8.	

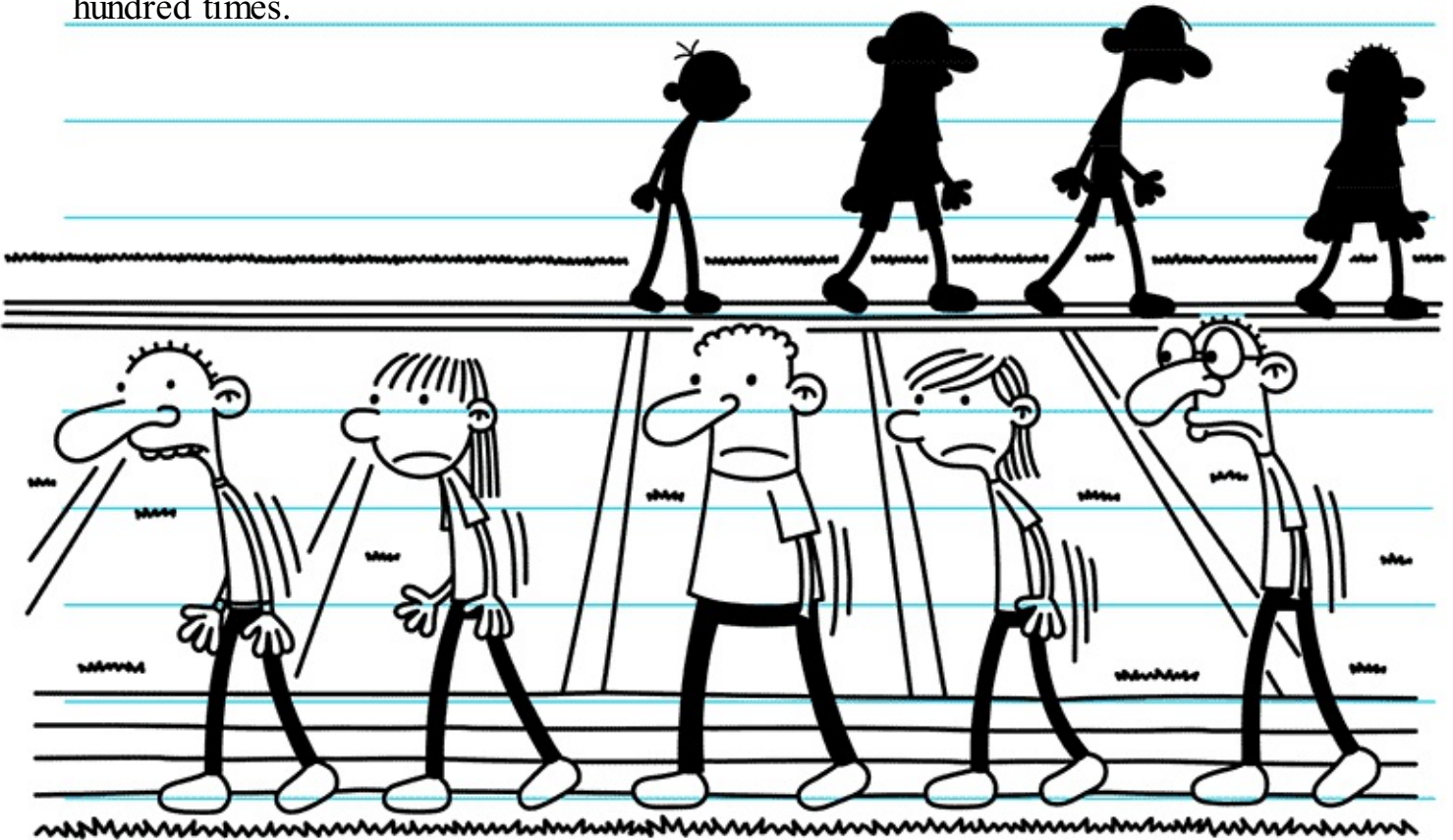
I can understand asking someone to pay for seeds

or coffee beans or whatever, but I don't know

what kind of person gets pleasure out of having

some kid walk around a football field a couple

hundred times.



The reason the school put on the Walkathon in

September was so they could pay for a billboard

near the town park.





I couldn't figure out why the school didn't

just skip the Walkathon and have the kids

clean up the town park instead. But I guess if

the seventh grade was involved, they might've

completely trashed it.

I've done the math, and I've figured out

that each grown-up on my street gives me an

average of twenty-three dollars a year for school

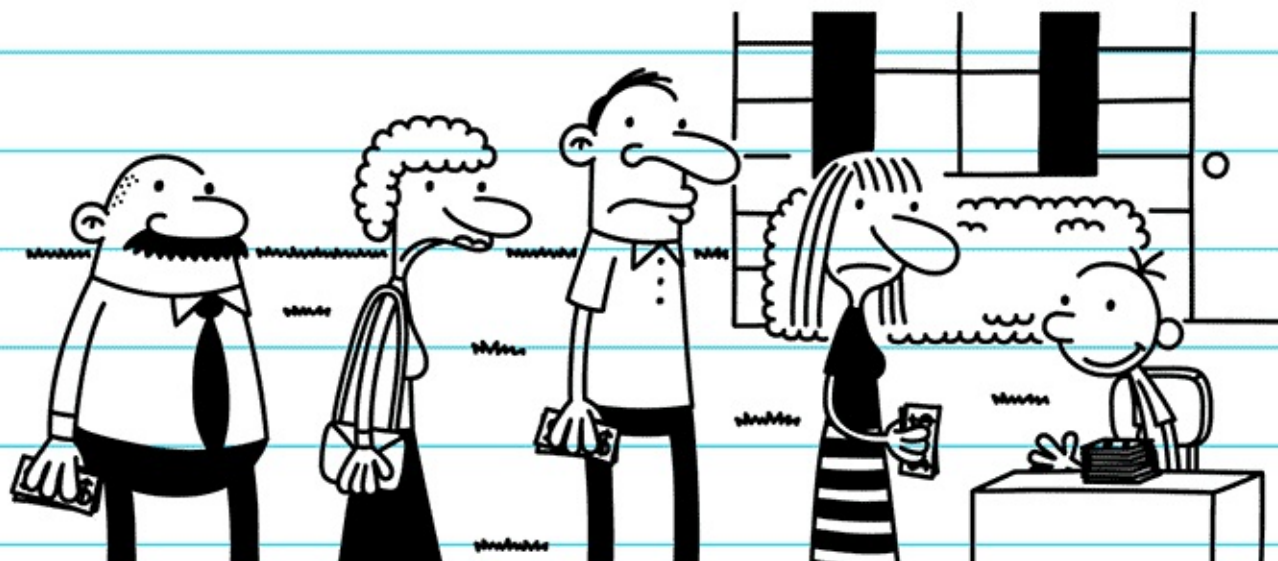
fundraisers.

So I should just invite all the neighbors to my

house once a year and tell them to bring me the

twenty-three bucks in cash, because it sure would

save everyone a lot of pain and anguish.



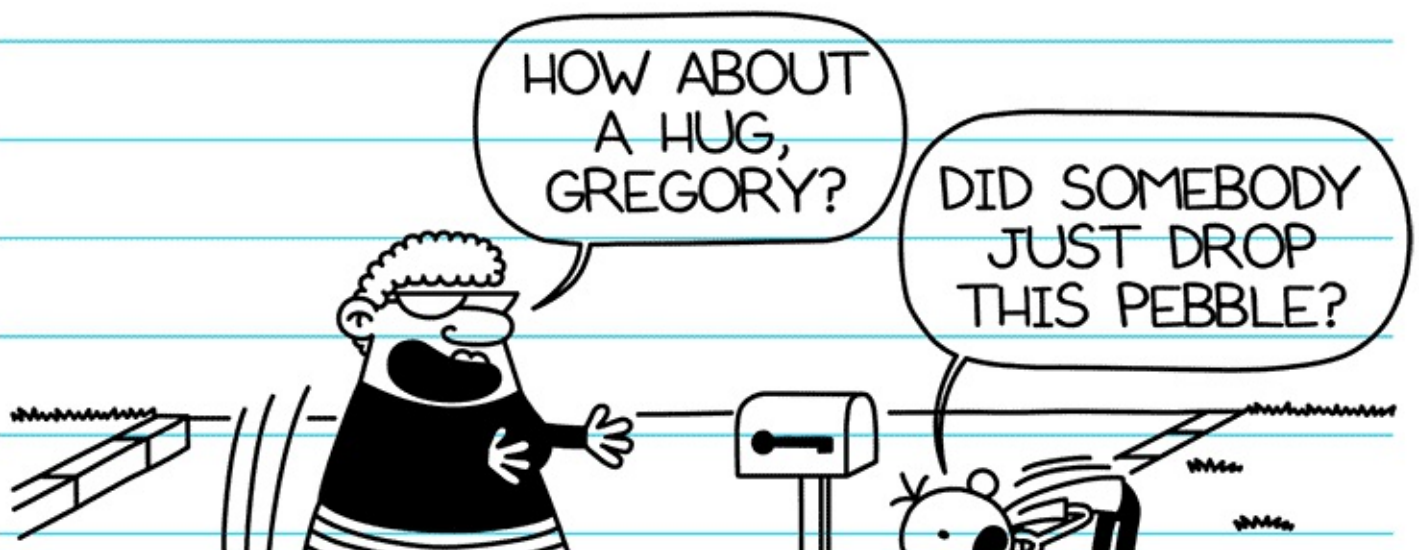


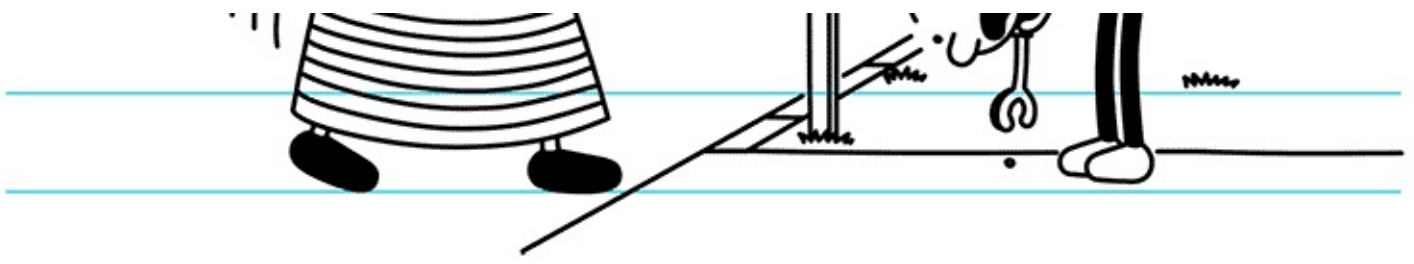
Wednesday

It snowed last night just like Mom said it would,
and while all the other kids in the neighborhood
were enjoying their day off from school, I was
pounding the pavement looking for work.



I thought about whose door I should knock
on first, but it wasn't easy. Mrs. Durocher lives
right across the street, but she's a little too
affectionate, and I usually do my best to avoid her.





Then there's Mr. Alexander, who moved into the

Snellas' house. He must not have worn braces as

a kid, because his teeth aren't very straight.

Unfortunately, the first time Dad met Mr. Alexander

was on Halloween, and Dad must've thought his

teeth weren't real.



So I decided to skip Mr. Alexander's house, too.

There are people who live on my street that I

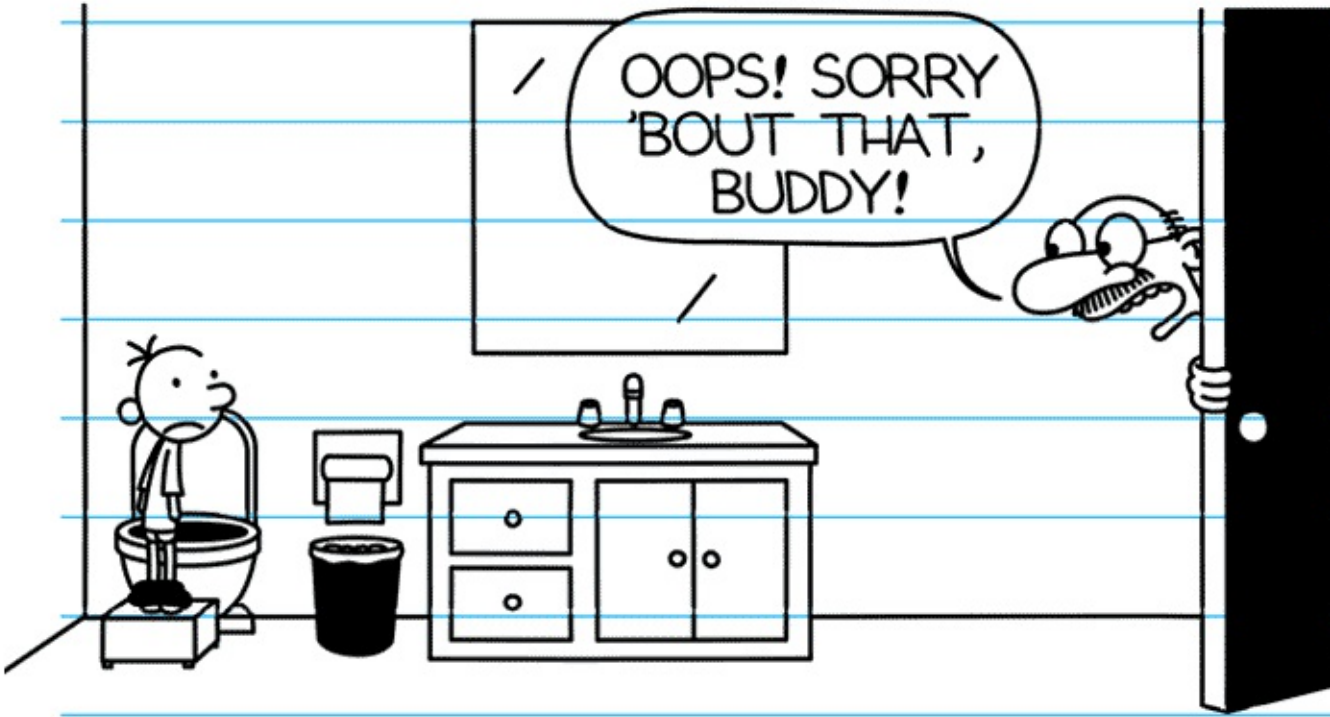
haven't spoken to in years. When I was about

four, Mom and Dad had a cocktail party for some

of the couples in the neighborhood, and I went

downstairs during the party to use the bathroom.

But I guess back then I didn't know you were
supposed to keep the door locked, so Mr. Harkin
walked right in on me.



When I was done I found Mom and told on
Mr. Harkin, and I'm sure he felt like a jerk.



So I'm not about to knock on the door of some

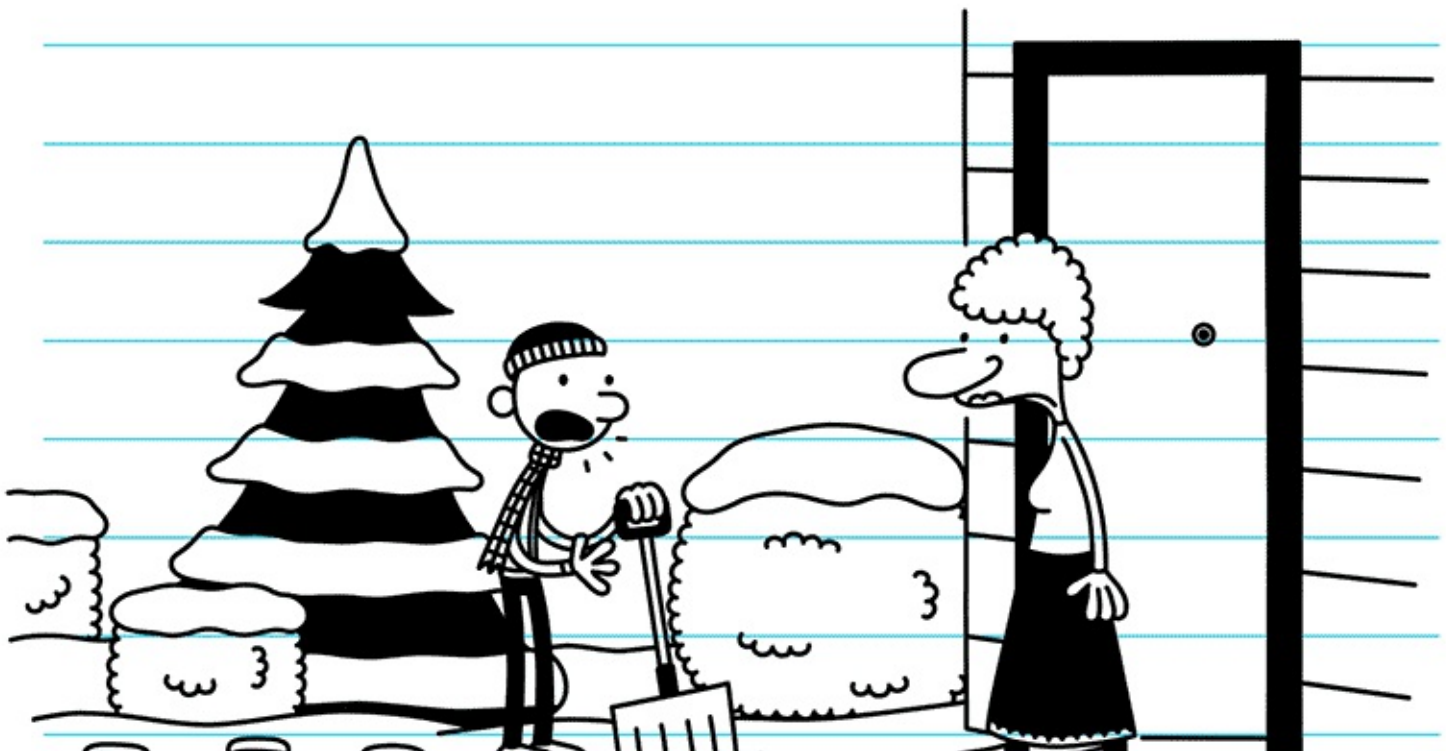
guy I ratted out when I was in preschool and ask

him for money, either.

Today I realized there's just too much history
between me and the people in my neighborhood, so
I decided to go one street over to Prentice Lane
and start fresh.

I walked up to the house on the corner and
knocked on the door. But I recognized the lady
who answered. She was Mrs. Melcher, one of
Gramma's friends from Bingo.

I told Mrs. Melcher I was trying to earn a
little money shoveling people's driveways and that
I'd be happy to do hers for five bucks.





But she told me she never gets visitors and

invited me inside to chat.

I didn't want to be rude, so the next thing I

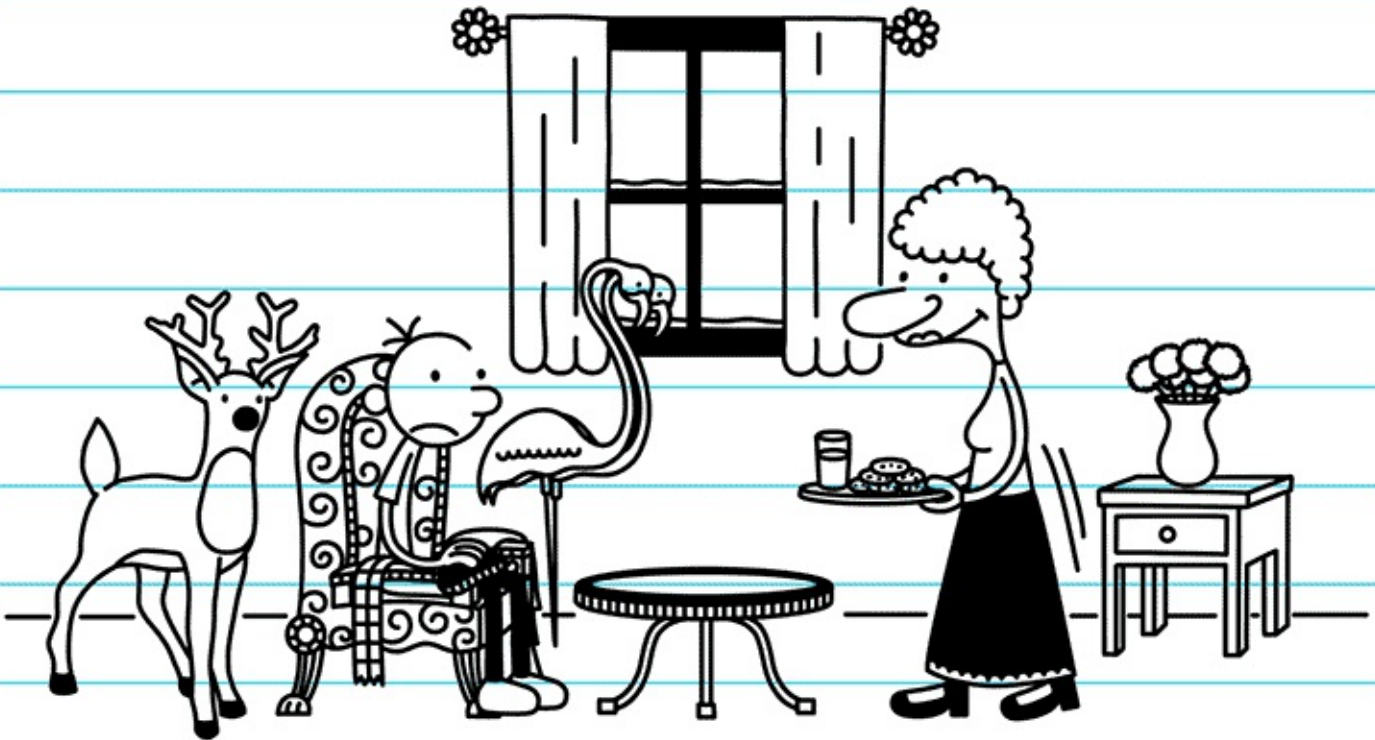
knew I was sitting in Mrs. Melcher's living room

surrounded by the lawn ornaments she took inside

for the winter. I felt a little uncomfortable, but

I figured if I was gonna ask someone for money

the least I could do was try and be polite.



But all I could think about the whole time I

sat there was how much money I could've been

making if I'd just knocked on someone else's

door instead.

I must've been in there for an hour before I

was finally able to steer the conversation back

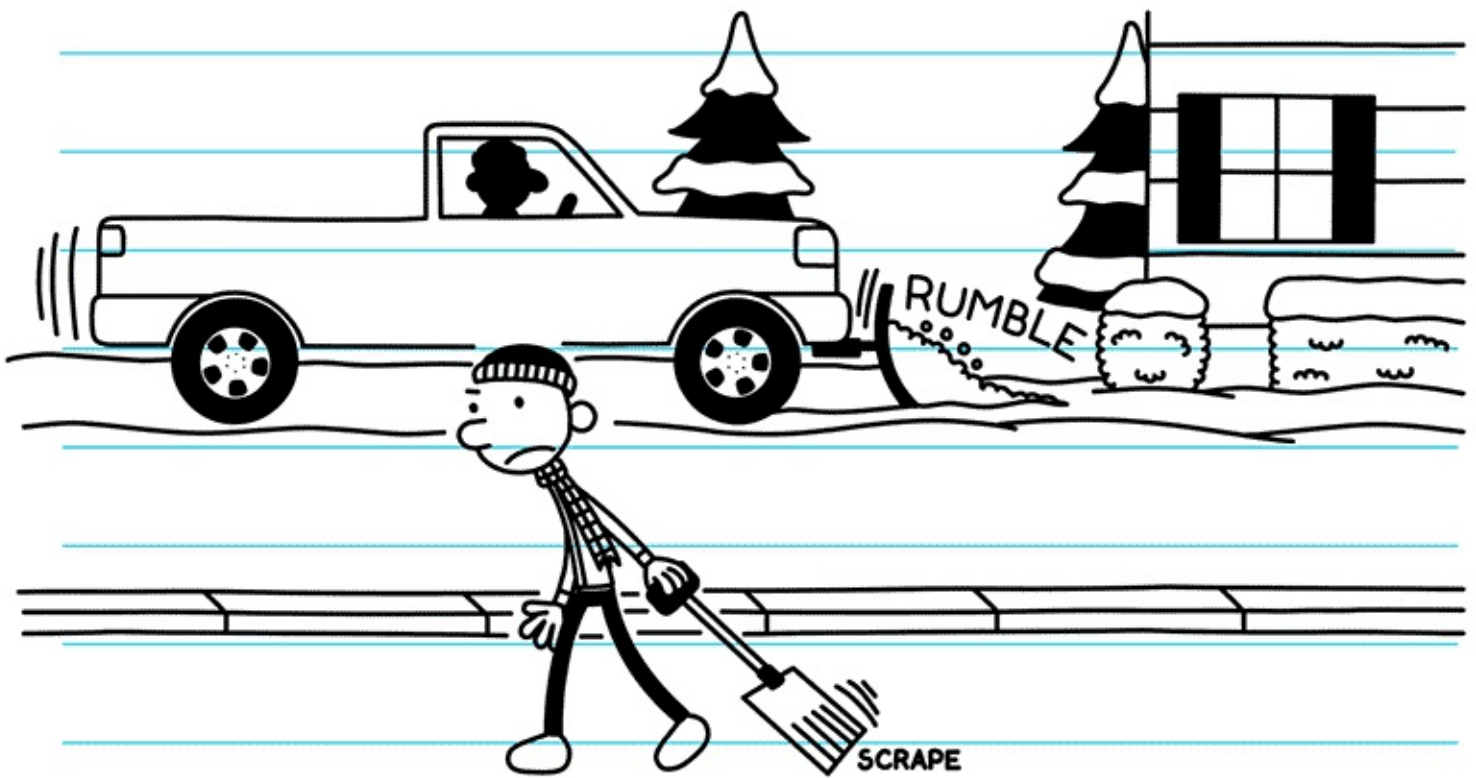
to the subject of me shoveling her driveway.

But Mrs. Melcher said her son was coming by in

his pickup truck any minute and he plows her

driveway for free. So that's an hour of my life

I'll never get back.



I headed back out onto Prentice Lane and

started knocking on doors. I guess most people

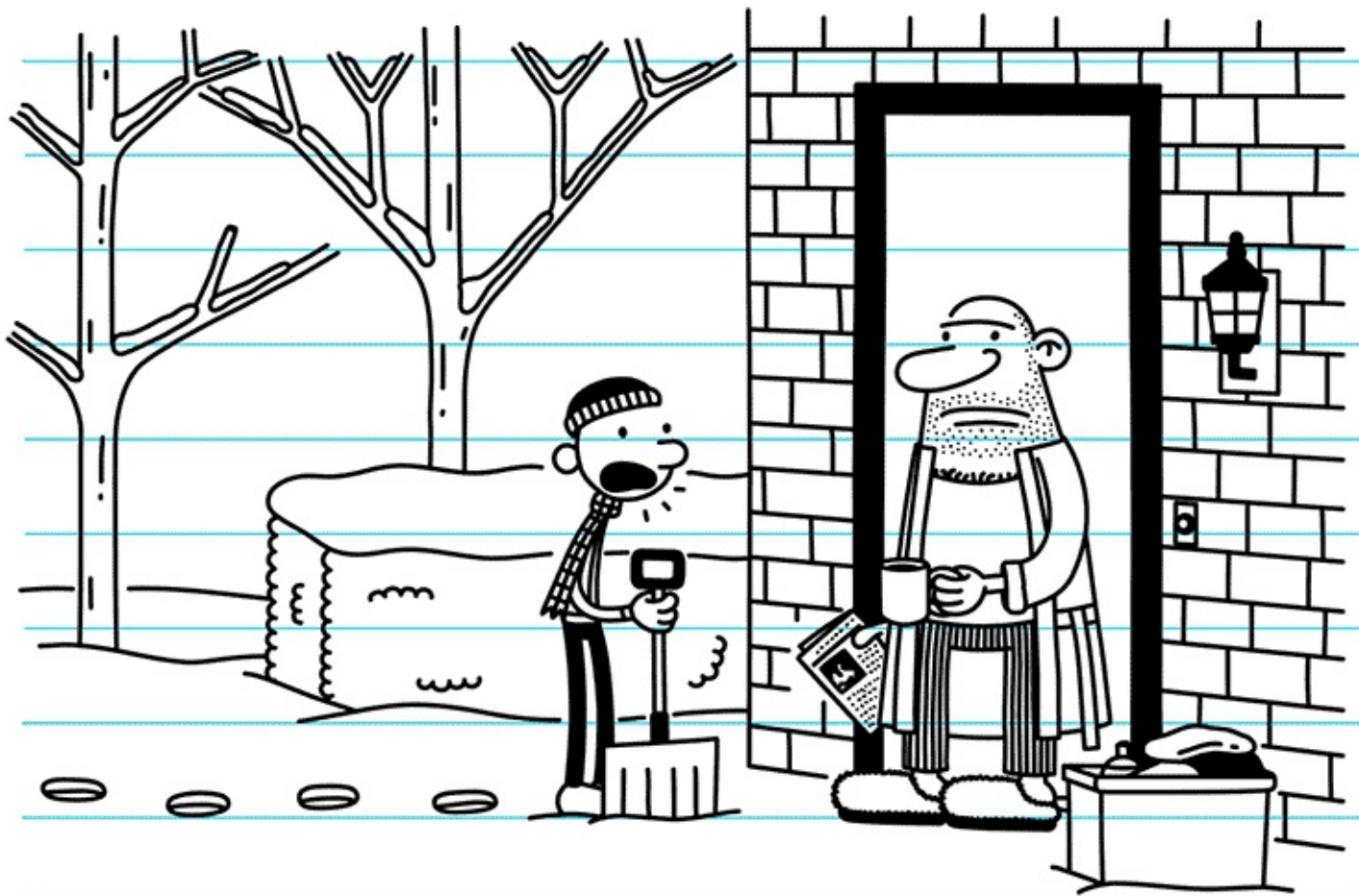
were at work, so it took me a while to find

someone who was actually home. I finally got lucky

when a guy who looked like he just woke up came

to the door. I told him I'd shovel his driveway

for five bucks, and he said it was a deal.



I got to work and was making pretty good progress. But it started snowing again while I was shoveling.



By the time I finished, it had snowed so much

that you could barely tell I did any work.

So I rang the doorbell and asked the guy if

he wanted me to shovel his driveway again for

another five bucks. But he wouldn't go for it.



And to make things worse, the guy said he

wasn't gonna pay me the first five bucks until his

driveway was clear like I promised. See, this is

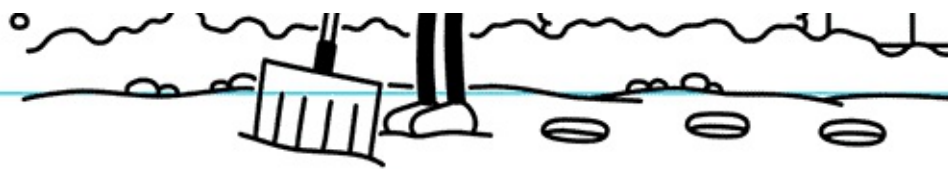
why it's a good idea to have a contract before you

start working for someone.

I got back out there and started shoveling, but so

much snow was falling that I was getting nowhere.





Then I had an idea. Gramma's house was only a few streets away, and I remembered that she keeps her lawn mower in the garage. So I walked over to her place and pushed the mower back to the driveway I was working on.

I thought the snow-mowing idea was genius, and I couldn't believe no one had ever thought of it before.

Unfortunately, it didn't go as smoothly as I hoped it would. I thought the snow would shoot out of the side, but the blade cut right through it and the snow stayed where it was.

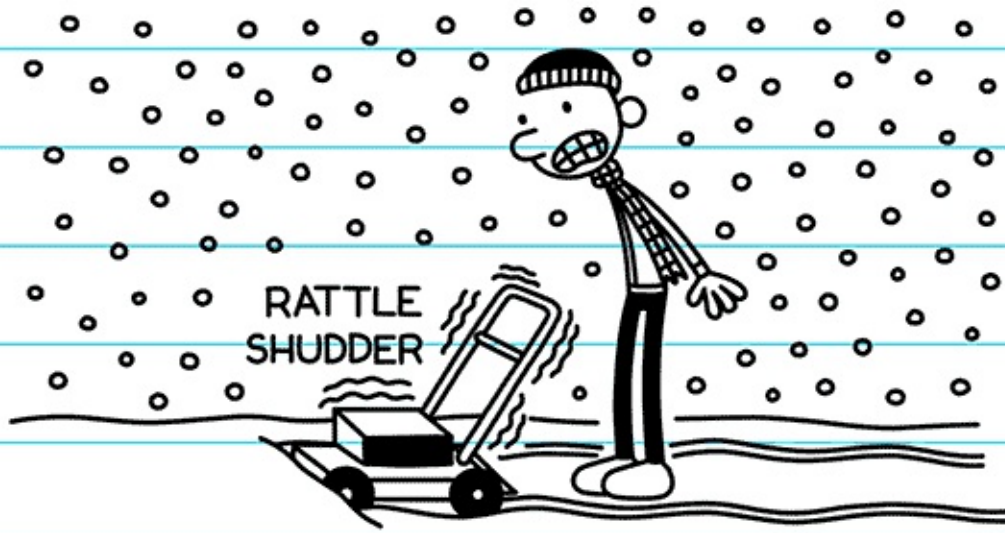


Eventually the mower started making funny

sounds, and then all of a sudden it stopped.

So I guess those things aren't really built for

cold weather.



I pushed the mower to Gramma's and put it back

in her garage. Hopefully it will thaw out before

the summer rolls around.

I still had this guy's driveway to deal with, but

now the snow was REALLY coming down, and

there was no way I was gonna spend the rest of

my day working for five bucks. I needed a quick

solution so I could move on.

I could see that his garden hose was attached to

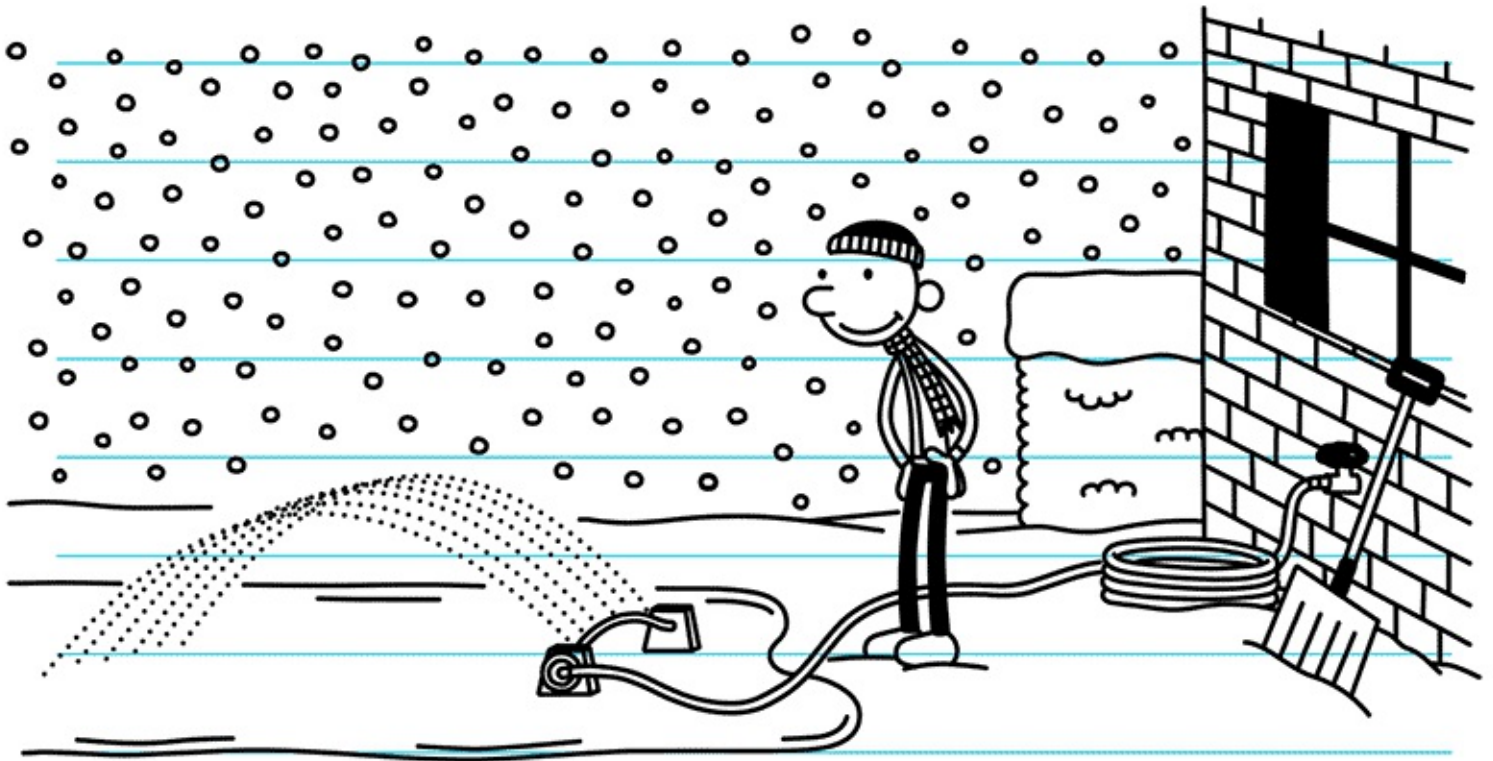
the house, so I turned it on, put the nozzle to

the "shower" setting, and sprayed down the snow

in the driveway.



It was GREAT. The water melted the snow
on contact, and I was cruising. Then I saw a
sprinkler leaning up against the house, and I got
an even BETTER idea.



Once I was finished, I turned off the sprinkler
and knocked on the guy's door. He paid me my five

bucks when he saw that his driveway was cleared.

I was pretty excited about the way things

worked out, and I figured if I found some more

people with sprinklers, I could have multiple jobs

going at once.

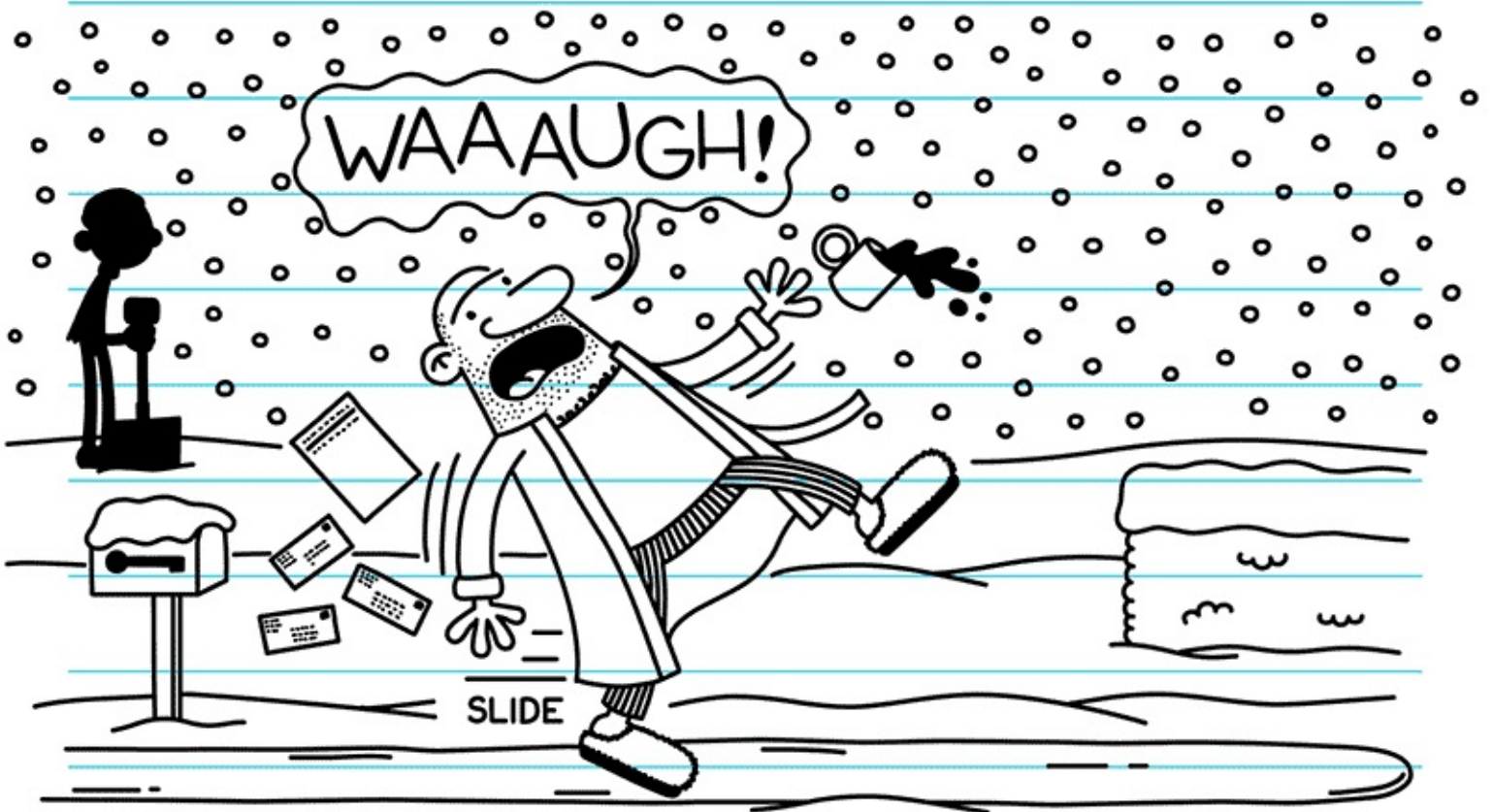
Unfortunately, I couldn't find anyone else who

was home. But my idea probably wouldn't have

worked out anyway. Because by the time I

walked back down Prentice Lane, the driveway I

hit with the sprinkler was frozen over.



When Dad got home, we had to go out and buy five

big bags of rock salt to melt the guy's driveway.

So now instead of having money in my pocket for

all my hard work, I'm twenty bucks in the hole.



Thursday

Dad wasn't too happy that I turned somebody's

driveway into an ice-skating rink yesterday, and

he said he was disappointed in me for using "poor

judgment." That's the exact same phrase he used a

few weeks ago when I scratched up his car.

It all started when I won Student of the Week

at school. When you win Student of the Week,

they give you a bumper sticker that you can put

on your family's car.

The bumper sticker is pretty corny, but it was

still cool to win it.



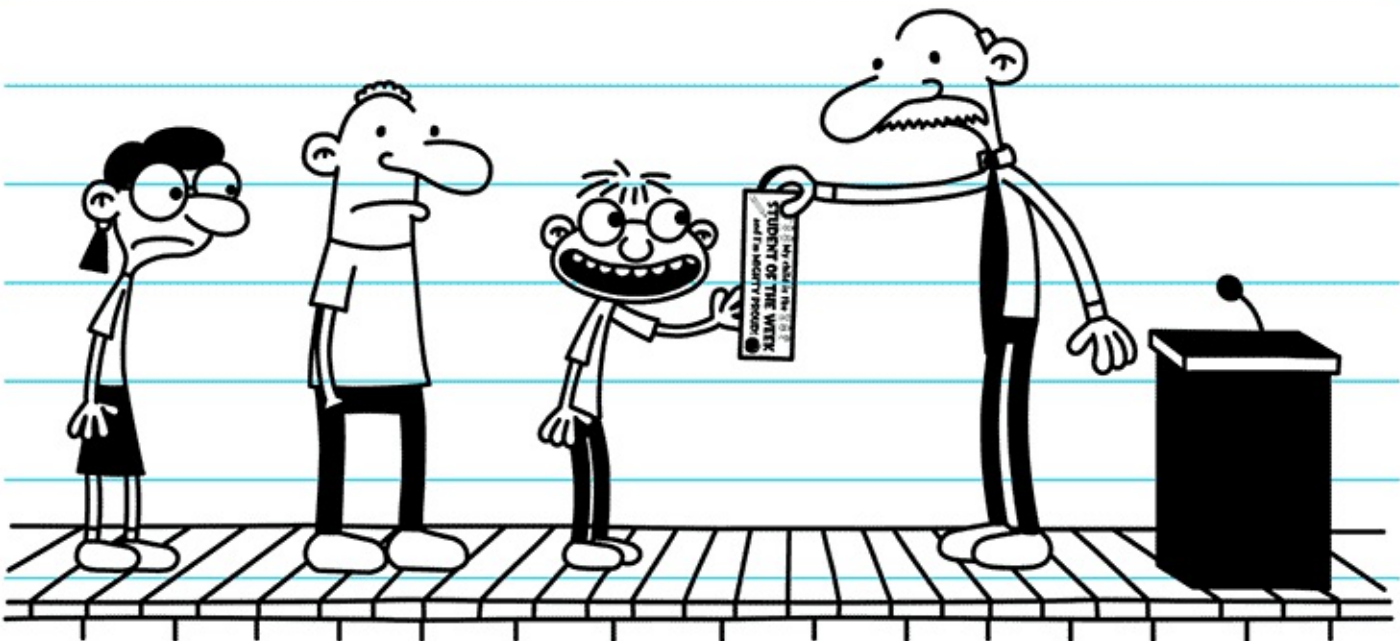
I'm not sure why I won, but I think they

just give it to everyone eventually. Fregley won

Student of the Week this past Friday, and I'm

guessing it was for not biting anyone for five

days straight.



Mom wanted to put my sticker on her car, but

her bumper is so overcrowded that I knew it

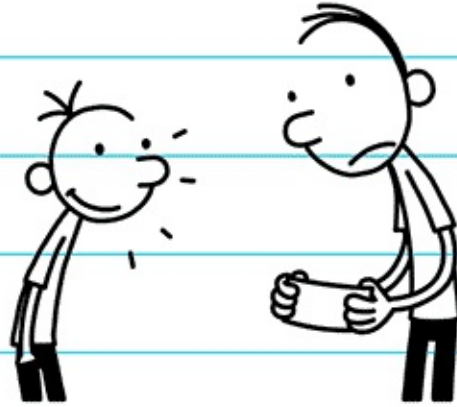
would just get lost on there. So I asked Dad if

I could put it on his car.

Dad recently bought a new car, and I thought

my Student of the Week sticker would look really

sharp on his bumper.



But Dad said he didn't want to "junk up" his new

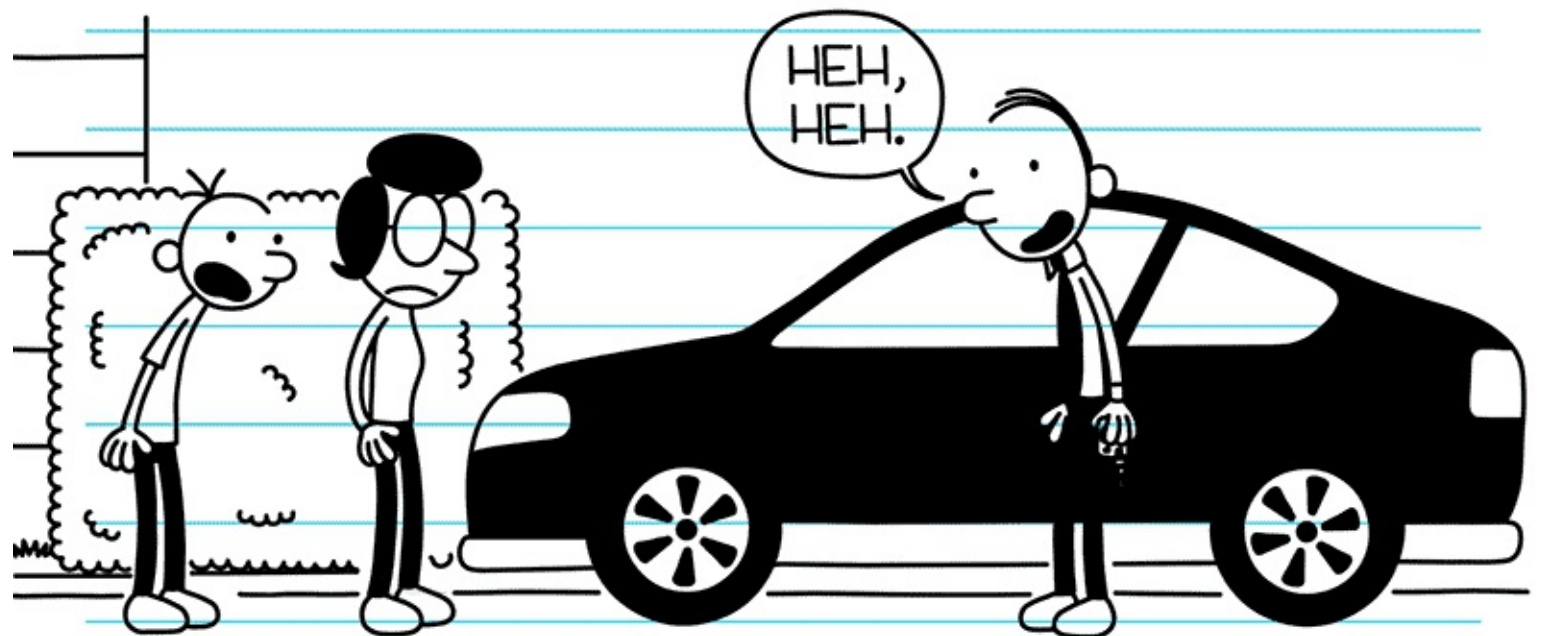
car. At first I was disappointed, but I guess

I could kind of understand where he was coming

from. My family doesn't have anything that's really

nice, and when Dad came home from the dealership

with a sporty car, I was pretty surprised.



Mom wasn't happy that Dad picked out a car

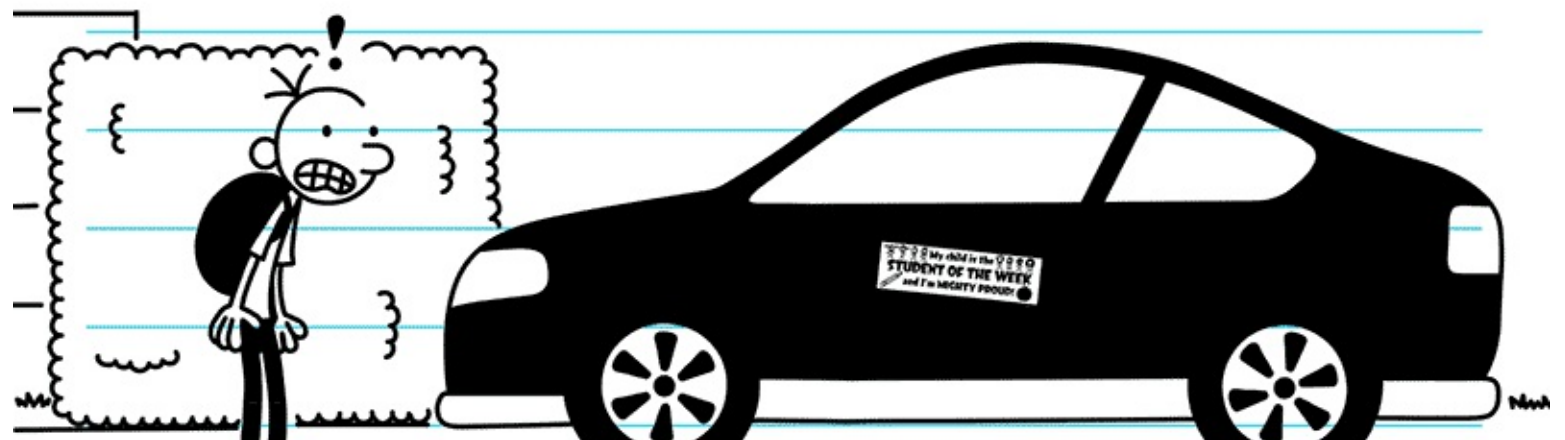
without talking it through with her, though.

She said the car looked “flashy” and that since it only had two doors, it wasn’t “practical” for a family of five. But Dad said it was the car he wanted, and he kept it.

After I talked to Dad, I didn’t know what to do with my bumper sticker, so I just ended up giving it to Manny and telling him he could put it on his wagon or something.

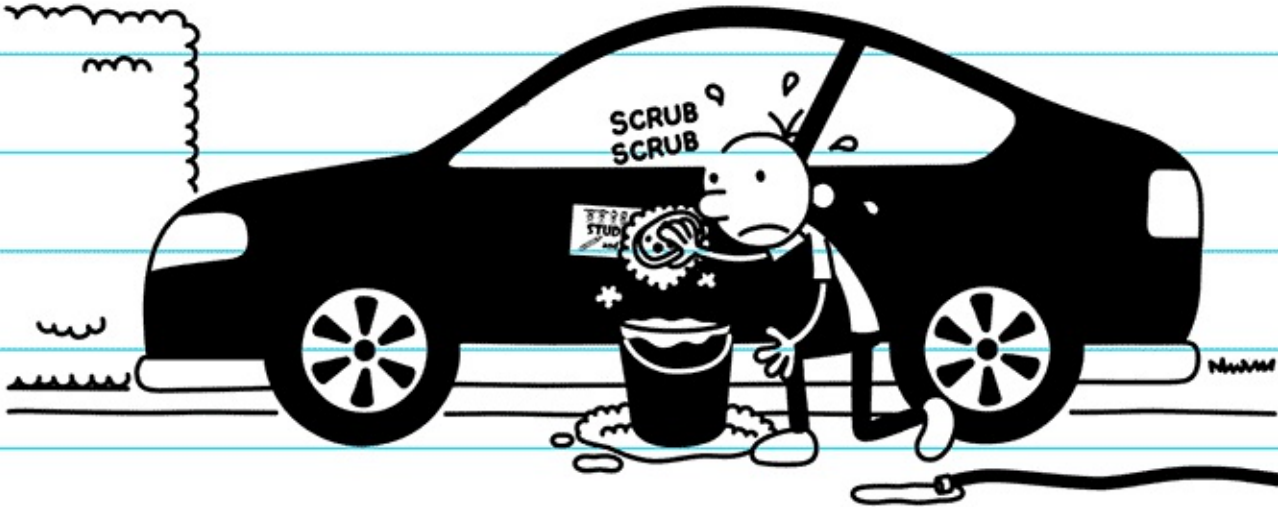


But Manny turned right around and put it smack in the middle of Dad’s driver’s-side door.

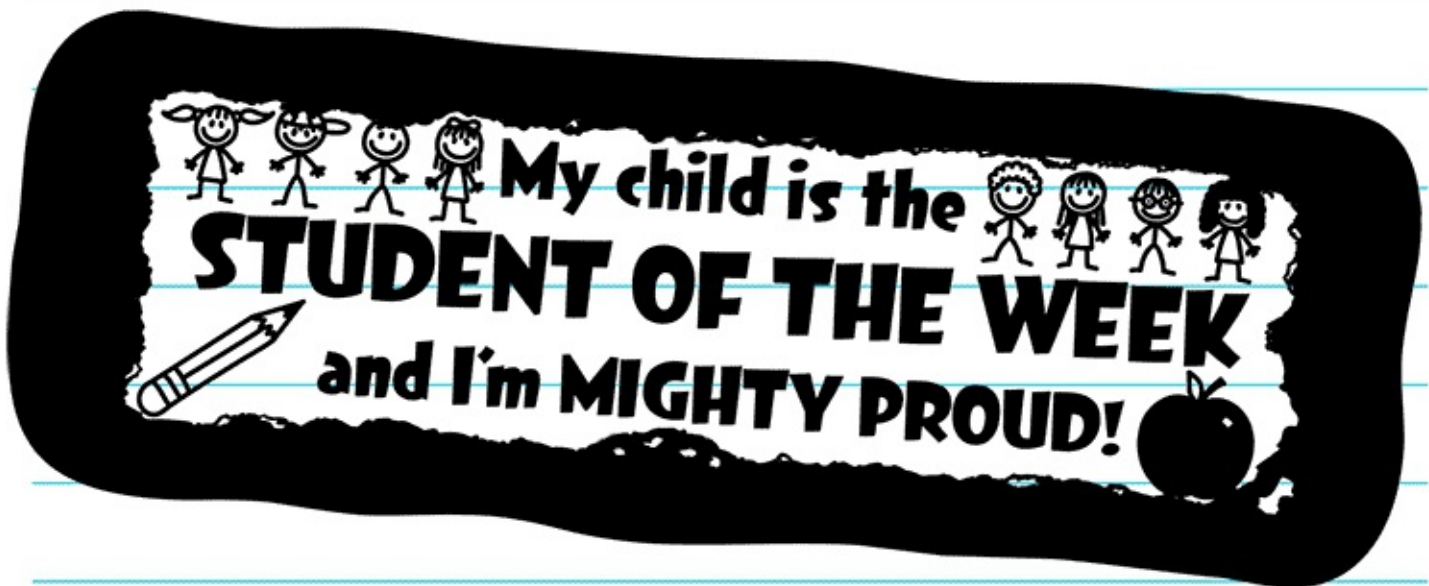




I freaked out because I knew Dad was gonna
think I was the one who put it there. I tried
to peel it off, but they must use superglue on the
backs of those things. So I got some soap and
water and tried to SCRUB it off.



But after twenty minutes of scrubbing, I'd barely
made a dent.

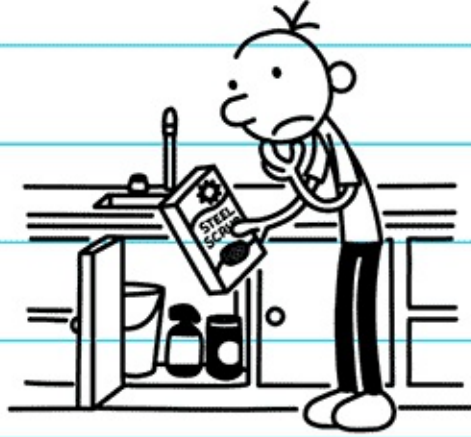


I started looking for different cleaning supplies
in the cabinet under the kitchen sink, and I

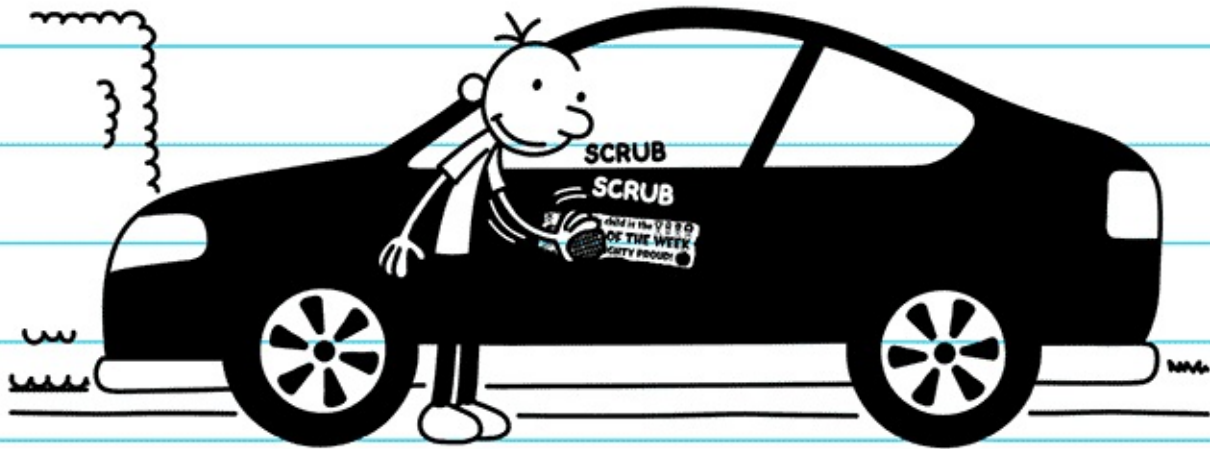
found some steel wool pads that looked like they

might do the trick.

Those things work pretty good on the pots and pans, so I figured they were worth a try on the car since it was metal, too.



Sure enough, the steel wool made the bumper sticker come off the car as easy as pie.



In fact, it was so easy that I kind of got carried away. I used the steel wool pads to scrape off the bugs and bird poop, too. I figured Dad would be pretty happy I was cleaning his car for

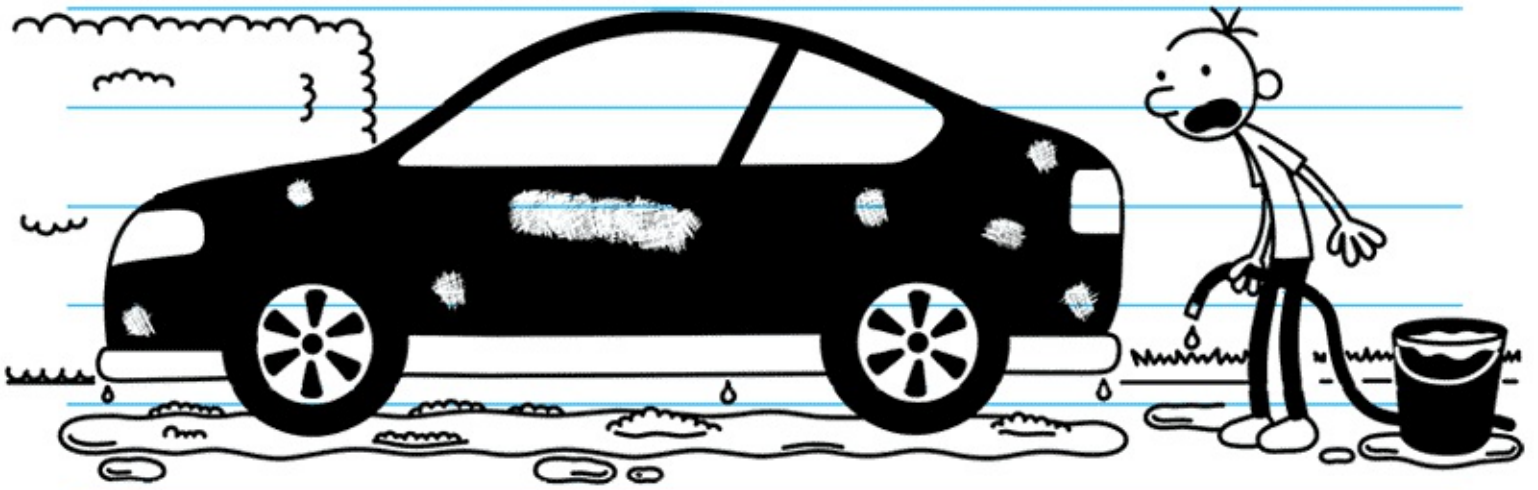
free. But when I rinsed the car off with the

hose, I got a huge surprise.

The steel wool didn't just scrape the bumper

sticker and bugs off the car. It scraped the

PAINT off, too.



I panicked and started filling in the bare spots

with a permanent marker. But the area where the

bumper sticker had been was too big, so I wrote

a note in Mom's handwriting and taped it over

that spot.

Hi, honey!

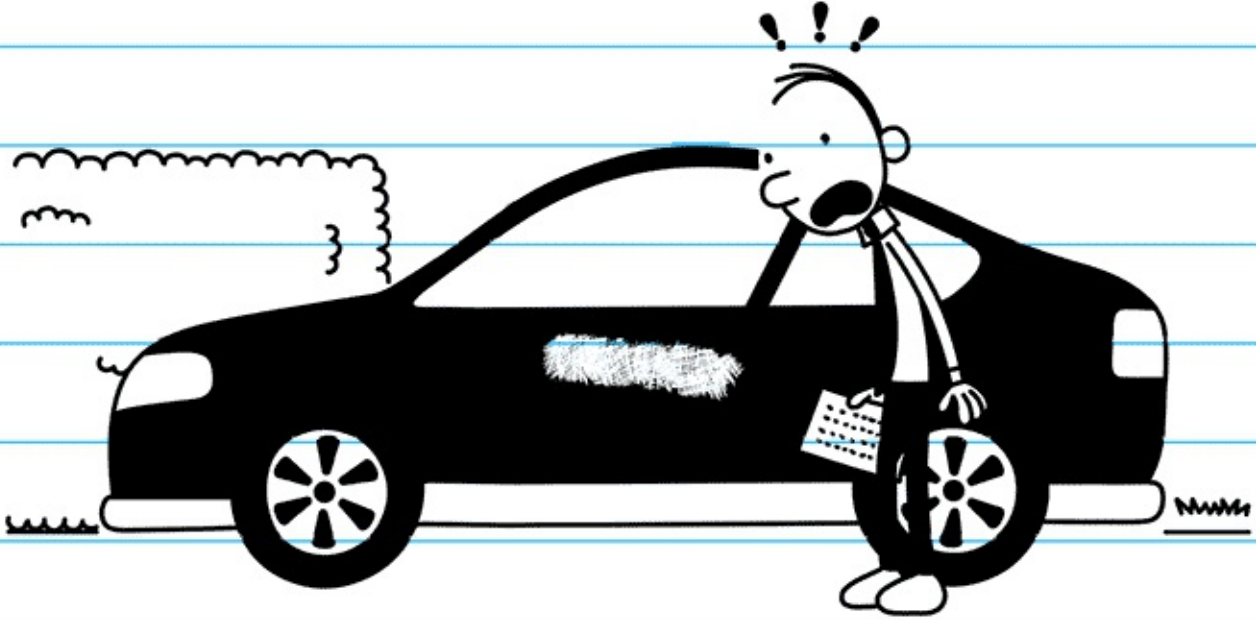
Hope you have a great day!

P.S. Why not leave this note
on your car so you can read.

it again tomorrow?

I thought the note might buy me a few days,

but Dad uncovered the big area in no time flat.



Dad was really mad at me, but Mom came to my

defense. She said everyone makes mistakes and

that the important thing is that I learn my

lesson and move on.



I owe Mom for that one. She calmed Dad down

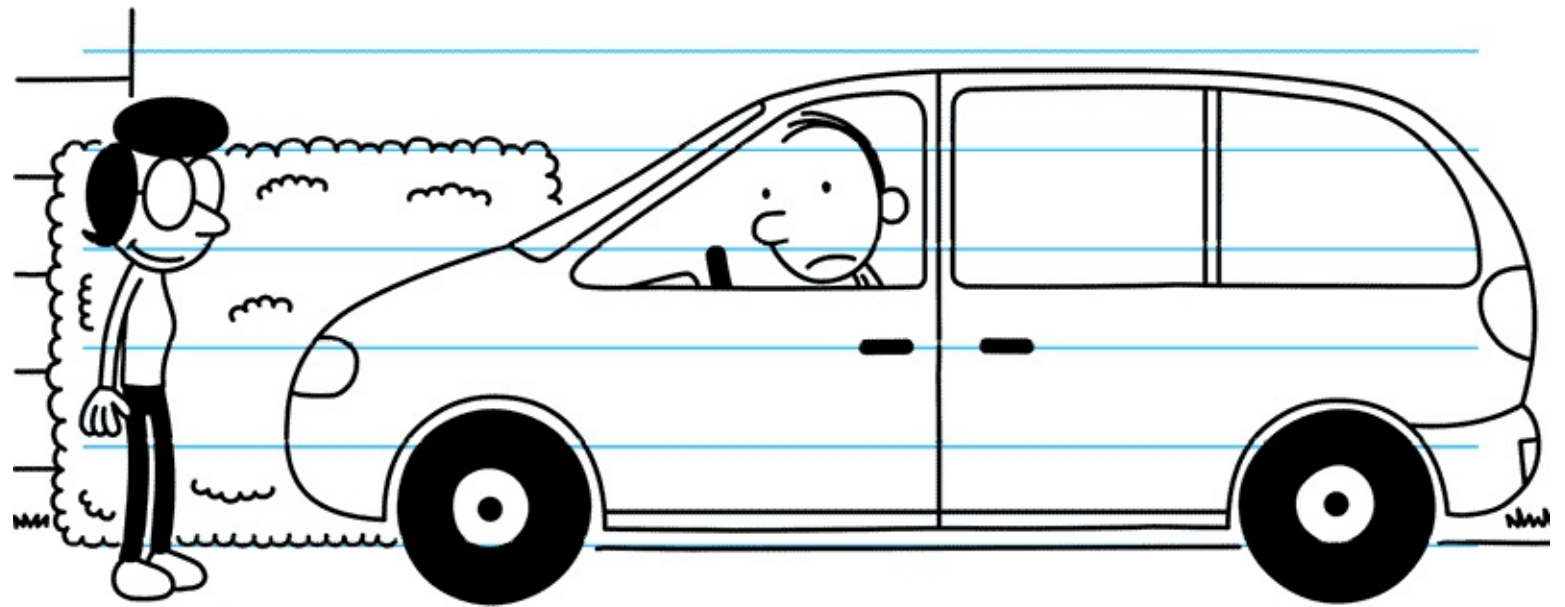
and I didn't even get grounded.

Dad took the car to the dealer to see how much

it would be to get the paint touched up.

The dealer told him it was gonna cost a lot of money because it was a custom paint job.

Mom told Dad this was a “sign” that it was a mistake to get a fancy car in the first place and that he should just trade it in for a used minivan instead. So that’s what he did.



The funny thing is that the minivan already had a Student of the Week sticker on the bumper from the previous owners. But Dad didn’t seem to appreciate the humor in that.

Sunday

Our family usually goes to church at 9:00 a.m.,

but today we went to the folk service at 11:00.

The folk service has a different kind of music

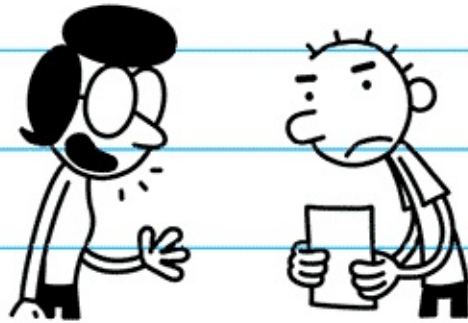
than the regular one, and there's a band that

plays guitars and stuff like that. Last week

Mom convinced Rodrick to join the folk group

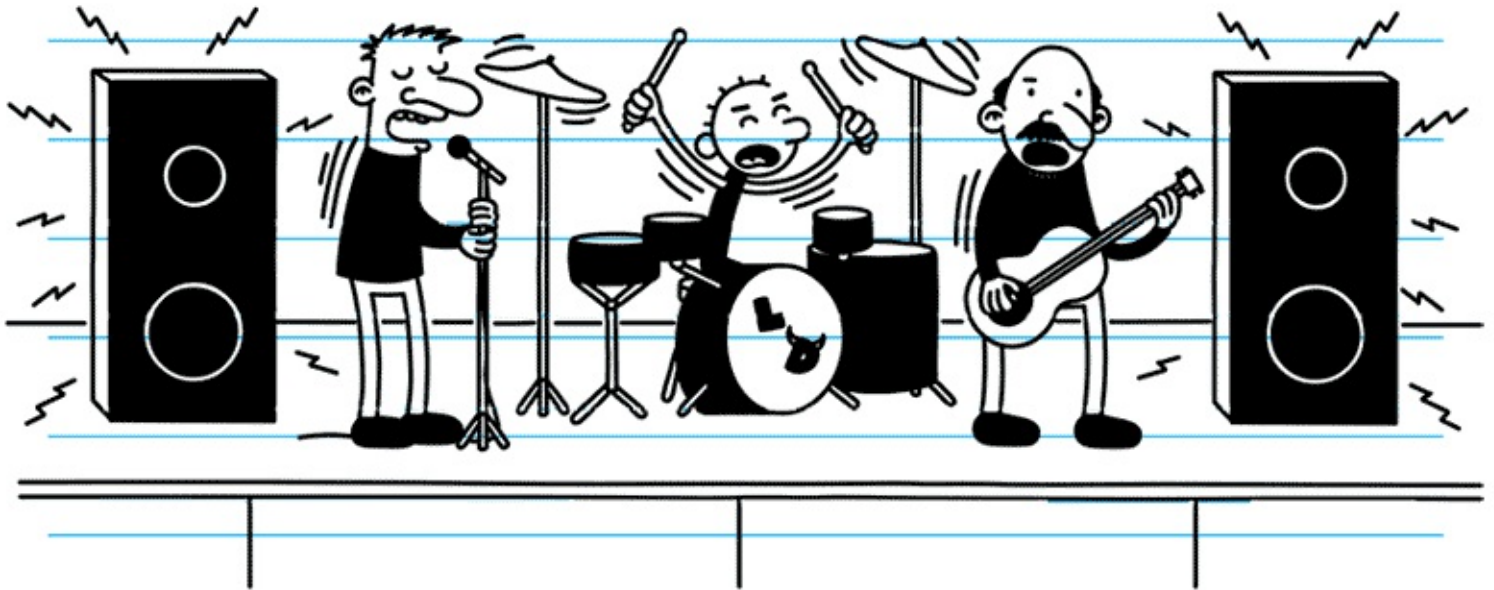
because she got a flyer saying they were looking

for a "percussionist."



I think Rodrick imagined he was gonna get to

play his drums in church, so he signed up.

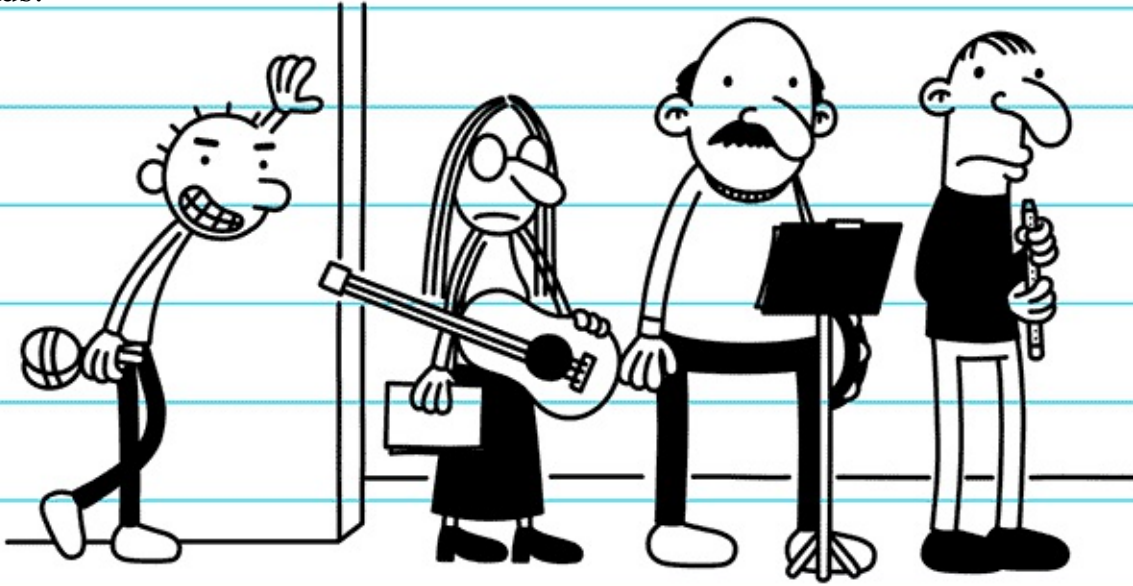


But it turns out the folk group was looking for

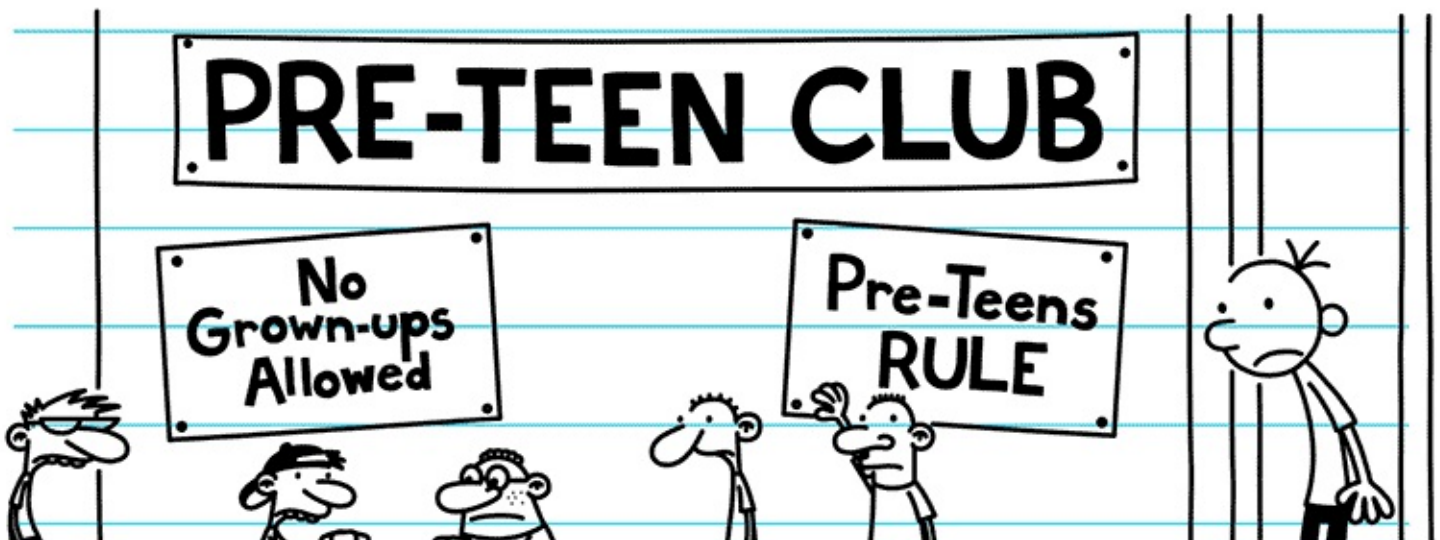
someone to play HAND percussion instruments, like

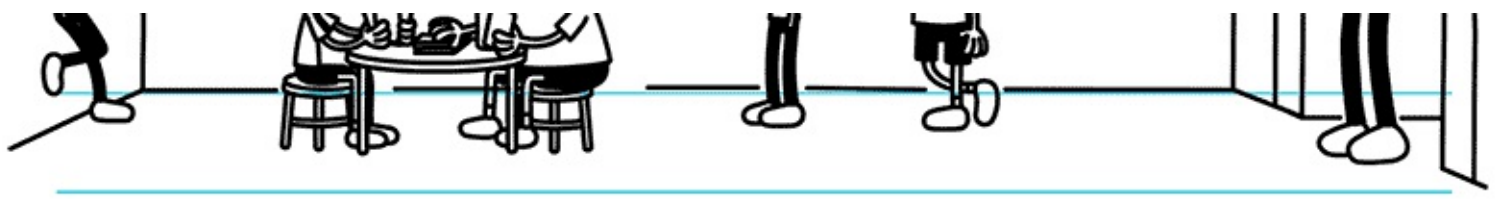
the tambourine and castanets.

Rodrick tried his best to look cool up there in the front of the church today, but it's really hard to pull that off when you've got a pair of maracas in your hands.



I can totally relate to getting duped into joining something without knowing all the details. Last year Mom told me I should join the church's Pre-Teen Club, but then I found out they were really lax about who qualified as a "pre-teen."





Every year our church does this thing called the

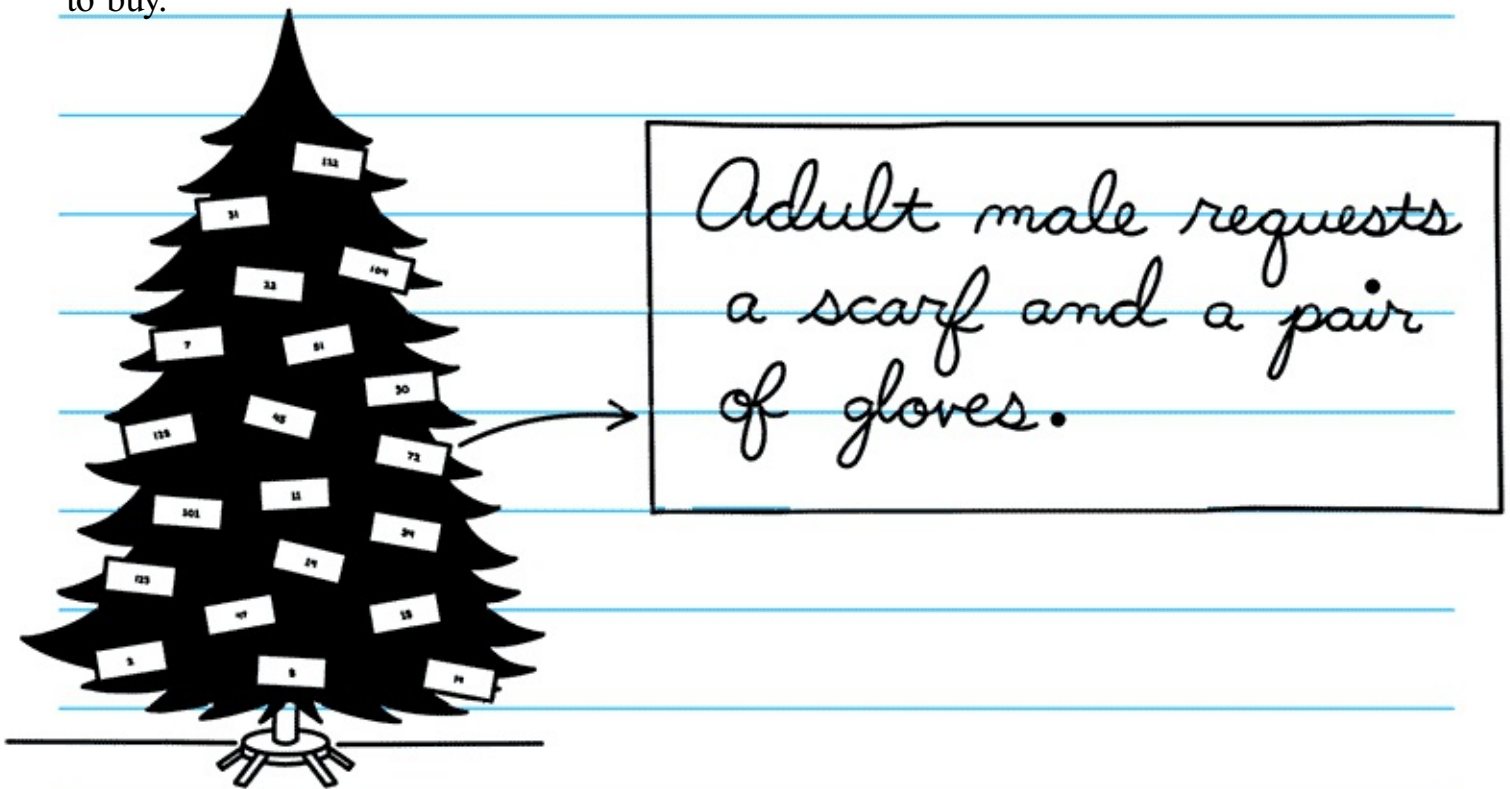
“Giving Tree,” where people in need put their

requests in envelopes and hang them on the

tree. Then a family picks a random envelope, and

whatever it says inside is what they’re supposed

to buy.



As far as I know, there aren’t any rules about

who’s allowed to put a request on the Giving Tree,

so I decided to try my luck and fill out a form of

my own.

But something told me Mom and Dad wouldn’t

approve, so I made sure it couldn’t be traced

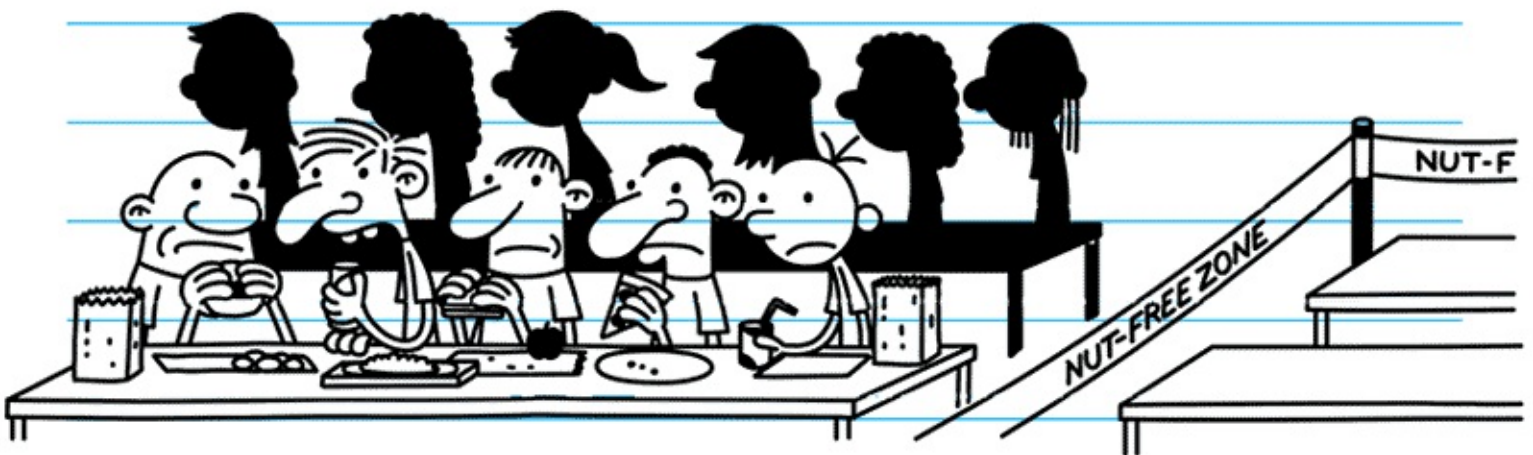
back to me.

Juvenile male requests cash, as much as you are willing to donate. Please leave the money in an unmarked envelope under the recycling bin behind the church.

P.S. Make sure you're not followed.

Monday

This year at school they taped off a bunch of tables in the cafeteria so kids with nut allergies could eat in a separate section. I think it's great the school did that, but it means there's a lot less room for the rest of us to sit.



I'm not sure anyone at my school is actually allergic to nuts, though, because for the first two

months of this year the tables in the taped-off

area were completely empty.

But I guess Ricardo Freedman liked the idea of

all that elbow room, because today he plopped

himself down in the middle of the Nut-Free Zone

and ate two peanut butter and jelly sandwiches

he brought from home.

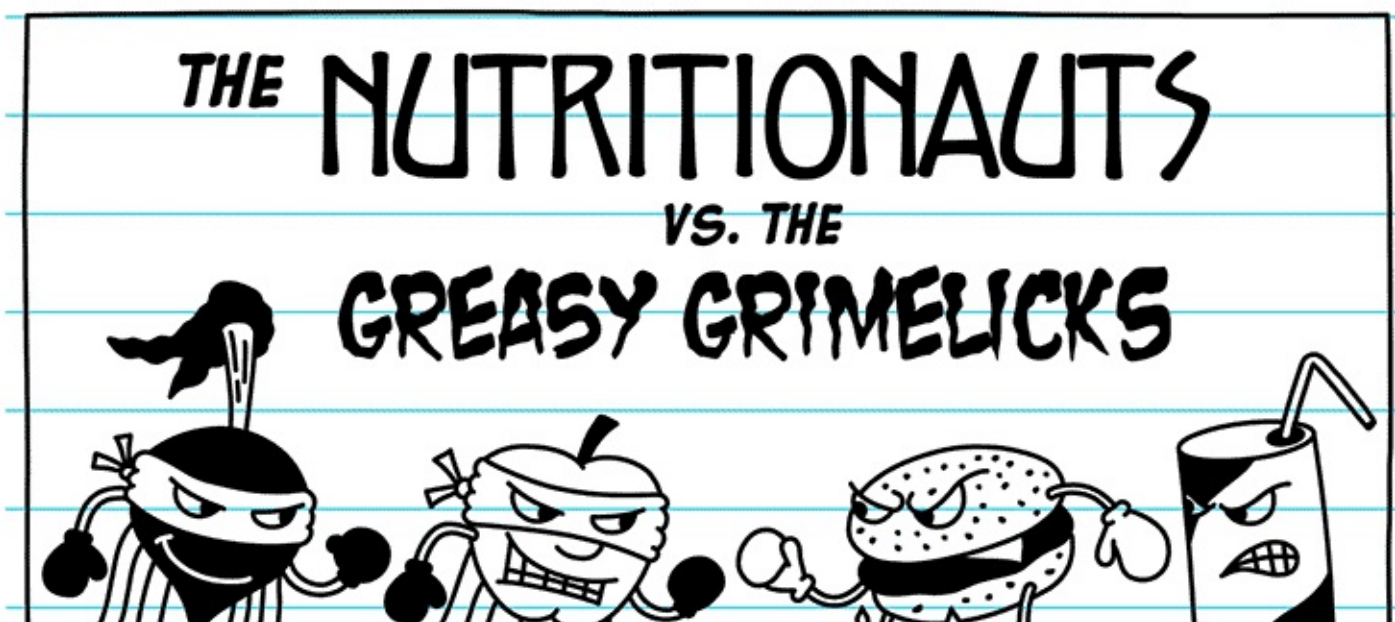


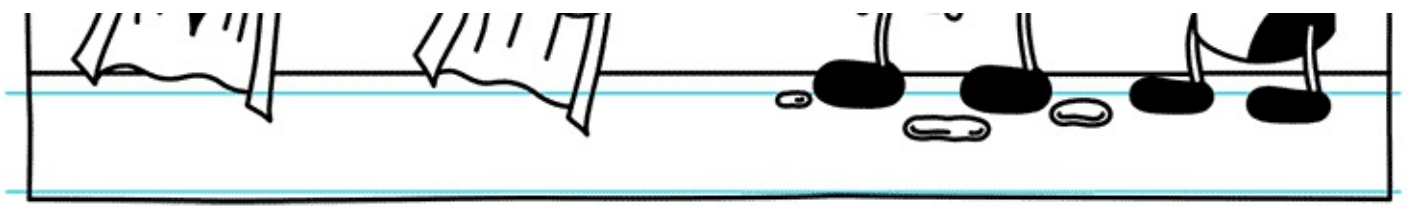
Today we had a general assembly, and everyone

was all excited because they told us we were gonna

get to watch a movie. But it was just one of those

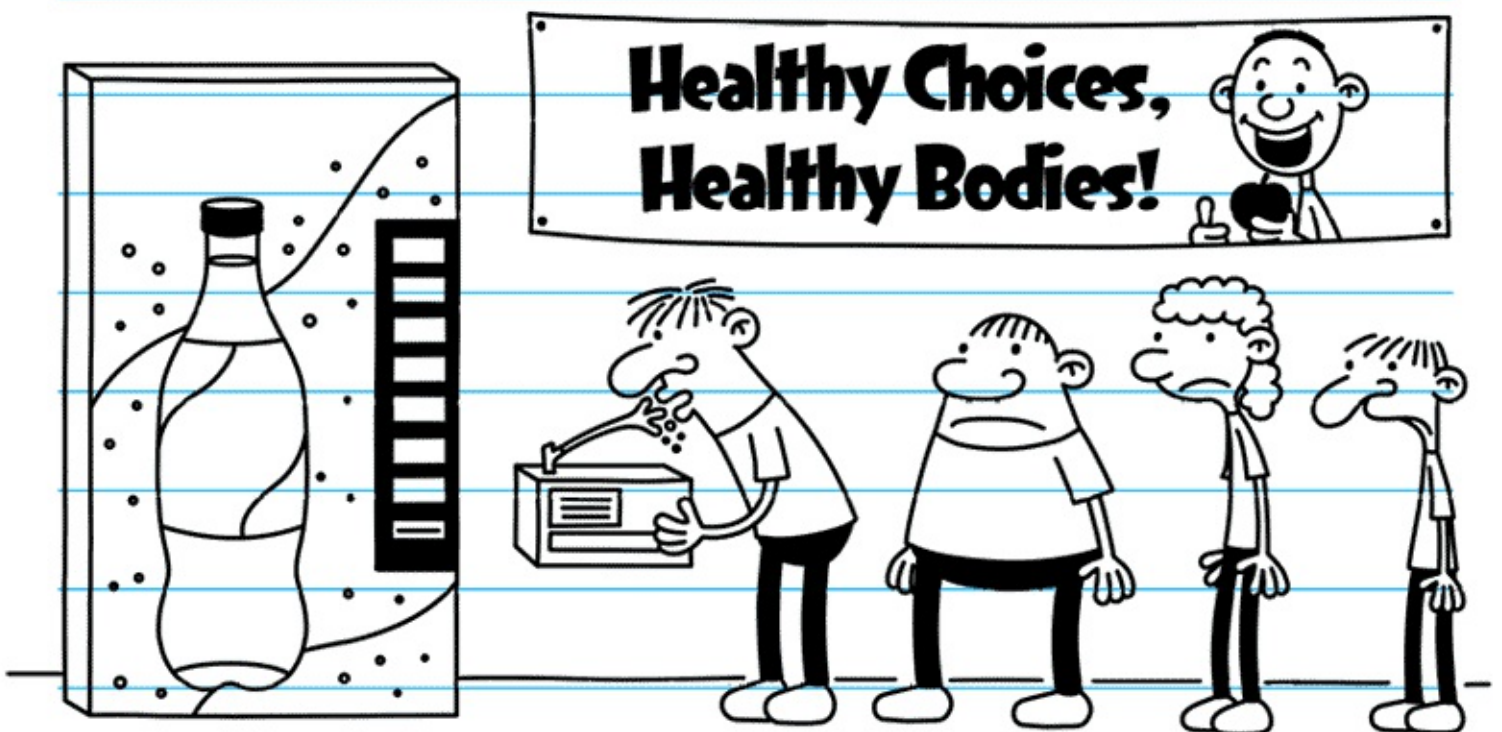
educational films about healthy eating.





I know I need to eat healthier, but if you
take fast food out of my diet I'm in big
trouble, because I'm probably something like
95% chicken nugget.

The school has really been cracking down on junk
food in the cafeteria. Last week they replaced
the soda machine with a bottled water machine,
but if they're gonna charge a dollar for a bottle
of water, they should probably think of a better
place to put it.



The school also got rid of a bunch of menu items,

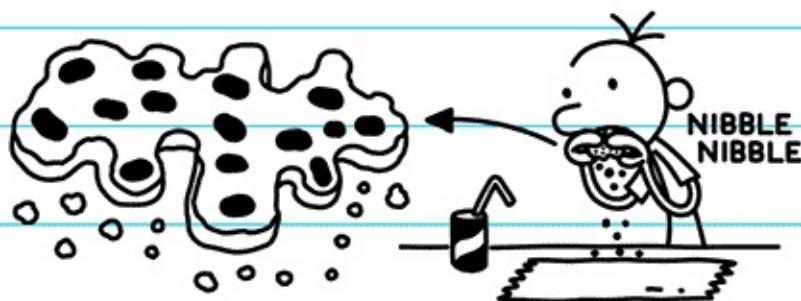
like hot dogs and pizza, and replaced them with

healthier stuff.

They even replaced french fries with a new item called "Extreme Sports Stix," but it took everyone about five seconds to figure out that Extreme Sports Stix are just sliced carrots.



I usually bring a bagged lunch to school, but the one thing I would always buy from the cafeteria was a chocolate chip cookie. Last week, though, the chocolate chip cookies were replaced by oatmeal raisin cookies. I still buy them, but I eat around the raisins, which is a lot of work.

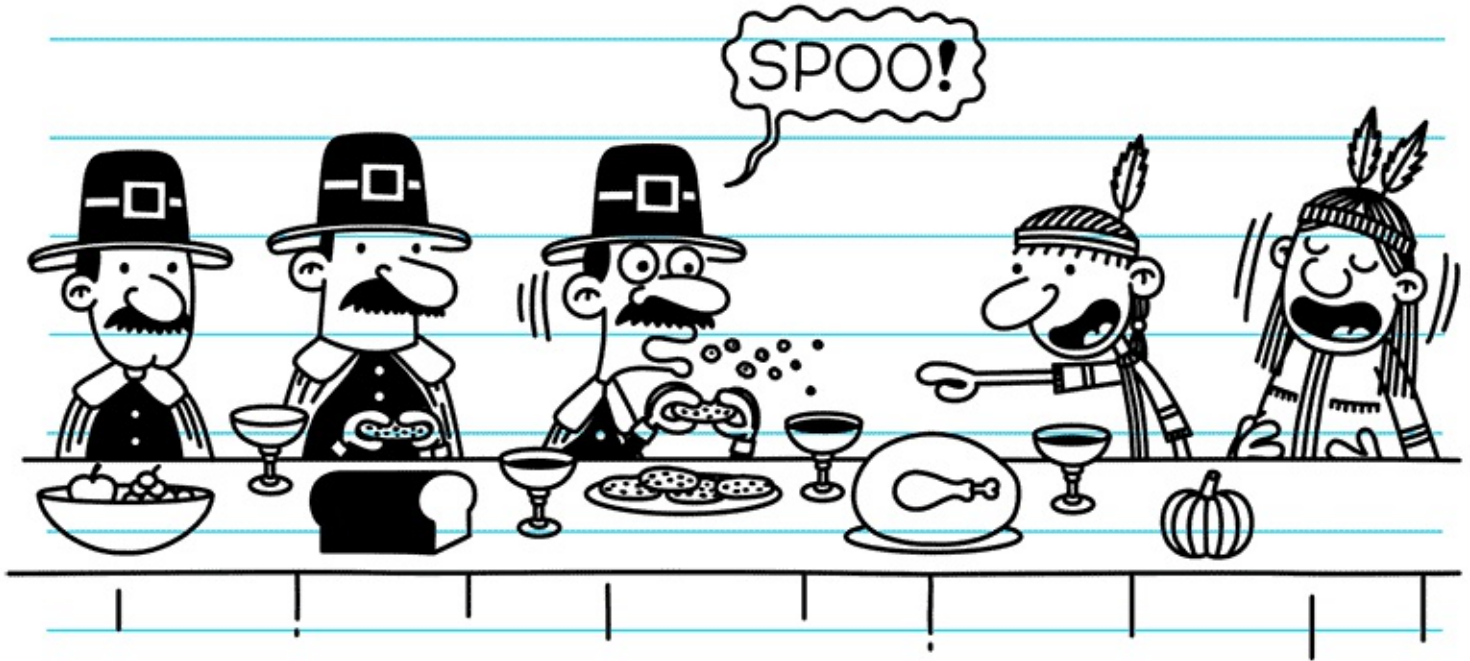


I can't tell you HOW many times I've bitten

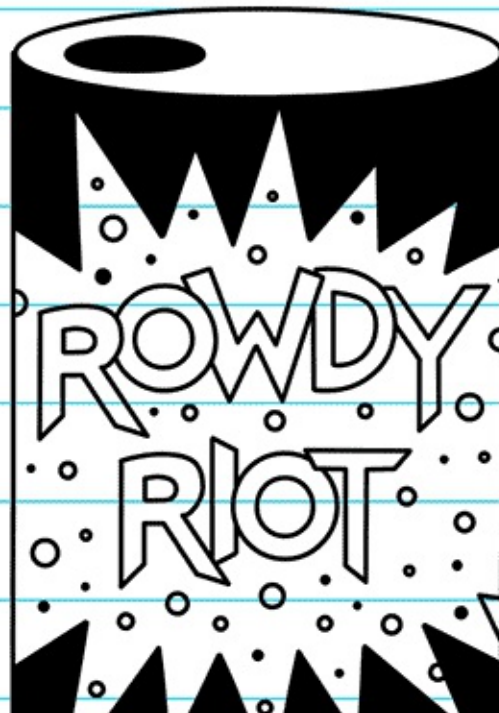
into an oatmeal raisin cookie thinking it was

chocolate chip.

I have a theory that oatmeal raisin cookies were
invented as a practical joke a long time ago and
that they were never actually meant to be eaten.



Most of the kids at school aren't too bothered by
all the menu changes, but the thing that really
set people off was when they took away the
energy drinks.





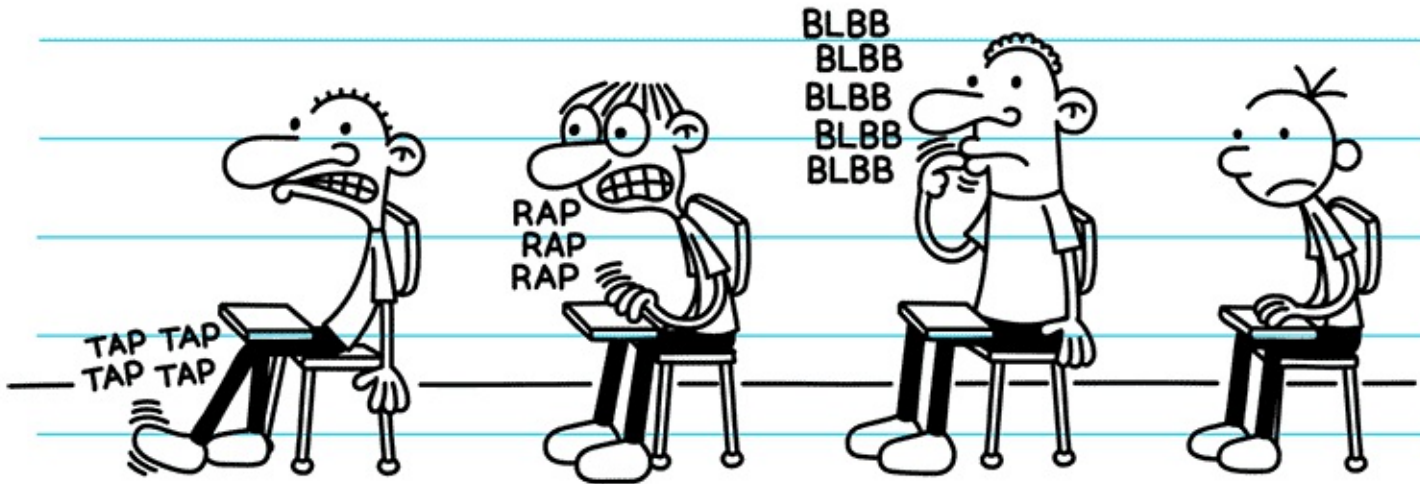
The reason the school stopped selling Rowdy Riot

was because teachers were complaining that the

red dye was making kids hyperactive. And if you

walked into my classroom after lunch, you'd see

what they were talking about.



But when they stopped selling Rowdy Riot, people

who were used to drinking three or four cans a

day were totally unprepared to go cold turkey.

In fact, some kids ended up having to go down

to the nurse's office because they had the shakes

from withdrawal.

The school wouldn't bring Rowdy Riot back no

matter HOW much people complained. But the

other day, Leon Goodson snuck in a backpack full

of Rowdy Riot he'd brought from home and sold

cans for three bucks a pop.

At recess a few kids who'd bought Rowdy Riot

from Leon ducked behind the school and slurped

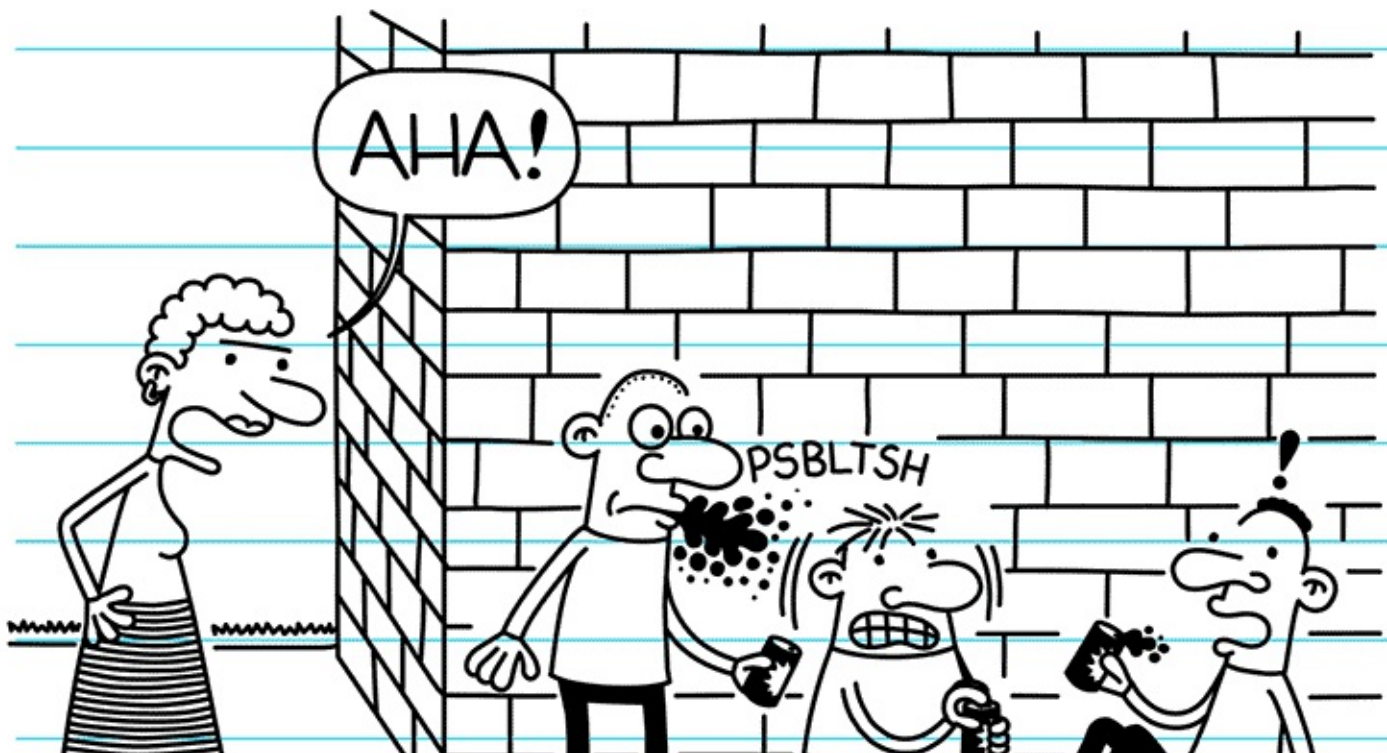
down their drinks where no one could see them.

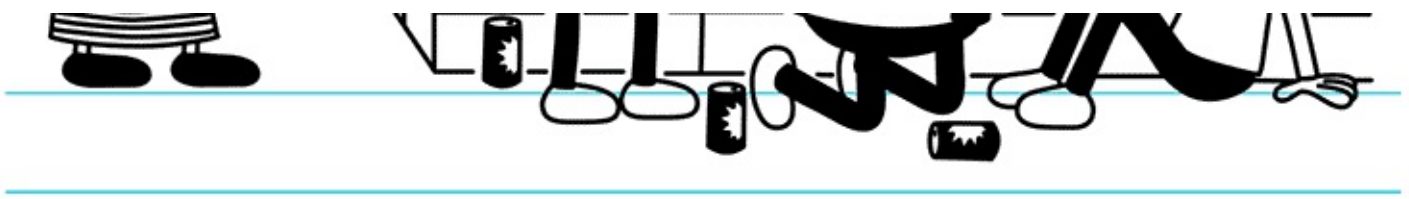


But one of the recess monitors, Mrs. Lahey, got

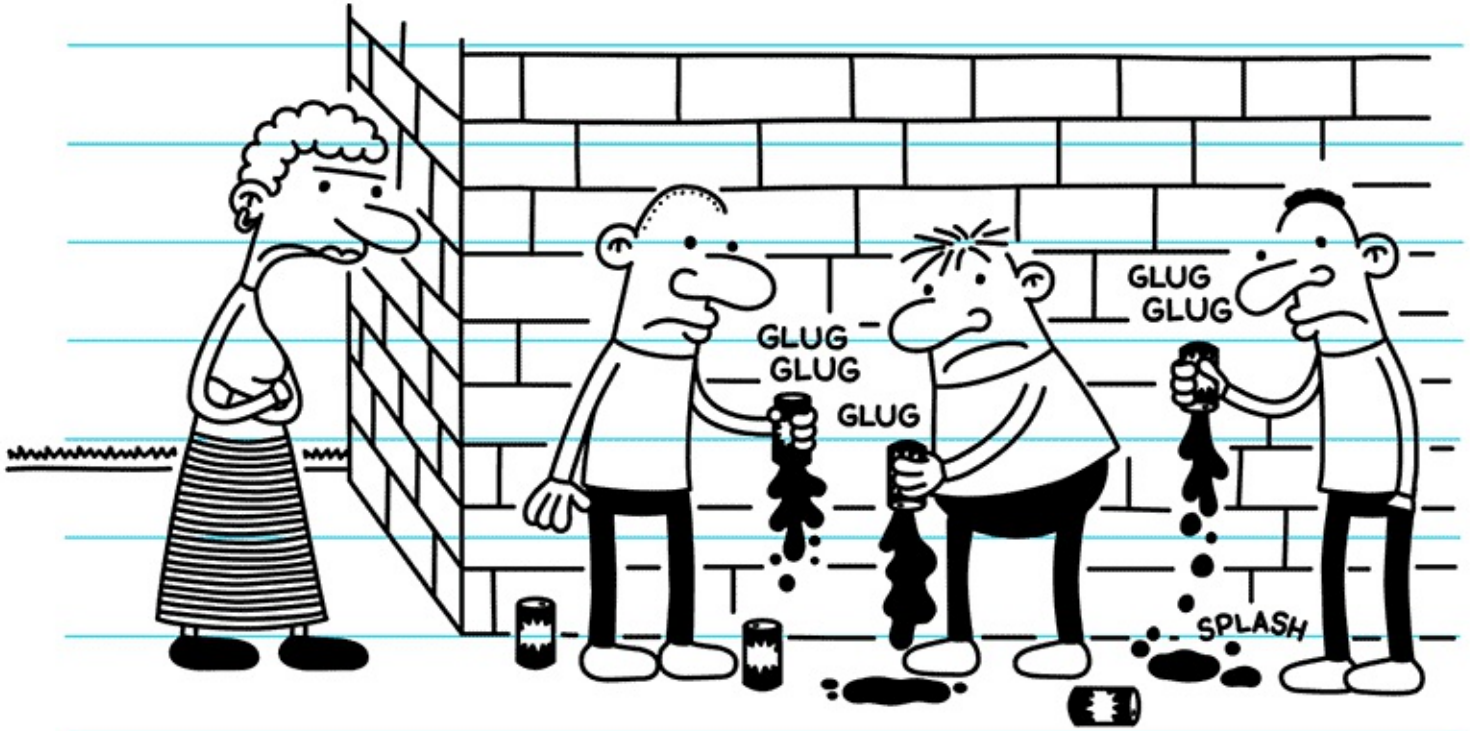
suspicious and went back there to see what was

going on.

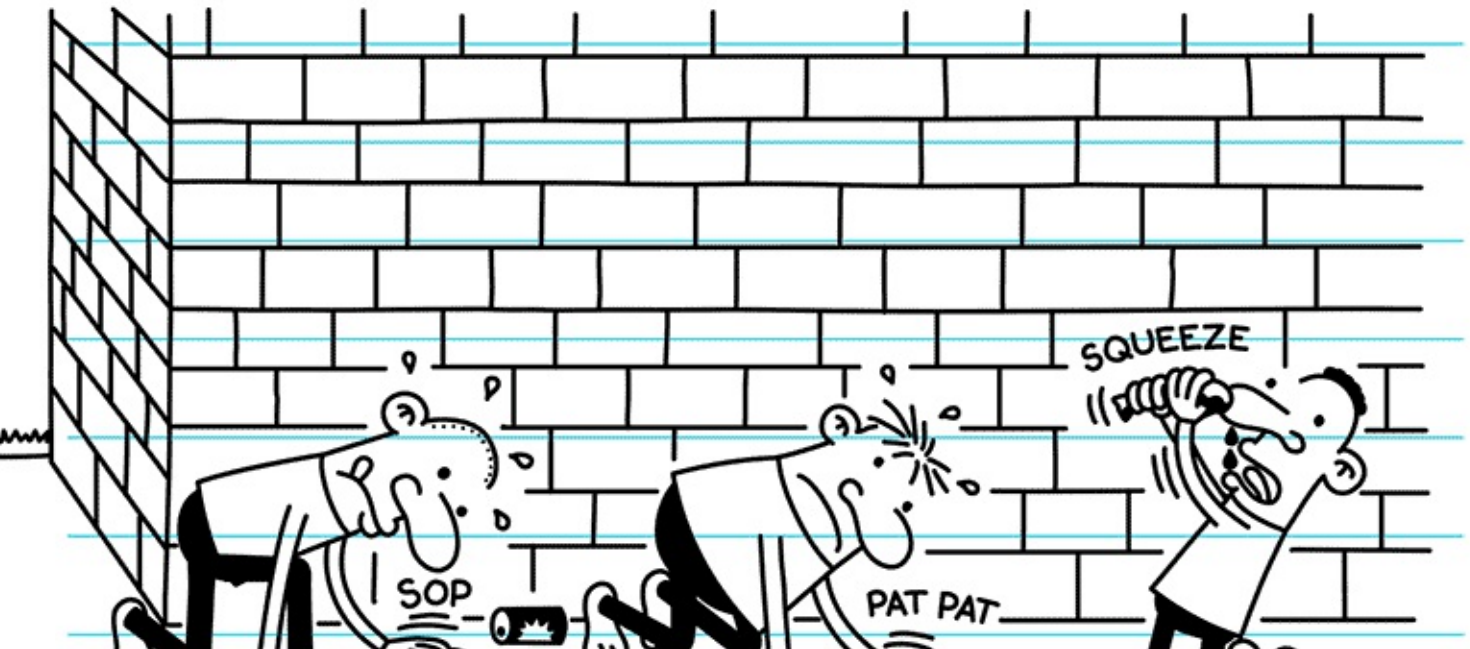




Mrs. Lahey told everyone they had to pour out
their drinks immediately or she'd report them to
the principal.



But the second she was gone, the kids took
off their shoes and sopped up the puddles with
their socks.

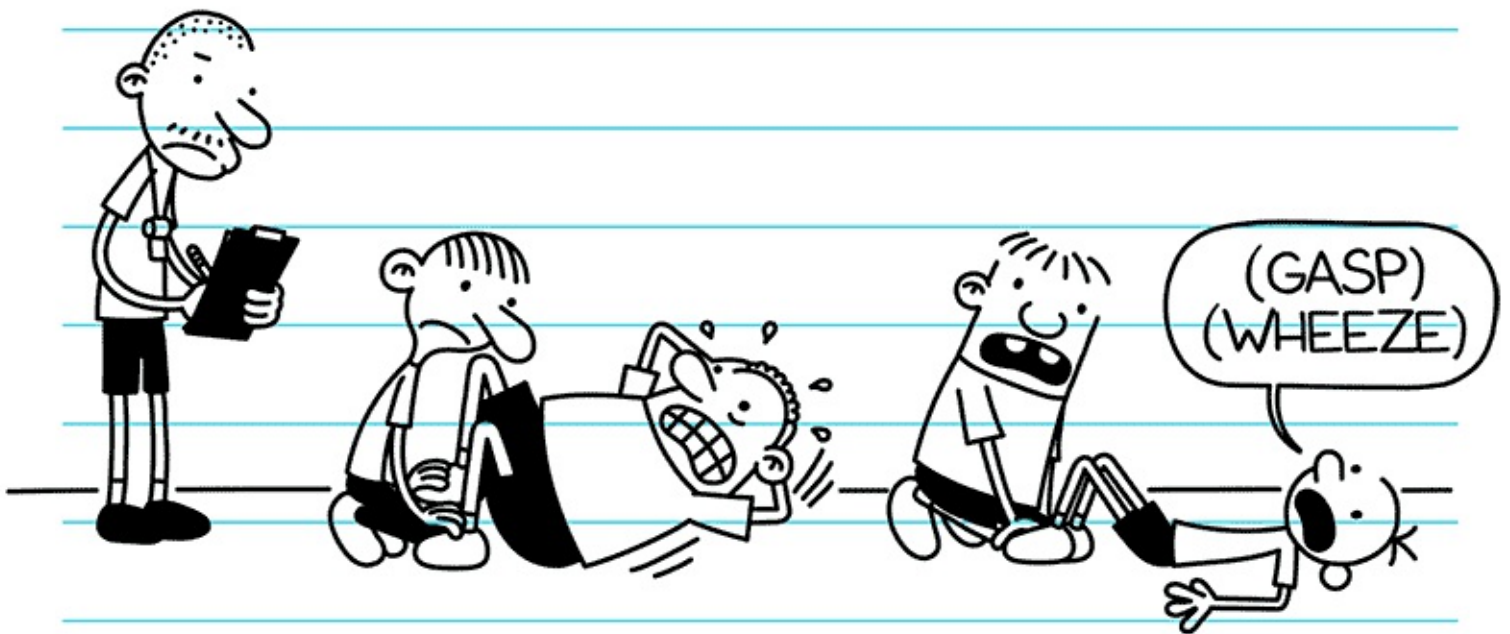




Tuesday

One of the reasons the school has been getting on us about our eating habits is because the Presidential Fitness Test is coming up, where they measure you on all sorts of stuff, like how many sit-ups and chin-ups you can do.

Last year our school was in the bottom 10% in the country, and I guess the school is trying to do anything they can to turn that around.

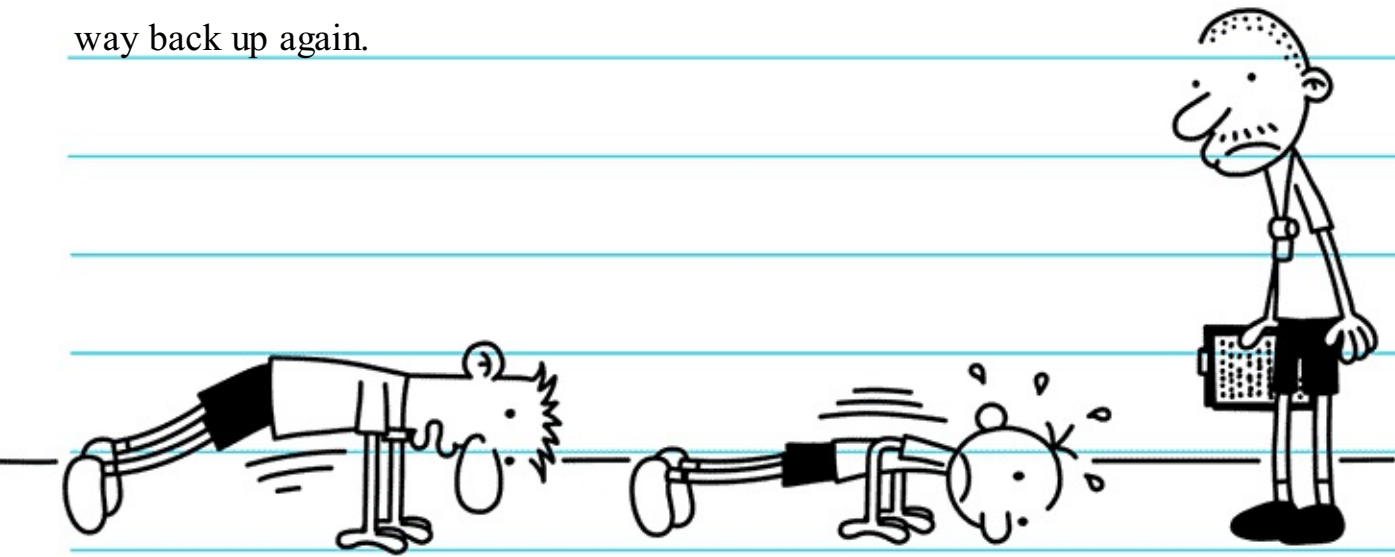


Grown-ups say there's a big problem with kids in our generation being out of shape because they don't exercise enough, but I don't think taking away our playground equipment is really

helping matters.

In one part of the Presidential Fitness Test,
they check to see how many push-ups you can do
in a row. The girls in our class did better than
the boys, but that's only because the girls get to
do an easier kind of push-up.

The boys have to keep their whole body straight
and go all the way to the floor and then all the
way back up again.



But the girls get to let their knees touch the
ground, so they have a HUGE advantage.





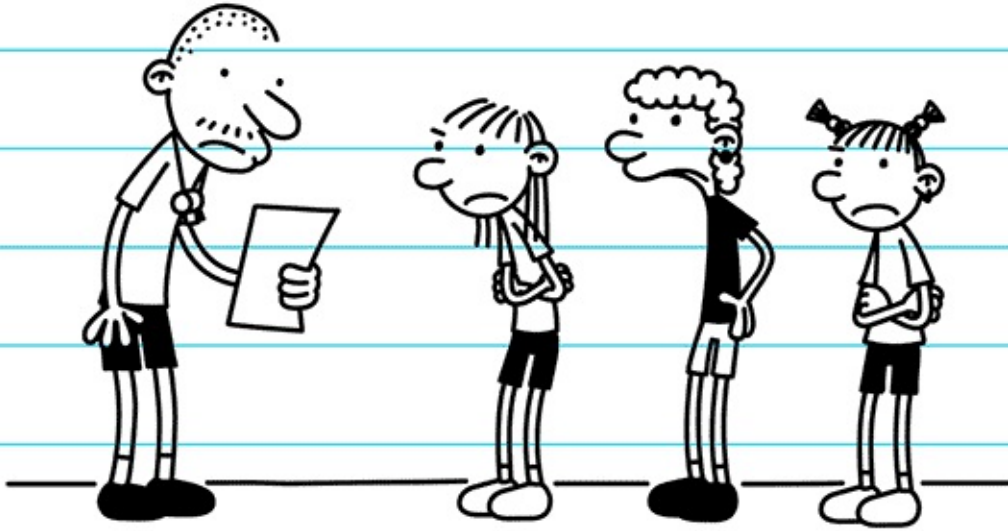
Not all the girls were happy that they got to

do easier push-ups than the boys, though. In

fact, a couple of girls signed a petition saying

they demanded to do the same kind of push-ups

as the boys.

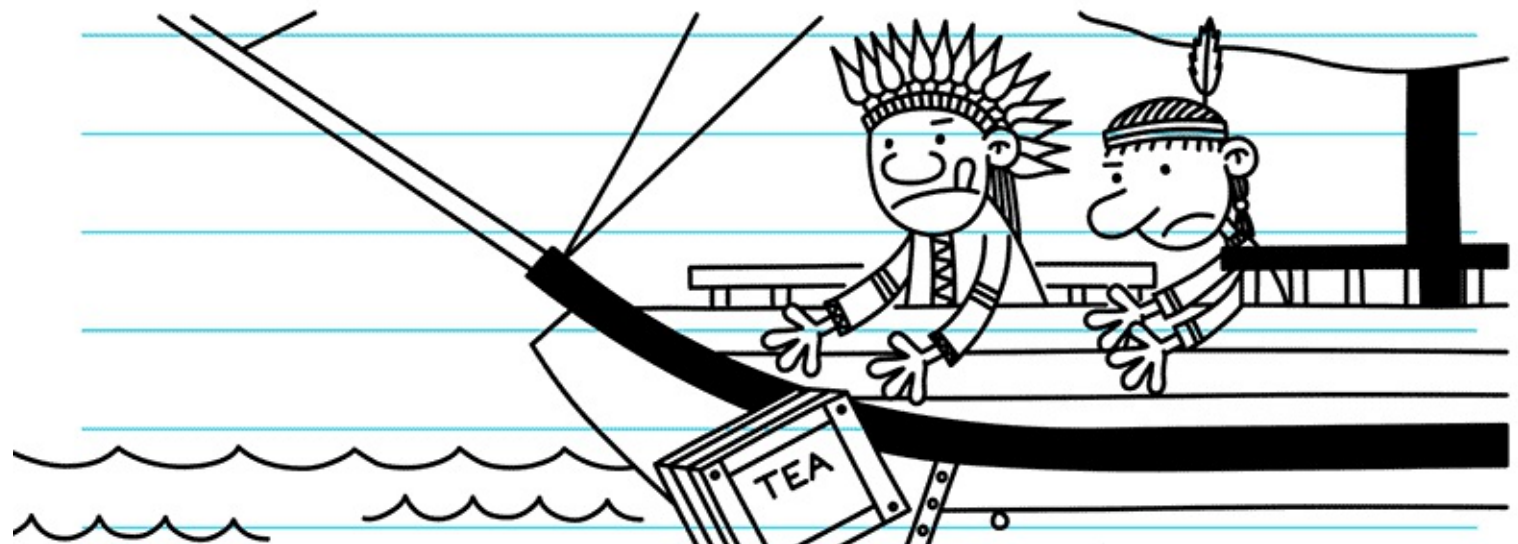


I'm pretty sure I know where they got that idea.

In Social Studies we're learning about different

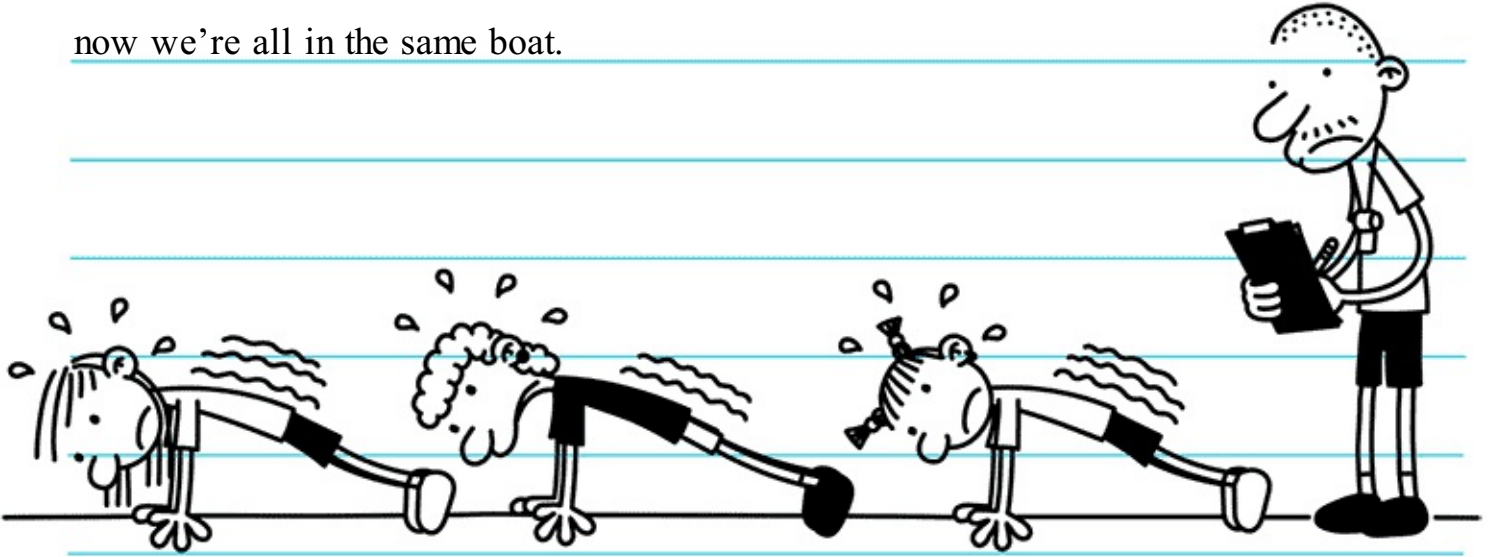
ways people throughout history have protested to

change things they weren't happy about.



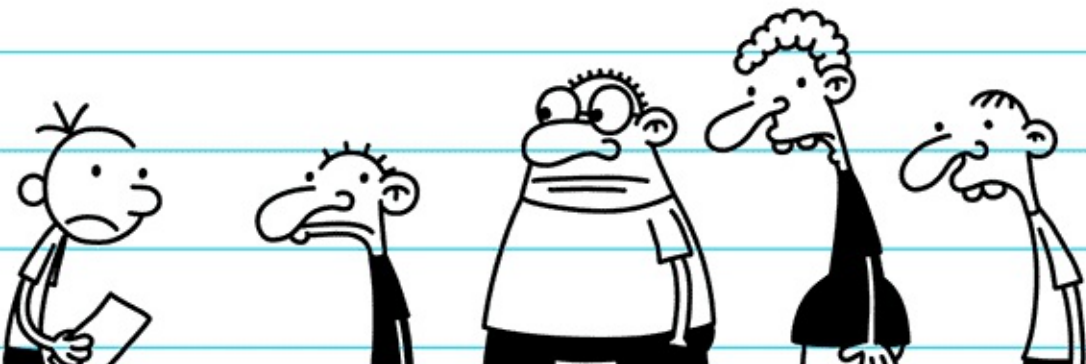


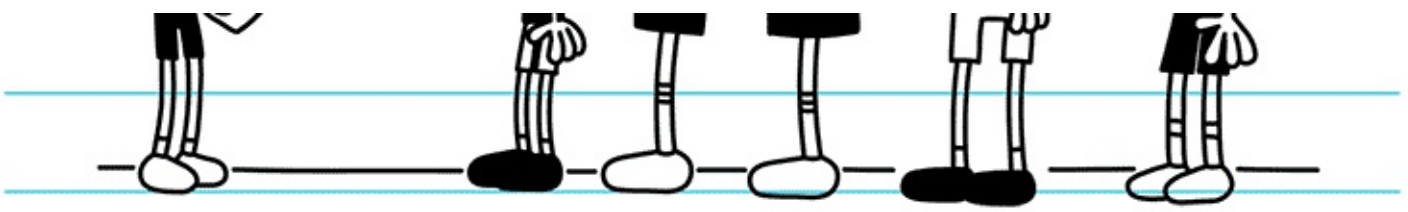
I think the girls were expecting a big fight out of Mr. Underwood, but he just told them they could do regular push-ups if they felt like it. So now we're all in the same boat.



I thought that petition thing was a good idea, though. I figured us boys should be allowed to do the easy push-ups if we want, so I wrote a petition and tried to get signatures.

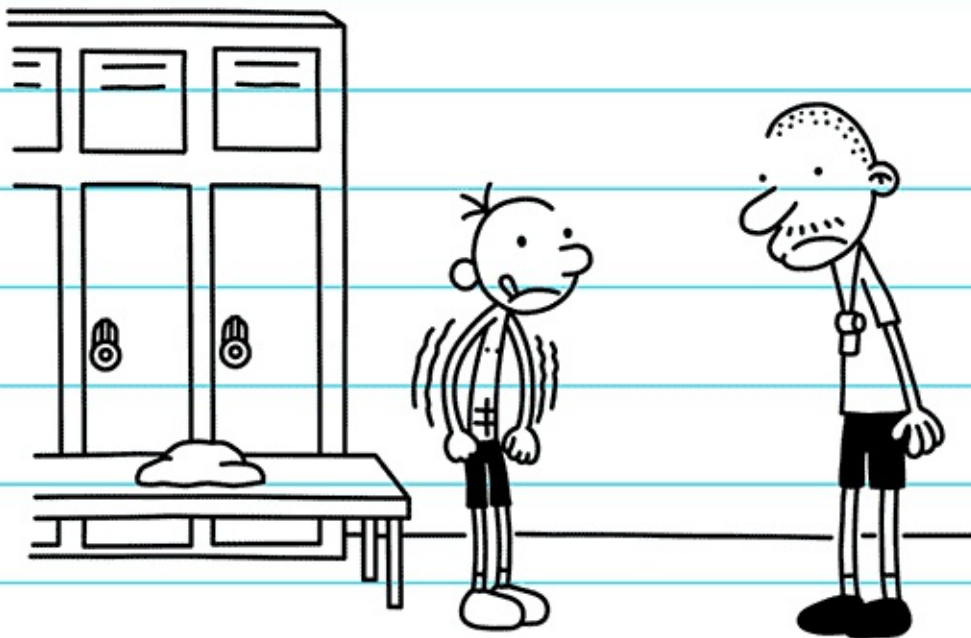
But I got a bad feeling when I saw the group of guys who wanted to sign my petition, and I decided to just drop the whole thing.





A couple of weeks ago we had to do sit-ups during Phys Ed, but I got cramps and asked Mr. Underwood if I could just do the rest of my sit-ups as homework. He said that was OK, but he wanted proof that I did them.

So the next morning I got some of Mom's mascara and drew a six-pack of abs on my stomach. Then I made sure I had my shirt off when Mr. Underwood walked through the locker room.

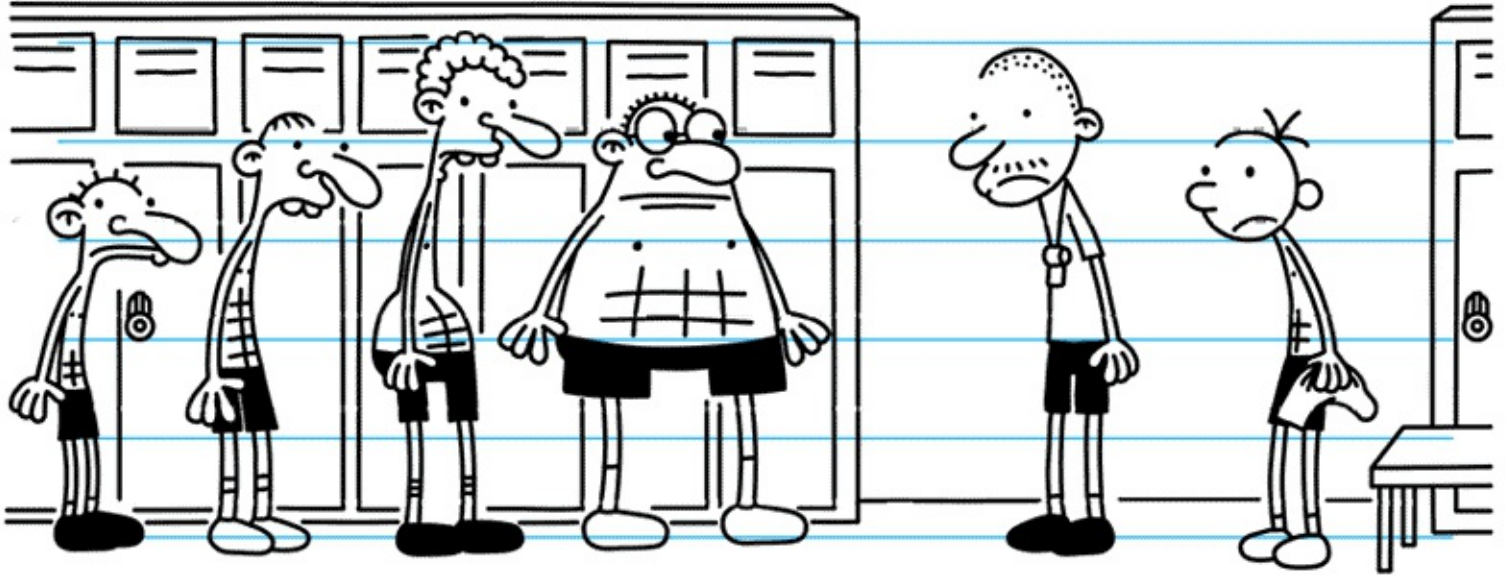


The next thing I knew, though, I had a bunch of copycats, and the following day half the guys in my class showed up with their OWN

fake six-packs.

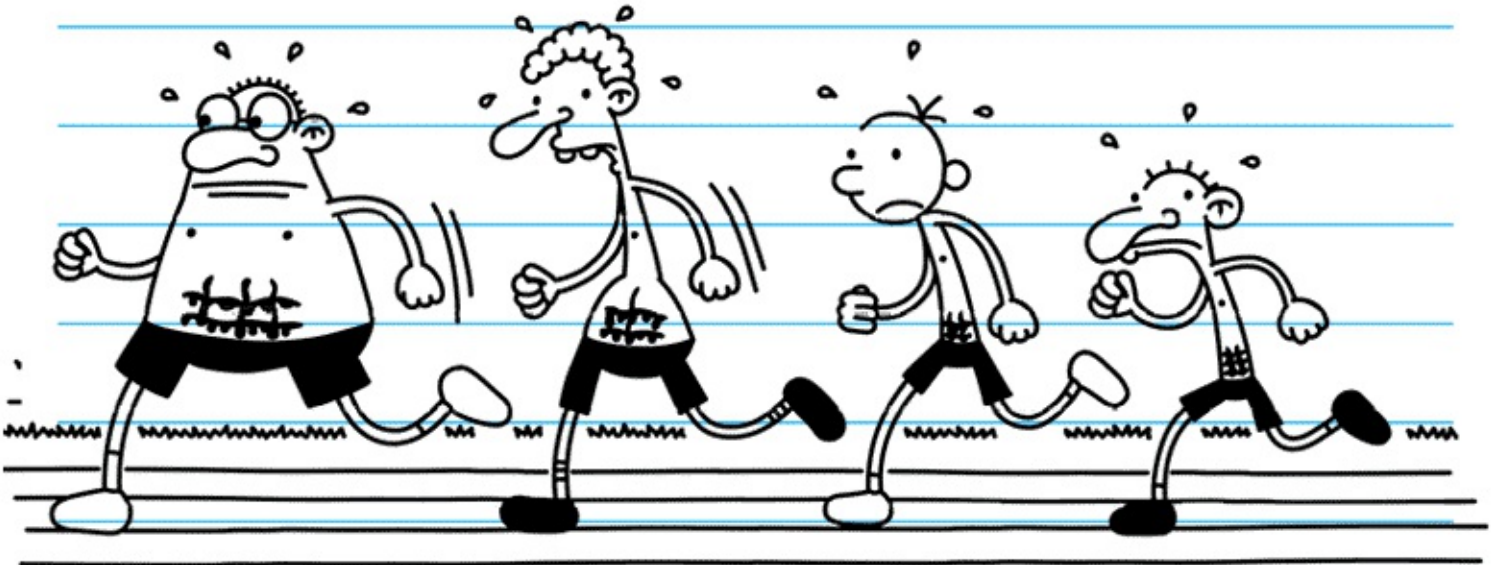
But some of those guys were REALLY awful

makeup artists.



Still, I think we had Mr. Underwood fooled. At

least until we got sweaty and the mascara ran.



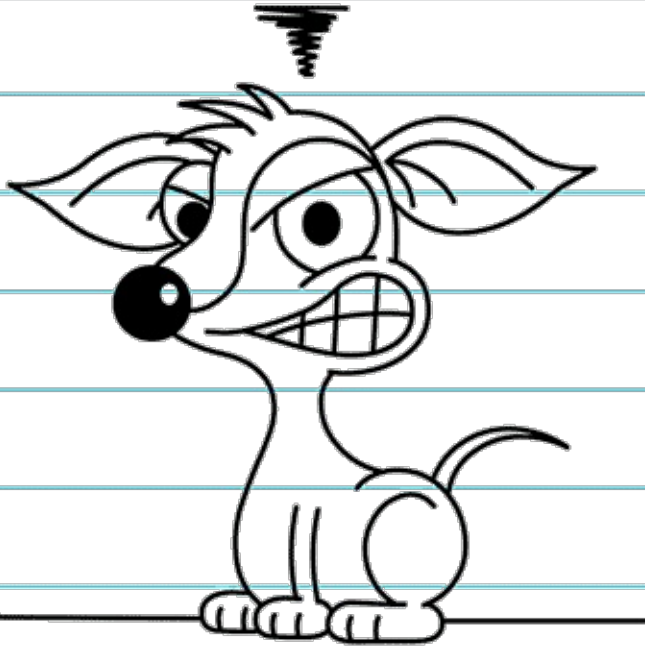
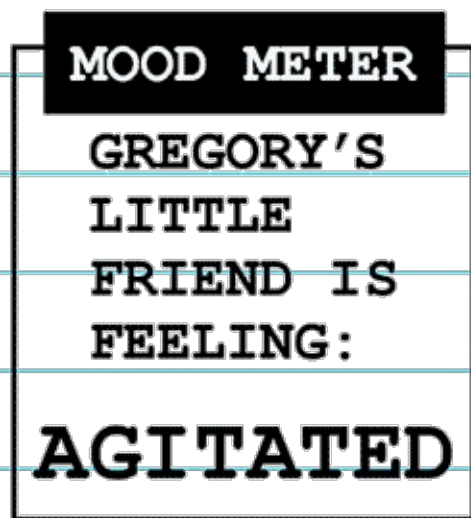
Wednesday

For the past few days I've been getting alerts

on my Net Kritterz account, and if I don't get

some Kritterz Kash soon, I could have a problem

on my hands.



I asked Mom if she could just float me a few
bucks so I could get my pet's Mood Meter back to
"Calm," but she wouldn't budge.

Then she said I shouldn't expect her to give me
money to buy Christmas presents for the family
this year, either. She said I'm at the age where
I need to be spending my own money so that my
gifts "mean" something.

Usually Mom gives me twenty dollars to spend on
presents and I do all my shopping at the Holiday
Bazaar at school. It's great because I can get all

my Christmas shopping done in one shot and the

stuff at the Bazaar is dirt cheap.

So I always come away with a little money I can

spend on myself.



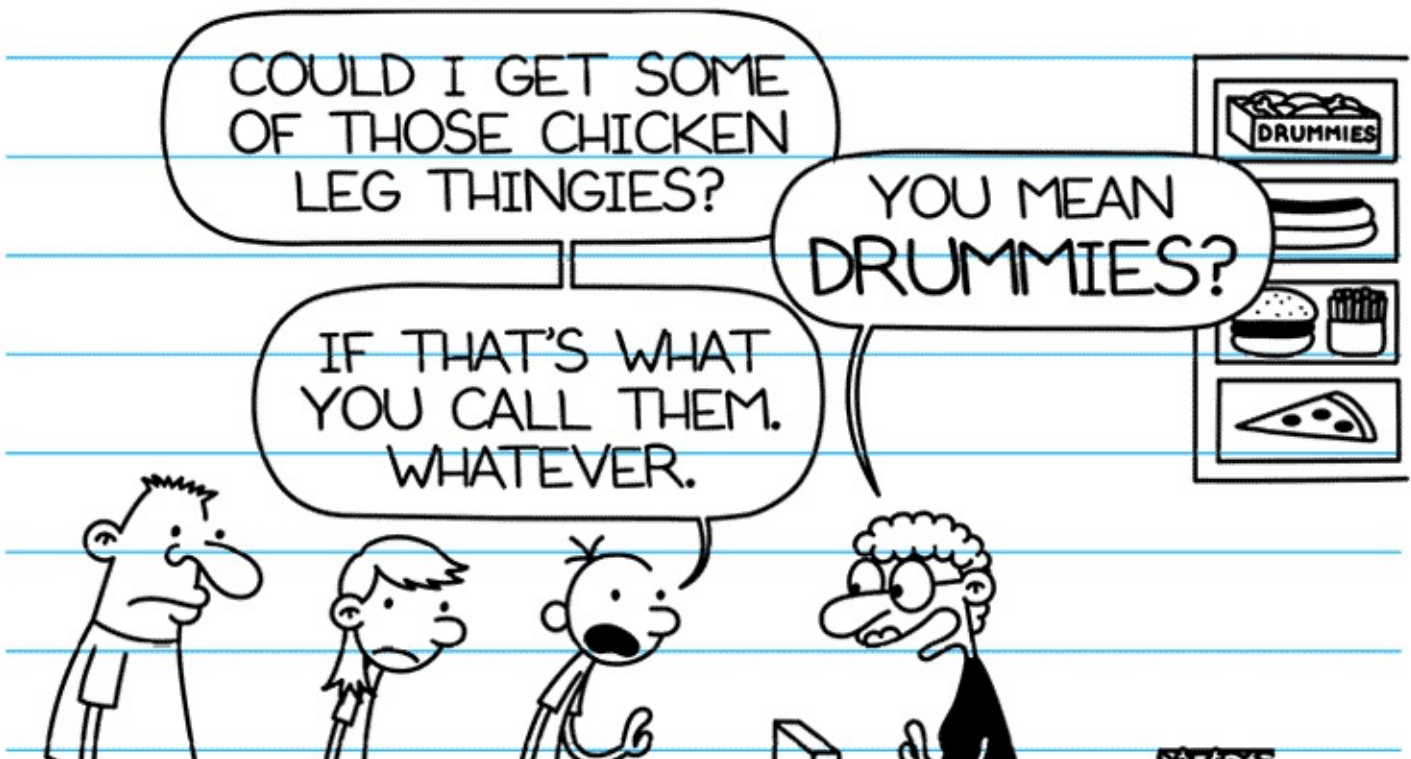
I usually spend most of my money at the

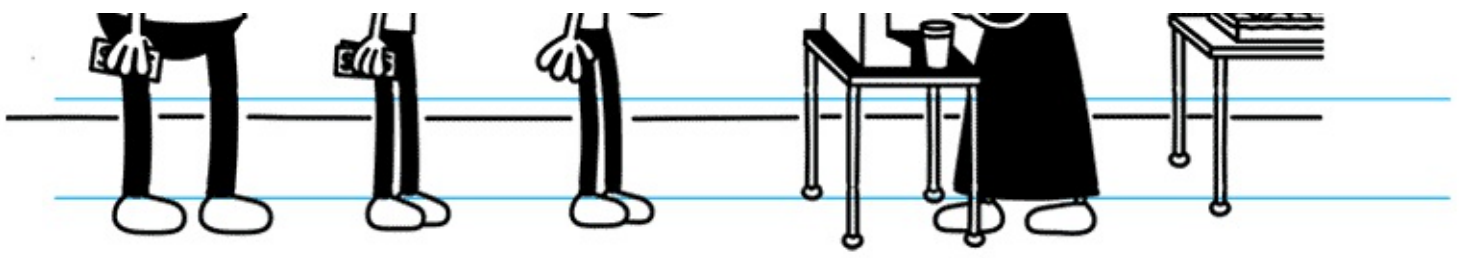
concession stand. They have the most delicious

chicken drumsticks I've ever tasted, but they

have a really goofy name and you feel stupid

ordering them.





I don't know how I'm gonna scrape together
enough money to buy everyone a present. Basically,
there are two times a year when I can count
on getting spending money, and that's on my
birthday and Christmas.

I'm just glad my birthday's a few months away
from Christmas so I get separate gifts for
BOTH. I feel bad for people who have their
birthday right around the holidays, because it
gets lumped together with Christmas and they
end up getting cheated out of a gift.

It's not fair, but I guess it's been happening for
thousands of years.

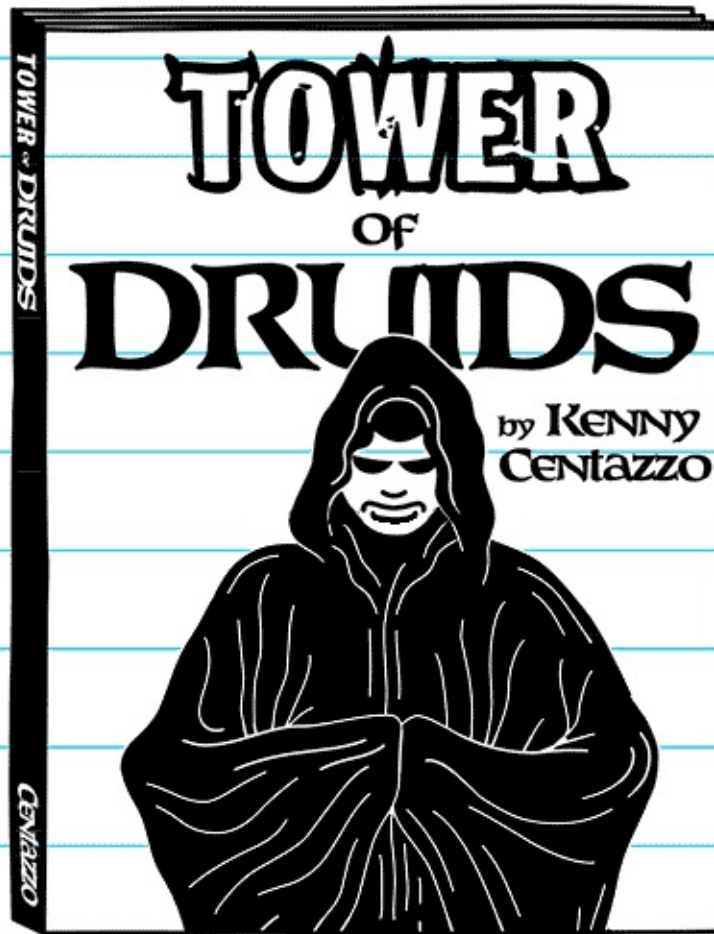
THIS GIFT COUNTS
FOR CHRISTMAS
AND YOUR
BIRTHDAY, JESUS!

GEE,
THANKS.





I realized something today, though. I might not have any cash, but I DO have something valuable: my first-edition signed copy of the “Tower of Druids” graphic novel.



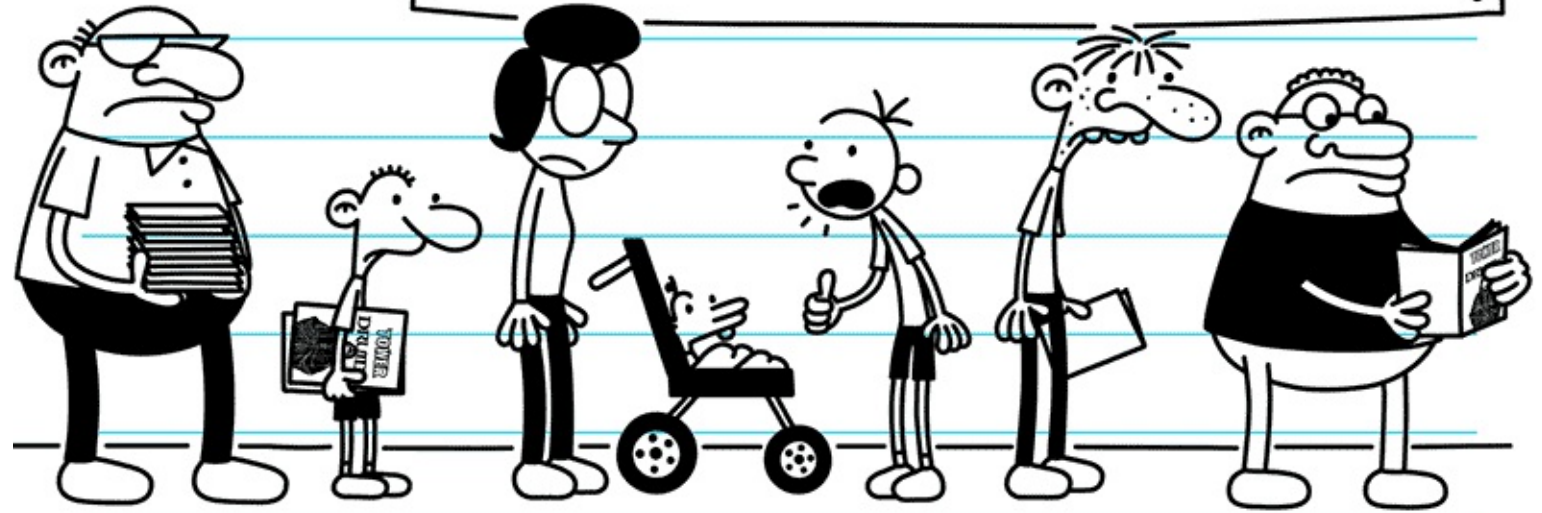
I got “Tower of Druids” signed by the author, Kenny Centazzo, at the comics convention in the city last year.

Well, actually, I didn’t technically get it signed— Mom did. I waited in line for two and a half hours, and then I had to take a bathroom break.

By the time I got back, Mom had gotten my

book signed.

COMICS EXPO



I was bummed that I didn't get to meet Kenny

Centazzo, but at least I got his autograph.

I looked on the computer today and found out
that a first-edition signed copy of "Tower of
Druids" is worth forty bucks. So that'll cover me
for Christmas presents, and I'll have enough left
over to get Gregory's Little Friend that jacuzzi
he seems to want.

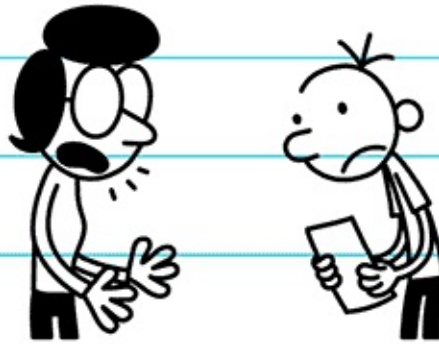
I told Mom about my plan to sell my book, and
she didn't like the idea. She said I waited a long

time to get that thing signed and I would really

regret selling it.

Mom said that when I had kids, they'd be mad I

sold it because it'll be worth a lot of money.



Well, that settled it for me. I've already decided

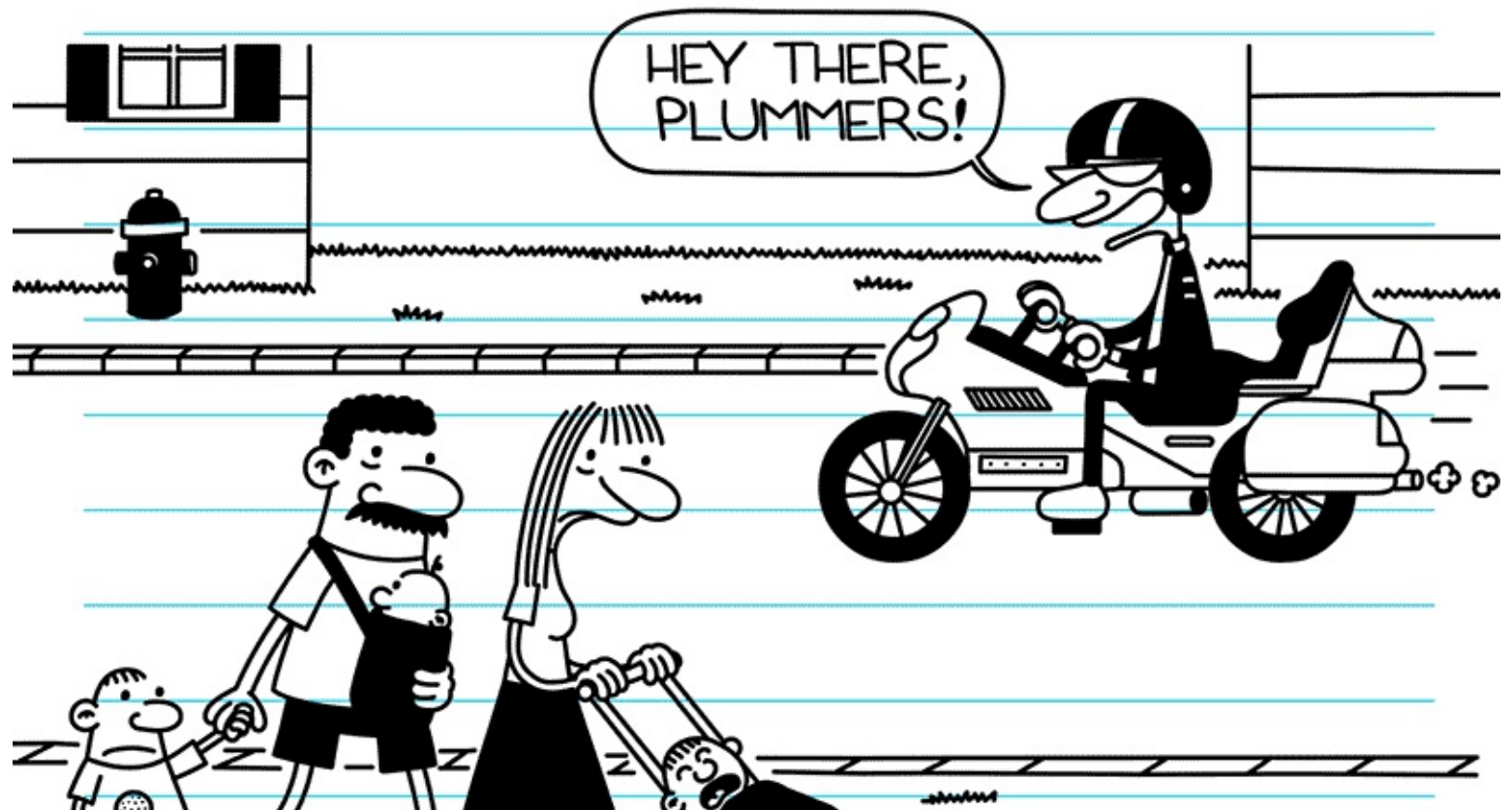
I'm not HAVING any kids. I want to be a

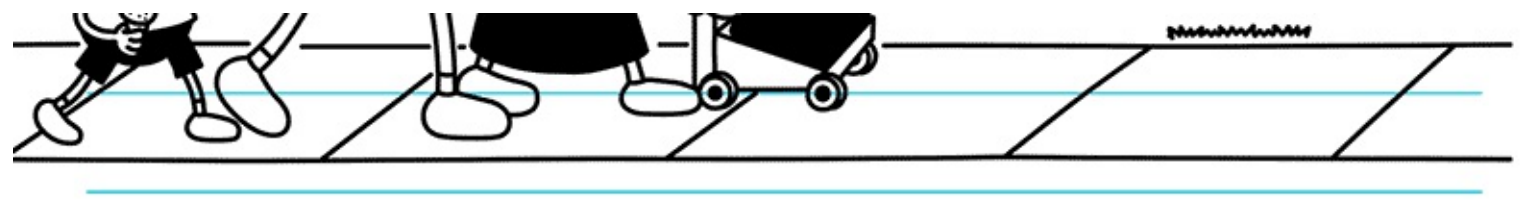
bachelor like my Uncle Charlie, who spends all his

money on vacations and heated toilet seats and

stuff like that, instead of forking it over to a

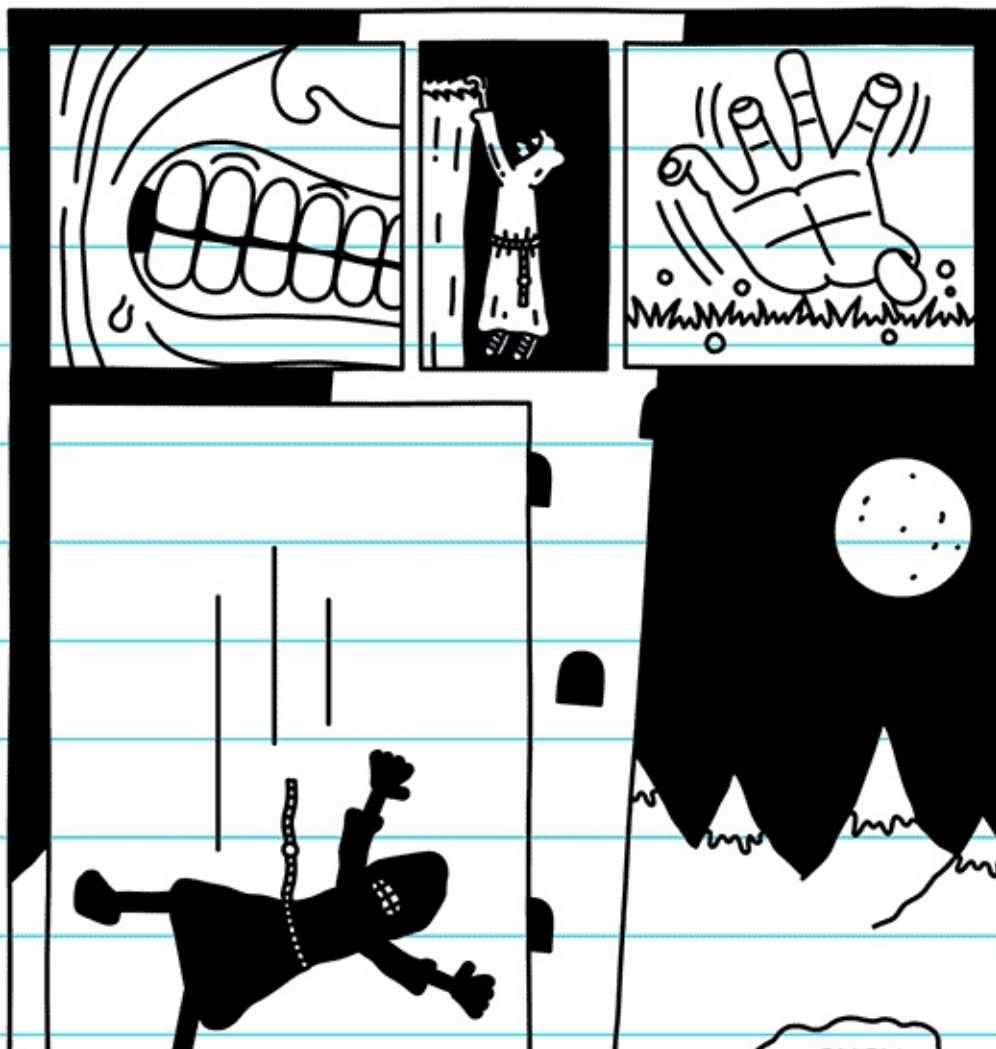
bunch of ungrateful kids.

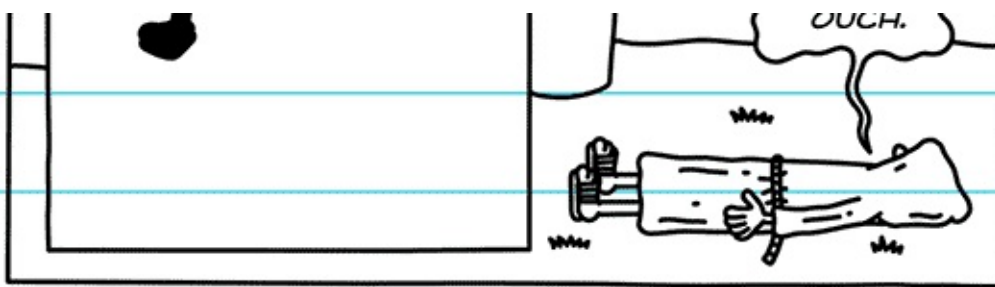




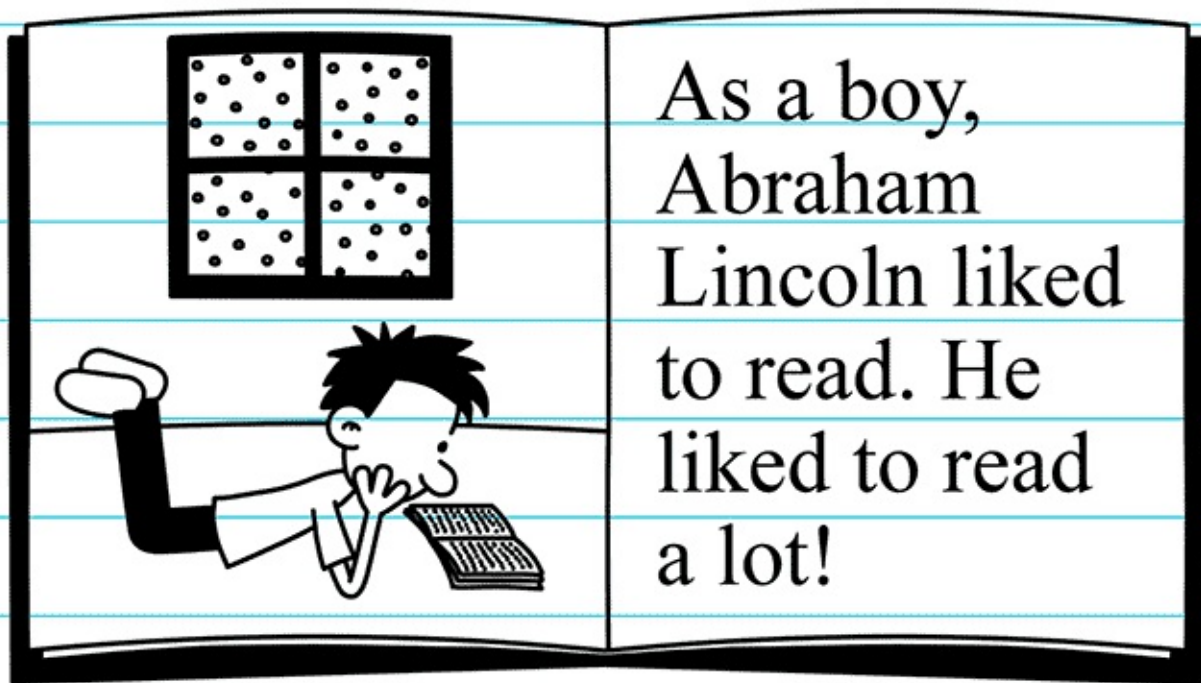
I can thank my librarian, Mrs. Schneiderman, for getting me into the “Tower of Druids” series to begin with, because she’s the one who started the graphic novel section in our school library.

I don’t know when they started calling comic books graphic novels, but I’m glad they did. Some of the teachers complain that they don’t count as REAL reading, but the way I see it, if they’re in the library, they’re fair game for book reports.



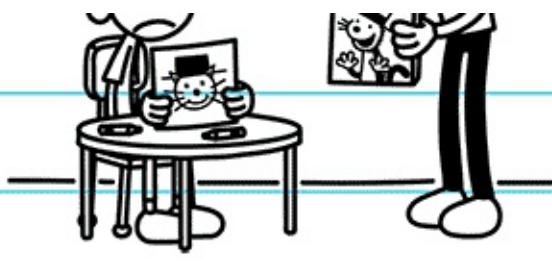


Unfortunately, when Mrs. Schneiderman put in the graphic novels, she got rid of the Easy Reader section. I always used the books in the Easy Reader section to do my reports for Social Studies, because you could whip through one of them in about forty-five seconds.



When I was little I used to want to be an author myself. But whenever I started telling Mom my ideas, she'd say my story was just like some book that was already published.





I realized all the good ideas were taken before I

was even born.

Mom said if I wanted to be an author, I should

try coming up with something original. But it was

really hard coming up with a fresh idea, so I just

took one of my favorite books and more or less

copied it word for word with a few small tweaks.

When Mom read what I wrote, she was really

impressed, and I guess she thought I was some

kind of genius or something.



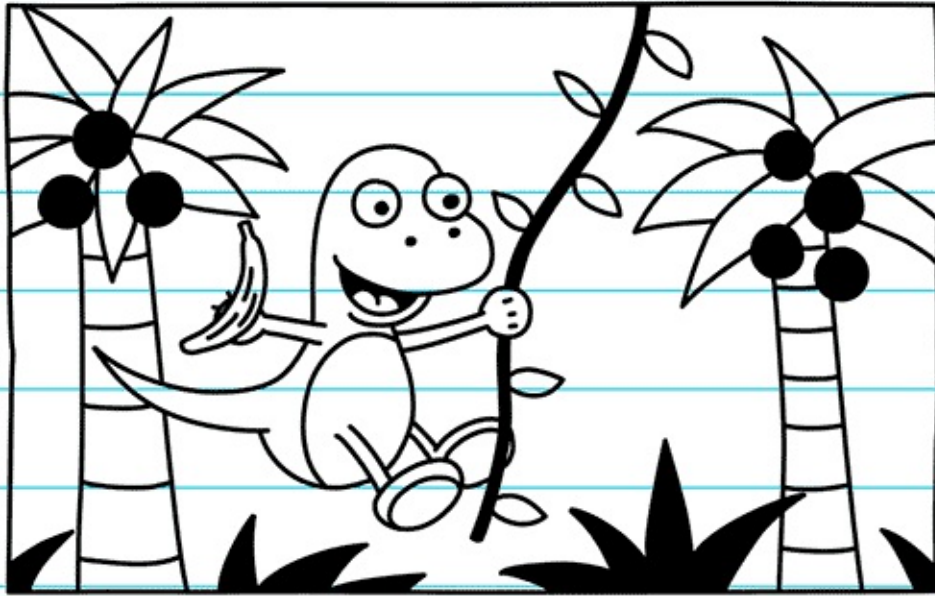
But I think Mom got a little carried away. She

sent my book to a publisher in New York, who

told her I'd plagiarized "Geoffrey the Gorilla,"

which was already a bestselling kids' book.

Mom was pretty mad at me for passing off the book as my own, but I'm surprised she couldn't figure it out herself from reading it.



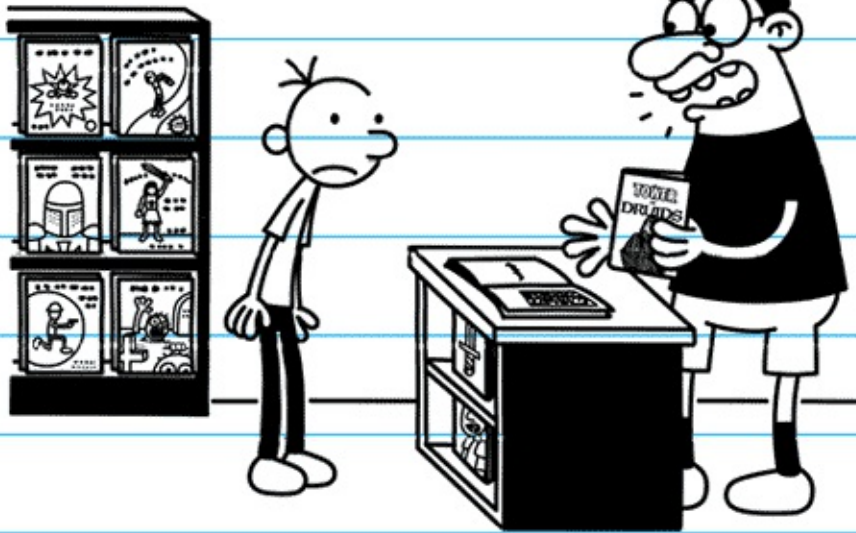
Geoffrey the Dinosaur swings from vine to vine. He perches in a tree and eats a banana. "Ooh ooh ooh," Geoffrey says as he pounds his chest.

Thursday

Well, it turns out my first-edition copy of "Tower of Druids" is totally worthless. I brought it to the comic book shop yesterday afternoon hoping

to cash in, but the guy who works there told me

the autograph was a forgery.



I told him he didn't know what he was talking about, because Mom got my book signed by the actual author. But the comic book guy showed me a catalog with Kenny Centazzo's signature in it, and it looked COMPLETELY different.

I was really confused, but on the walk home I realized what must've happened. Mom probably got tired of waiting in line at the comics convention and just signed the book HERSELF. In fact, I should've figured that out from the inscription.

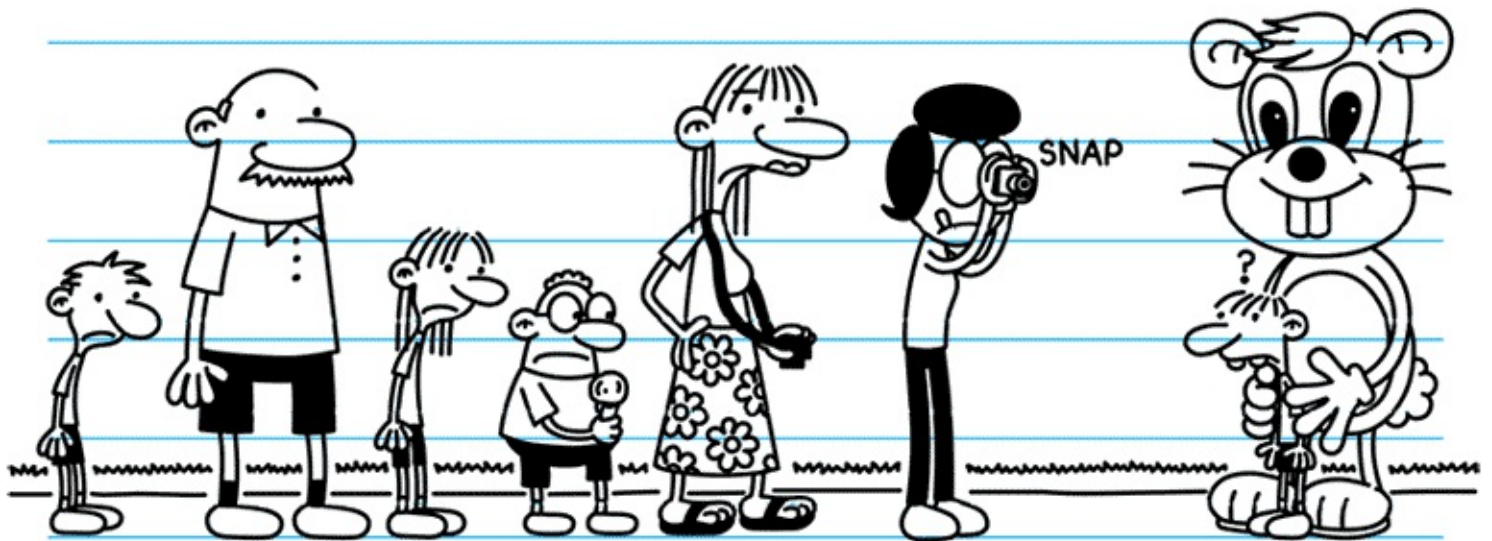
Readers are winners! Keep reading to make your dreams come true!

91-11-11

your fax,
Kenny

It wouldn't be the FIRST time Mom pulled this
sort of thing, because she has ZERO patience for
waiting in line.

When I was little I used to like to get my
picture taken with the characters at theme parks.
But whenever there was more than a five-minute
wait, Mom would just walk to the front of the
line and snap a picture of the character and
whatever kid was posing with him. That's why
our vacation photo albums are full of pictures of
random people.



When I got home I went straight to Mom's room
with my book, and the look on her face said it all.

So now I know why she didn't want me to sell it.



I just hope Mom knows that when she doesn't
get a present from me on Christmas, she's only
got herself to blame.

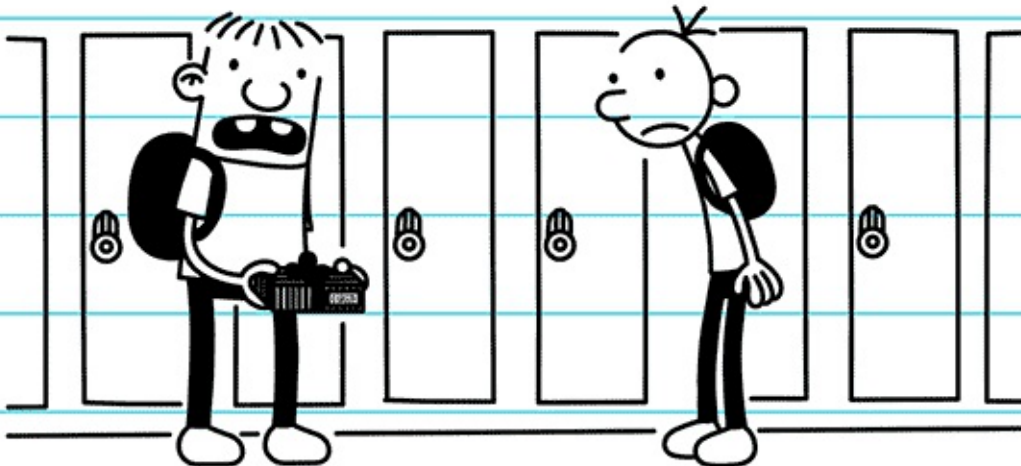
Friday

Even though I was still pretty mad at Mom for
forging that signature, she bailed me out today.

At school Rowley was carrying a present, and

I asked him what it was for. He said it was his

Secret Holiday Buddy gift.



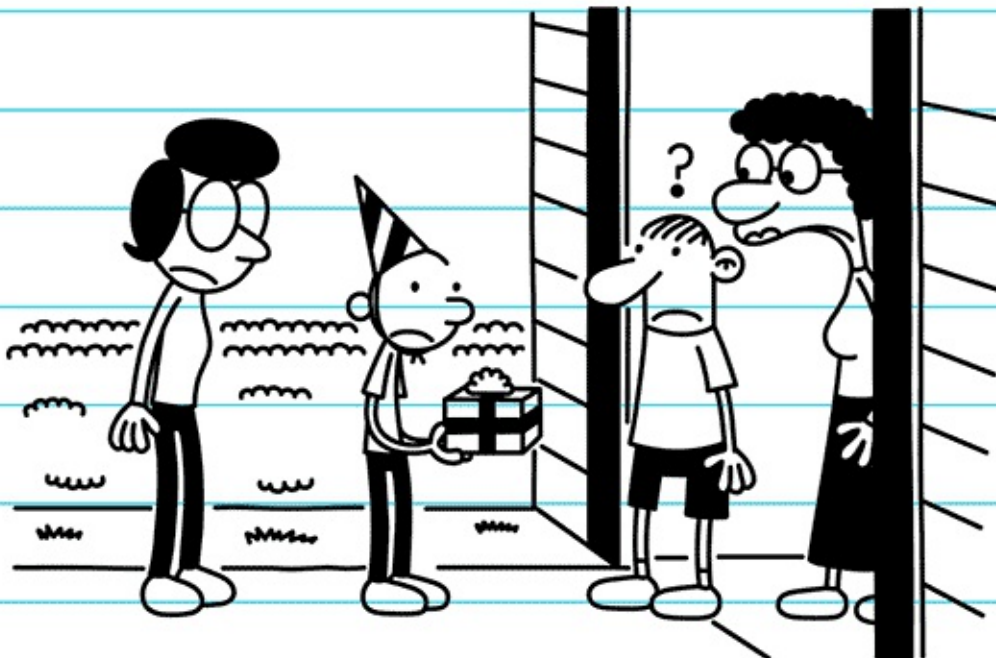
I forgot all ABOUT the Secret Holiday

Buddy thing.

Everyone at school is supposed to buy a gift for the person they get assigned and then give it anonymously.



The person I was supposed to get a gift for was Dean Delarosa, who I've known a long time. Back in third grade, I got invited to Dean's birthday party, but Mom got the date wrong and I showed up at his house a week EARLY.

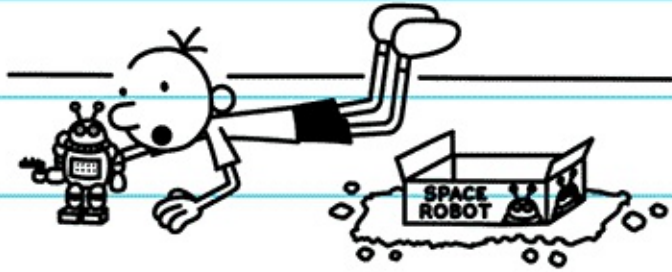


Dean's mom told us the party was the following

week, so we went home.

But the gift Mom bought for Dean was really

cool, and I ended up playing with it myself.



By the time Dean's actual birthday rolled around,

I'd already broken the robot's hand and lost the

gun that came with it, so I skipped the party.

I've felt guilty about that ever since, and today

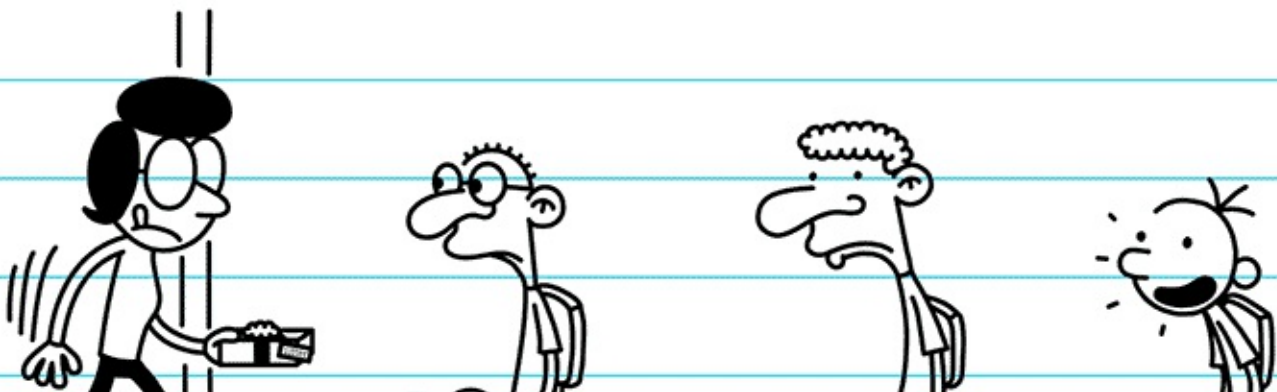
I didn't want to cheat Dean out of a gift for

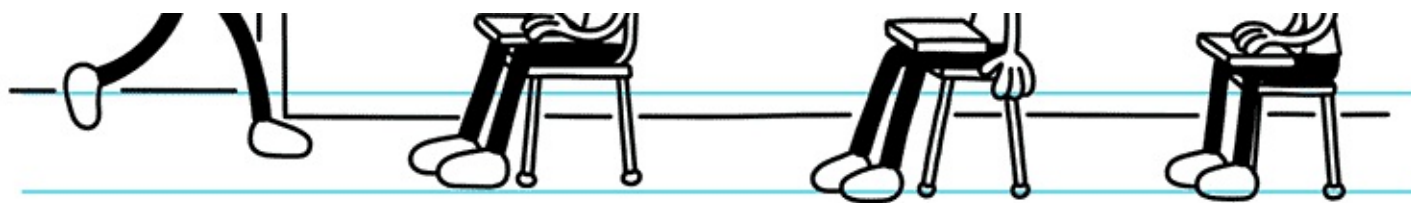
the second time. So when I got to school, I

asked the secretary in the front office to call

Mom and see if she could pick something up for me.

And she came through just in time.





The teacher started handing out the Secret

Holiday Buddy gifts, and I got a jar of gummy

bears. Finally, there was only one present under

the tree, and it was the one for Dean.

Unfortunately, Mom didn't understand that the

gift was supposed to be ANONYMOUS, so it

was totally embarrassing when the teacher read

the card on Dean's present out loud.

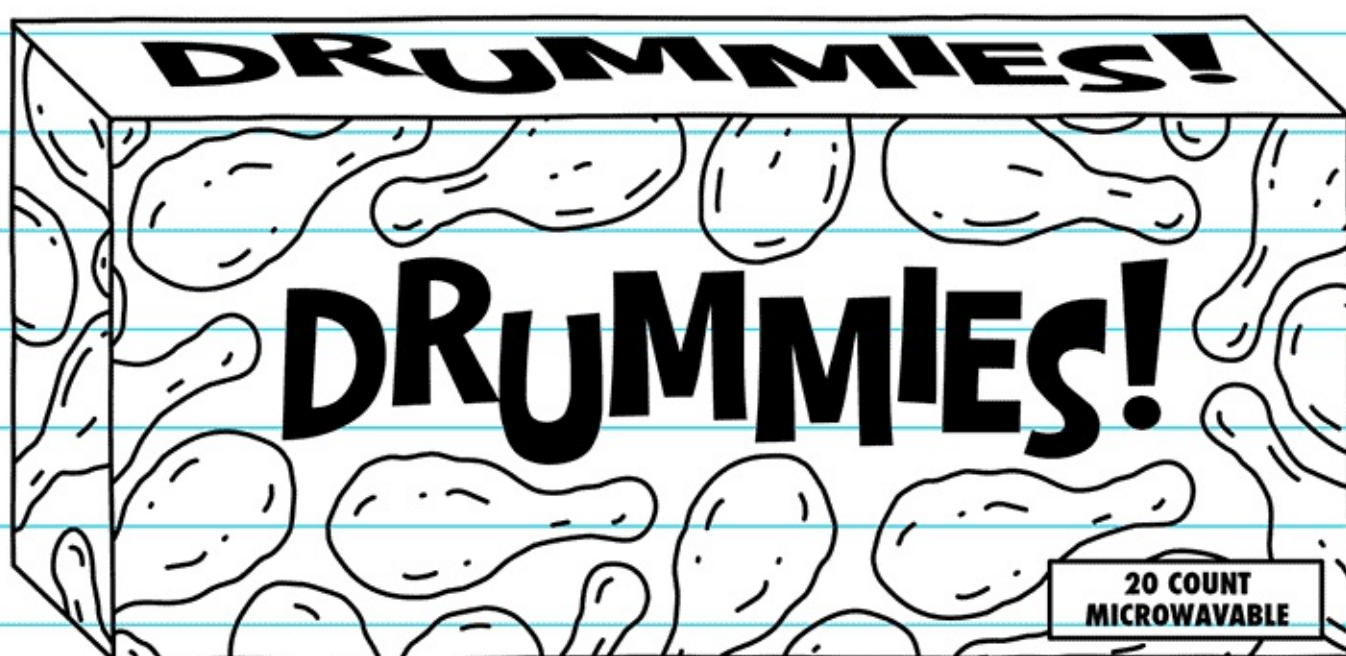


Dean looked like he wanted to crawl under his

desk and hide, and I felt the same exact way.

Saturday

I always thought the only place in the world
where you could get Drummies was at the Holiday
Bazaar. But today me and Mom were at the
grocery store, and you'll never BELIEVE what I
found in the frozen food aisle.



Now I know that I can have Drummies whenever
I want and that they're TOTALLY ripping us
off at the Holiday Bazaar. You can buy a whole
BOX at the store for what they charge for three
or four individual Drummies at school.

In fact, now that I could get my own Drummies,

I realized I could run my OWN Holiday Bazaar.

But first I had to buy up the grocery store's

supply before the school beat me to it.

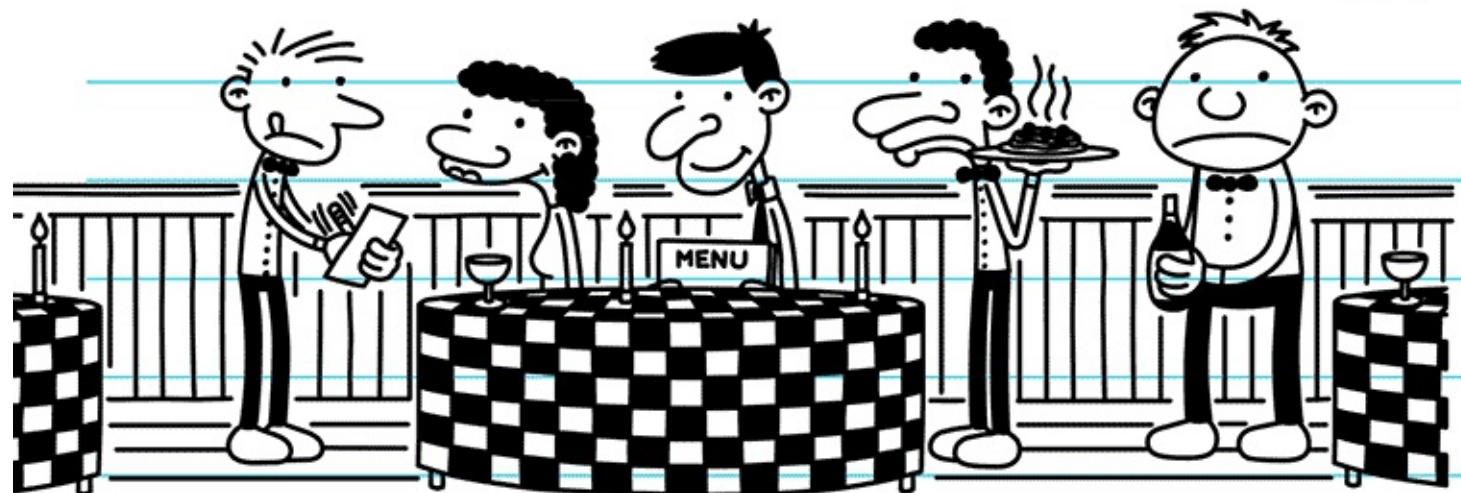


Other kids in my neighborhood have done this sort

of thing before. Last summer Bryce Anderson and

a bunch of his cronies set up a restaurant for all

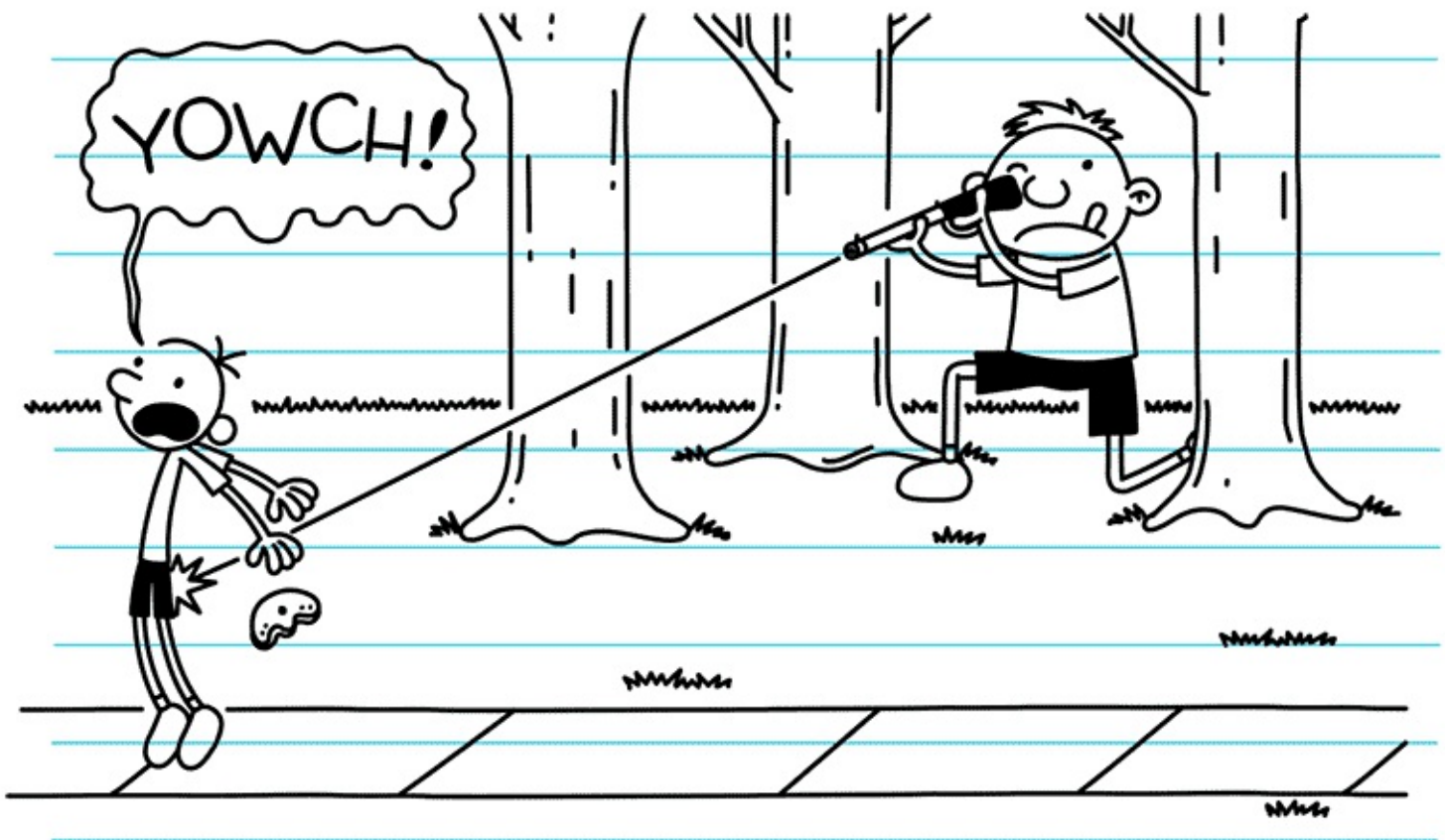
the neighborhood parents.



I heard they pulled in almost three hundred

bucks, and I know for a fact that one of Bryce's

goons bought a brand-new BB gun with his share.



I knew I couldn't run a Holiday Bazaar all by myself, so I called Rowley and asked him to help out. We found some Christmas ornaments and some other stuff in my basement we could sell.

But I figured if we were gonna compete with the school's Holiday Bazaar, we'd have to come up with better games than the beanbag toss and the ping-pong-ball bounce.

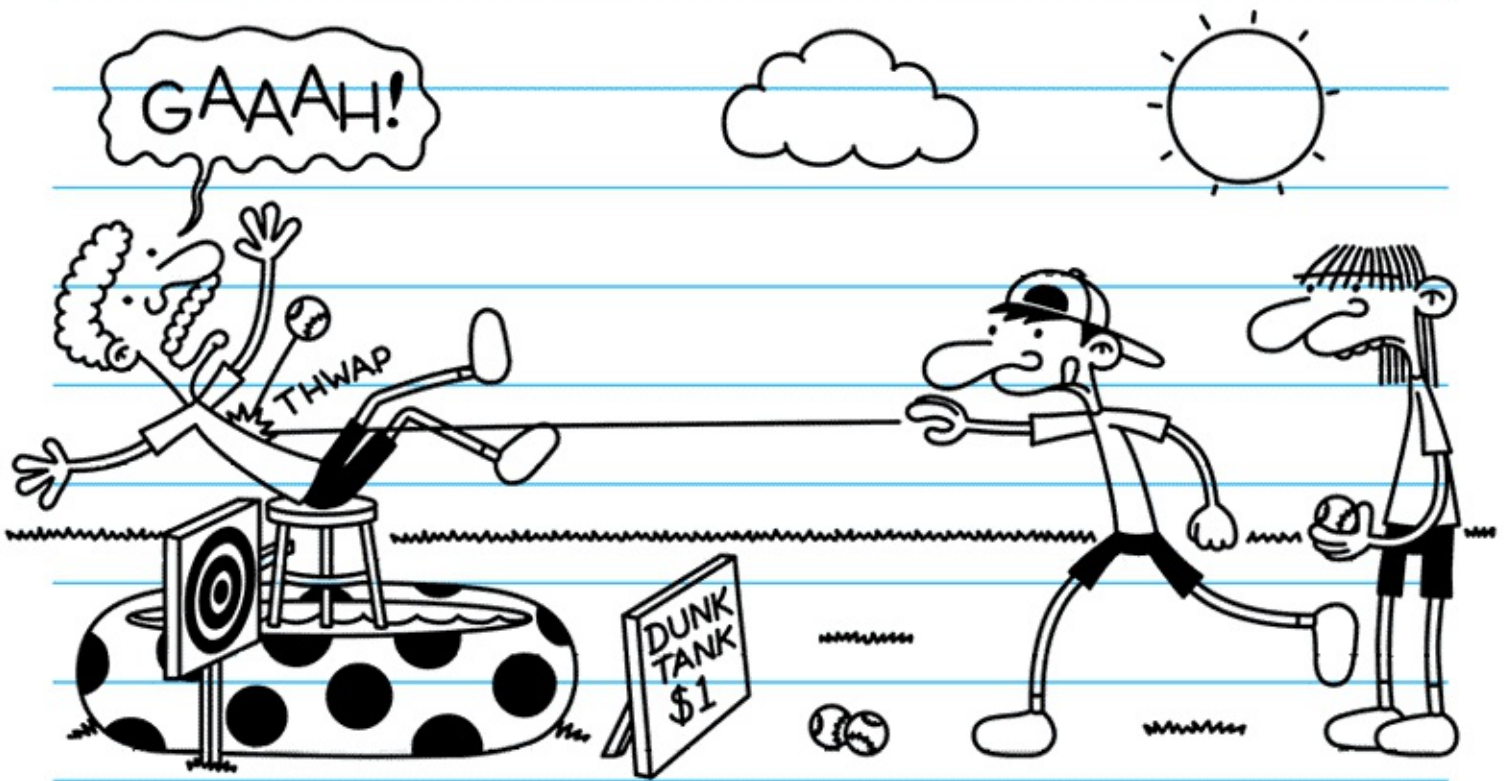
Rowley suggested a dunk tank, but I told him I didn't think Mom would allow that in the house. Plus, we had a dunk tank when we ran a

Fun Fair in Rowley's yard over the summer, and it

was a DISASTER.

We didn't know you were supposed to protect the

guy in the dunk tank by putting him in a cage.



Me and Rowley decided it would be really cool if

our Holiday Bazaar had a video game arcade. We

didn't have the money to buy real arcade machines,

so we got a bunch of cardboard boxes out of the

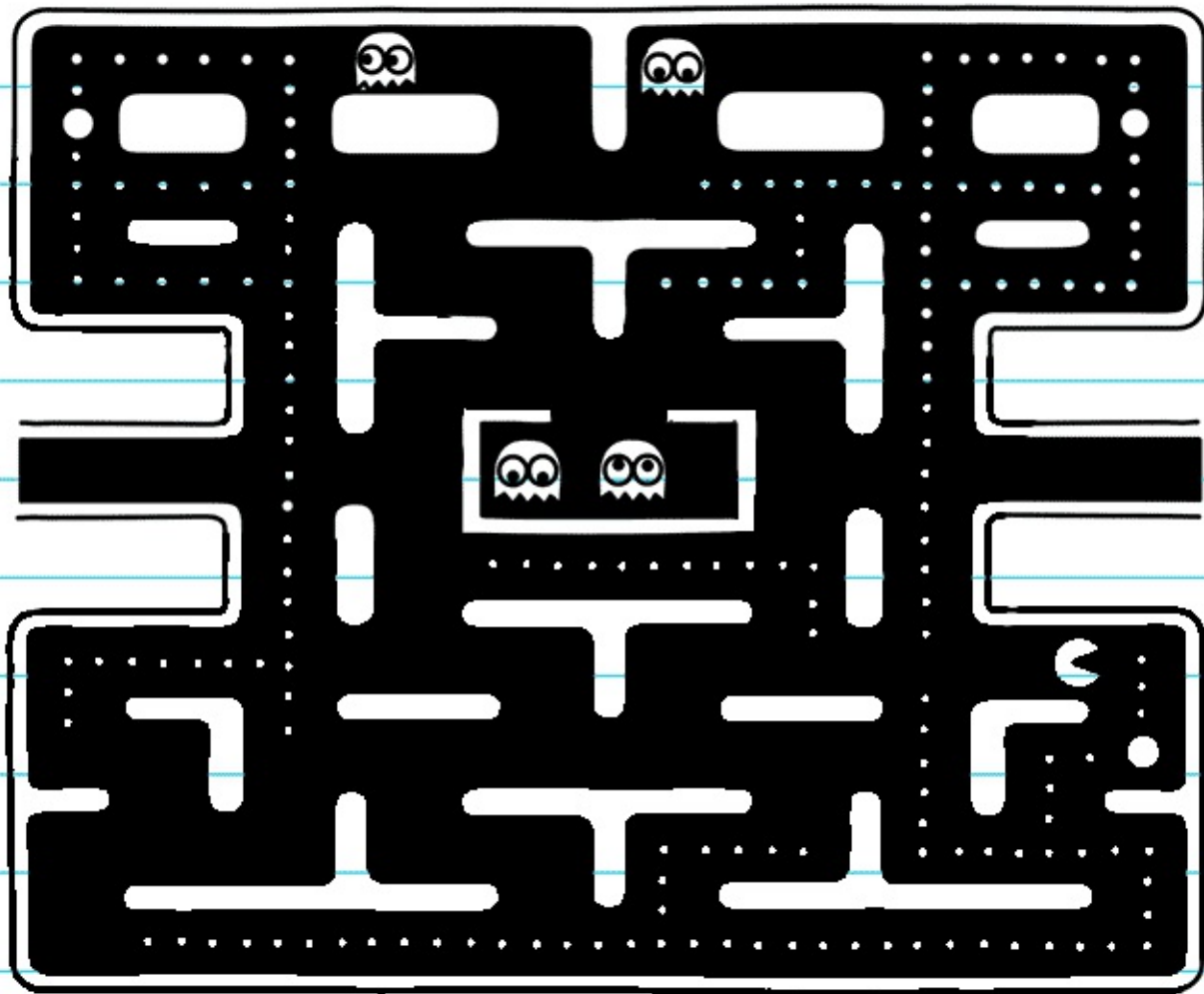
basement to make homemade versions.

We started off with Pac-Man because we thought

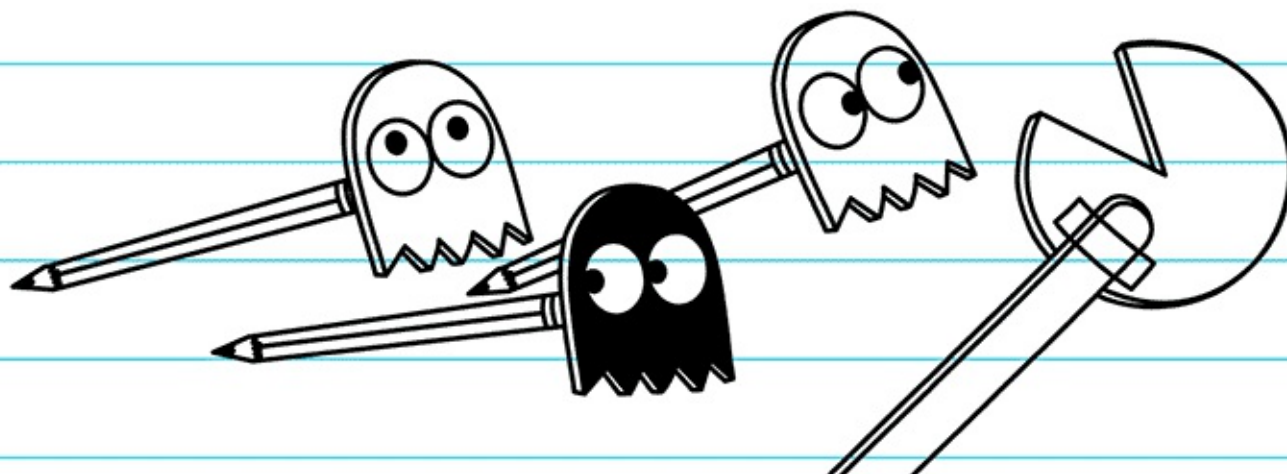
it would be pretty easy to make. In Pac-Man

you've got a little character who goes around

eating pellets while getting chased by ghosts.



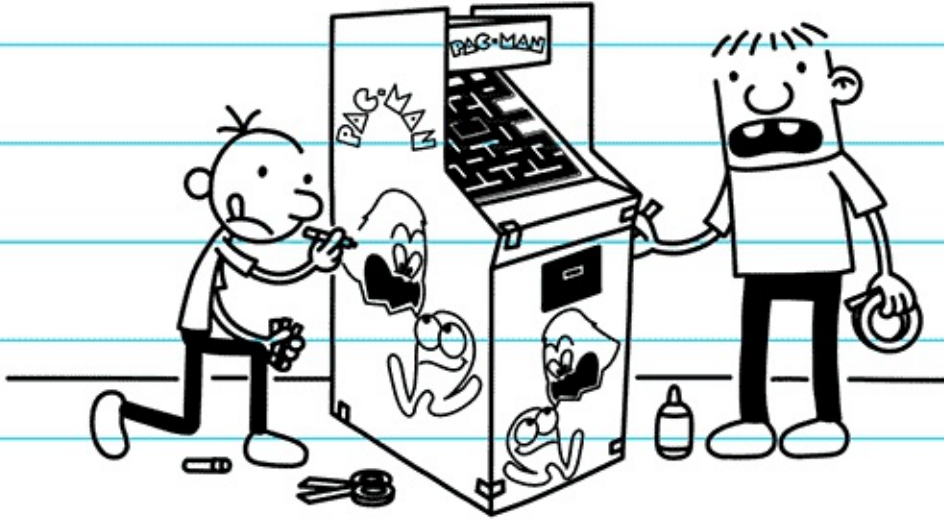
In our version we were gonna have Rowley on
the inside of the box operating ghosts glued to
pencils, while the person who was playing the
game maneuvered Pac-Man from the outside with a
popsicle stick.





We spent the next two hours making the box look

just like the real thing.



But while we were working, Rowley started asking

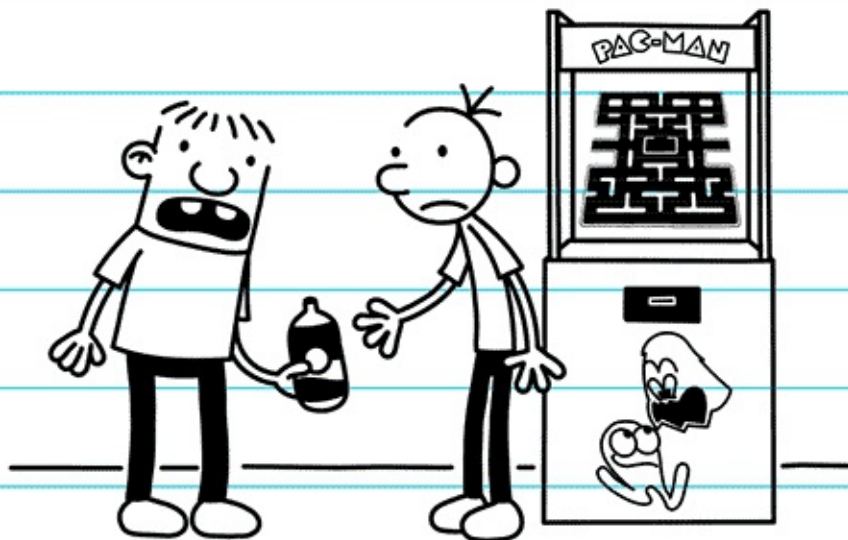
questions about how long he was gonna be in

the box and what would happen if he needed a

bathroom break. I gave him an empty two-liter

soda bottle to keep in the box for when he had to

go Number One.



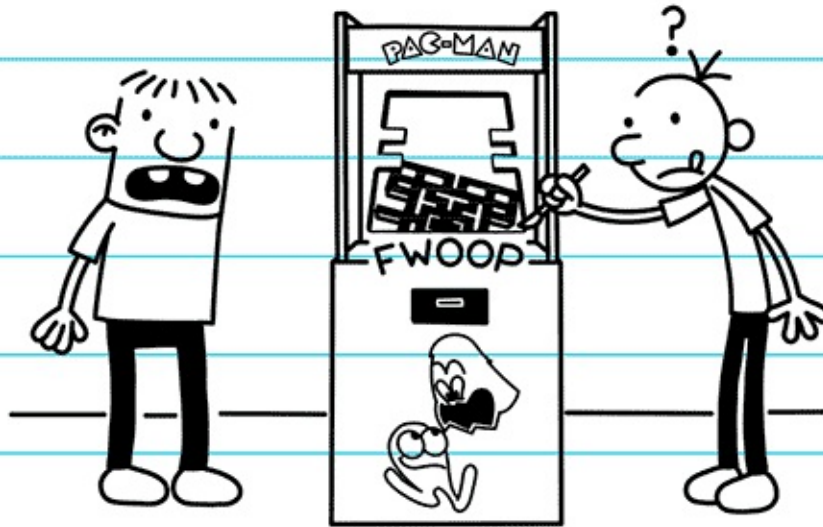
Rowley asked what he would do if he needed to

go Number Two, but I told him we'd cross that

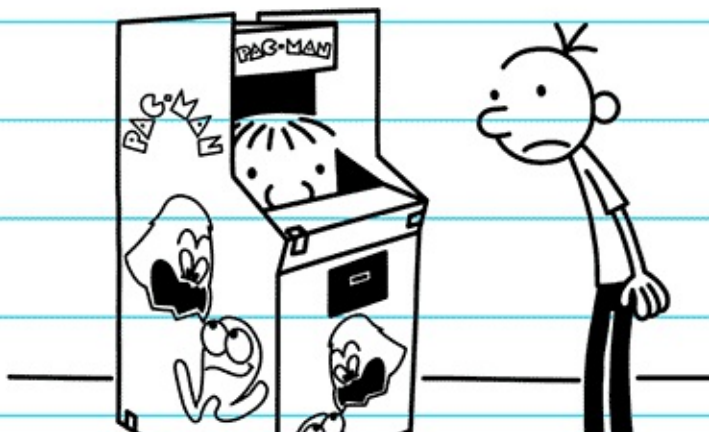
bridge when we came to it.

Once we were done coloring in our machine, we
started cutting out the groove where the popsicle
sticks were supposed to go.

But I guess we weren't really thinking ahead,
because as soon as we cut the outer border, the
whole maze fell inside the machine.



So I guess we're not gonna make a lot of money
on Pac-Man unless people are willing to pay
twenty-five cents to see Rowley sitting in a box.

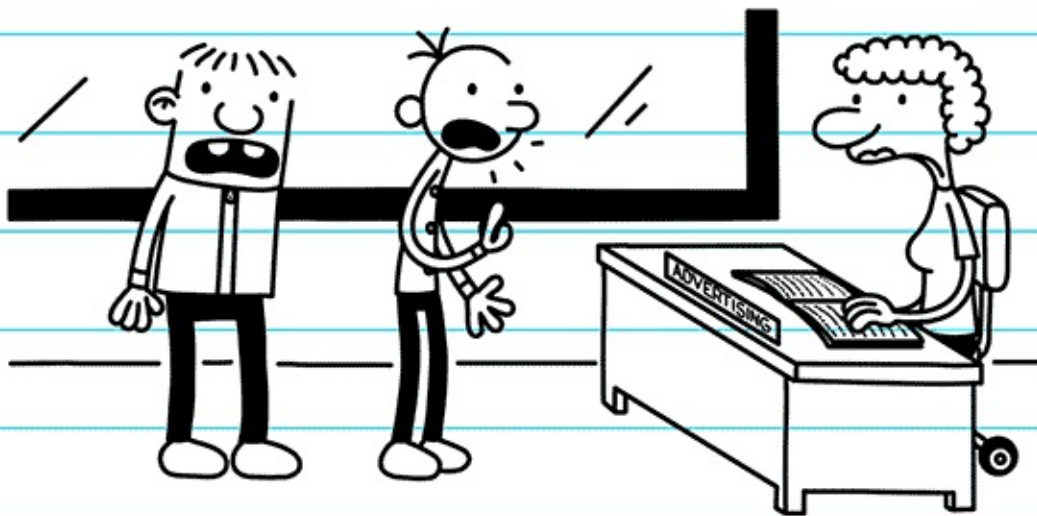




Sunday

Me and Rowley still have a lot of work to do to set up our Holiday Bazaar, but I realized we'd better not wait until the last minute to let people know about it. So we went down to the town newspaper's office and told them we wanted to order up a full-page color ad in tomorrow's edition.

They said an ad like that would cost a thousand dollars, and I told them we could pay for it the day AFTER our event. But they wouldn't take an IOU, even when I told them how many Drummies we were planning on selling.



I suggested maybe they could just write an article about how two regular kids were putting

together their own Holiday Bazaar and not

charge us anything.

But they told us they didn't consider our Holiday

Bazaar "newsworthy."

I think it stinks that the newspaper basically

gets to control the information people are

getting. At home, I complained to Mom, and

she suggested me and Rowley start our OWN

newspaper and write about our Bazaar.

I thought that was a GREAT idea, and we got

right to work. We came up with a name for our

paper and put together the front page.

The Neighborhood TATTTLER



Drummies Pricing Scam EXPOSED!

Tattler reporters have uncovered a price-gouging scheme at the school Holiday Bazaar that has been running unchecked for years. The popular chicken drumstick items, "Drummies," have been sold at the Bazaar for more than six times their retail value.

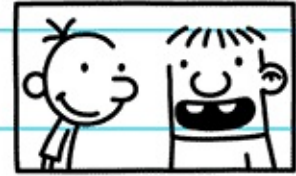
"I'm outraged," said a loyal customer who did not want to be
See DRUMMIES, A2

New Bazaar Offers Alternative to School Event

NEW Bazaar Offers Alternative to School Event

With the community reeling from the Drummies scandal, two boys have decided to make things right.

"We've decided to start our own Holiday Bazaar," said Greg Heffley, an entrepreneur
See **BAZAAR**, A3



We realized we were gonna have to come up with

some more pages for people to take our newspaper

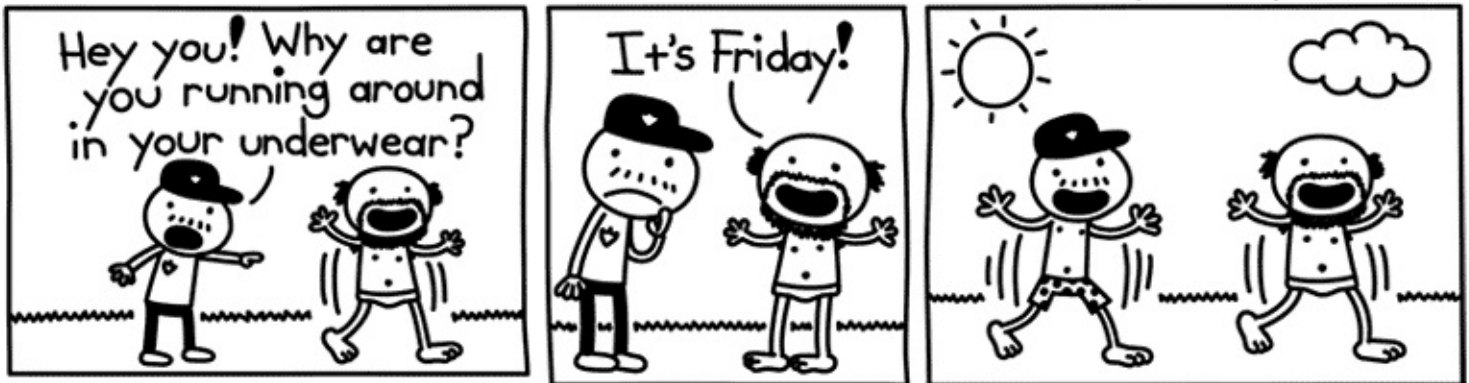
seriously, so we started brainstorming ideas for

other sections we could add. I figured we needed

a comics section, so we started there.

T.G.I.F.

by Rowley Jefferson



Stinky Sebastian

by Greg Heffley

Ned the Napkin

by Rowley Jefferson

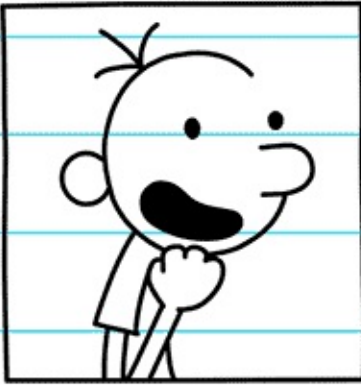


We added an advice column, where people write in

questions about problems they're having. But we

didn't have time to wait for people to send in real

questions, so we just made a few up.



Ask Greg

Dear Greg,

My wife is always criticizing everything I do. The other day it was a little chilly out so I wore socks with my sandals. My wife actually made me go back inside and put on shoes! I feel like she treats me like a child, but she has a very strong personality and I'm afraid to stand up to her. What can I do?

Sincerely,
FRUSTRATED

Dear FRUSTRATED,

It's NEVER okay to wear socks with sandals! You should apologize to your wife immediately.

Greg

Dear Greg,
Are you single?

Sincerely,
THE LADIES

Dear THE LADIES,
Why, yes, I am!

Greg

Rowley was all excited about this newspaper, and

he said he wanted to be like a real reporter and

go out looking for stories. So I told him he should

go around the neighborhood and see if he could

dig up any dirt. But what Rowley came back with

wasn't exactly hard-hitting news.

Kitten has a fun day

By ROWLEY JEFFERSON



Yesterday Mrs. Salter's kitten Mittens was seen frolicking in her front yard. Mittens spent an hour and a half chasing after a butterfly that was flying around Mrs. Salter's azaleas, and when the butterfly flew off Mittens



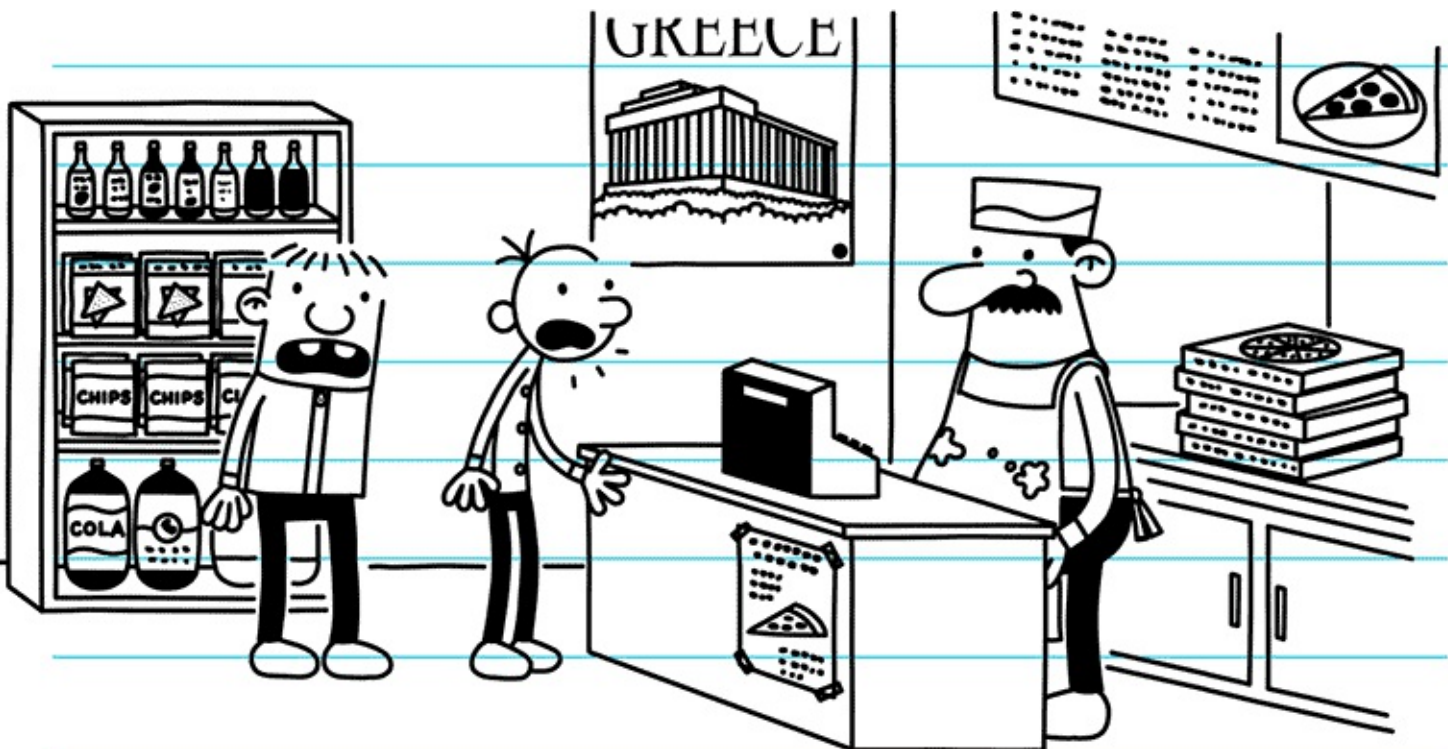
Mittens enjoys the nice weather yesterday.

the butterfly flew on, Mittens got very interested in something that was jumping near the front porch. But by the time I got close enough to see what Mittens was chasing, the thing had hopped away.

I decided to make myself editor in chief so I could control the kinds of things we had in our newspaper. Because if Rowley had his way, our paper would be like a little girl's coloring book.

Mom told us we should go to some businesses downtown and see if anyone was willing to pay for ads to cover the cost of our first printing.

The only person who was willing to buy an ad in our paper was Tony from Papa Tony's Pizza, and I'm pretty sure the reason he agreed to help is because we're in there at least twice a week and he didn't want to lose our business.



Tony gave us just enough money to buy some color

ink cartridges, so we printed a hundred copies.

Monday

Yesterday we went around town trying to sell our papers, but nobody wanted to pay and we had to start giving them out for free. When we handed a paper to Tony, he didn't seem too happy that his ad was running next to a negative review of his restaurant.

Papa Tony's pizza stinks!

By Food Critic
GREG HEFFLEY

Have you noticed that Papa Tony's has started to really go downhill lately?

It all started when they took the barbecue chicken pizza off of their menu and replaced it with a spinach pizza.

Then they stopped selling grape soda. Papa Tony's was the only place in town you could get grape soda, so now I have to drink root beer, but it's really not the same.

And half the time the soda water doesn't mix right with the syrup, so you either get corn syrup sludge or soda water. I think they're just trying to give you a bad fountain soda experience so you'll pay for the canned soda, which costs twice as much.

My last complaint is about the napkins. You used to be able to use as many as you wanted, but now Tony only lets you have two, and if you take more he gives you a dirty look.

Papa Tony's

Two-for-One Deal

Order any one-topping pizza and get a second one FREE!

Mention this ad and you'll get an additional dollar off your order.



OFFER EXPIRES ON
DECEMBER 31

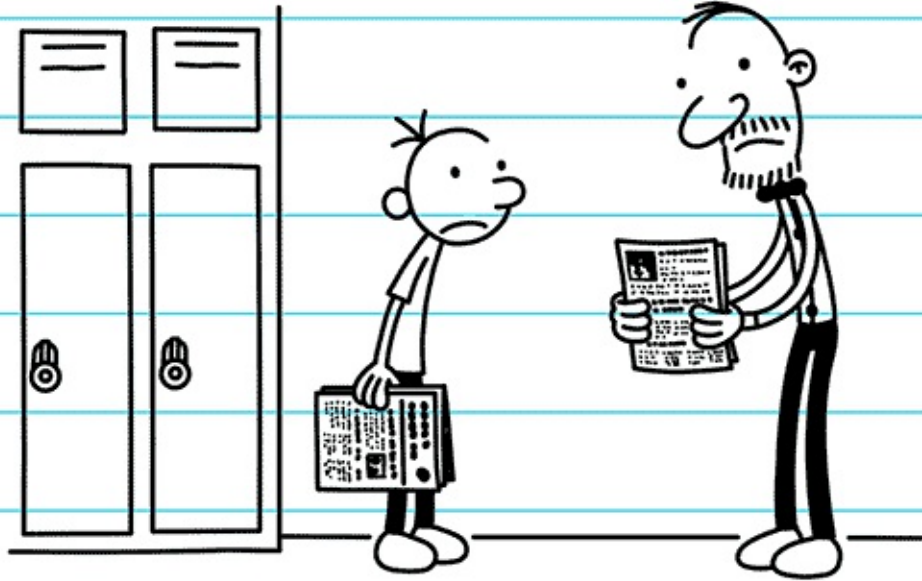
I told him if he bought a BIGGER ad for the NEXT edition of the paper, we could arrange for a more positive write-up.

We still had a few dozen papers left, and since

we were handing them out for free, I figured I

could unload them at school.

But when I started giving them to kids as they walked in the door, Vice Principal Roy asked me what I was doing.



He said I couldn't hand out an "unauthorized publication" on school grounds and that he was going to have to confiscate my papers. But I knew what this was REALLY all about. Vice Principal Roy was just spooked that we were gonna give the school a run for its money with our Holiday Bazaar.

I was still pretty mad about the whole thing when I got home this afternoon, and I decided I wasn't gonna just roll over and let Vice Principal

Roy shut us down.

Even though Vice Principal Roy took our papers,

I figured I could make some signs and hang them

up around town to advertise.

I knew Mom kept poster board and markers in

the laundry room for school projects, so I got

to work. I used the neon green poster board,

because I wanted to make sure you could see our

signs from a mile away.

I finished making the posters after dinner and

called Rowley to ask for help putting them up. We

started with the school because I figured a lot of

parents would see them when they dropped their

kids off in the morning.





But right when we were done hanging them up, it

started to rain, and the marker on our signs ran.

And soon they were pretty much worthless.

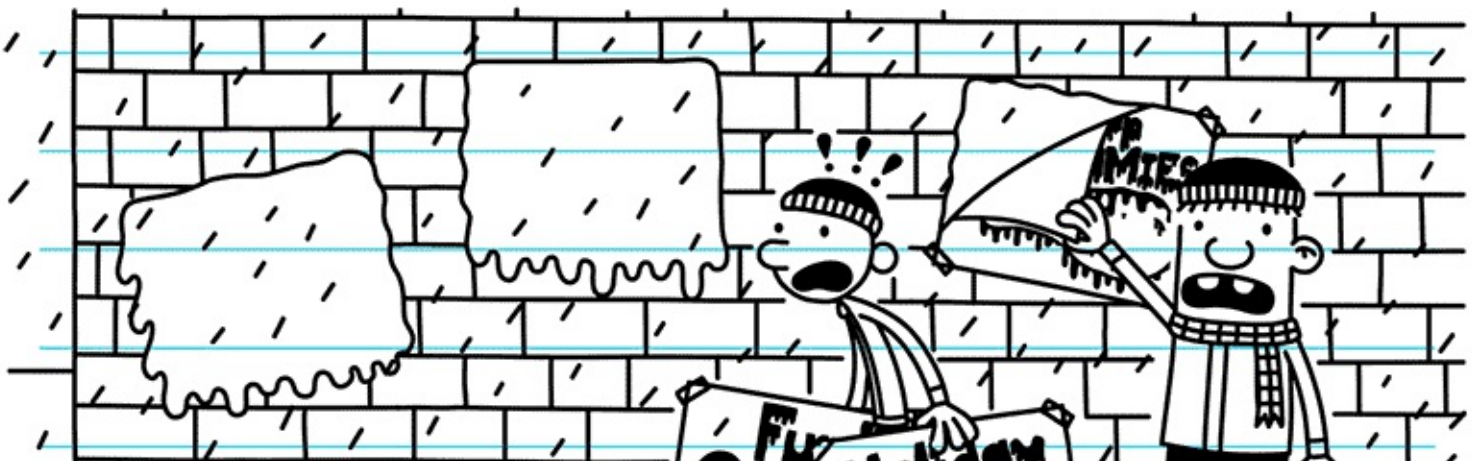


But when we pulled them down, we got a huge

shock. The rain had made the green dye from the

poster board bleed, too, and now there were huge

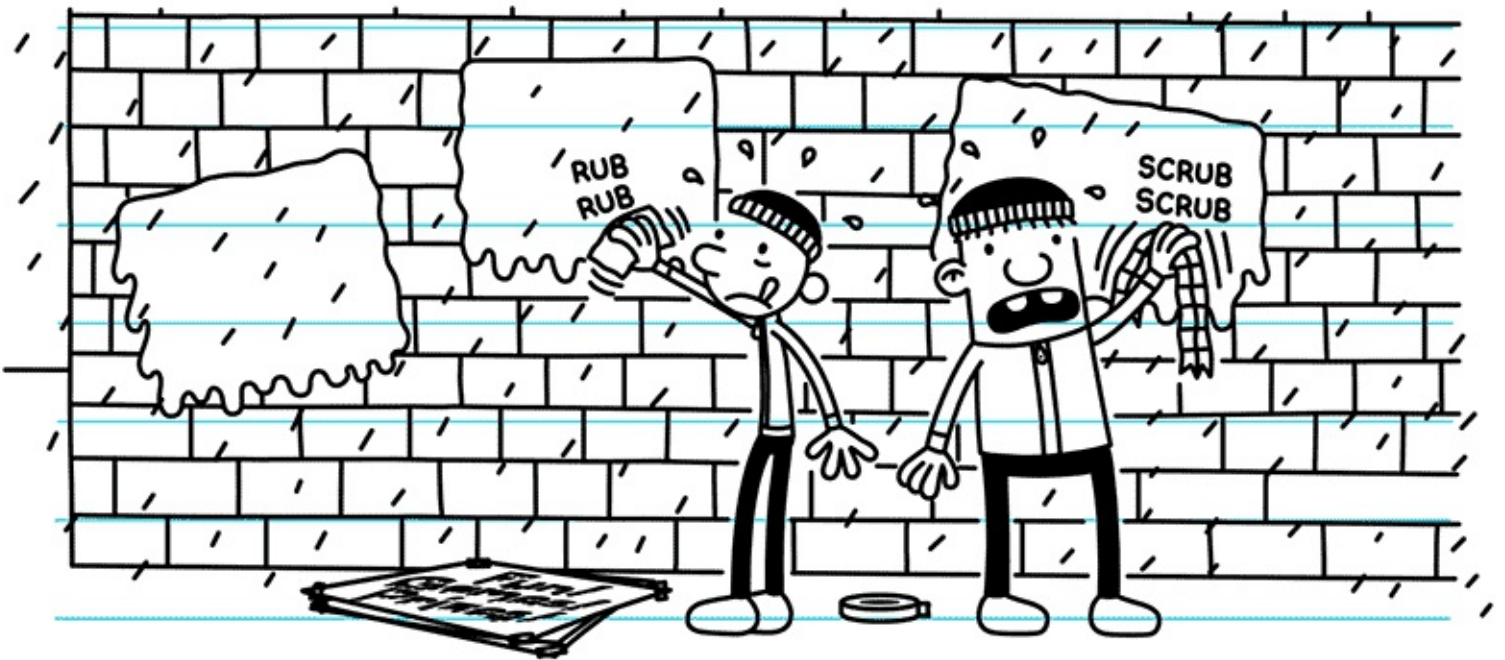
green splotches all over the brick wall.





We tried to get the green dye off the wall, but

that stuff was like permanent ink.

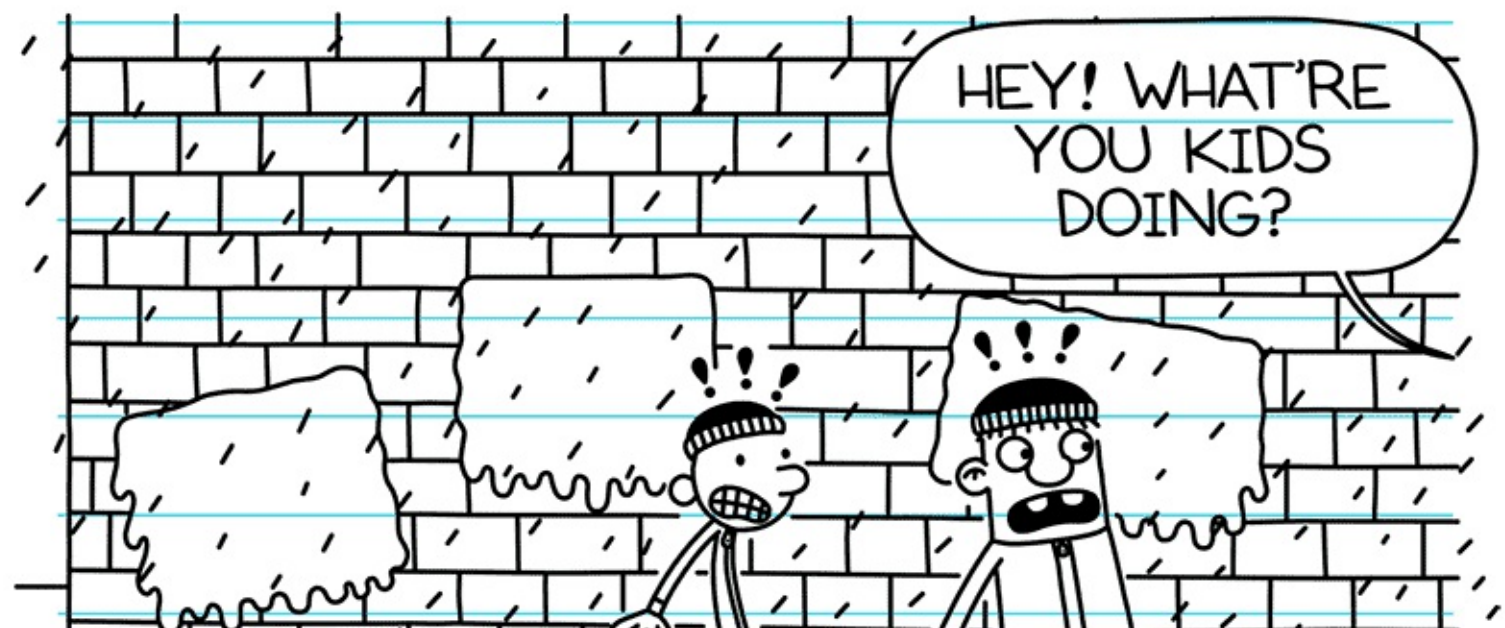


I knew we couldn't leave giant green stains all

over the school, so I tried to figure out what

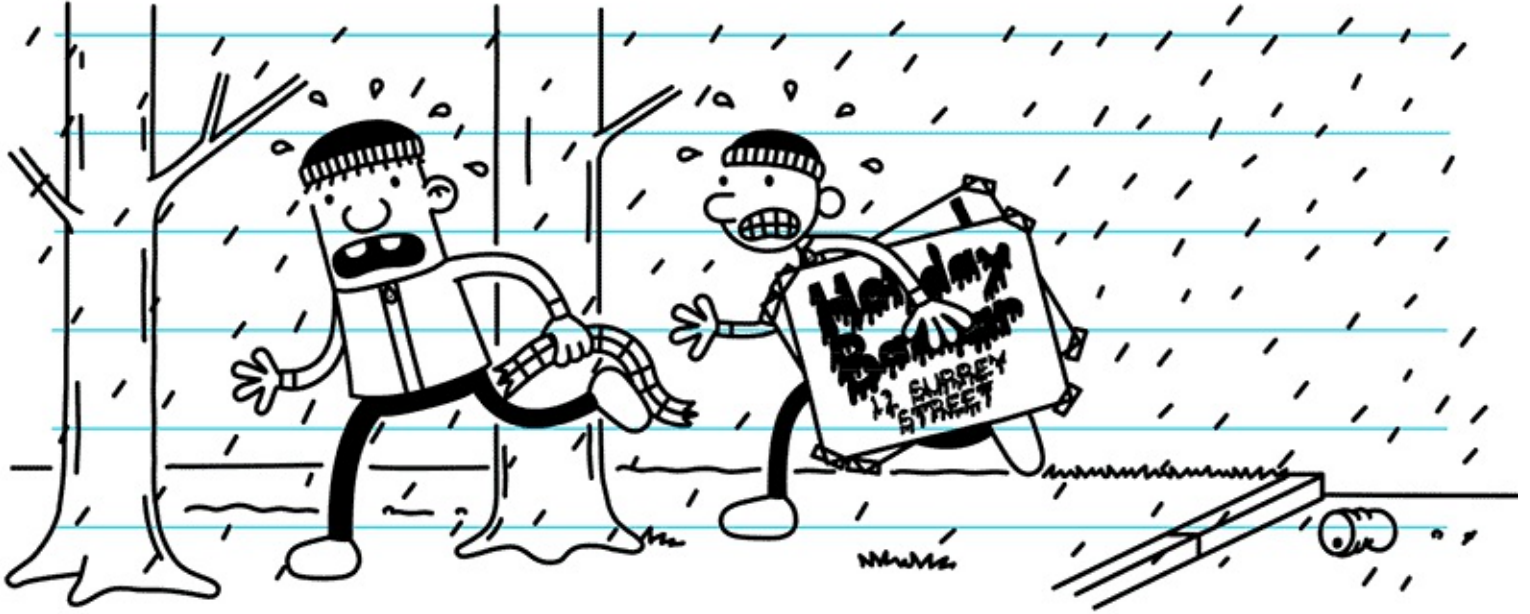
to do next. But right at that moment, someone

yelled at us from the street.





Me and Rowley panicked and took off. We ran
across the parking lot and through the shortcut
in the woods, then kept running until we were
sure we'd lost whoever was back there.



I wish we didn't run, because if we had just
stayed and explained ourselves it probably would've
been fine. I don't know if the person who called
out was a parent or a police officer or WHAT, but
I just hope they didn't recognize us. Because if
they did we could be in some SERIOUS trouble.

Tuesday

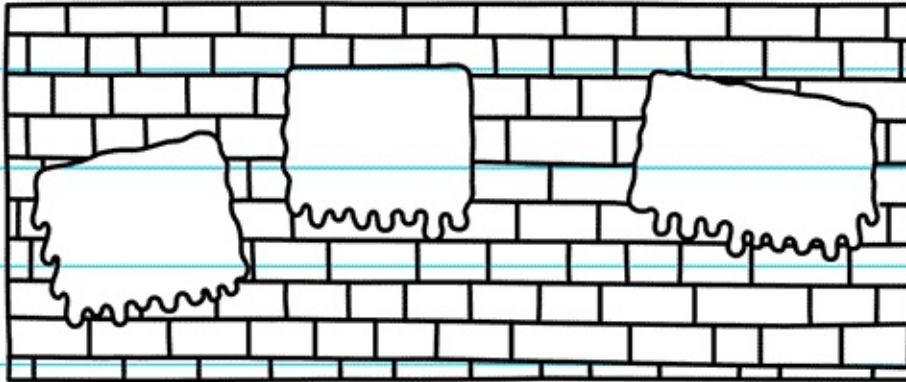
When I woke up this morning, I thought maybe
everything that happened last night was just a

bad dream. But then I saw the newspaper on the

kitchen table.

The Daily Herald

Vandals deface middle school



Top: Juveniles left these green splotches on the school last night.



Left: Police sketches of the vandals based on an eyewitness account.

The suspects fled the scene when confronted by the passerby.

Vandals struck last night under cover of darkness and rain, leaving large bright green stains on the front wall of the town middle school.

The meaning of the green blobs is still unknown, but police suspect it could be gang-related.

"Graffiti artists have caused a lot of property damage in the past six months," said Sgt. Peters of the town police force.

SEE VANDALS, A2

So now I'm basically a criminal. Believe it or not,

this isn't the FIRST time I've been falsely

accused of a crime.

When I was in the Boy Scouts, I was trying to

earn my Service Project merit badge, and I had to

do some kind of good deed. Mom said I should go

over to Leisure Towers and see if there were any

elderly people who needed help carrying groceries or

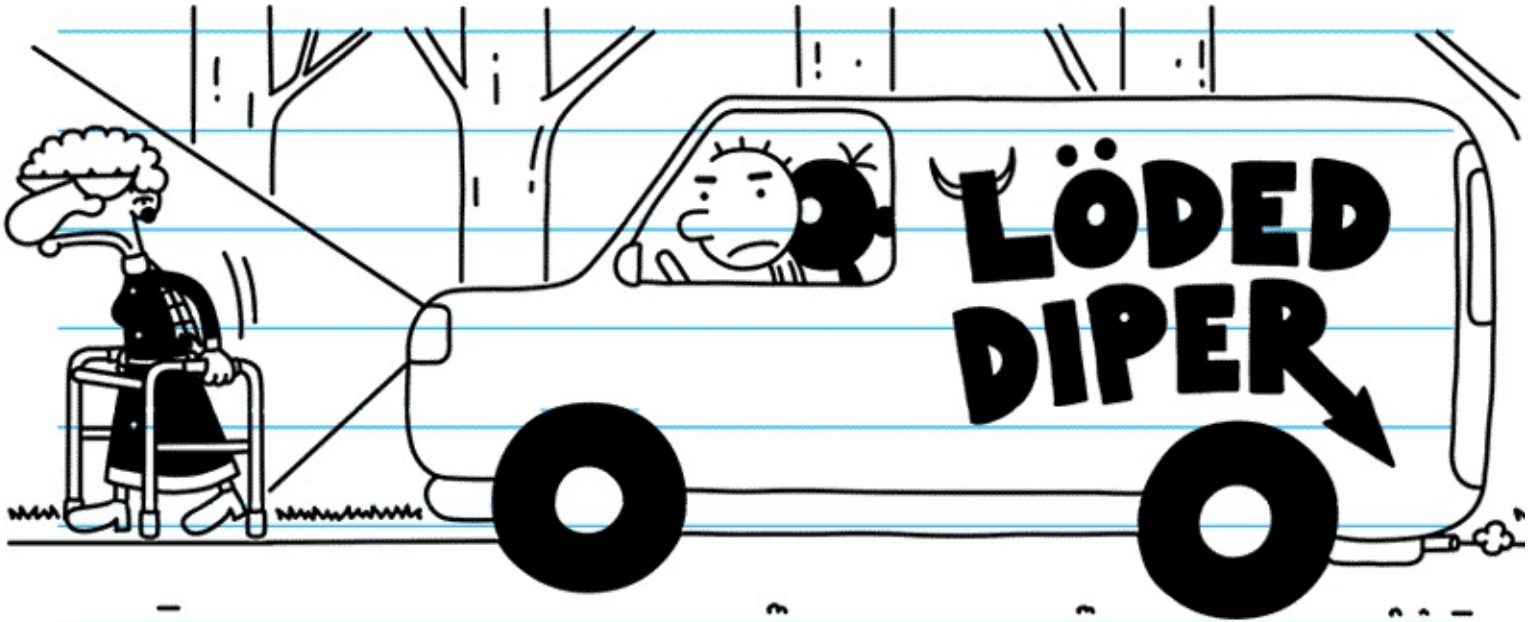
something like that, and she told Rodrick he had to

give me a ride.

When we got to the parking lot of Leisure

Towers, there was a lady walking around who

looked like she was lost.



We asked the lady if she needed any help, and

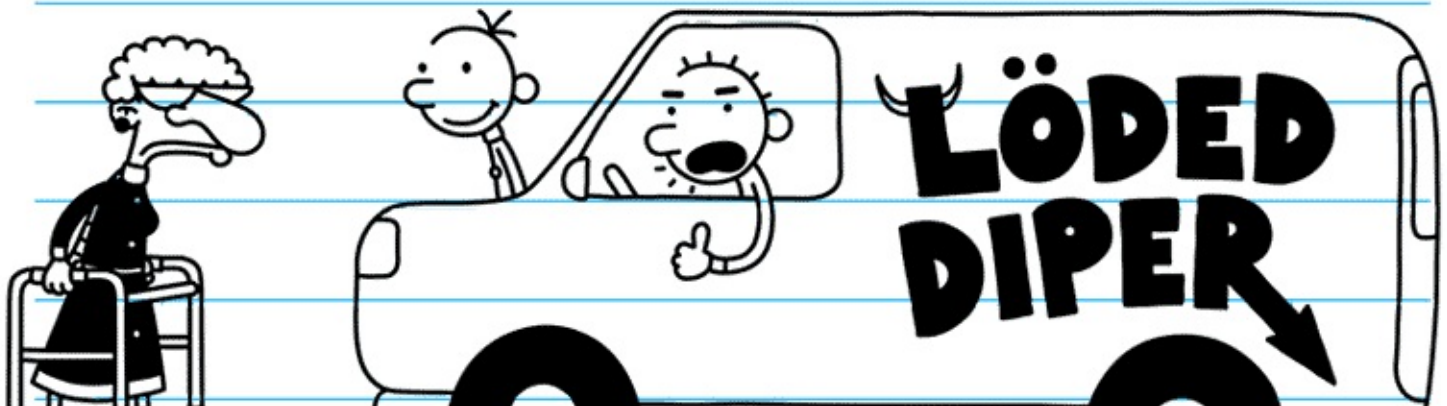
she said she was just walking to the supermarket

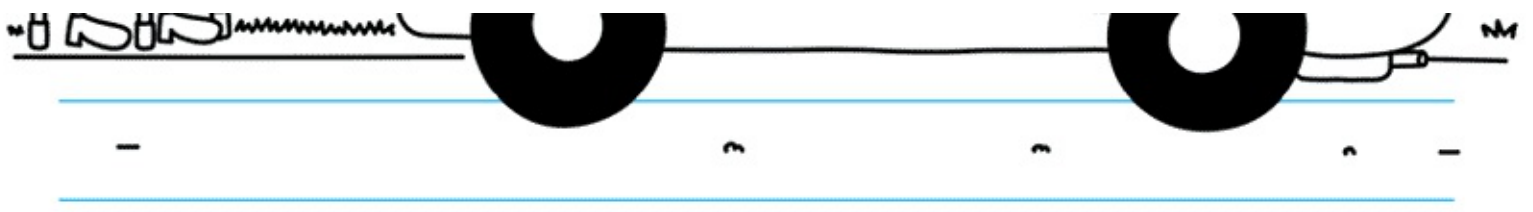
on the other side of the apartment building. But

I knew the nearest supermarket was almost five

miles away in the opposite direction, so we said

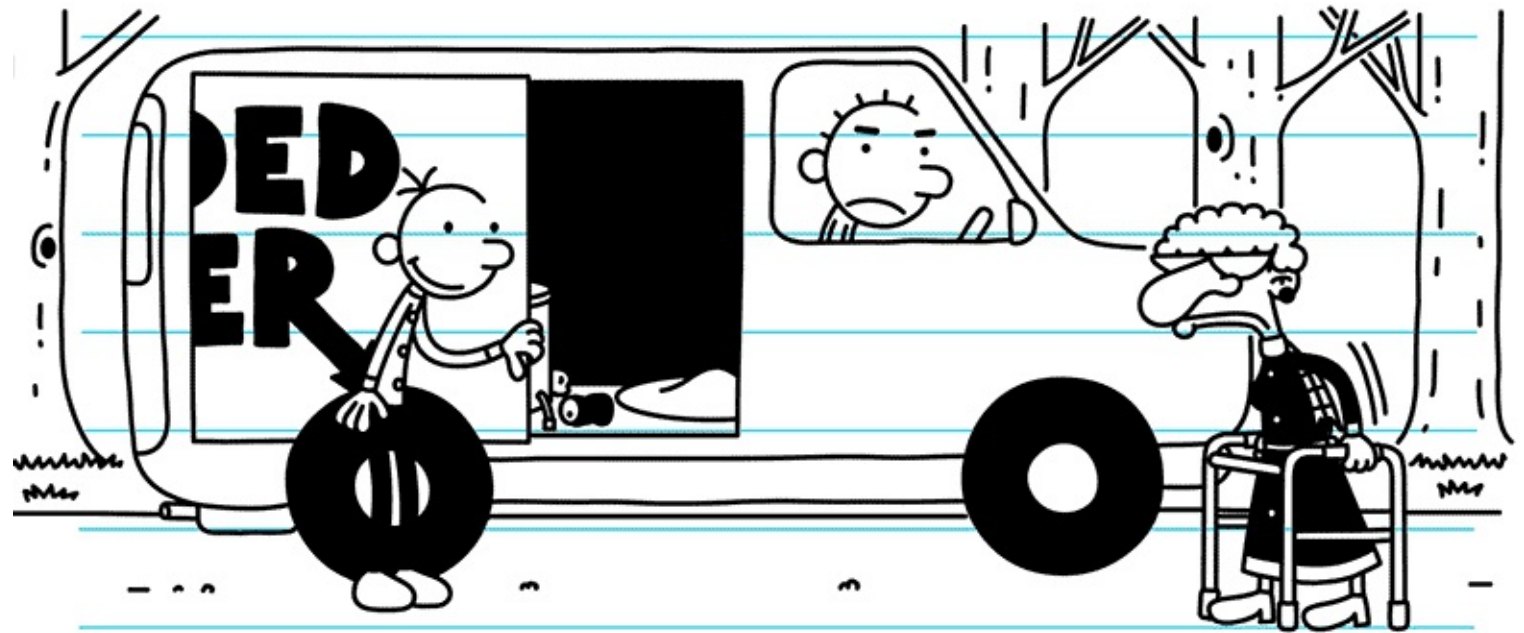
we'd give her a ride.





The only condition was that she had to ride in

the back because I had already called shotgun.



We dropped the woman off at the supermarket,

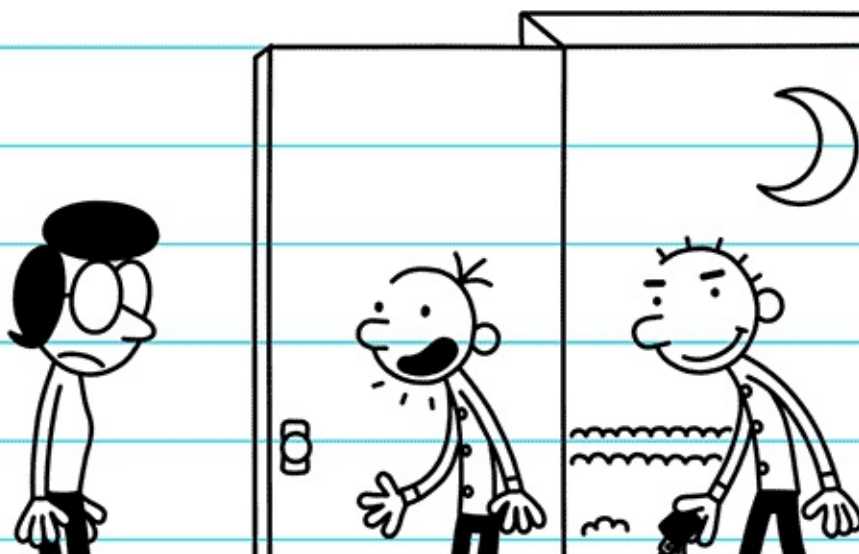
and then we went home. When we walked in the

door, I was pretty excited to tell Mom about my

good deed. I told her about the lady and how

we gave her a ride to the supermarket a few miles

from Leisure Towers and saved her a lot of walking.





But Mom said there was a brand-new supermarket

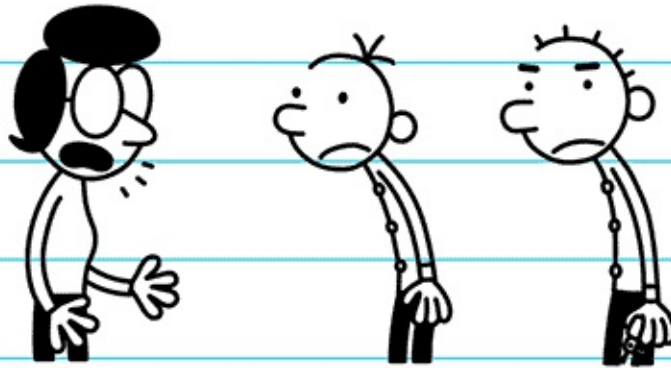
a block away from Leisure Towers and the woman

had probably been heading THERE. So that

meant we dropped her off five miles from where

she was trying to go, and now she didn't have a

way to get home.



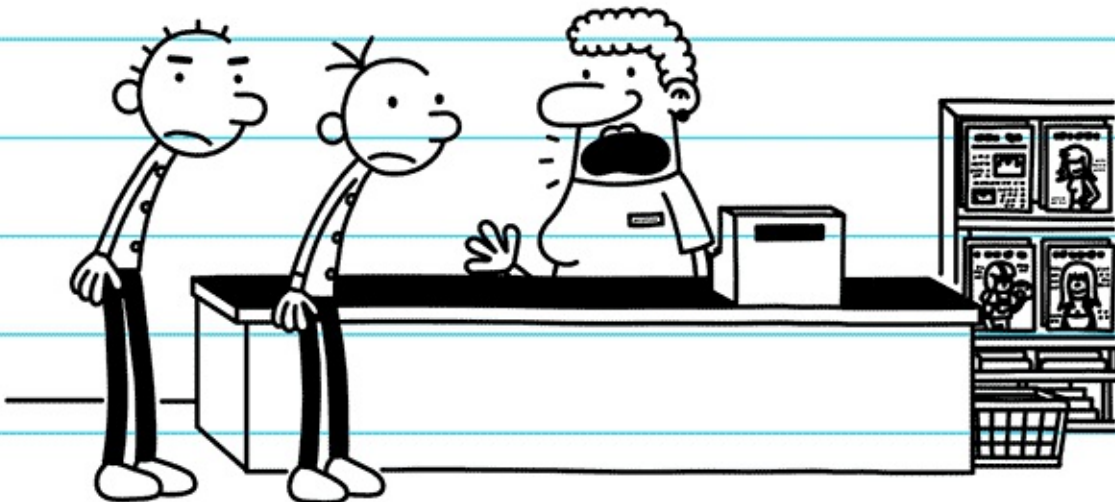
Mom said we had to get back in the van and

see if we could find the lady, so we went to the

supermarket where we dropped her off. But a

cashier told us she'd already finished her shopping

and left.

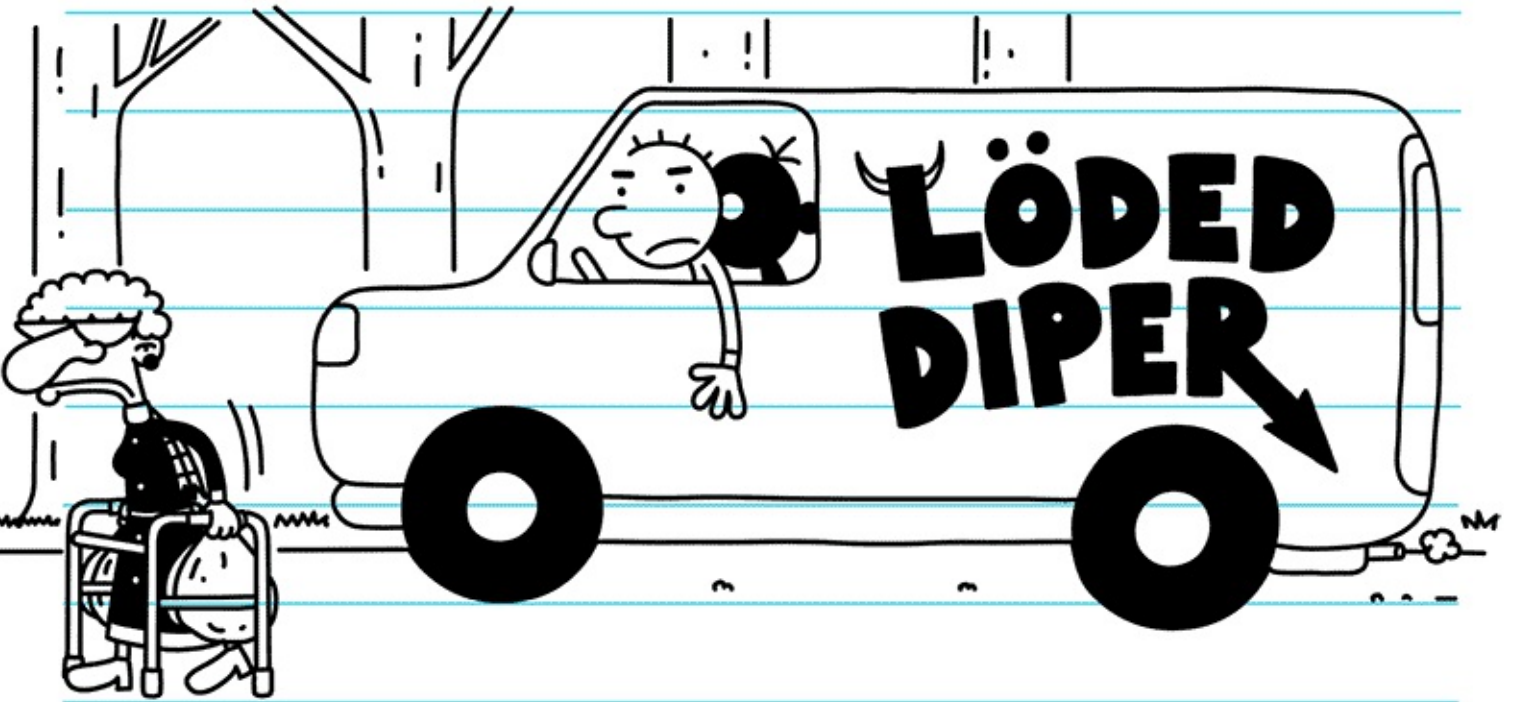


We eventually found the lady walking along the

highway with her groceries.

We tried to offer her a ride back to Leisure

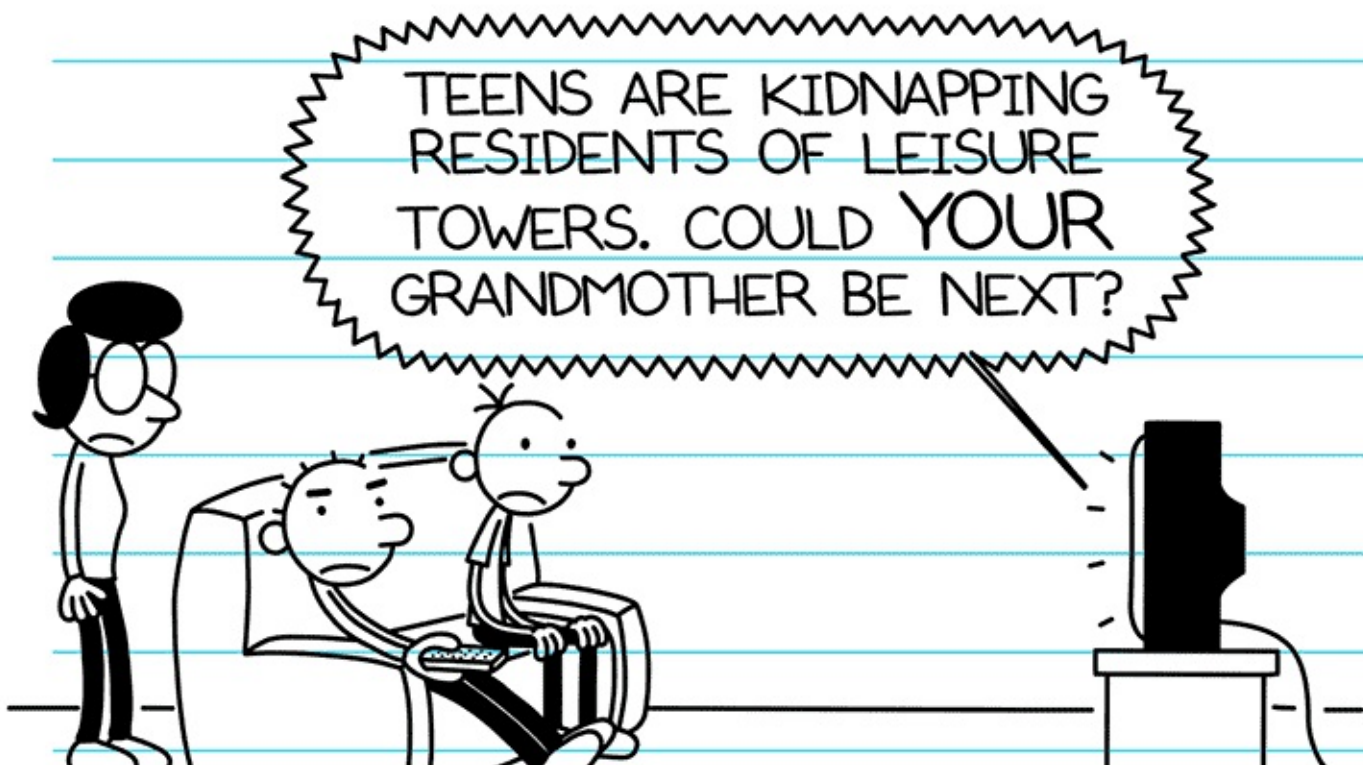
Towers, but this time she wouldn't get in the van.



I guess she must've called the local TV station to

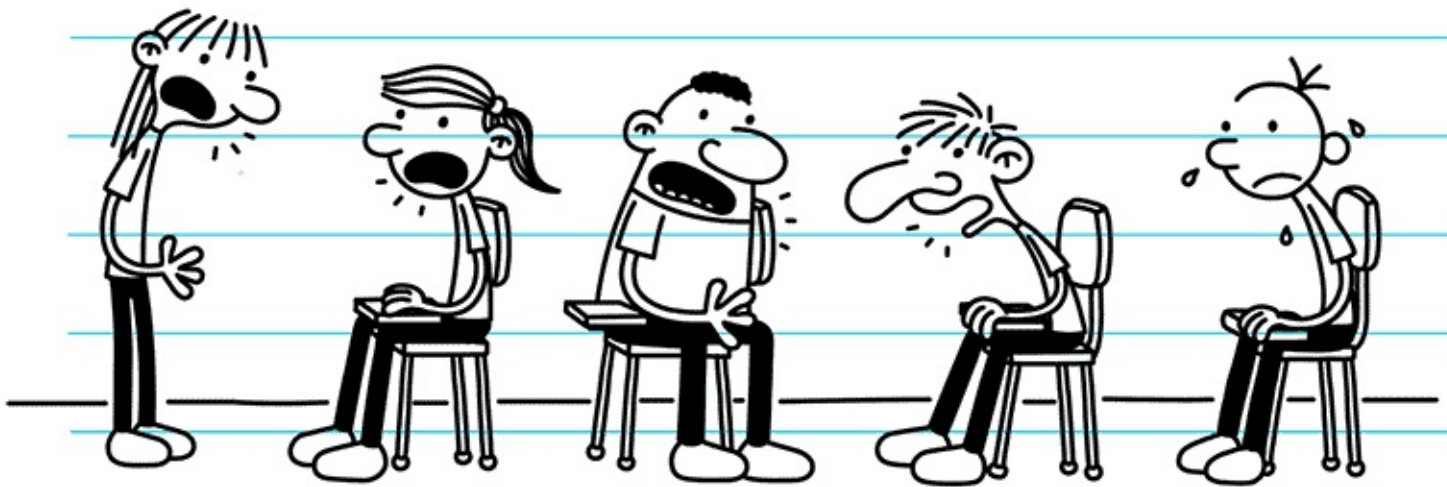
report us once she got home, because that night

we were on the news.





This school vandalism thing seems a LOT more serious, though. Luckily the eyewitness sketches in the paper didn't really look like me and Rowley, so I thought maybe we'd be OK. But when I got to school, all anyone wanted to talk about was who was behind the green blobs.



The school had a general assembly in third period, and the topic was the so-called graffiti on the front of the school. Vice Principal Roy said someone had spray-painted the front wall and he was sure the perpetrators were students at our school.

He said someone in the auditorium knew who was responsible and that it was terrible to live with a “guilty conscience.” Then he said he was gonna put

a locked box in the cafeteria to make it easy for

someone to leave an anonymous tip.



At lunch I could tell Rowley was really freaking out, so I reminded him that this “vandalism” thing was a lot of baloney and we didn’t really do anything wrong. But Rowley said if he got a criminal record, he wouldn’t be able to get into college or get a job and that his whole future would be ruined. It took a while, but eventually I convinced him to just stay cool and wait for the whole thing to blow over.



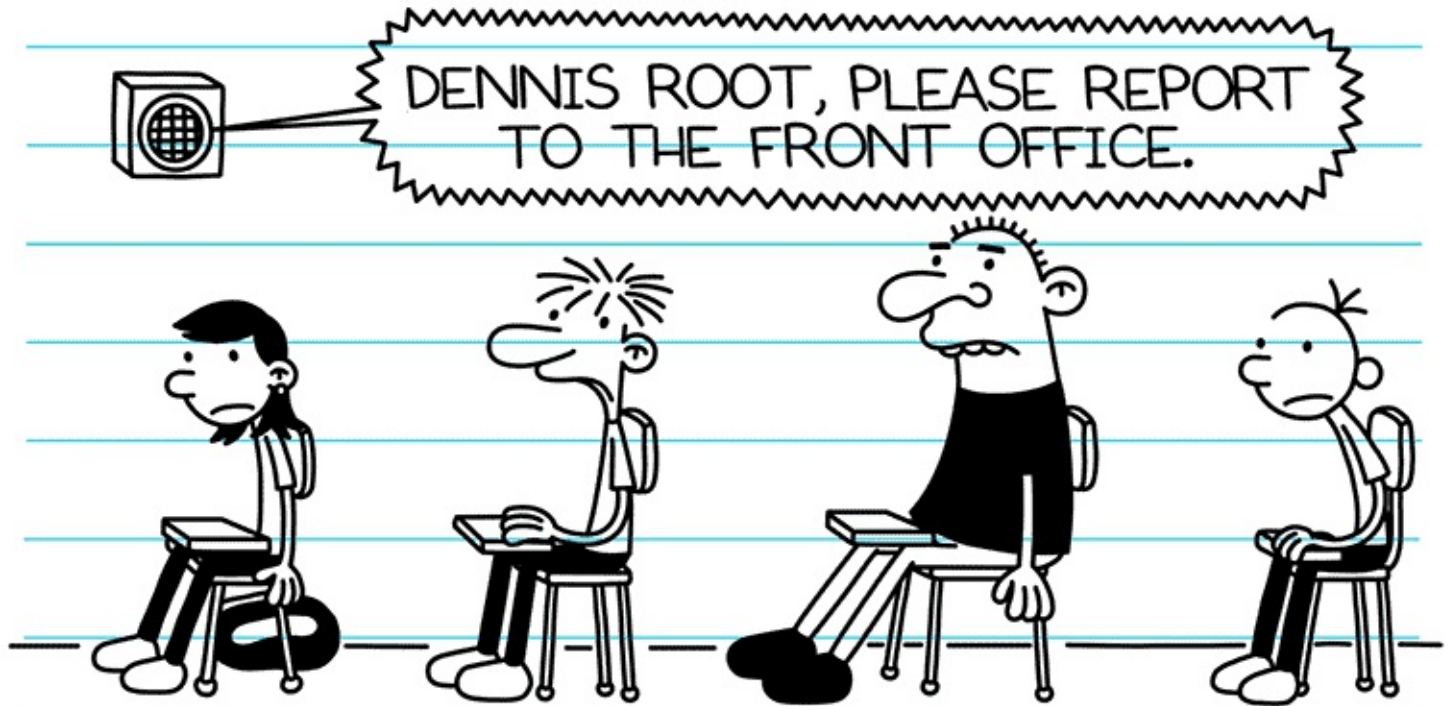
After lunch the POLICE came to the school, and Vice Principal Roy started calling kids down to the front office one by one. At first I was worried someone had identified us, but then I realized Vice

Principal Roy was only calling the names of the

worst troublemakers.

That's when I knew they didn't have any real

evidence, and I started to relax.



At recess a kid named Mark Ramon told us what

happened when he went in for questioning. The

police had a machine that they said was a lie

detector, and they claimed it was foolproof, so

there was no point in fibbing.



Mark said it was pretty obvious the "lie detector"

was really just a photocopier. But whenever Mark

said something the police didn't like, Sergeant Peters

hit the "copy" button and out came a piece of paper.

He's lying.

I guess the police eventually gave up, because after lunch Vice Principal Roy stopped calling kids down to the front office. So I finally feel like we're off the hook.

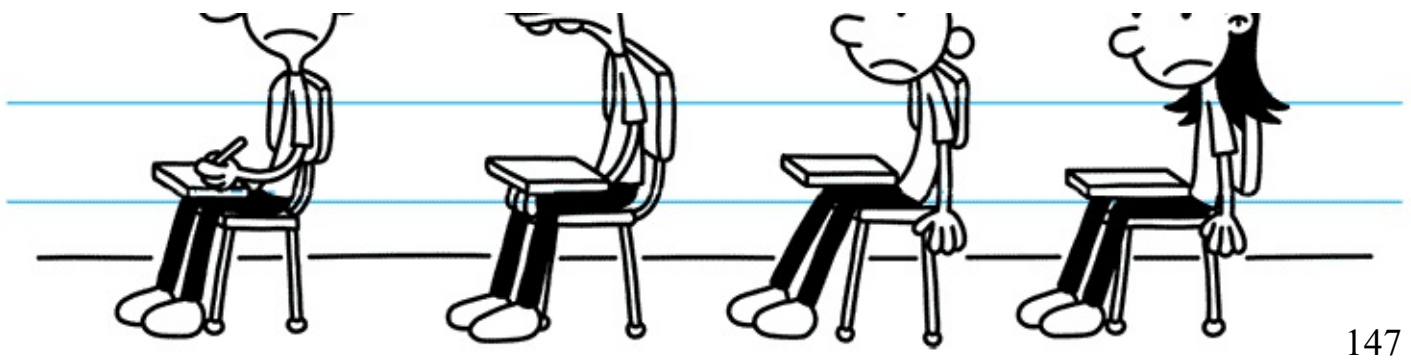
Wednesday

When I got to school today, I thought the green dye incident was totally behind me. So I was pretty surprised when I heard MY name on the loudspeaker during morning announcements.

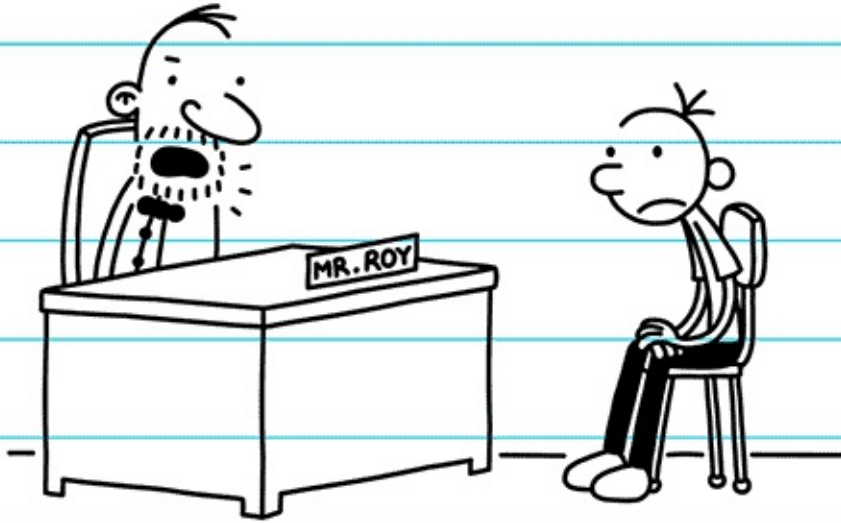


GREG HEFFLEY, REPORT
TO VICE PRINCIPAL ROY'S
OFFICE IMMEDIATELY.





I walked into Vice Principal Roy's office, and he told me to take a seat. He said he knew I was one of the "culprits" responsible for the green blobs and asked me if I had anything to say for myself.



I looked around the room for the lie detector machine, but I didn't see it, and I decided my best move was to just keep quiet or maybe ask for a lawyer. Then Vice Principal Roy pulled a piece of paper out of the anonymous-tip box and showed it to me.

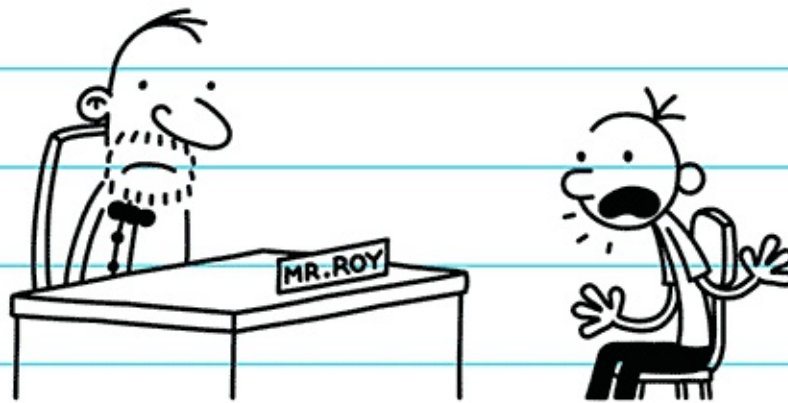
Me and Greg Heffley
vandalized the school.

All of a sudden, everything made sense.

Rowley confessed, but he kept himself anonymous.

I don't know if Rowley did it that way on purpose or if he's just a total doofus, but I'm guessing it's door number two.

I didn't see any reason to play dumb at that point, so I told Vice Principal Roy the whole story. I told him about the signs and how the rain made the poster board bleed and how we panicked and ran.



Vice Principal Roy thought about it for a while, and then he told me I should've come clean earlier. He said he was gonna have to give me a punishment to make sure I learned my lesson and said that after school I had to scrub the green dye off the wall with bleach.

Then he gave me a choice.

He said I could name my “co-conspirator” or I

could just take the punishment myself.

Let me tell you, that was not an easy one. I

really wanted to stick it to Rowley for writing my

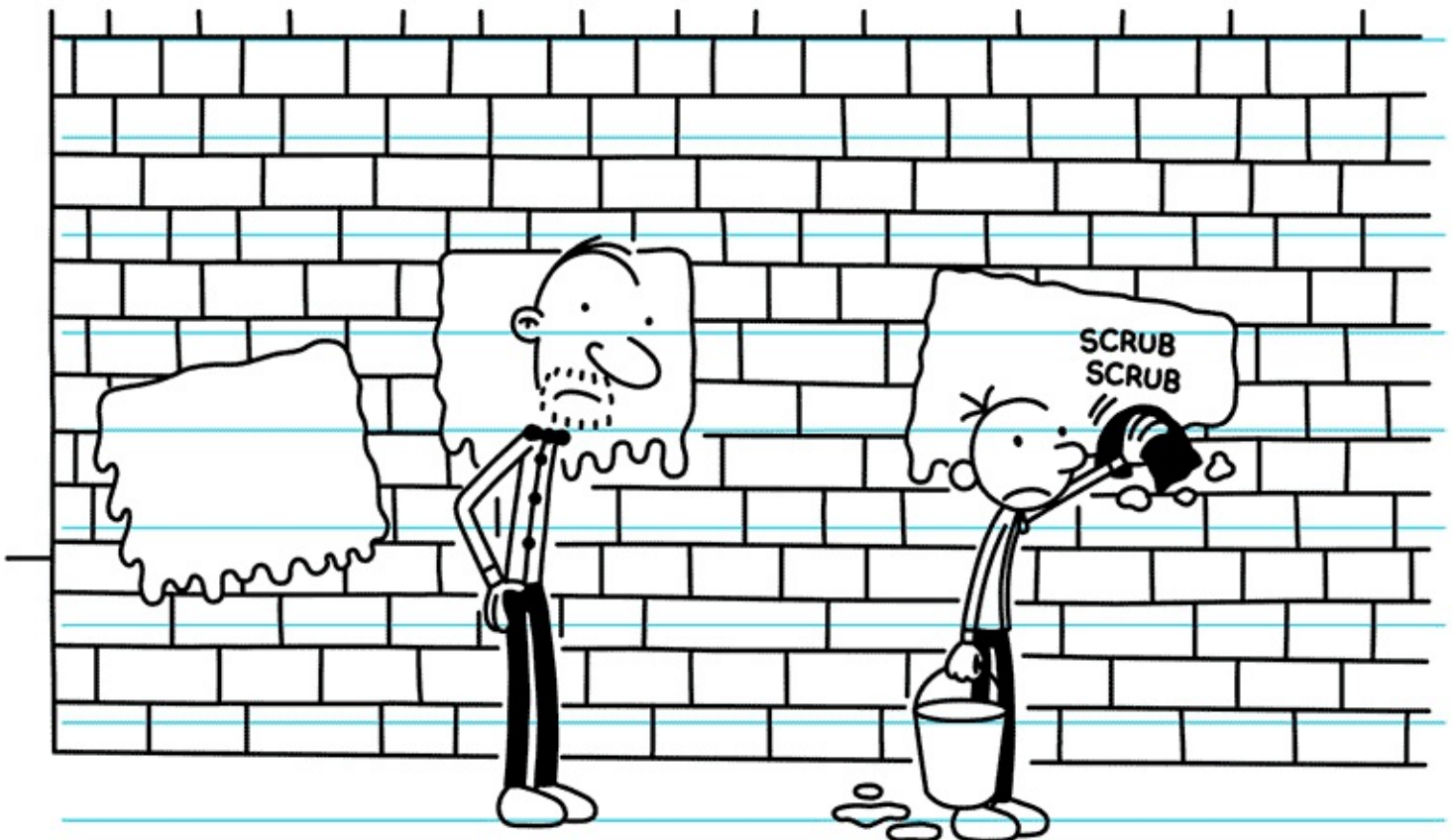
name on that piece of paper, but I also didn't

see the point in both of us getting in trouble for

something that I basically dragged him into.

So I decided this time around I'd just take one

for the team.



And if Rowley gets into a good college or gets

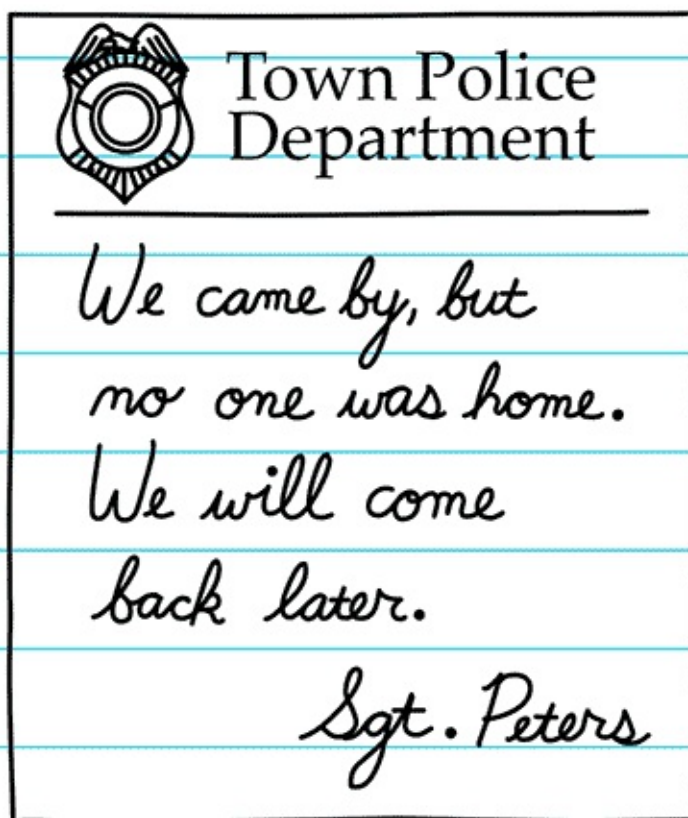
some dream job later on, I hope he remembers to

thank me.

Thursday

It took me two hours to scrub the green dye
off the wall yesterday, and it was hard work. I
tried to get Vice Principal Roy to get me a few
steel wool pads so we could speed things along,
but he told me I needed to stick with the bleach.

I finally got home around 5:00 p.m., and there
was a note on the front door. When I read it,
I almost passed out.

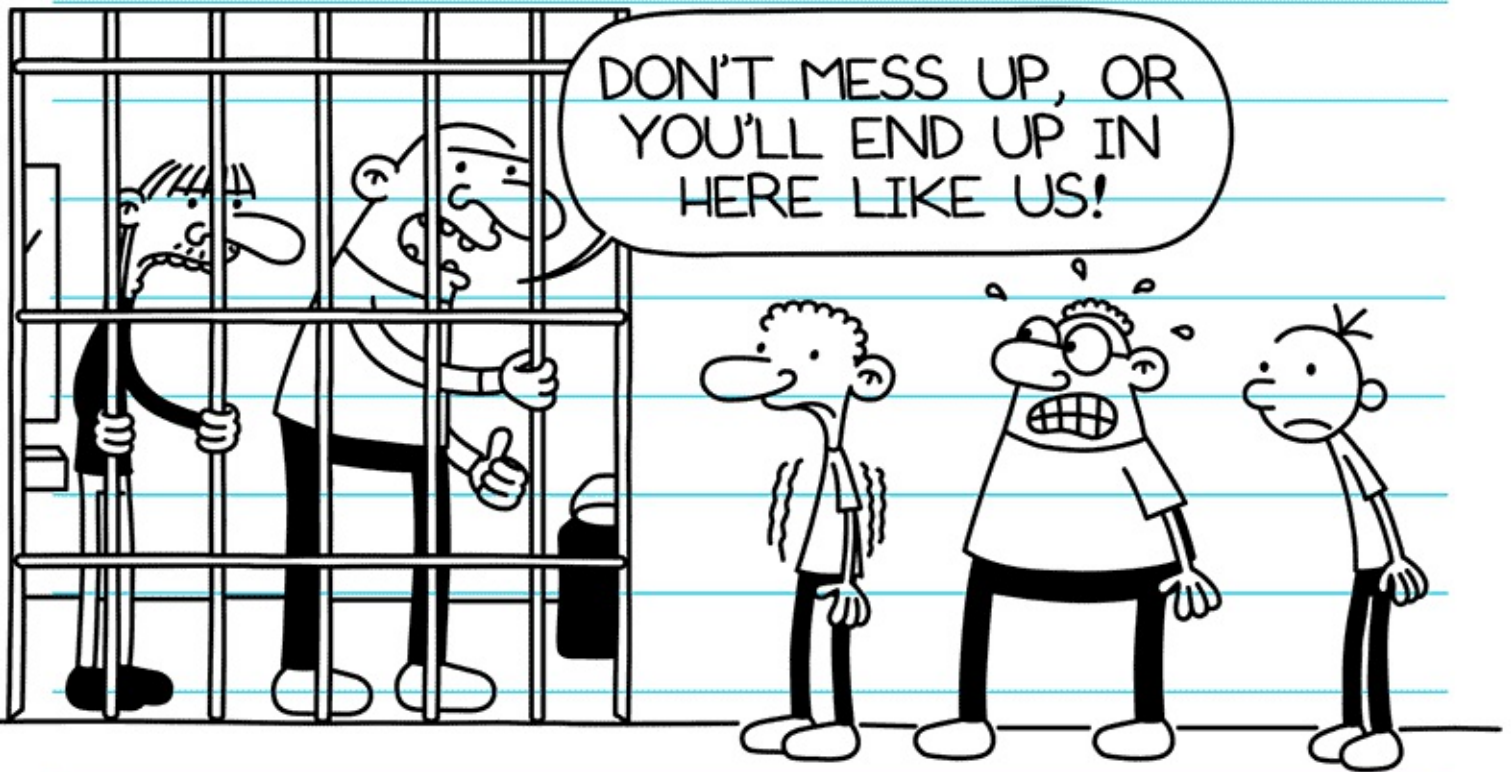


I couldn't BELIEVE Vice Principal Roy gave
me up to the police. I thought we were gonna

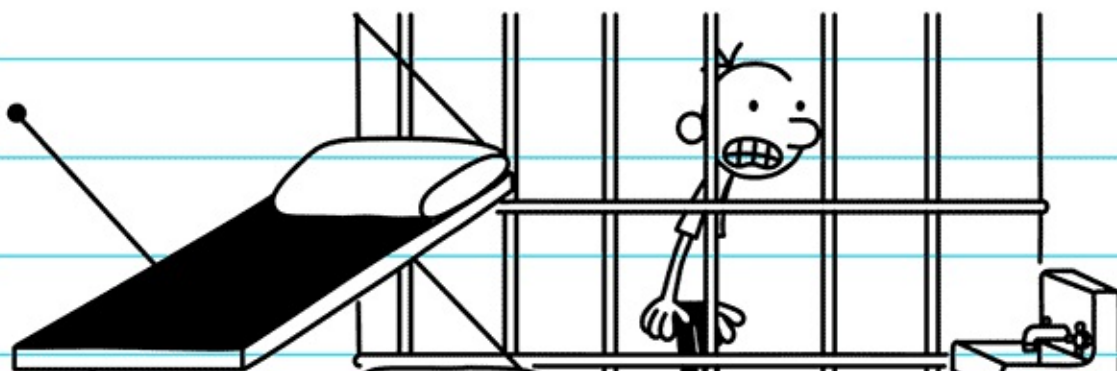
keep this between us and that once I served my

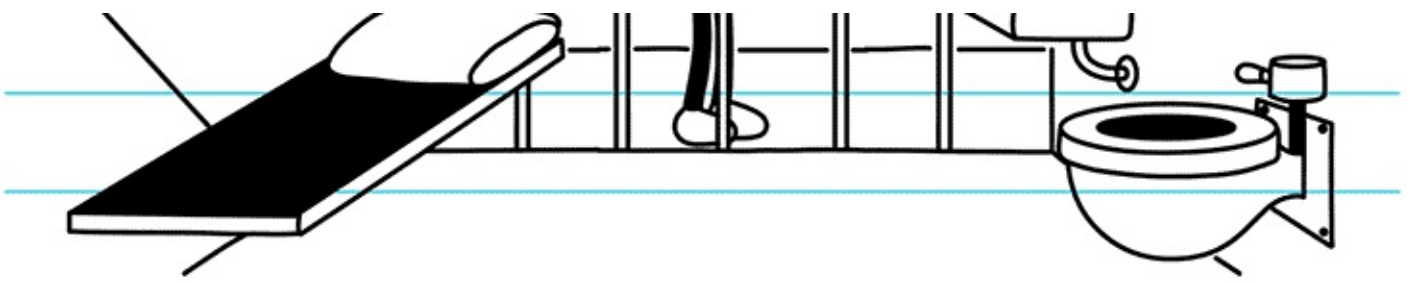
punishment, it was over and done with.

All I know is, I can't go to jail. This year they took our class on a "Scared Straight" field trip to the local prison. They had these prisoners talk to us about what their lives were like in jail, and it really freaked everybody out.



But it wasn't the idea of being locked up that scared me. It was the fact that the toilets in the cells are right out in the open.





I have a HUGE issue when it comes to privacy.

It's bad enough at school when you come back

from the bathroom and everyone wants to know

all the details.



I've never actually broken the law before, but

when I was little I THOUGHT I did. They

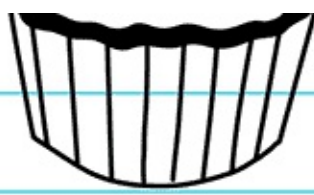
used to have this thing at my supermarket called

the "Cupcake Club," where they gave a free

cupcake to everyone under eight years old. I had a

membership card and everything.





HEFFLEY, GREGORY

Well, I kept taking a cupcake even AFTER I
turned eight, and every time I did I thought
I was gonna get busted. Then this one time an
alarm went off at the EXACT moment I bit into
a strawberry frosted cupcake with sprinkles.

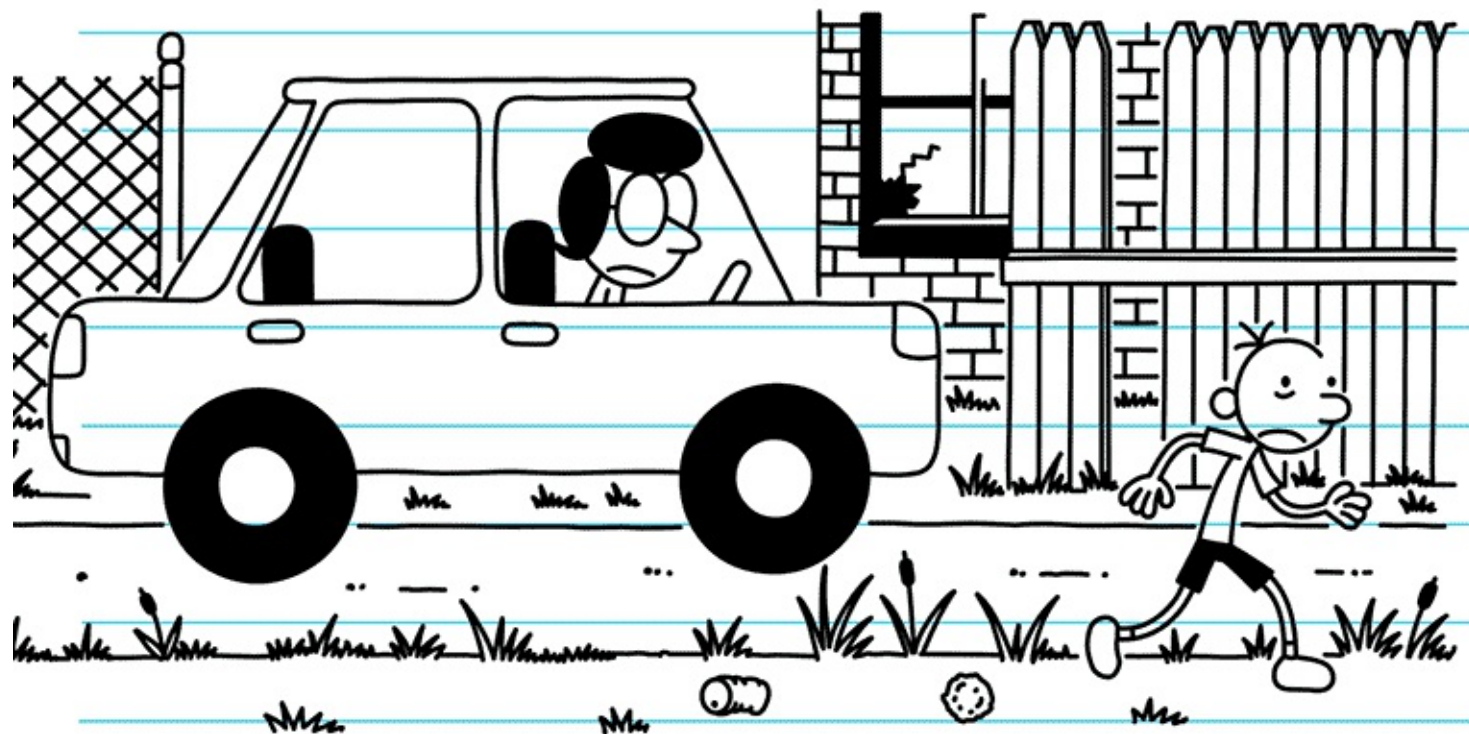


Looking back, I'm pretty sure what happened
was that someone accidentally tripped the fire
alarm or something, but I was convinced it was
for me and that the cops were gonna swoop in
and place me under arrest.

So I made a run for it. Luckily Mom found me
a few streets away, because as far as I was

concerned, I was a fugitive and had started my

life of crime.



But this vandalism thing was a whole lot more serious than the Cupcake Club episode. So when Mom got home with Manny, I didn't tell her about the note.

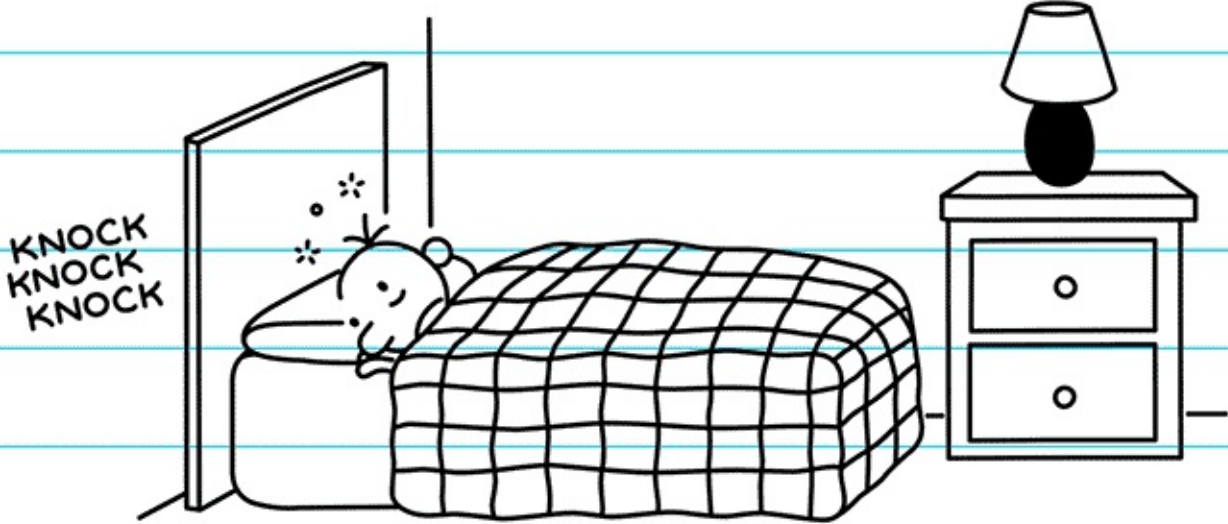
The person I was really worried about was DAD. I haven't been on his good side lately. In fact, this morning we had an incident I'm sure he's still sore over.

I was asleep when I heard someone knocking on the front door, but I didn't wanna get out of

bed to answer it.

I was hoping whoever was there would just go

away and come back later.

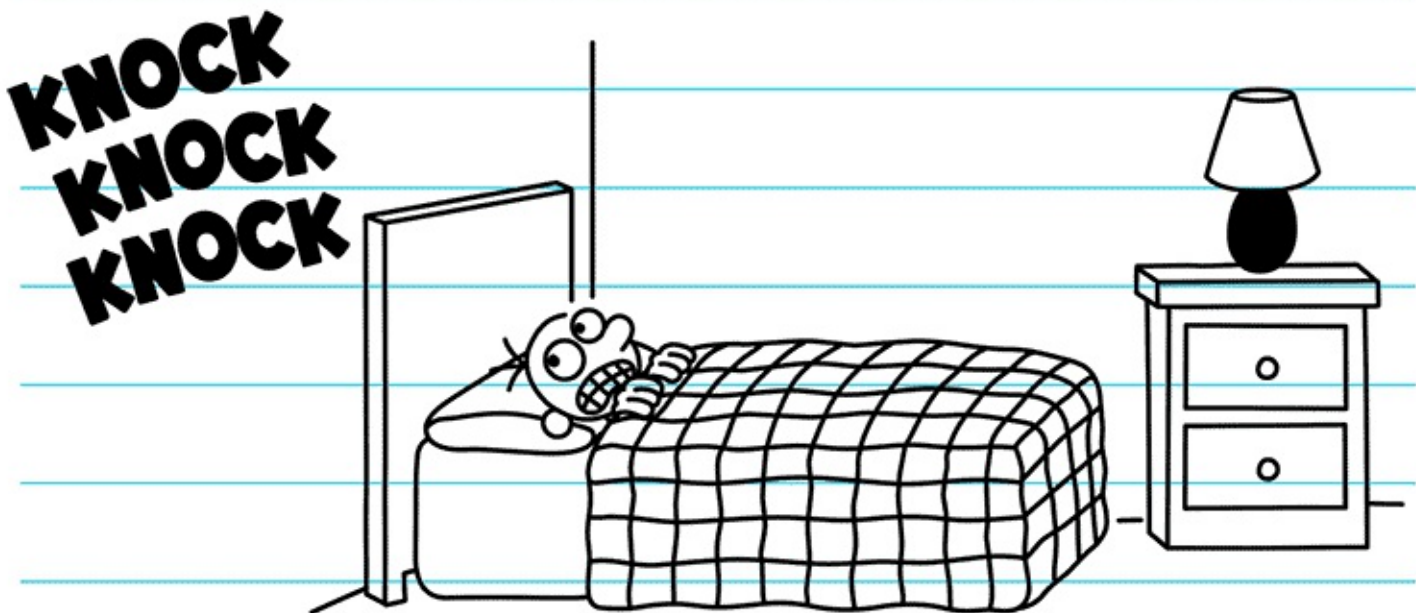


But the knocking got louder and louder, and

the person out there was acting like a maniac. I

buried myself in my covers and just prayed that

whoever it was wouldn't knock the door down.



I thought about calling the police, but then I

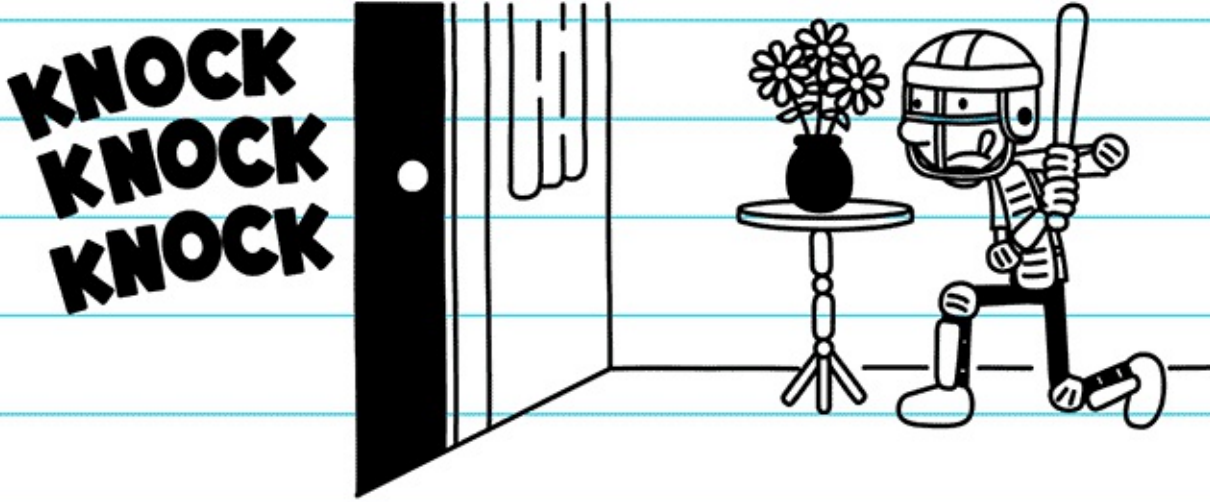
remembered I was a wanted man and that I'd

have to deal with this problem on my own.

Eventually I got brave enough to go downstairs

and grab a baseball bat out of the garage to

protect myself.



Then it got quiet, and I pulled the curtain

back to see if the person was still out there.

But I was surprised to see DAD standing on

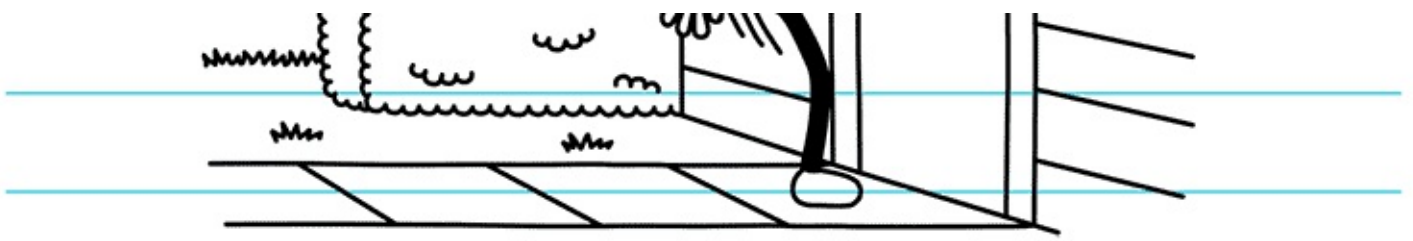
the front step.

He had gotten his tie stuck in the door and had

left his keys inside, so he just needed me to open

it to let him loose.





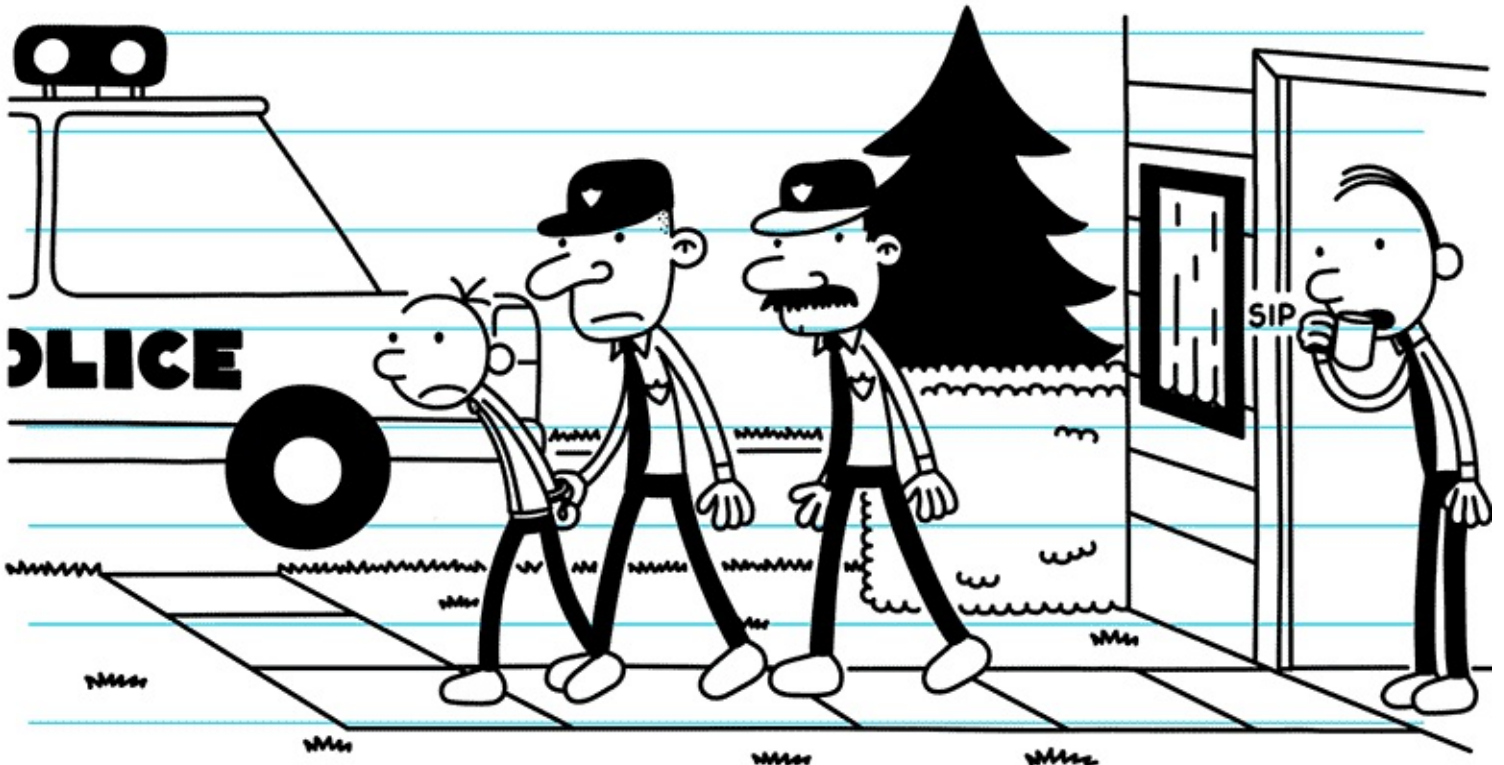
So I'm sure Dad is ready to ship me off to

juvenile detention the first chance he gets. In

fact, if he's home when the police come, he'll

probably hand me over into their custody without

batting an eye.



It turns out I don't have to worry about Dad—

at least not for the next twenty-four hours.

It started snowing pretty hard around dinner

tonight, and Dad called Mom to say it was too

dangerous for him to drive home, so he was gonna

stay overnight in a hotel near his office.

That means I've got until tomorrow to figure out

my next move.

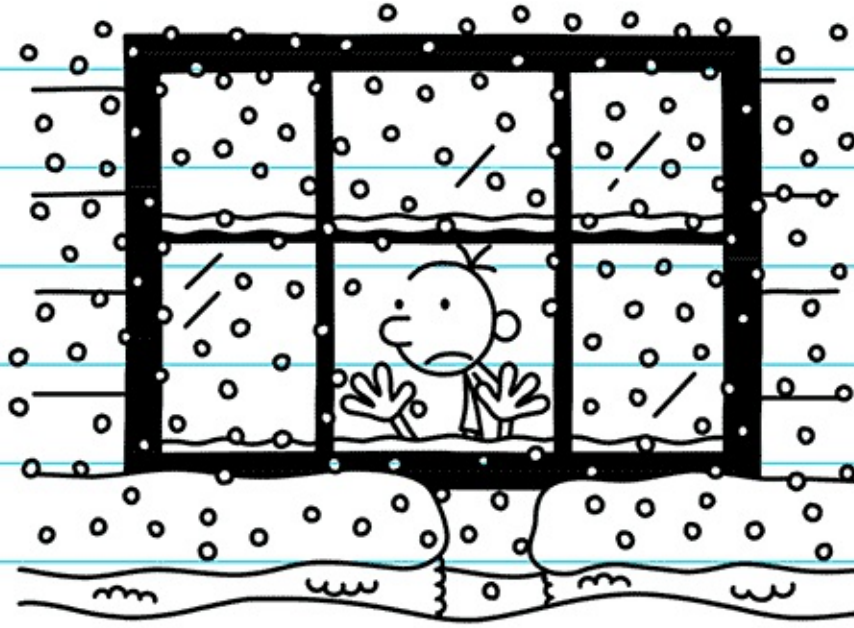
Friday

It looks like I'll have more time than I thought.

It snowed all night, and by the time I woke up

this morning the snow was three feet high. They

even canceled school.



Apparently we're in the middle of a BLIZZARD.

Rowley actually called last night to tell me we

were supposed to get a ton of snow, but I didn't

believe him.

Every year around this time, Rowley calls to

tell me there's a huge snowstorm coming, and

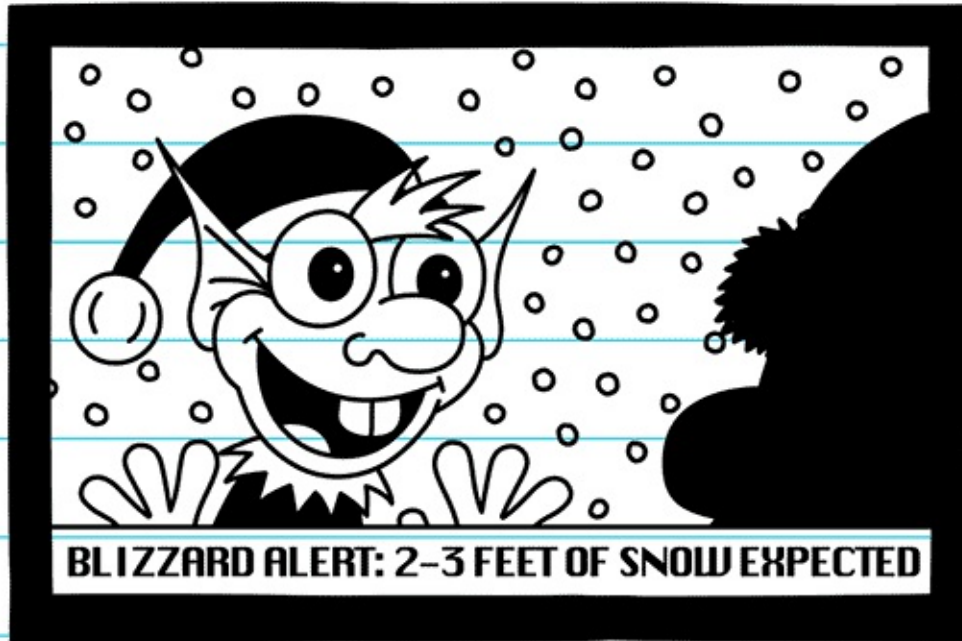
he's always wrong. His family taped one of those

holiday specials a few years ago, and the night

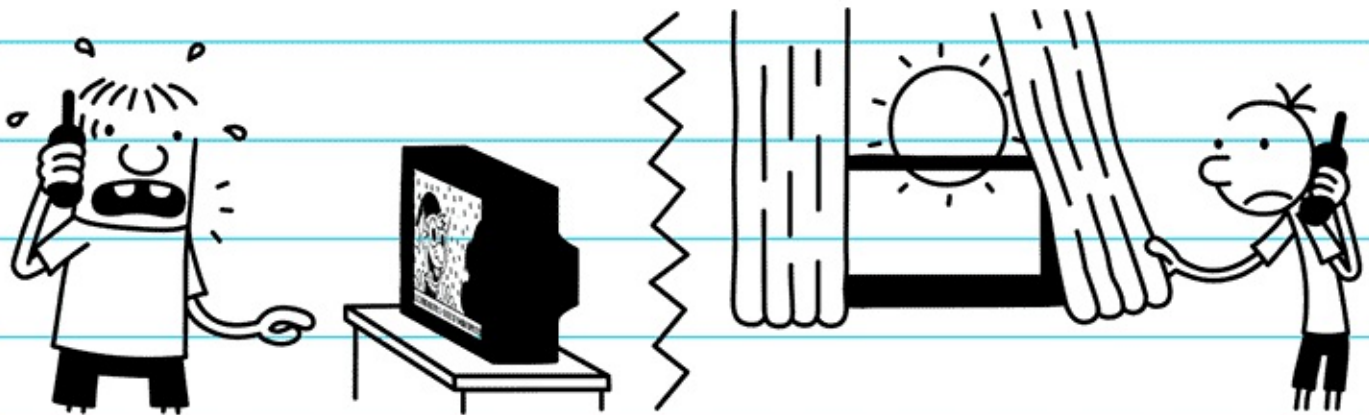
they recorded it a “severe weather” warning was

on the bottom of the screen.

So now the weather warning is a permanent part of the recording.



Every time Rowley watches that holiday special, he calls me up and tells me a blizzard is coming. I used to fall for it, but I stopped believing him after he called me in a panic when he watched the special over summer vacation.



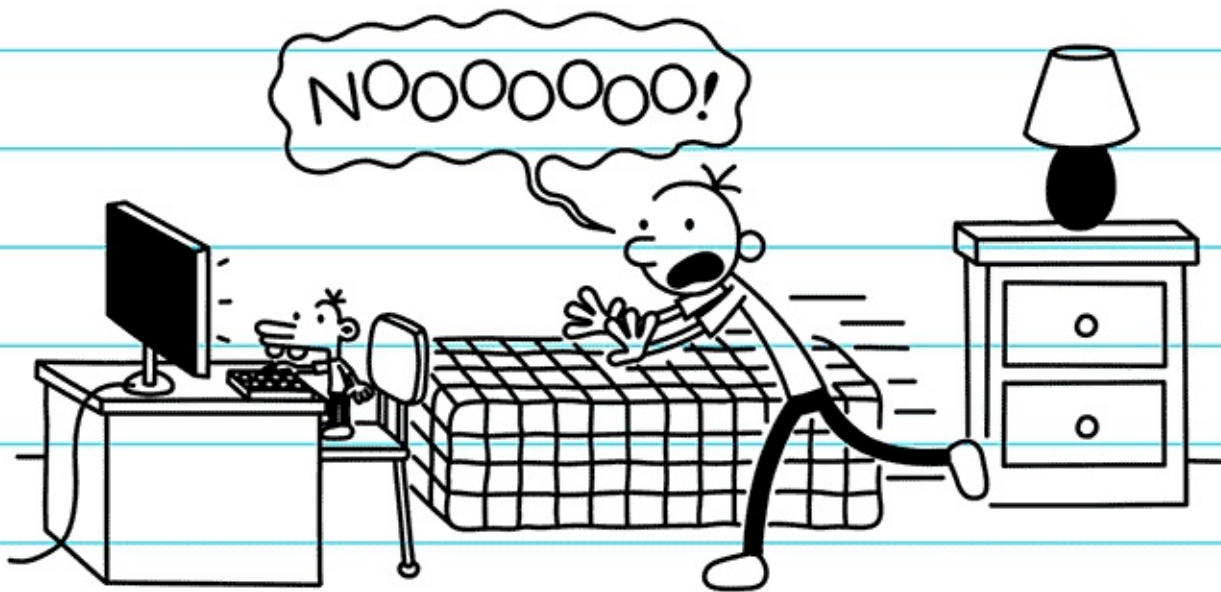
So it looks like we're snowed in. Ordinarily I would be really happy to be stuck in the house,

because it would give me a good excuse to play Net

Kritterz all day long.

But my account is locked thanks to Manny.

A few days ago Mom decided it would be a good idea to teach Manny how to use the computer, so she let him play on my Net Kritterz account while I was at school. By the time I got home, Manny traded in everything I ever earned in the game for tokens and then blew all of them in the Kritterz Kasino.



And the worst part is that Manny somehow figured out how to change my PASSWORD, so now I can't even play the game and earn my stuff back. For the past few days I've been getting e-mails from Net Kritterz telling me I

need to get back on the site, but there's nothing

I can do about it.

And if something doesn't change soon, I don't

think my Chihuahua is gonna make it.

TO: Heffley, Gregory

FROM: Net Kritterz

SUBJECT: SOS!

Dear Gregory-

**GREGORY'S LITTLE FRIEND
misses you!**

**Purchase more tokens
for your virtual pet
before it's too late!**



This isn't the only password Manny has changed,

either. He figured out how to mess with the

settings on our TV and changed the "parental

lock" feature.

The parental lock thing is supposed to allow

parents to control what their kids can watch,

but Manny changed the settings so that the only

shows we can watch are HIS favorites. And he

won't give up the password, no matter how much

we try to bribe him.



Luckily I can still play video games on the TV.

But Mom just got this exercise game, and now she spends an hour a day using my system.

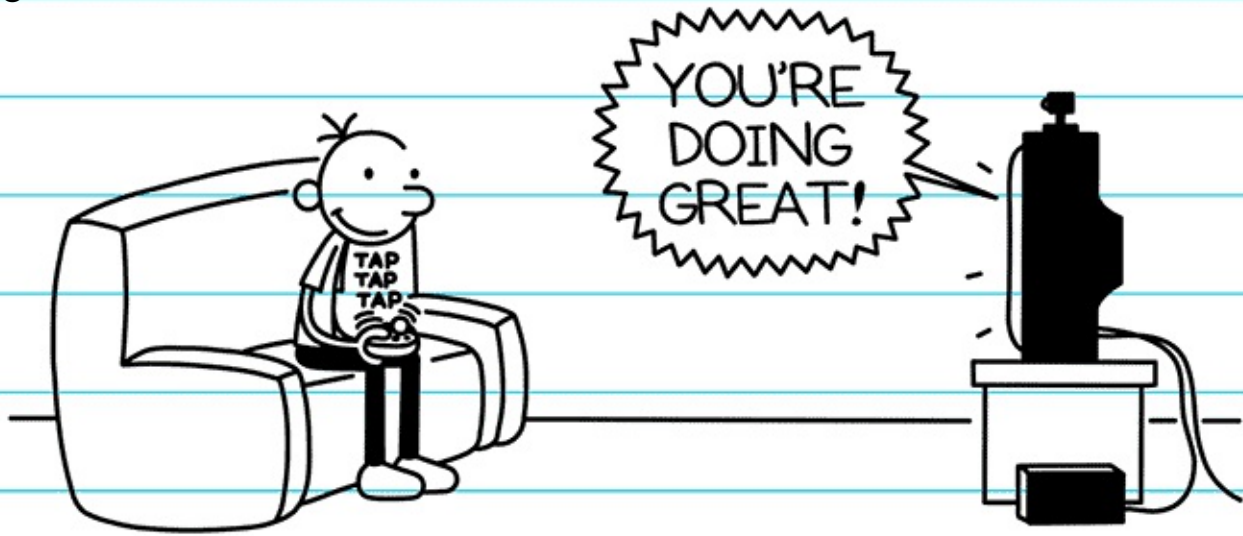


When it got cold a few weeks ago, Mom said she wanted the whole family to use her exercise game so we'd stay active during the winter. I tried

it out, but I don't really like to sweat while I'm

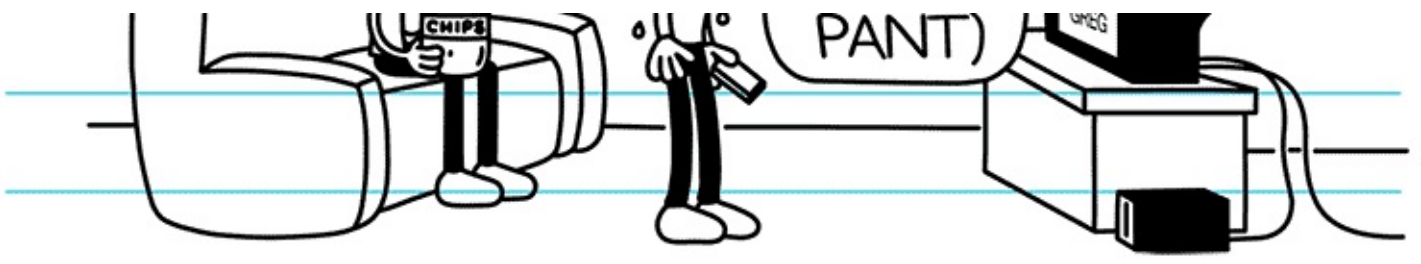
playing video games.

The problem is, the game keeps track of how much you exercise each day, so Mom was on my case about not using it. But then I figured out I could use the controller instead of my body, and within a few days I had all the high scores on the game.



When Mom saw my high scores, she took it as a personal challenge to beat them. I feel like I should probably come clean and tell her I cheated, but she's already lost five pounds trying to get on the leaderboard, so I think I'll do her a favor and keep my mouth shut.





Mom always says I need to spend less time on the couch and more time being active. But the way I see it, I'm just conserving my energy for later on. When all my friends are in their eighties and their bodies are broken down, I'll just be getting started.



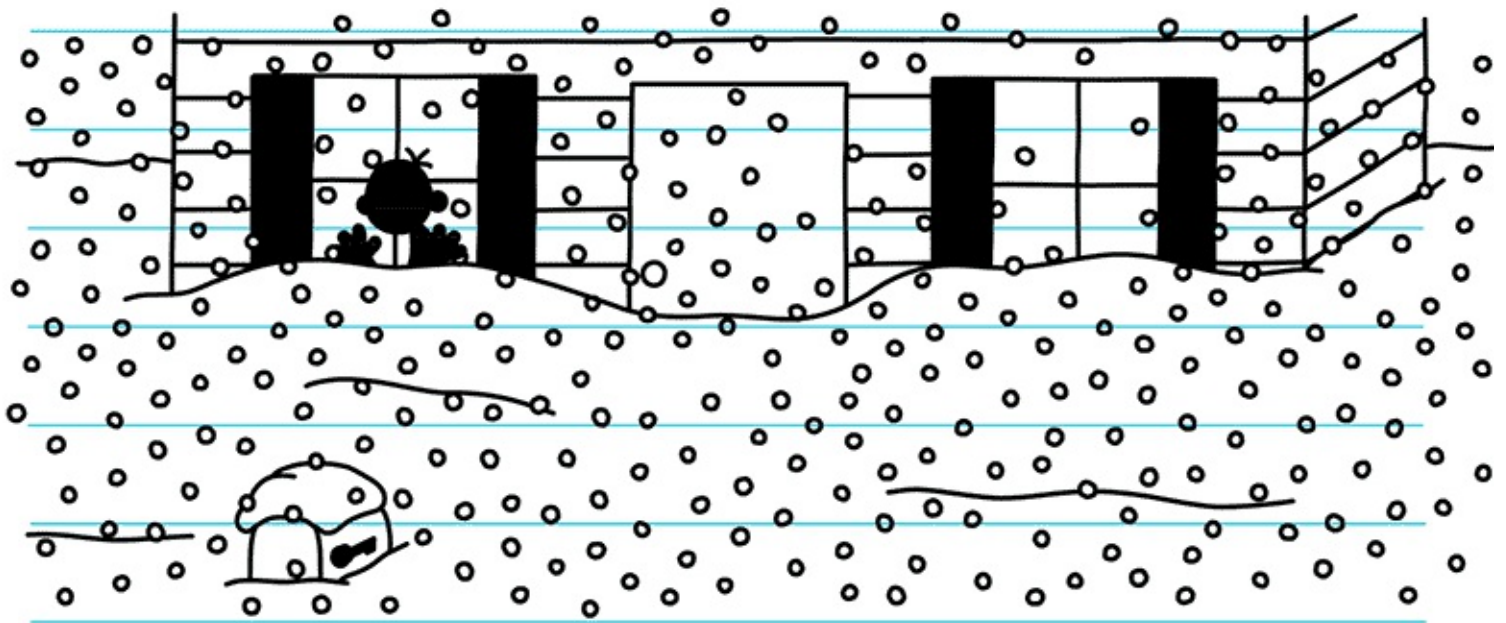
This morning Mom wanted to turn on the weather channel to see when the blizzard was going to end, but Manny wasn't budging on the parental lock, so she went into the kitchen and turned on the radio.

The weather report said we could expect another foot and a half overnight, which means this storm

is gonna break all the records for our area by the

time it's finished.

On the one hand I was pretty happy, because
that meant I had some more time to figure out
what to do about the police situation. But I was a
little worried, too. The snow was already up to our
mailbox, and it wasn't showing any sign of stopping.



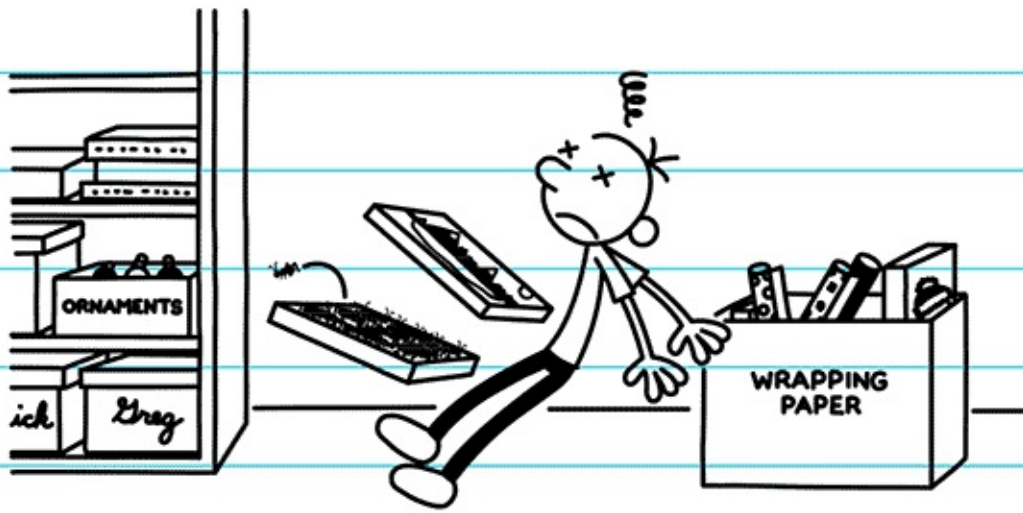
Mom wasn't stressed out about the snow, though.

She said it was a good opportunity to slow down
and relax and told me I should go down in the
storage room to get a puzzle.

But there was no WAY I was getting a puzzle
from the storage room. I have a big phobia
about puzzles, and that's because once when I
got one out of the basement, I opened the box

and it was full of CRICKETS that had made a

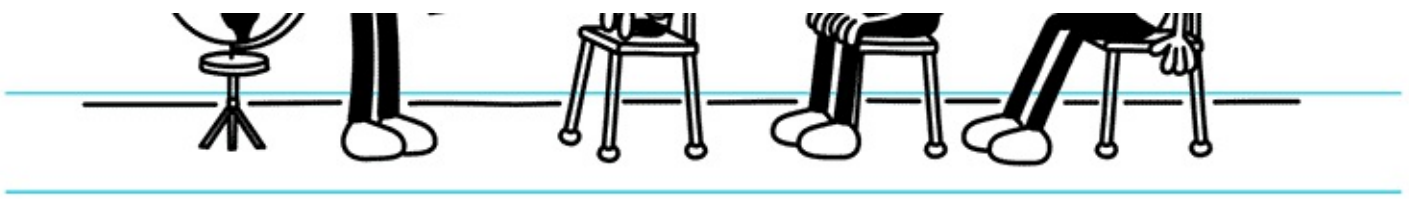
nest in there.



After lunch Mom said that even though we were gonna miss school, she was gonna make sure we didn't fall behind in our education. She said that two hundred years ago all the kids went to school in one classroom and that we could do the same sort of thing in our house.

But if I was in the same classroom as a kid Manny's age back in the old days, I would have gone bananas.

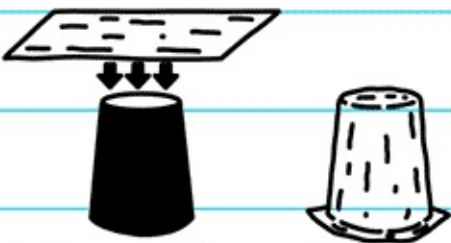






Saturday

Last night Mom brought up some stuff from the basement to keep us entertained. She found a magic set I got for my sixth birthday, and all the tricks were still in it.

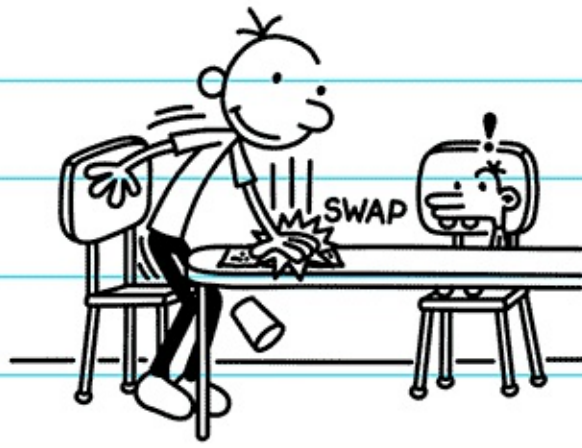
I never really played with the magic set because I couldn't read the directions when I got it. But today I read through the instructions and tried a few tricks out.

<h3><u>Hole-in-the-Table Trick</u></h3> <p>Tell the audience there's a magical hole in the table and that you can prove it by pushing a plastic cup straight through it.</p> <p>Put a piece of tinfoil over a plastic cup and wrap it tight.</p>  <p>Slide the plastic cup toward you and allow it to fall out onto your lap. But don't let your audience see you do it!</p>	 <p>Slap down on the empty tinfoil shell with your hand, standing up at the same time.</p>  <p>The plastic cup will fall out of your lap and onto the floor, making it seem as if it has passed through the table! Voilà!</p>
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The first trick worked pretty well, and I had

Manny believing there was actually a magical hole

in the table.



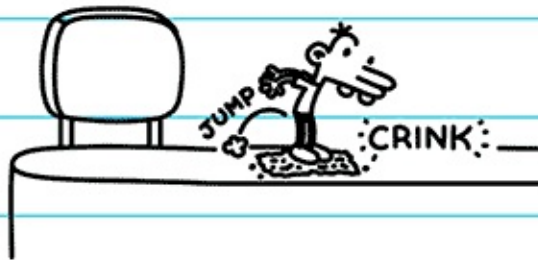
I really wish I hadn't done that trick for

Manny, though. When Mom was in the bathroom

washing her face, Manny got her glasses off the

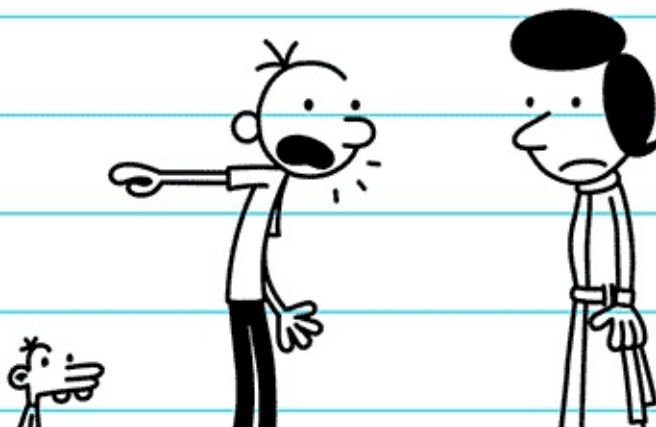
dresser and brought them into the kitchen to try

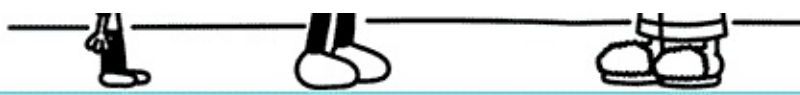
the trick himself.



When Mom got out of the bathroom to look for

her glasses, I had to tell her what happened.





Mom is practically BLIND without her glasses, so

she said me and Rodrick were gonna have to help

her out with Manny until Dad came home and she

could get a new pair. Rodrick said he had some

urgent homework assignments to work on, and

he took off for the basement, leaving me to deal

with Manny.

I had to brush Manny's teeth and tie his shoes,

and then I had to make him breakfast. I poured

some milk in the bowl and then dumped Manny's

favorite cereal on top.

Well, Manny was upset that I poured the milk in

first, and he had a fit. He wanted a new bowl of

cereal since he said I did it in the wrong order.



But I didn't want to waste a perfectly good bowl

of cereal, so I refused to do it.

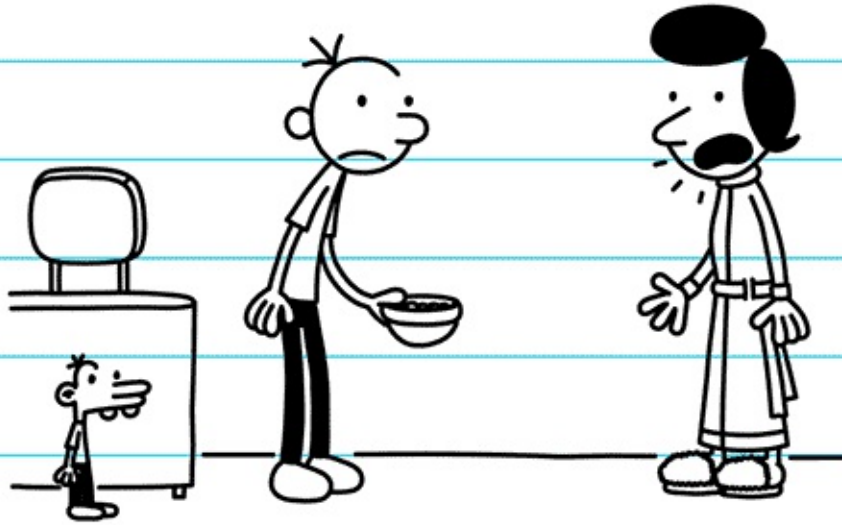
Mom asked what was going on, and I told her

Manny was just being ridiculous. I expected her to

back me up and tell Manny to just eat his cereal

the way it was, but Mom said she wouldn't eat it

with the milk poured in first, either.



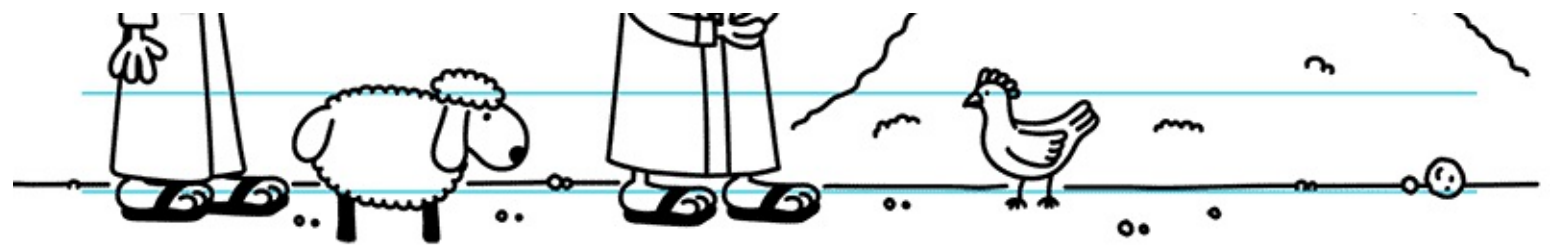
You know, back in the old days adults were

respected because of how wise they were, and

people went to them to help settle disputes.

FOR YOUR CRIMES, YOU
MUST REPAY YOUR
NEIGHBOR WITH THREE
HENS AND A ROOSTER.

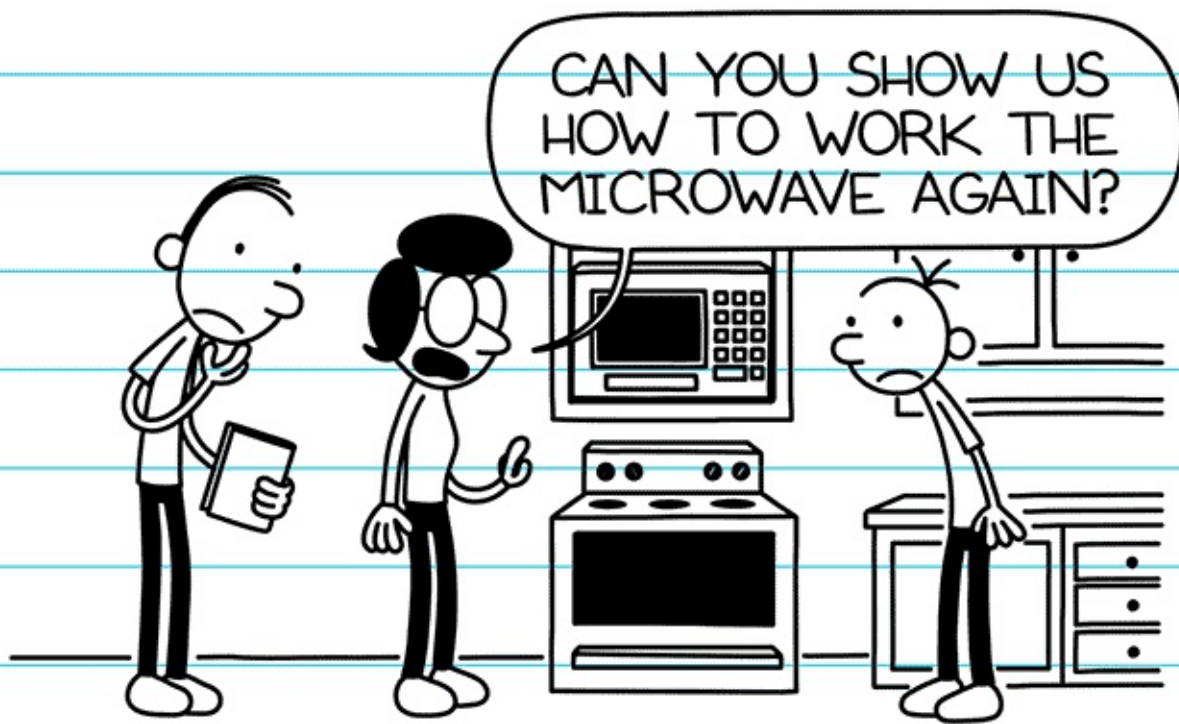




Nowadays it's a whole different world, and half

the time I wonder if grown-ups should really

be in charge.



Mom went upstairs to take a shower, and after she

was finished she yelled down and said there were

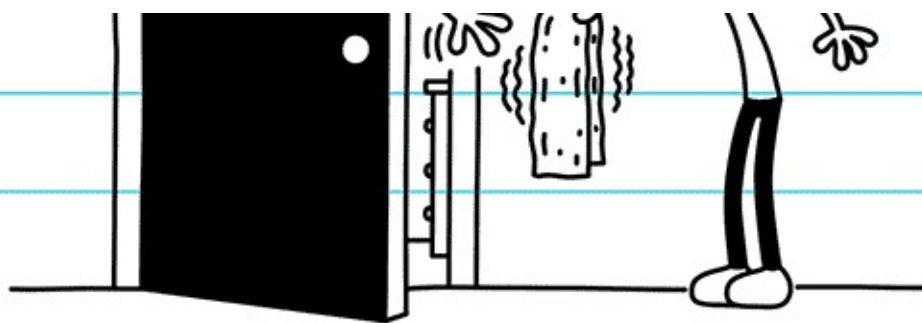
no towels in the bathroom. So I got one from the

linen closet and tried to give it to her. But the

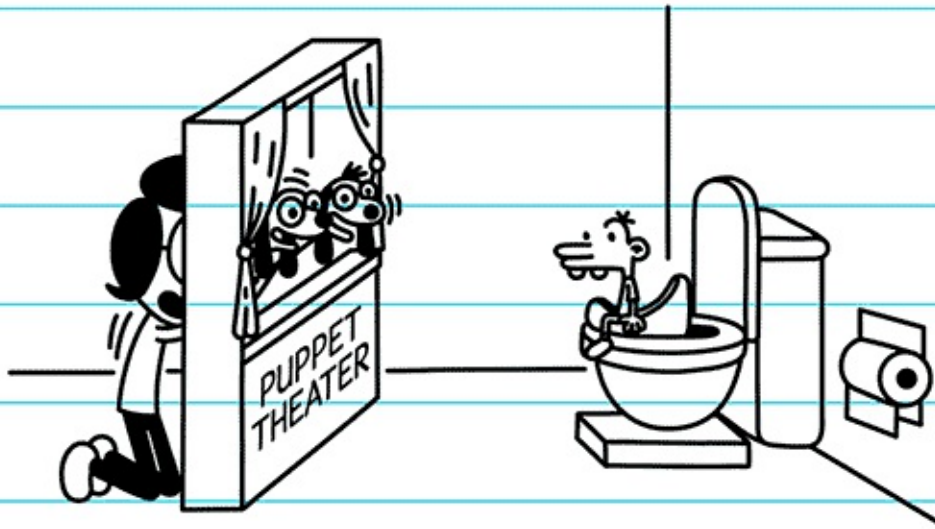
handoff was tricky because she couldn't see and I

was shutting my eyes as tight as I could.





Later that morning Manny had to use the bathroom, and Mom said she needed me to go in there and keep him “entertained.” But that’s where I put my foot down, because I knew what she had in mind. Manny used to make Mom read to him while he sat on the potty, but it just escalated from there.



After Manny was finished in the bathroom, Mom said I needed to make him lunch. She said he likes hot dogs, so I got one out of the refrigerator and put it in the microwave.

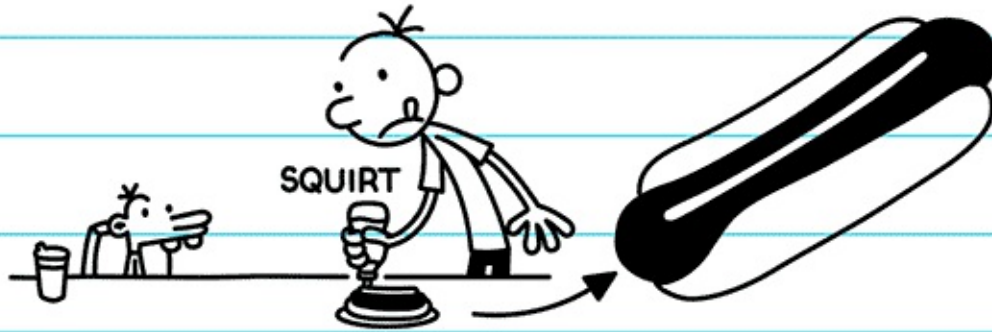
Mom told me Manny is really finicky about the way his mustard goes on his hot dog, and she said he likes a straight line right down the middle.

I didn’t want a repeat of Manny’s breakfast

meltdown, so I tried to make the line of mustard

as perfectly straight as possible.

I was pretty sure I got it right.



Manny had another temper tantrum, though.

I thought the line must not have been straight enough, so I got a napkin and wiped the mustard off to give it another try. But I guess Manny thought that hot dog was tainted, so I had to microwave another one.

This time I tried to be extra careful with the mustard, but when I showed it to Manny, it was the same exact result as before.



Mom asked me to describe how I was doing it, and I told her I was making a straight line of

mustard along the length of the hot dog.

But Mom told me Manny likes his line of mustard

ACROSS the hot dog, and when I did it like

that, he finally calmed down.



See, this is the kind of nonsense I'm dealing with

right now. I've seen a lot of movies where a kid

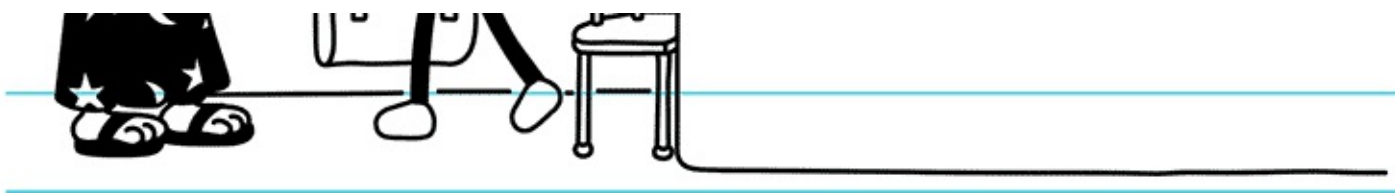
my age finds out he's got magical powers and then

gets invited to go away to some special school.

Well, if I've got an invitation coming, now would

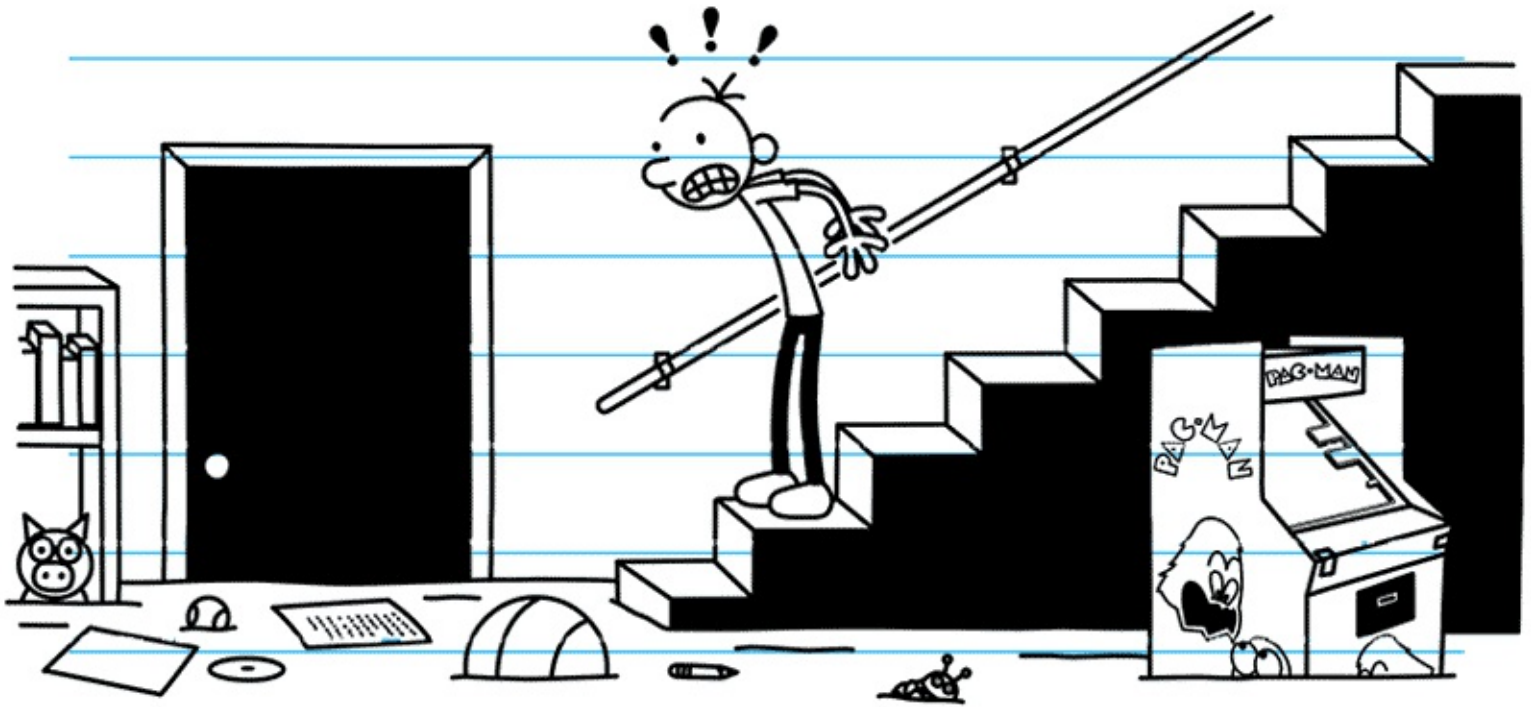
be the PERFECT time to get it.





Sunday

This morning at 10:00, Mom told me to go downstairs and wake up Rodrick. But when I walked down the basement steps, I could tell something was seriously wrong.



There was at least a FOOT of water covering the basement floor. I guess all that snow was too much for the ground to hold and it caused the basement to flood.

I told Mom to come downstairs quick, and when she did, she was REALLY upset that a bunch of our stuff was ruined. But to be honest with you,

there were some things floating in the water that

I didn't MIND getting wrecked.

Mom keeps a "memory box" for each of us kids,

and mine was on the bottom shelf, so it was

mostly underwater. One of the things that was in

the box was my bed-wetting calendar from when I

was eight years old.

Let me just say in my defense that there was

a perfectly good reason why I was wetting the

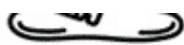
bed back then. In those days I drank a lot of

water before I went to sleep at night, and then

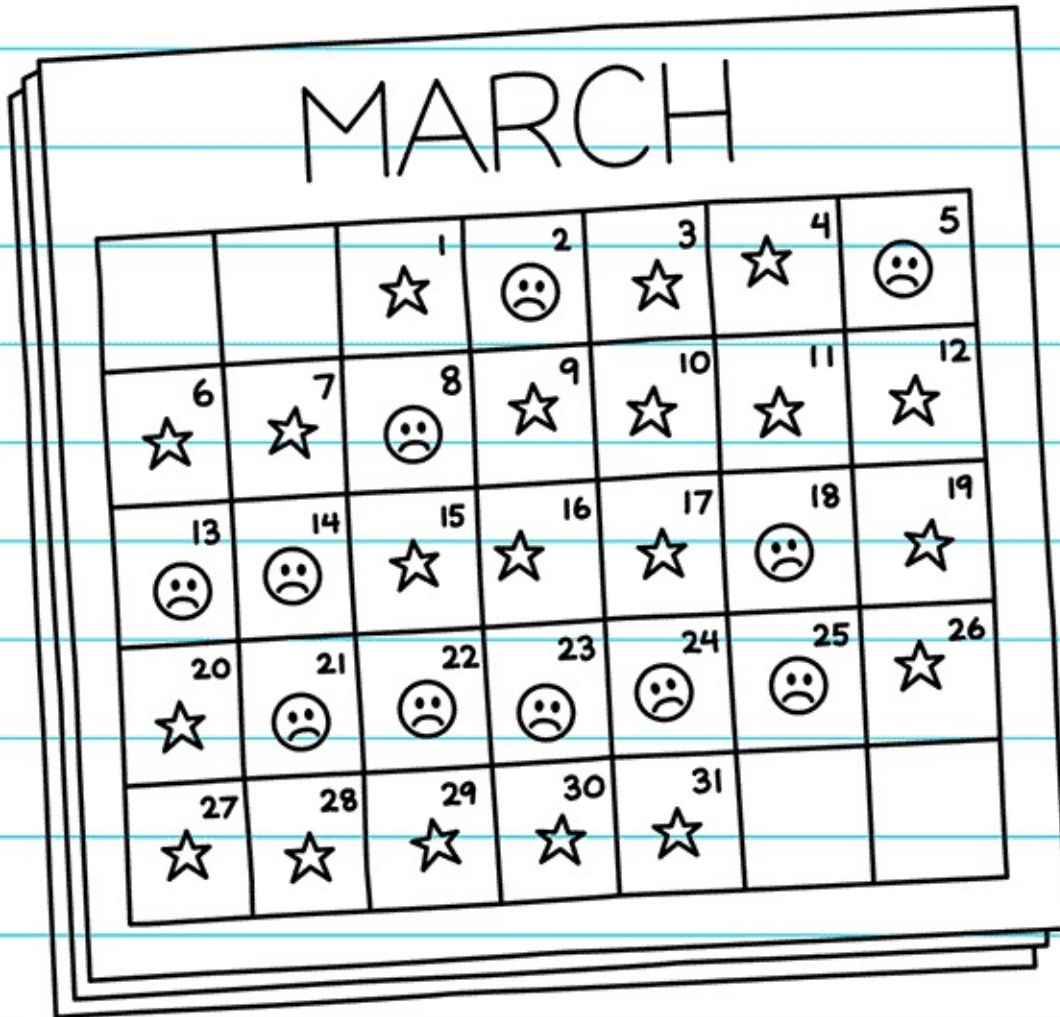
I'd have these crazy dreams that made me need

to go.





I finally figured out what the issue was, but not
before I got five frowny-face stickers in a row.

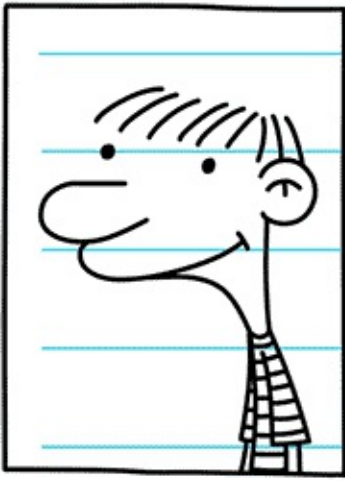


Some of the yearbooks from my elementary school
days were soaked, but I didn't mind that, either.

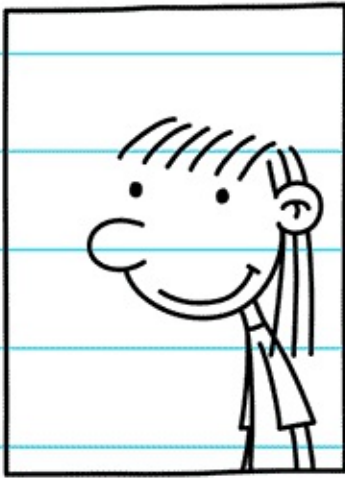
My fifth-grade yearbook was in my memory box,
and that's the one where we were allowed to
choose whatever kind of background we wanted for
our school picture.

I was the only kid in the whole school who chose

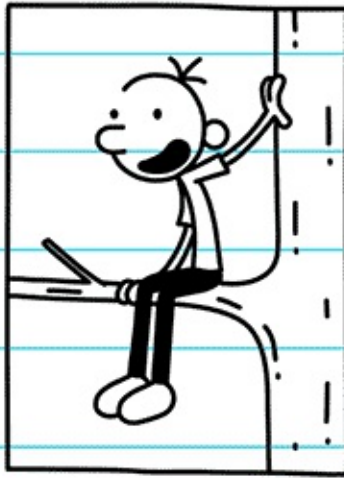
“Natural Setting.”



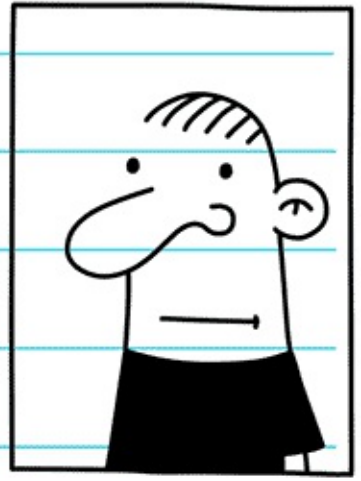
*Haverly,
Jordan*



*Heath,
Olivia*

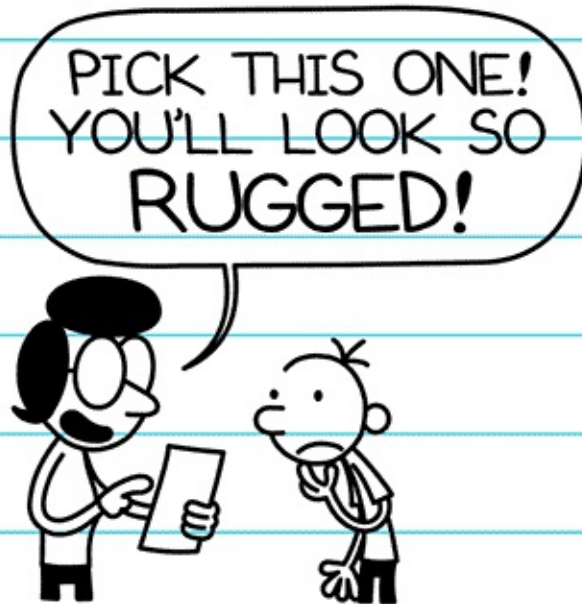


*Heffley,
Gregory*



*Henry,
Jared*

I knew I should've just gone with a regular
background, but Mom talked me into it when the
forms came home from school.



I don't really understand why Mom was so upset.
Most of the stuff that got ruined was in the
basement for a reason, and that's because we
never USE it. One of the things Mom was really

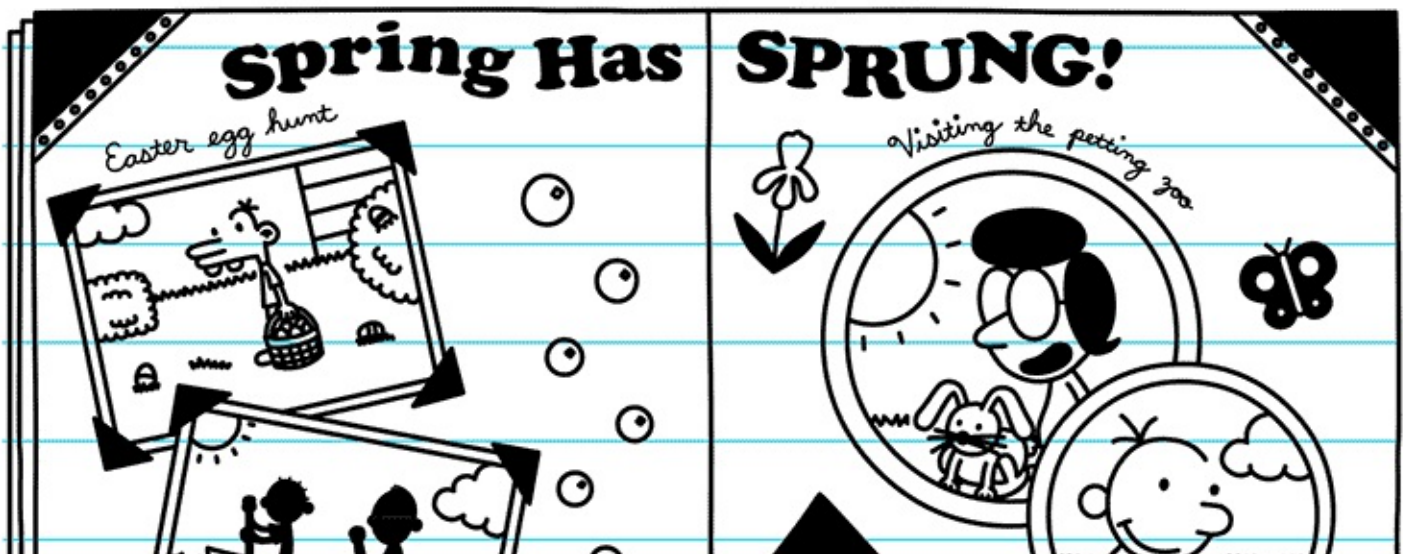
sad about was a “spoon carousel” Gammie gave us

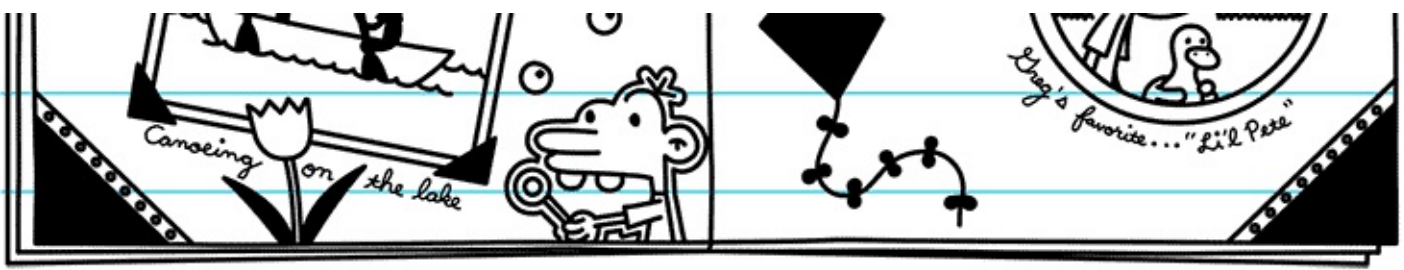
five or six years ago.

I think we were supposed to collect a spoon from
every country in the world, but we only got up
to Canada.

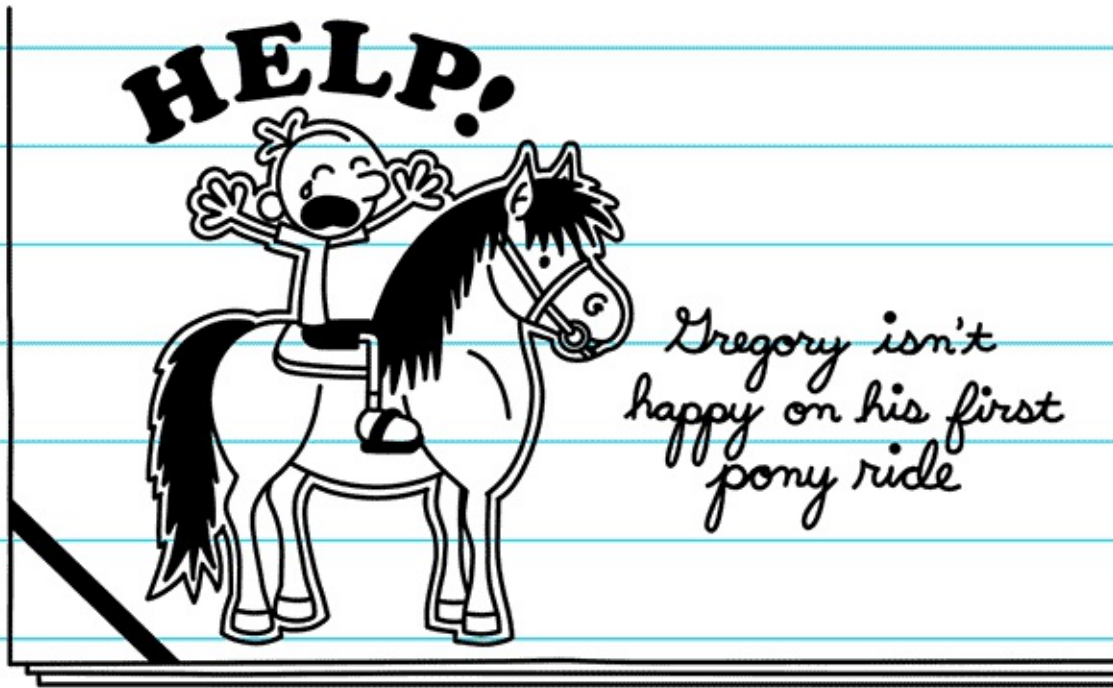


I did feel pretty bad for Mom when she found
out one of the family photo albums got ruined. A
few years ago Mom got into scrapbooking, and
she spent a lot of time cutting out pictures and
doing these really fancy photo pages.

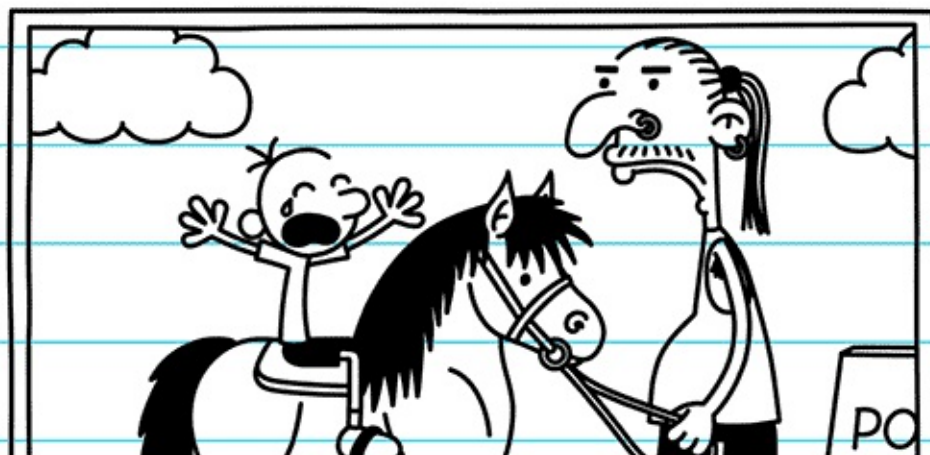


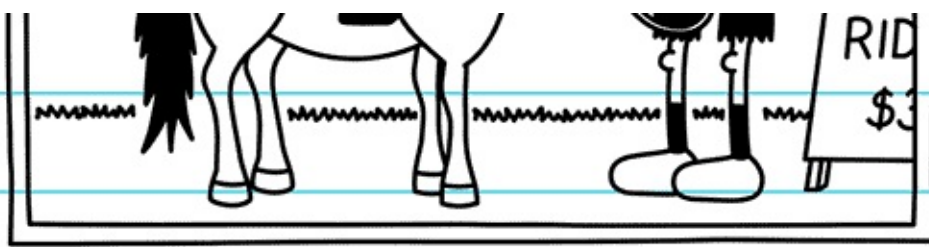


But there's one page in that album I didn't like,
because Rodrick always teases me about it. It's
the one where I had a breakdown before a pony
ride at the state fair.

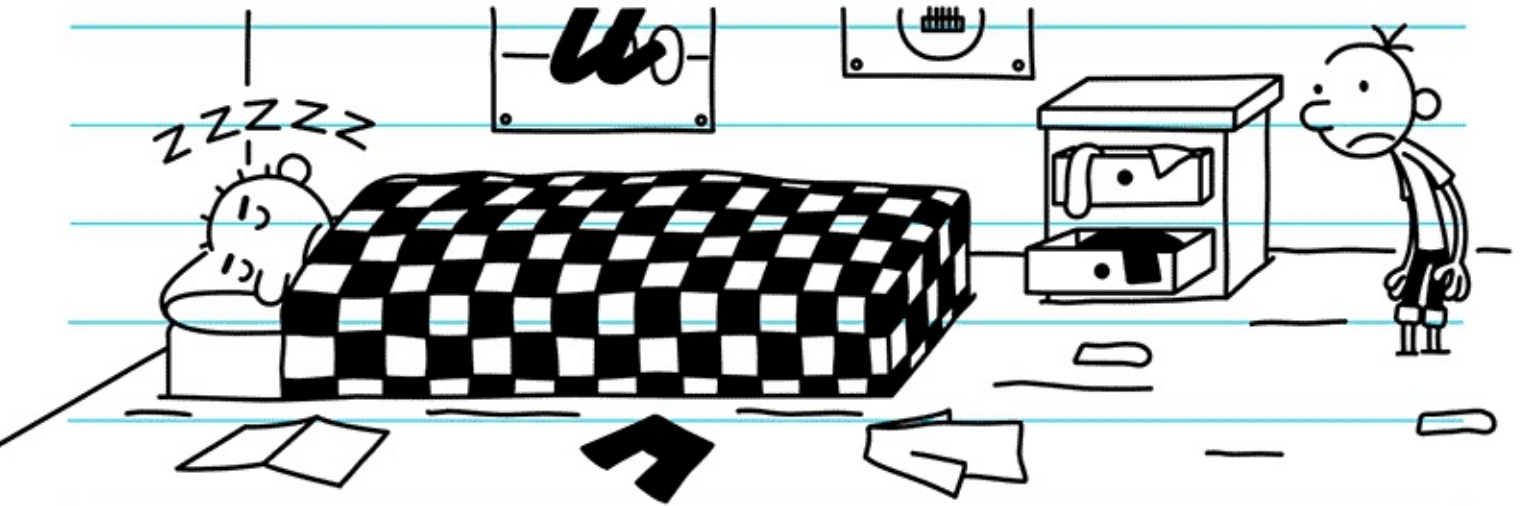


Rodrick always says I was scared of the pony,
but that's not true at all. I was scared of the
guy HANDLING the pony, but Mom cropped
HIM out of the picture.

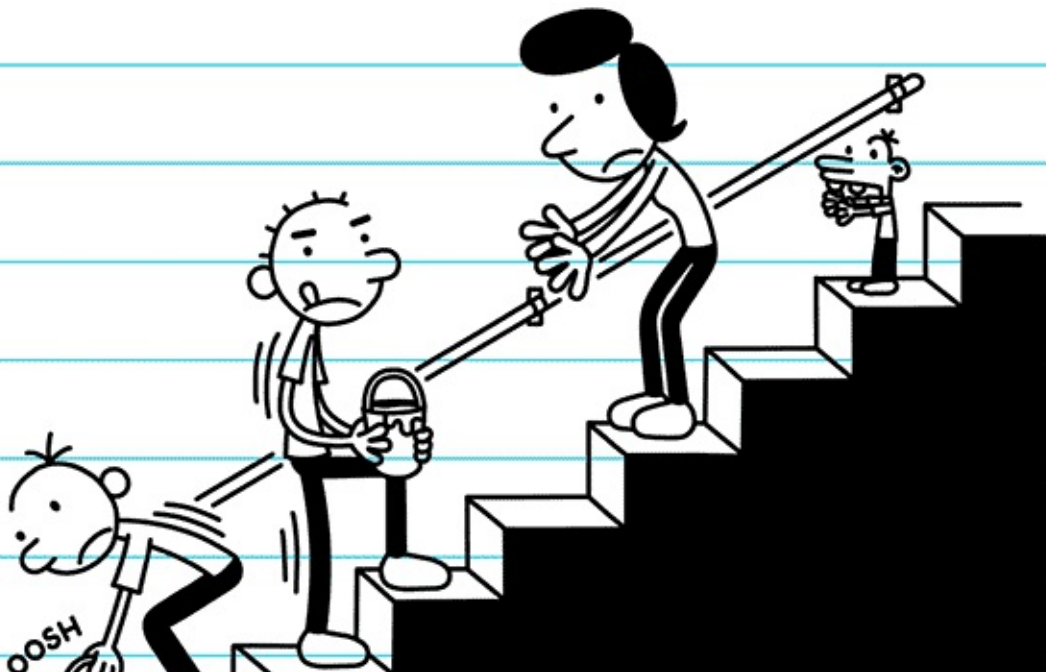




Speaking of Rodrick, the flooding didn't seem to bother him at all. In fact, I'll bet if I hadn't woken him up he would've kept sleeping even if his bed floated up the stairs and out of the house.

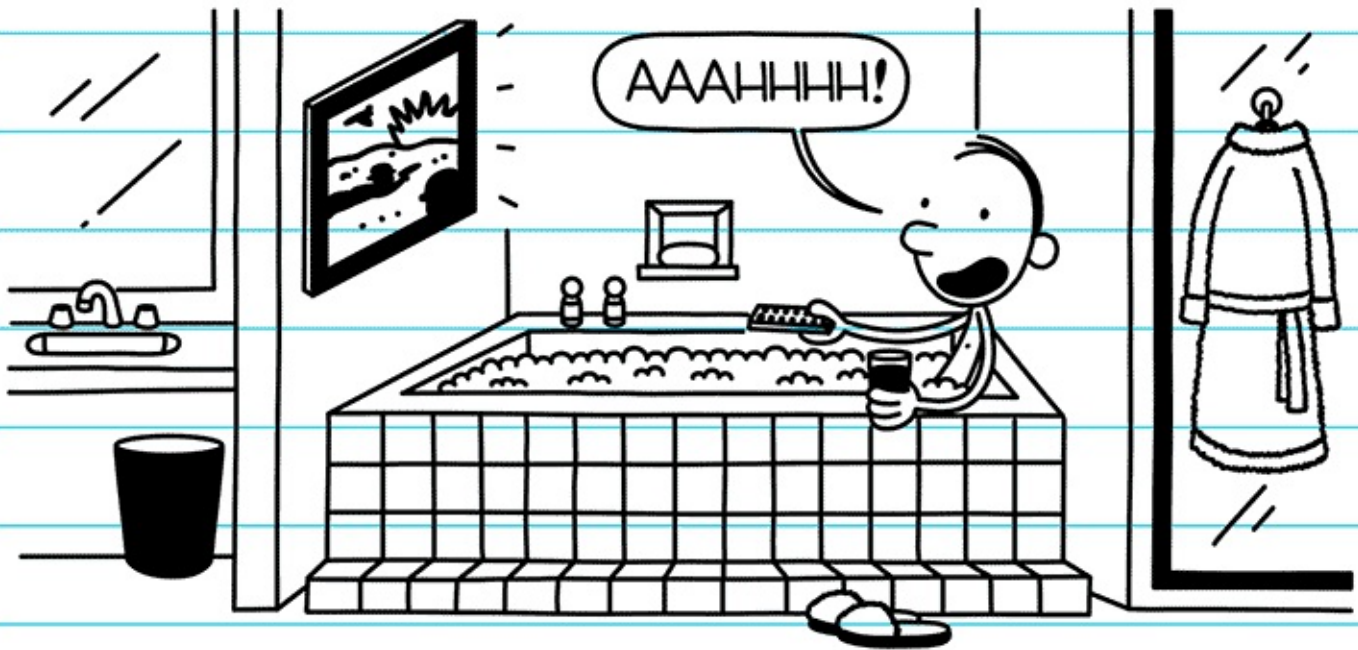


The rest of the day was pretty awful. The water in the basement kept getting higher, so we had to make a bucket relay line with some of Manny's sand pails.





Dad called from his hotel room to check in on us, and Mom told him what happened. Dad said he was really sorry he wasn't home to help, but something tells me he's OK with the way things worked out for him.



I would LOVE to trade places with Dad right now, because he's got a clean room and a king-size bed all to himself.

Mom told me and Rodrick that since the basement was flooded, we're gonna have to share MY room.

She said it would be good for both of us to get used to having a "roommate," because it was practice

for college.

Me and Rodrick shared a room this summer for

a weekend. We had to spend a few days at

Gramma's while Mom and Dad took Manny to a

kiddie amusement park. Gramma has a guest room,

so I figured one of us would sleep on her couch

and the other would get the guest bed.

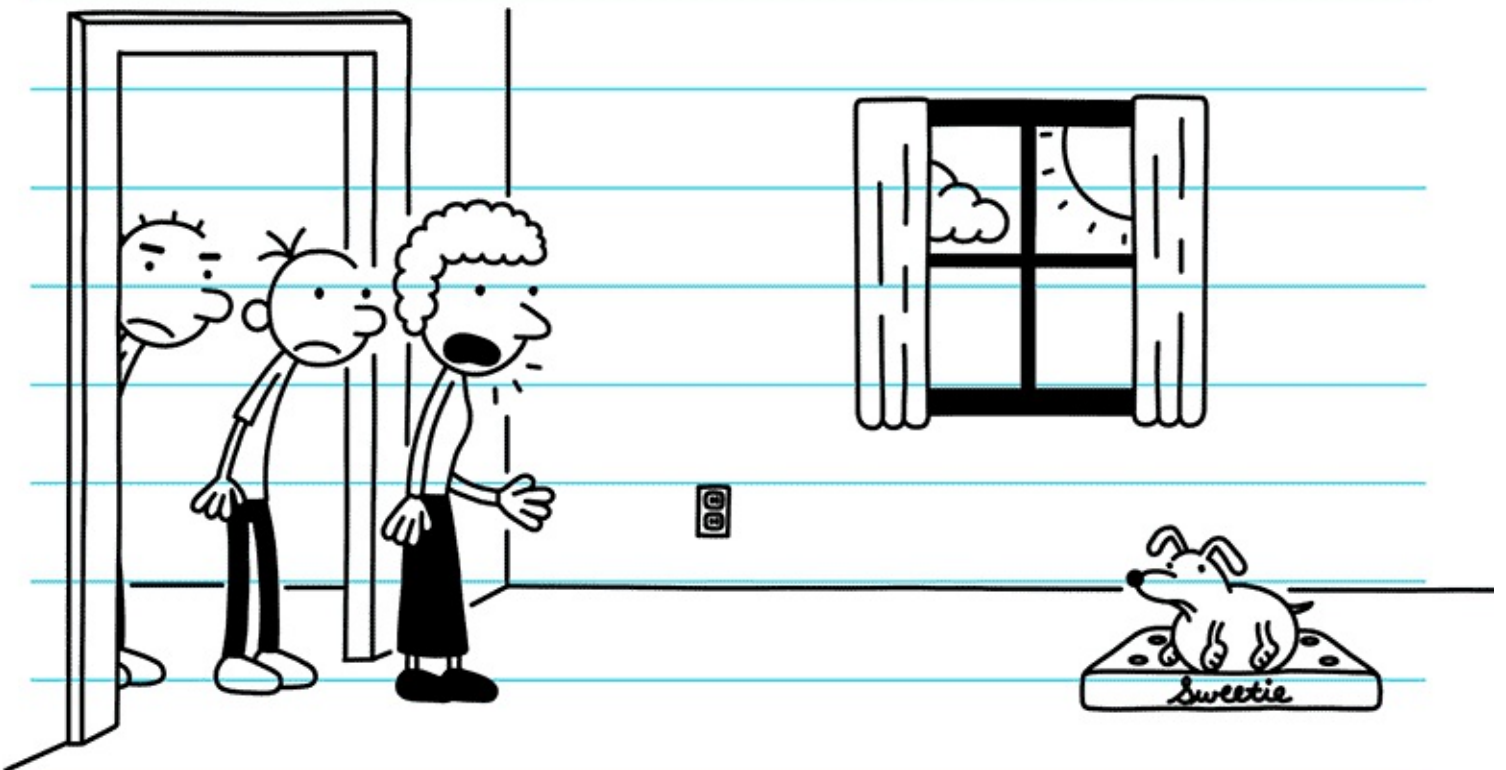
But Gramma said the guest room was "occupied," so

we couldn't sleep there. She'd given the whole room

to Sweetie, the dog we gave her. But you'd hardly

know he's the same dog, because Gramma feeds him

so much he looks like a tick that's about to pop.

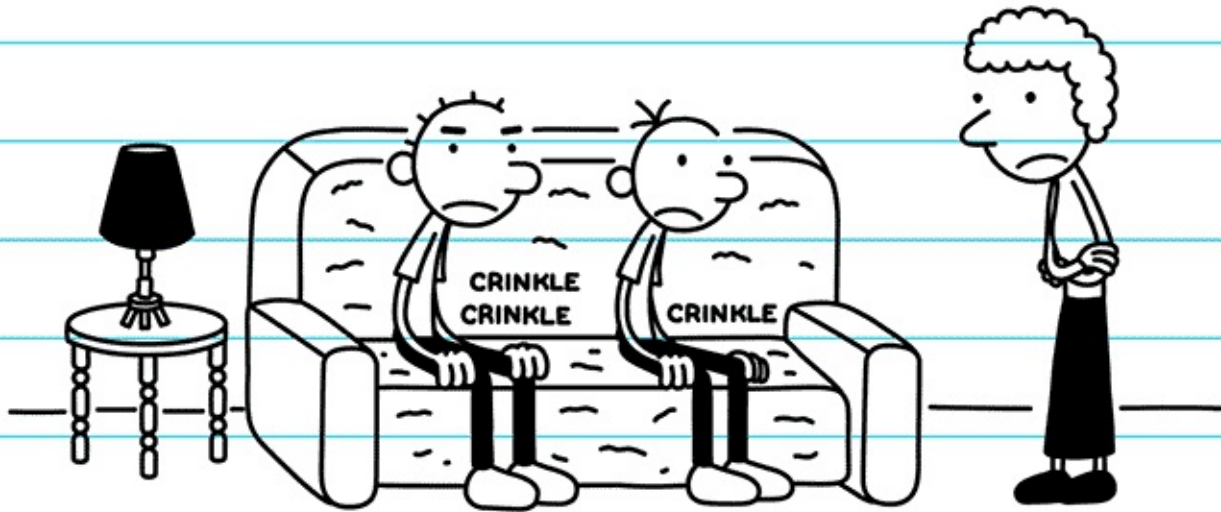


Gramma said me and Rodrick could sleep together

on the pullout couch she has in the living room.

But that couch is covered in plastic because she

doesn't trust us kids not to spill something on it.

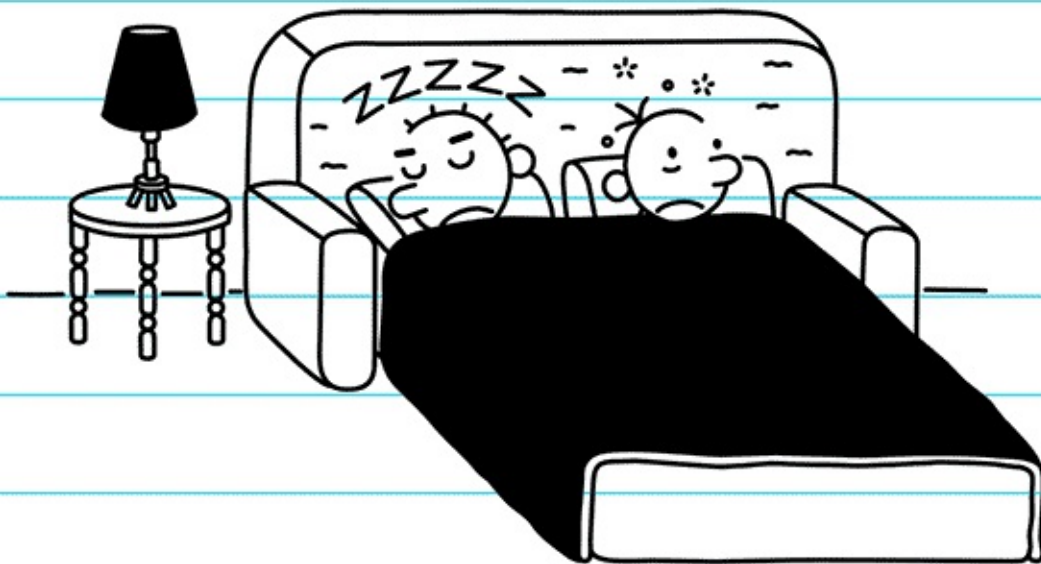


So me and Rodrick spent a whole weekend sleeping

side by side on a queen-size pullout couch. I'd wake

up every morning in a pool of sweat, and I don't

even know if it was Rodrick's or mine.



I'm pretty sure that in prison you sleep in bunk

beds, so if they lock me up at least I'll have

a better sleeping arrangement than I did at

Gramma's this summer.

Monday

After twelve hours of sharing a room with
Rodrick, I'm thinking of marching down to the
police station and turning myself in. Because there's
no punishment they can dream up that could be
worse than what I'm dealing with at home.

Last night Rodrick brought a bunch of his stuff
from the basement and put it in my room. This is
supposed to be a temporary living situation, but
Rodrick is treating it like a permanent one.



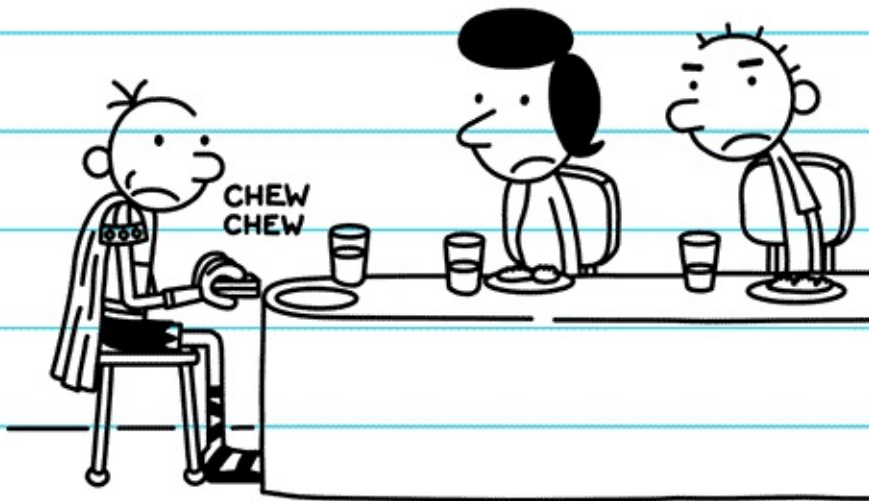
Rodrick's got his drum set on stacks of books to air

it out, and his dirty clothes are EVERYWHERE.

This morning when I was getting dressed, I put
on a pair of boxer shorts that was sitting on my
dresser. But by the time I realized it was actually
Rodrick's dirty underwear, it was too late.



So until Mom did a load of laundry, I wore my
Halloween costume. It was uncomfortable, but at
least I knew for sure it was CLEAN.



This afternoon we were down in the basement

seeing if there was anything we could salvage

from the flood.

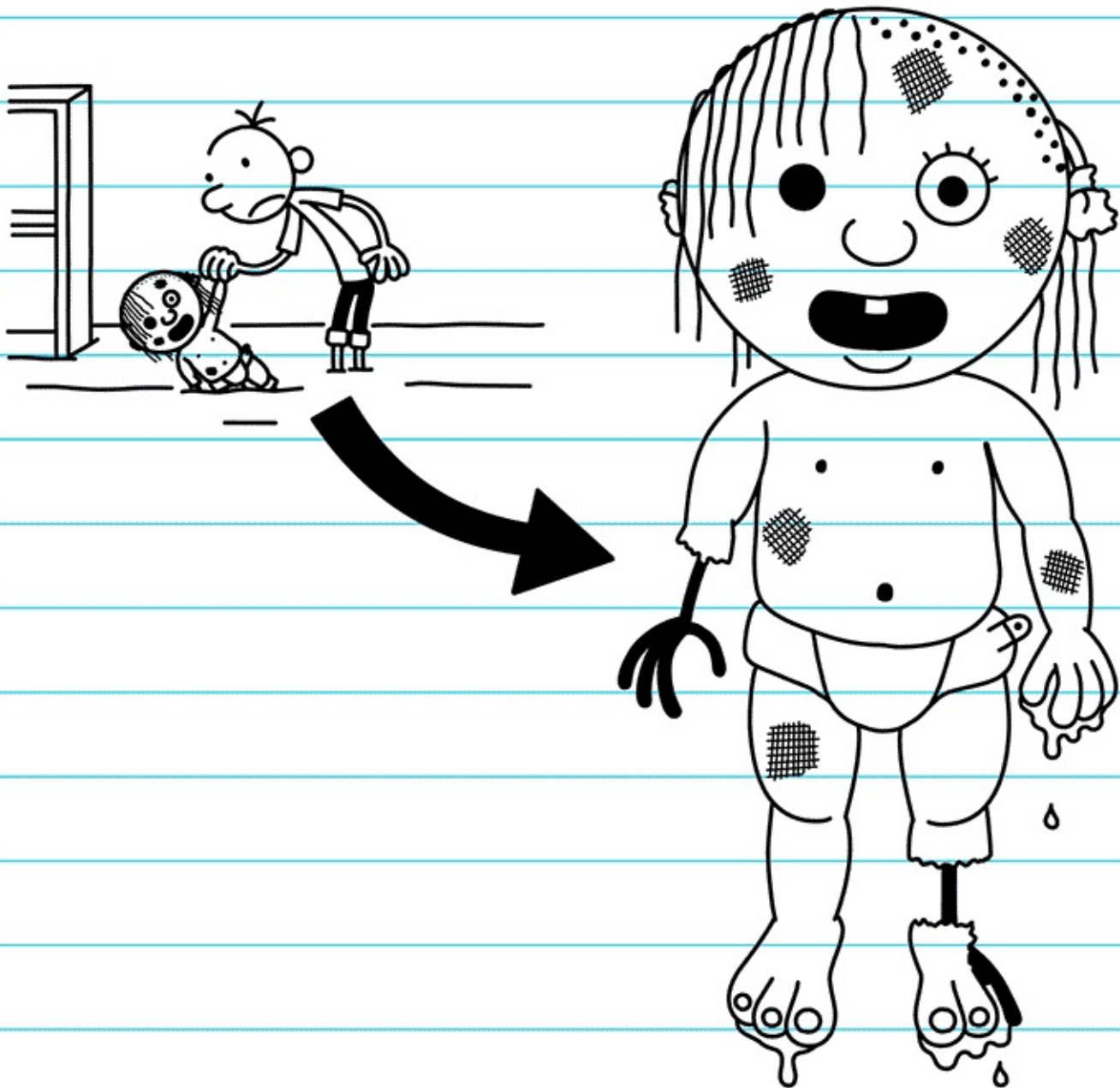
I noticed something strange floating in the water

in the storage room, and when I picked it up I

almost passed out.

At first I thought it was a real baby, but then

I realized it was my long-lost doll, Alfrendo.



After all this time, Alfrendo wasn't looking too

good. I think a mouse must've gotten to him, and

spending a day in the water didn't help, either.

But in a weird way I was kind of glad to see him.

I was living with the guilt of losing Alfrendo for all these years, and now I found out he was in the house all along.

In fact, I couldn't figure out how he wound up in the storage room. But I realized it HAD to be Dad. He was never really on board with the whole doll idea, and I'm sure he got rid of Alfrendo when I wasn't looking.



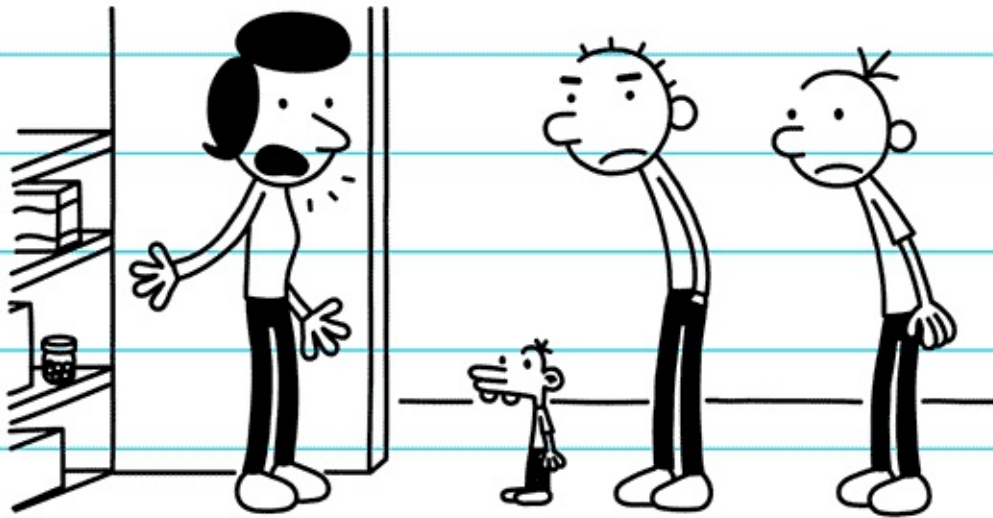
I figured I'd confront Dad about kidnapping my doll when he got home, but at the moment I had

bigger things to worry about. The first one was

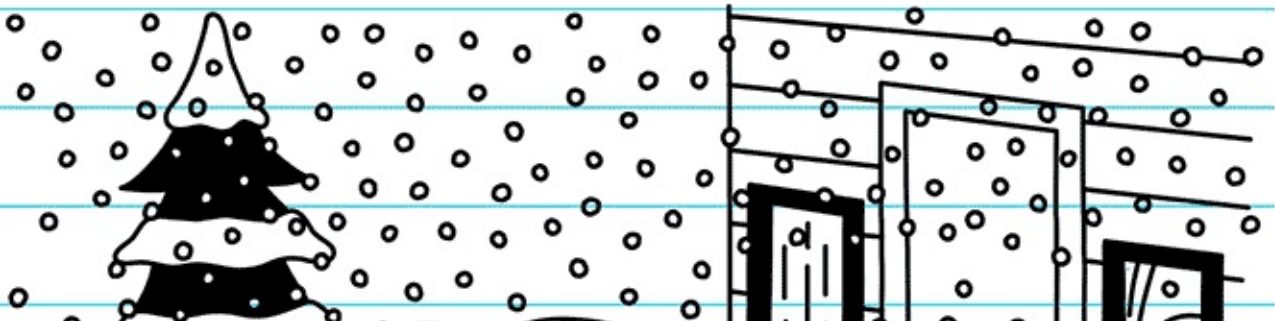
what I was gonna EAT.

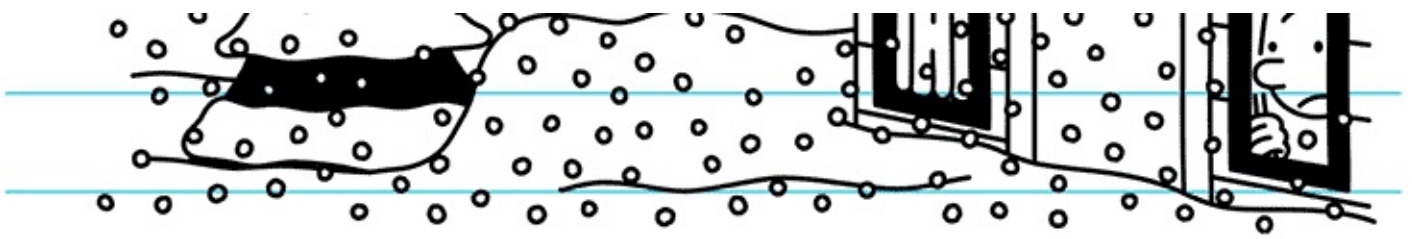
Over the past few days we've been running low on food, and if this snow doesn't melt quick, I don't know WHAT we're gonna do.

Mom was supposed to go grocery shopping the day the blizzard hit, so we have less food than usual to begin with. She said we're gonna have to start "rationing" until she can go back out.



That could be a while, though. The snow is piled up three feet high against the front door, so we're basically trapped inside.





And Rodrick is spoiling the food we DO have

left. He drinks milk straight from the carton, so

there's no way I'm gonna touch that now.



I'm actually kind of mad at Dad, because if it

wasn't for him, we'd have all the milk we wanted.

A few years ago I won a contest at the state

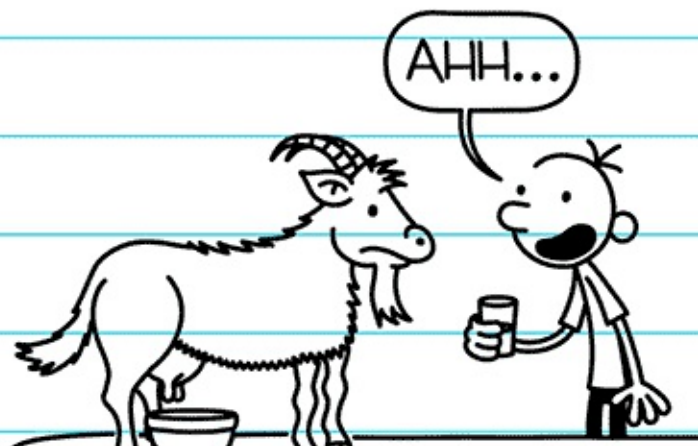
fair where you had to guess how much a baby goat

weighed, and the winner got to take it home. I

guessed the weight right, but Dad wouldn't let me

have the goat. And if we had that goat, I could

have a glass of milk whenever I wanted.



Handwritten text at the top of the page, possibly a title or header, partially obscured by a vertical line.

Mom found some burritos in the back of the freezer last night and made them for dinner, but they tasted funny, so I wouldn't eat them.

Mom said I needed to eat SOMETHING, so I had ketchup as my main course.



Manny didn't seem to mind the burritos, but he'll eat just about ANYTHING as long as he's got his favorite condiment on it. When Sweetie lived with us, he used to chew on the furniture, so we sprayed it with this stuff called "Bitter Apple Spray" that dogs can't stand the taste of.

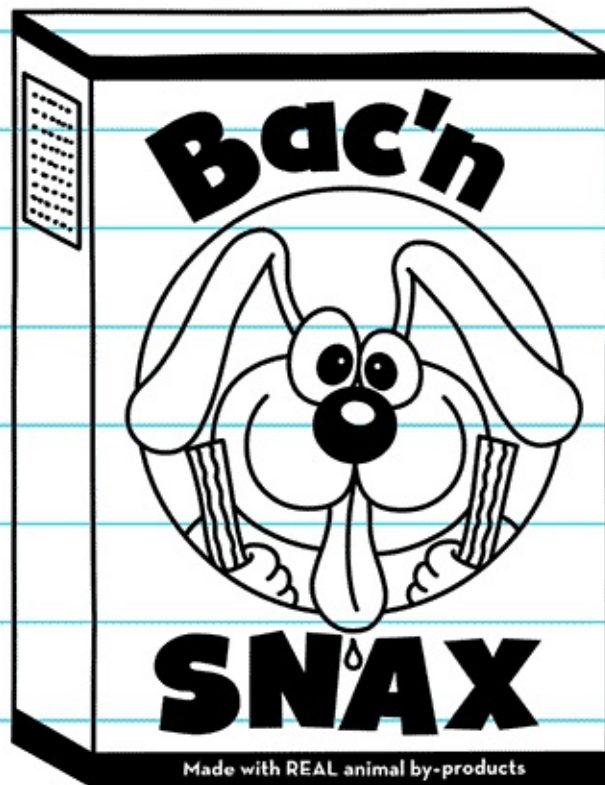




But for whatever reason, Manny LOVES the
taste of Bitter Apple Spray, and to this day he
uses it on almost everything he eats.



Speaking of Sweetie, I got so hungry today that
I was seriously thinking about eating some of the
dog treats I found in the back of our pantry.



But Mom told me they have different standards for

making dog food than they do for people food, so

that stopped me from eating any, at least for now.

I can't believe I'm practically starving here

while Sweetie is living the good life at Gramma's,

enjoying her home-cooked meals.



I only have myself to blame about the food

situation, though. We had a bunch of canned

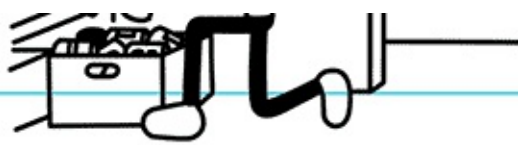
food until a week before Thanksgiving, but then

I gave almost ALL of it to the Food Drive at

school. I got rid of the things I don't like to

eat, like yams and beets.





But I'll bet whoever got our rejects is having a
pretty good laugh about it right now.



I was starting to wonder whether toothpaste had
any nutritional value when I remembered I actually
DID have something edible in my desk drawer.

When Dad wouldn't let me take the goat home
from the state fair, Mom got me a giant
gobstopper to make up for it. I spent the whole
fall working on that thing.

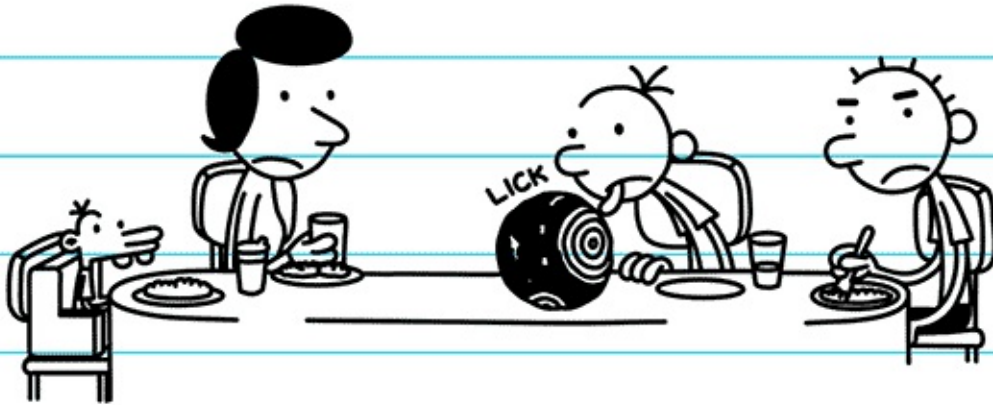




I figure if we DO run out of food in the house,

that gobstopper will help me survive at least

another week.



Tonight the electricity cut out for a few seconds

and then came back on. Mom said there was a lot

of ice on the power lines and we were probably

gonna lose our electricity at some point.

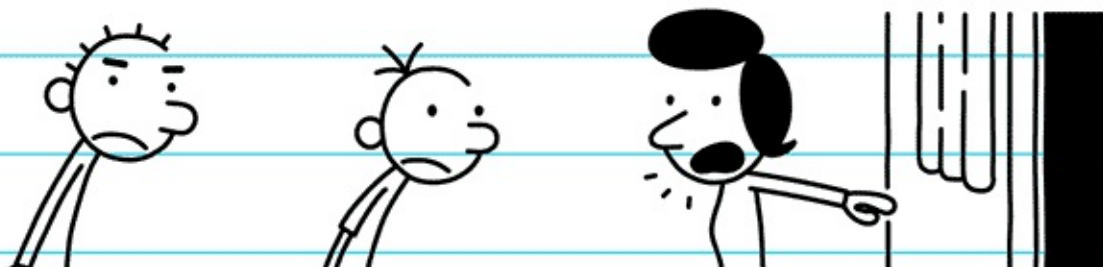
She said if that happened, we needed to keep the

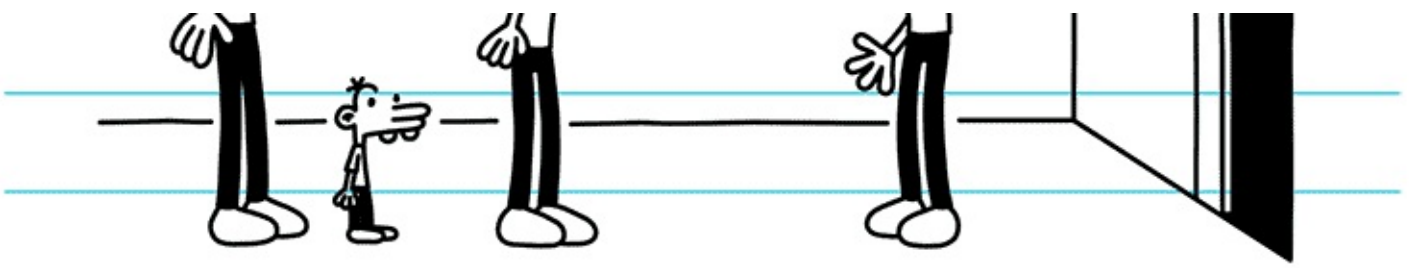
freezer door closed so the food inside didn't thaw

out and get ruined. She also said we'd need to

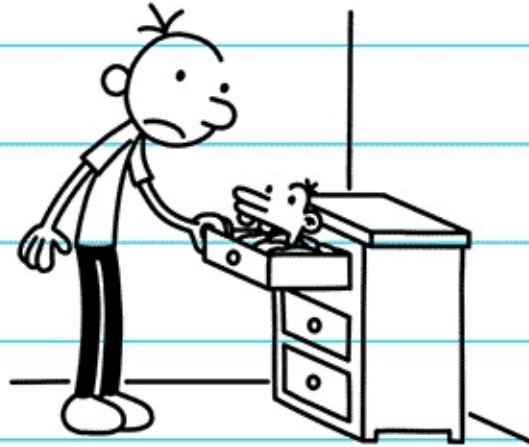
keep the doors to the house shut so we didn't lose

too much heat.



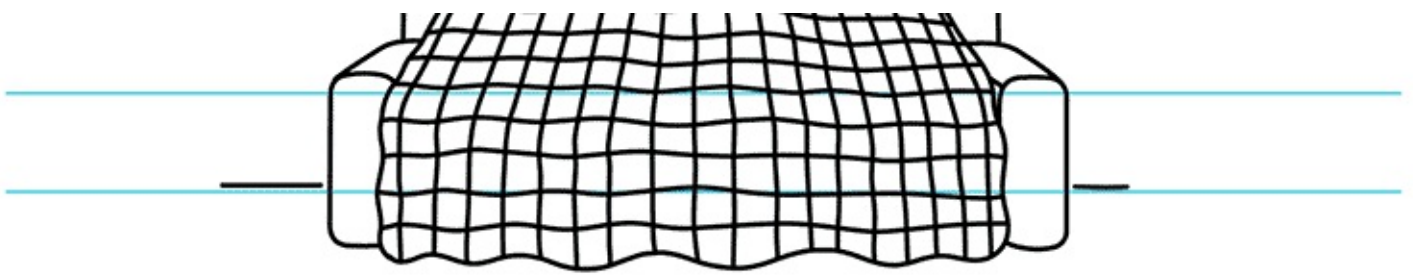


Manny got REALLY upset, and whenever he gets scared he hides in his room. One time when Manny was younger, I told him a witch lived in our basement, and he got really spooked. He went missing for a few hours, but we eventually tracked him down to his sock drawer.



Mom was right about the electricity, because fifteen minutes after her prediction, the power cut off and didn't come back on. She tried to call the electric company, but her cell phone battery was dead. Every hour the temperature dropped another two or three degrees, and we had to get a blanket to keep ourselves warm.

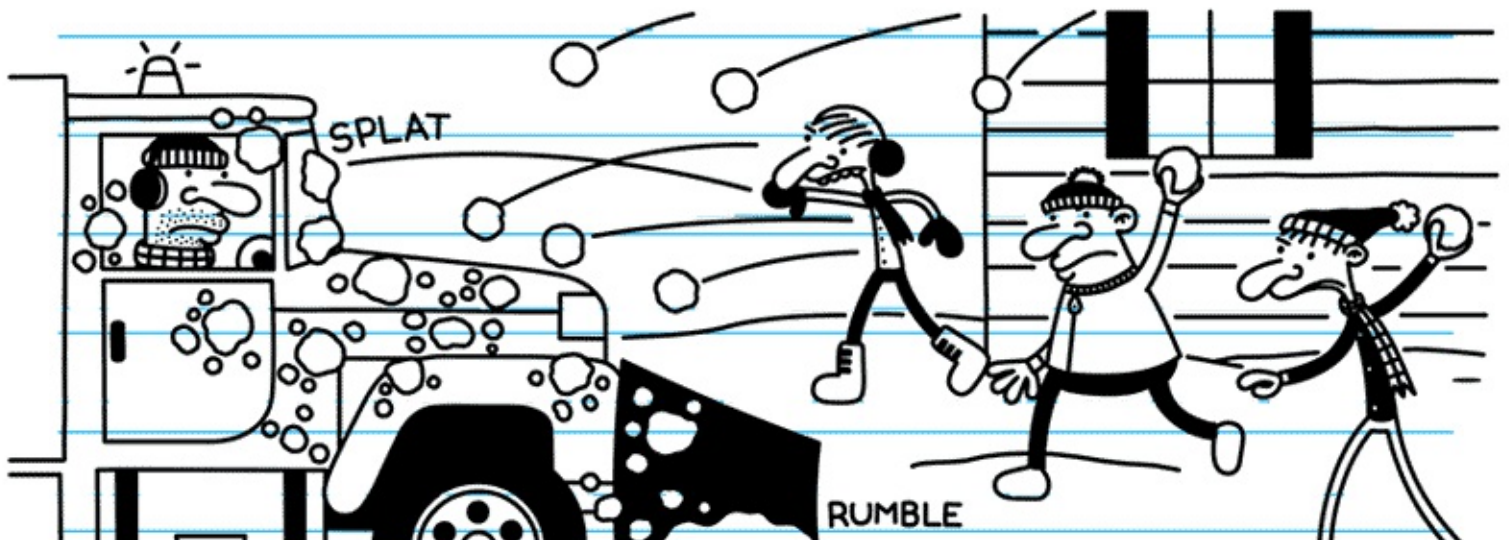




Manny just stayed in his room the whole time,
and I'm sure he was scared out of his mind. I was
actually pretty worried myself.

When you're used to having electricity and then all
of a sudden it's taken away, you're basically just
one step away from being a wild animal. And with
no phone or TV, we were totally cut off from the
outside world.

I would've felt a lot better if our street was
plowed, because then we'd at least be connected to
the rest of civilization. But I'm sure the snowplow
guy is gonna come to our street last, because every
time he comes up our hill he gets ambushed.





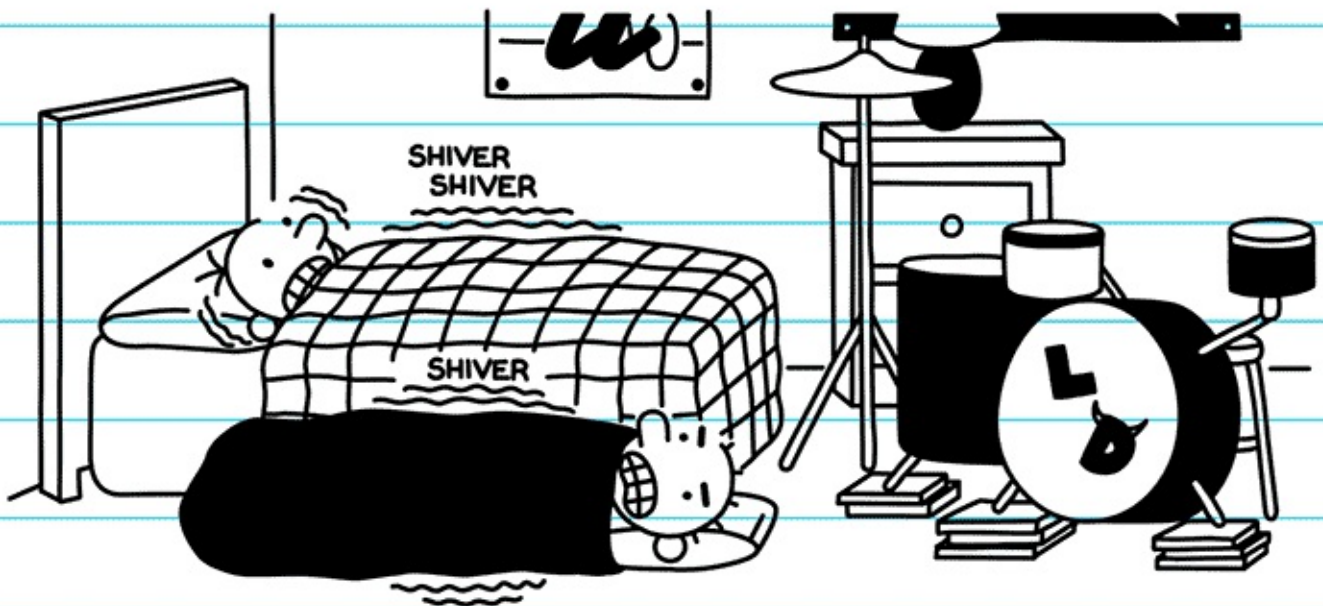
There really wasn't any point in staying awake, so

I just went to bed, and Rodrick followed me into
the room a few minutes later.

It was freezing cold, and I remembered a story

I read in a magazine about these two guys who
were stranded out in the wilderness and had to
share a sleeping bag to conserve body heat.

I looked over at Rodrick and thought about it
for a second, but then I decided my dignity was
more important to me than staying alive.



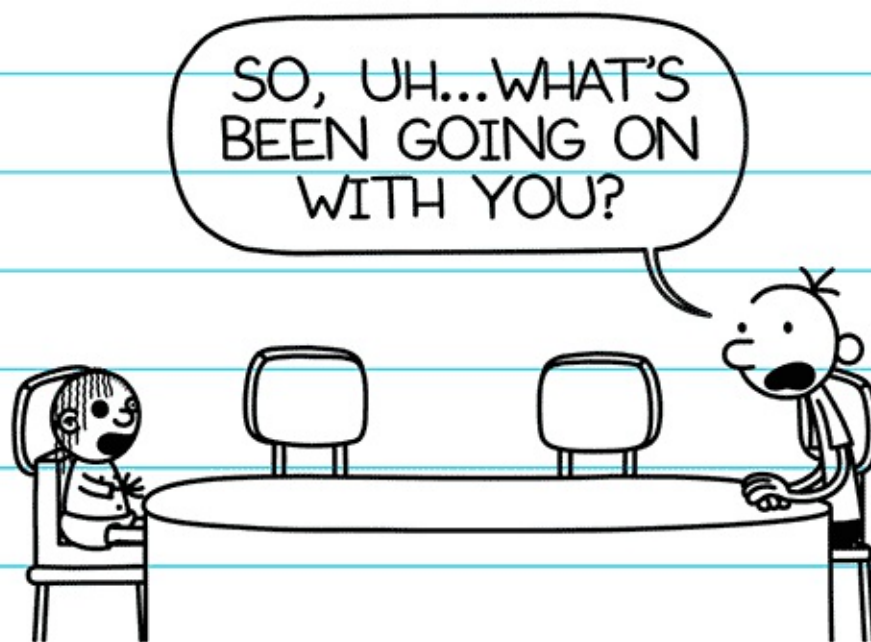
All I can say is, prison's gotta be a lot better
than THIS. I'm pretty sure they guarantee you a

warm cell and three meals a day, so when the police

do come back, believe me, I'll be ready to go.

Tuesday

When I woke up today, I realized I'd somehow lost Alfredo again, but I wasn't too upset about it. I was pretty happy to be reunited with my doll yesterday, but it hasn't been easy picking up where we left off.



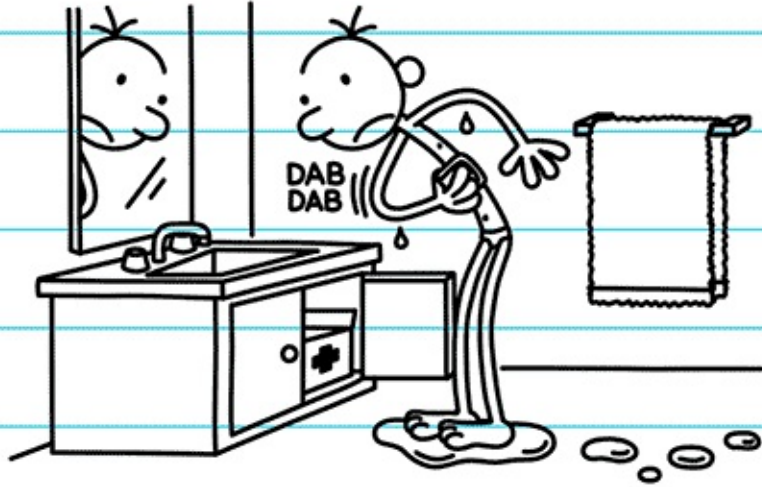
This morning I noticed it was snowing a lot less, but the electricity was still out, and Mom said we were just gonna have to adapt to our new circumstances until the snow melted.

She said I hadn't showered in a few days and I couldn't live like a "savage." I promised Mom I'd bathe TWICE a day once the electricity came

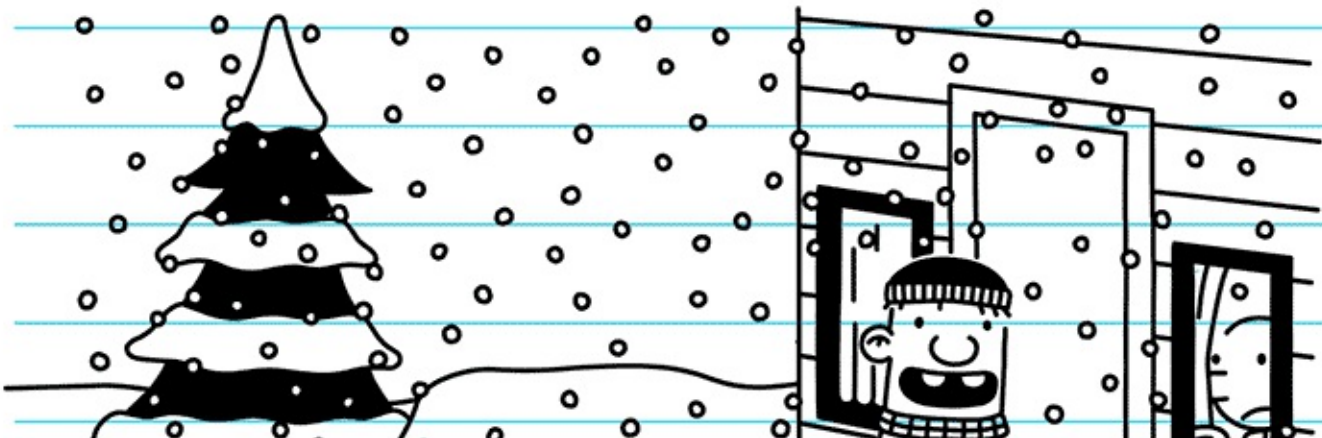
back on, but she made me go upstairs to take a

shower anyway.

The water was freezing cold, and the only towel
in the bathroom was one Mom used yesterday. So
I had to dry myself with some gauze I found in
the cabinet under the sink.



After I got dressed, I heard a knock on
the front door. I thought maybe the police
had finally come to take me away, and I felt
dizzy. But when I looked out the window I saw
ROWLEY standing there, and he had something
in his hands.





I thought Rowley had come to RESCUEus. But

when I opened the door, he told me he brought us

Christmas cookies, and then he asked me if I wanted

to come outside and play. I told him he was out of

his MIND and asked him how his family was surviving

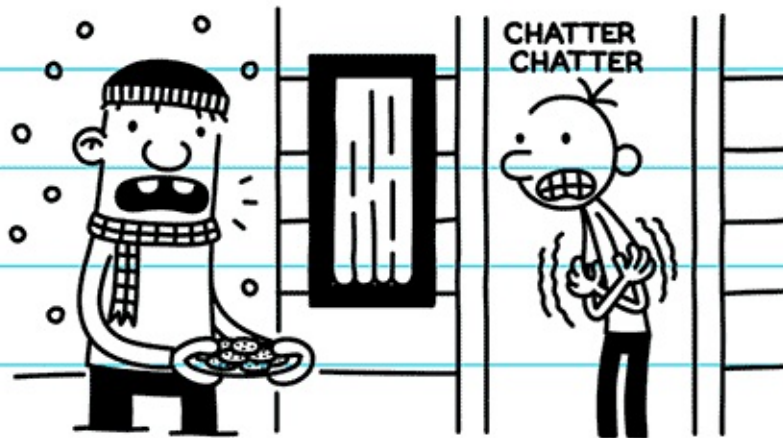
without any electricity, but he looked confused.

Rowley said his family still had electricity and

everyone else on the street did, too. And sure

enough, I could see people's Christmas lights on

up and down the street.



Then Rowley asked me if I wanted to make a

snowman. I slammed the door shut, but only after

I helped myself to a few cookies.

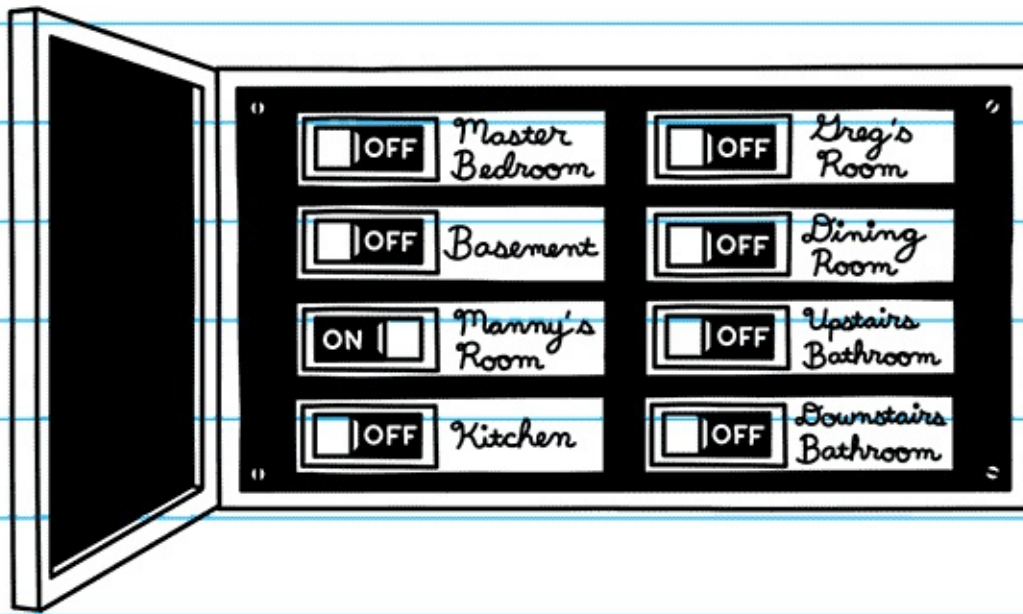
I told Mom what Rowley said about the electricity,

and she told me to go down to the basement to see

if there was something wrong with our fuse box.

When I opened it up and looked at the circuit

breaker, here's what I found—



The only switch that was ON was the one for

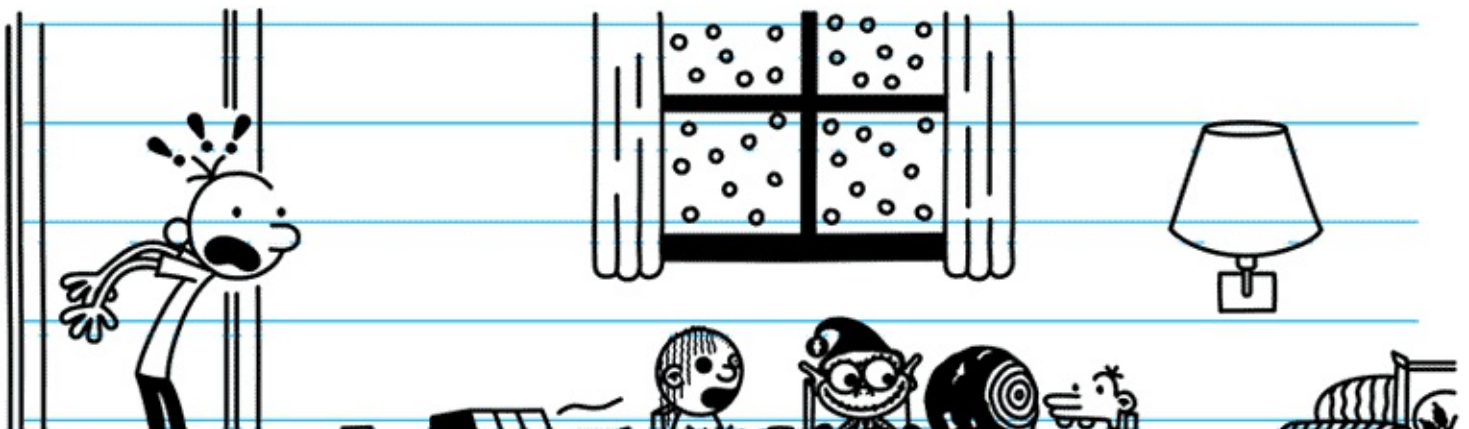
Manny's room.

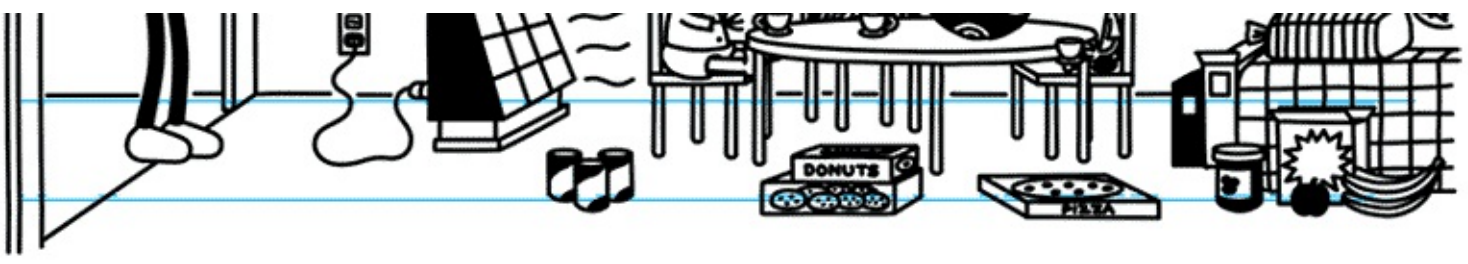
I ran upstairs, and when I opened Manny's door

I got a blast of heat. Manny was sitting there

with a space heater, a pile of food, and a bunch

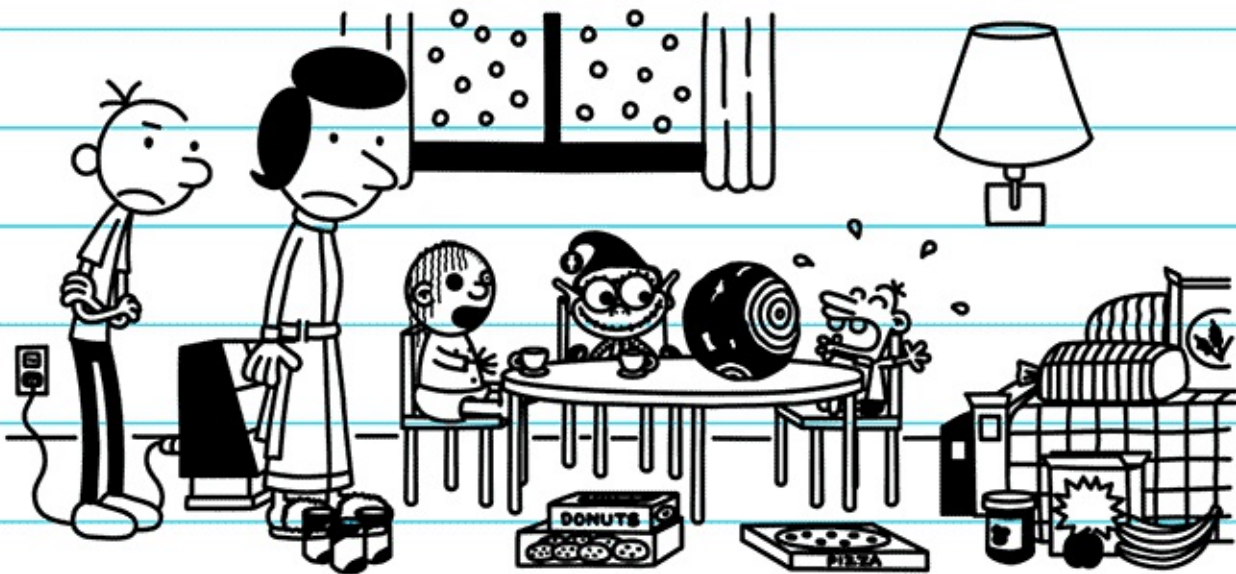
of OTHER stuff, too.





When things got bad, Manny must've figured it was every man for himself. I think he would've let the rest of us freeze to death as long as HE had enough to survive.

Mom asked Manny why he cut off the power to the rest of the house, and he started blubbing that it was because no one ever taught him how to tie his shoes.

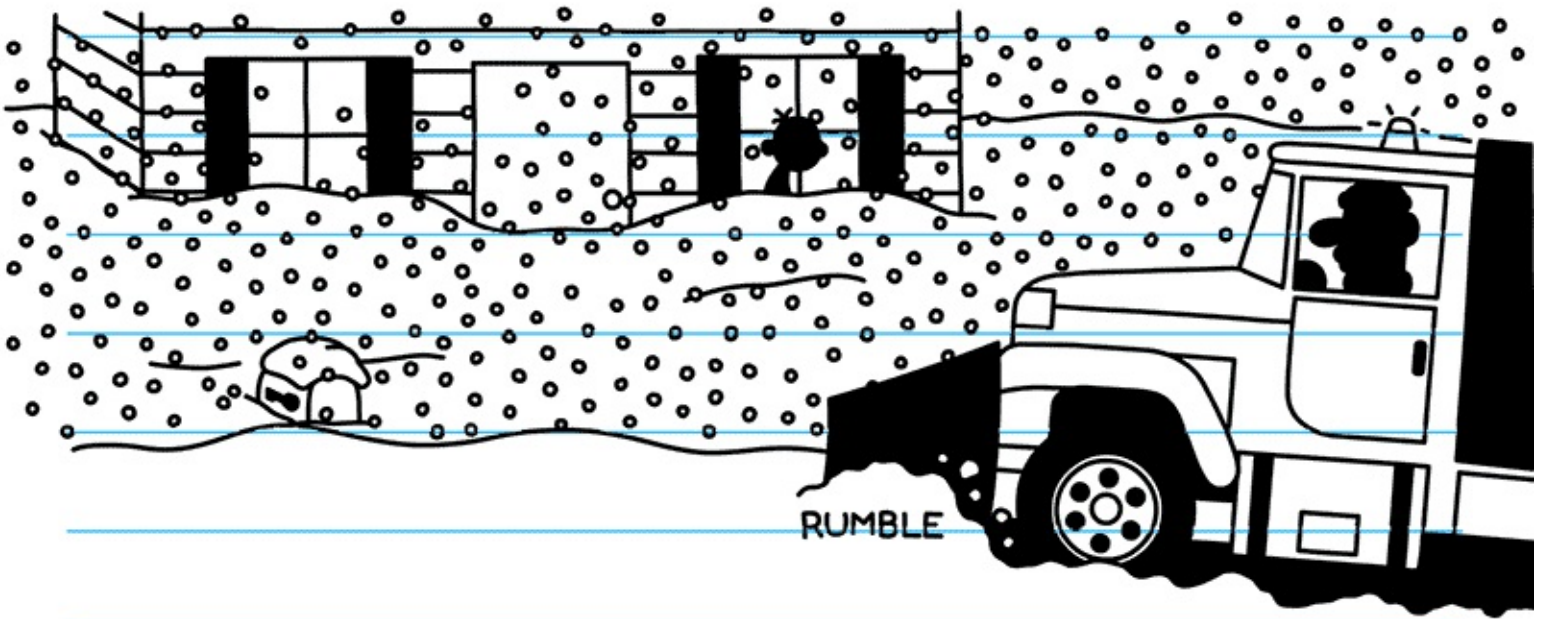


While Mom dealt with Manny, I went down to the basement and switched on the circuit breakers for the rest of the house. The electricity came back on, and the furnace kicked in. A few minutes after that, Dad called. He

said the highways were clear and that he was

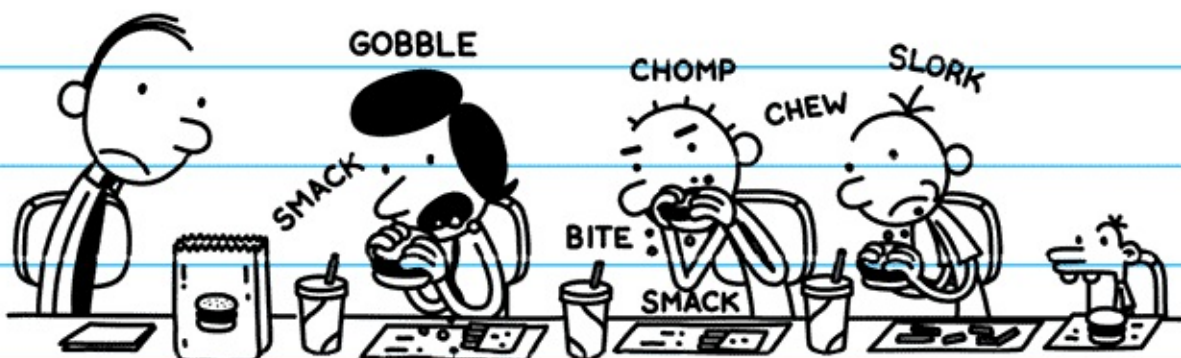
coming home.

I looked out the window and saw the plow coming
up our hill.



Mom said it was a “miracle” that Dad was gonna
be home for Christmas Eve, but to be honest with
you, I had totally forgotten what day it was
until that moment.

Dad picked up some food on the way home, and the
rest of us ate like a pack of wolves. And let me
just say, I’ll never take food for granted again.



Mom said she was gonna go out with Dad to try

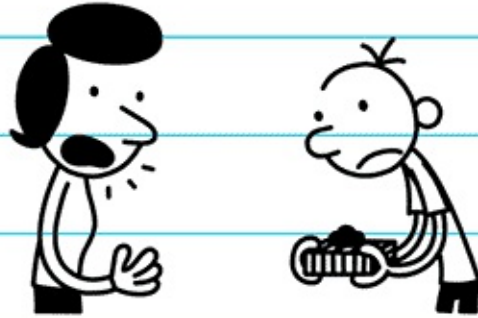
and find a place that was open that sold glasses.

Before she left, Mom asked me to take a present

down to the police station for the Toy Drive and

put it in the outdoor bin, because today was the

last day you could turn a gift in.



But I wasn't too eager to show my face at the

police station, and I REALLY didn't need to

spend Christmas in jail. I knew I'd let some kid

down if I didn't turn in our present, though, so

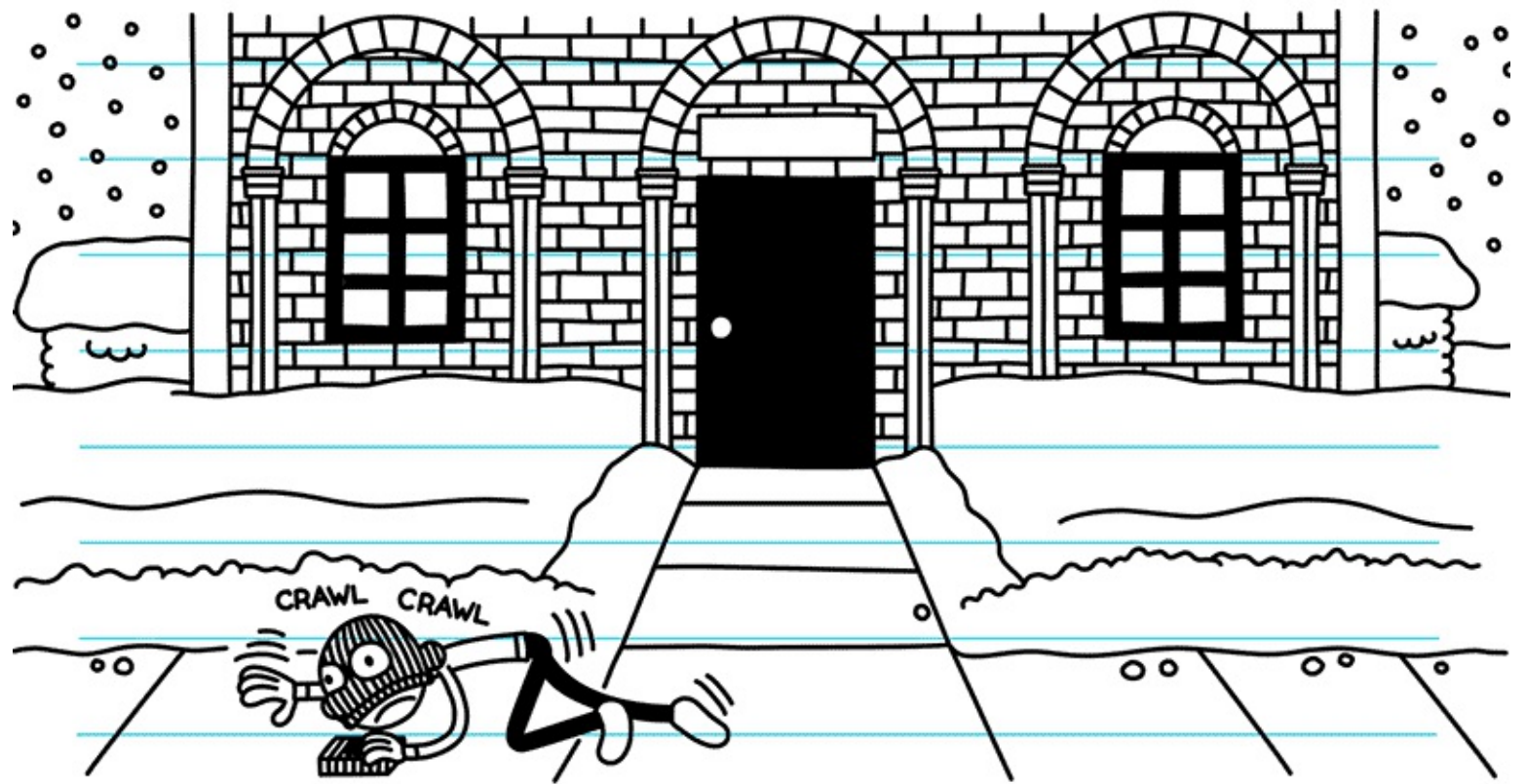
I found a ski mask in our closet and headed out.



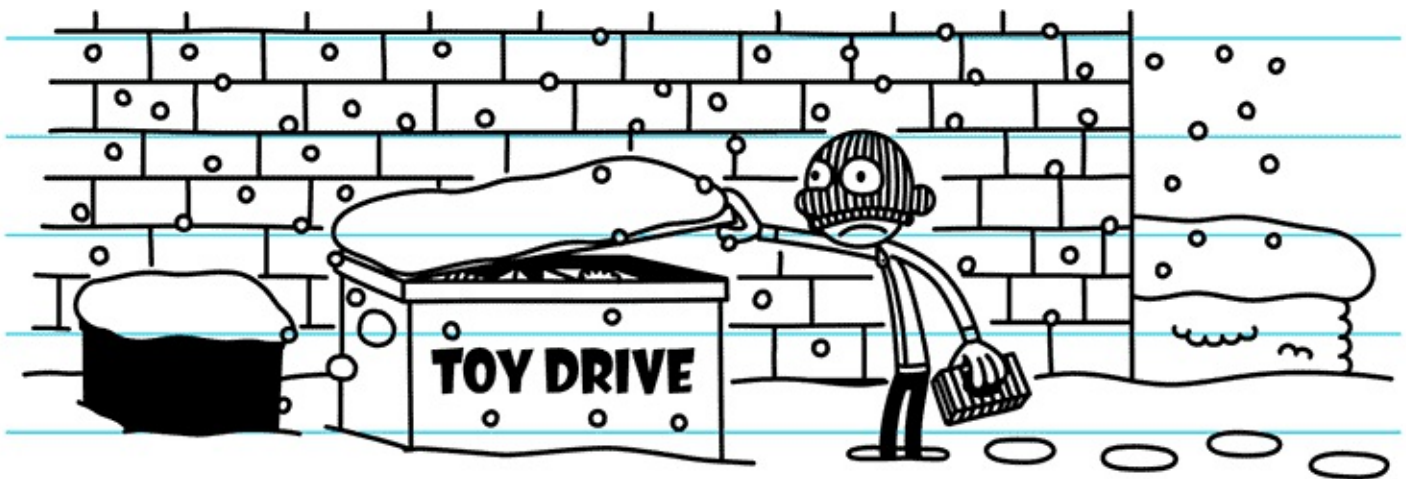
It took forever to get to the police station, and

I crawled the last twenty feet to the bin just to

play it safe.



Once I knew the coast was clear, I stood up and
tossed the present in the bin.



Then I turned around and headed home. But
when I walked by the church, I remembered
something. I had filled out a request for the
Giving Tree, and I asked whoever got my

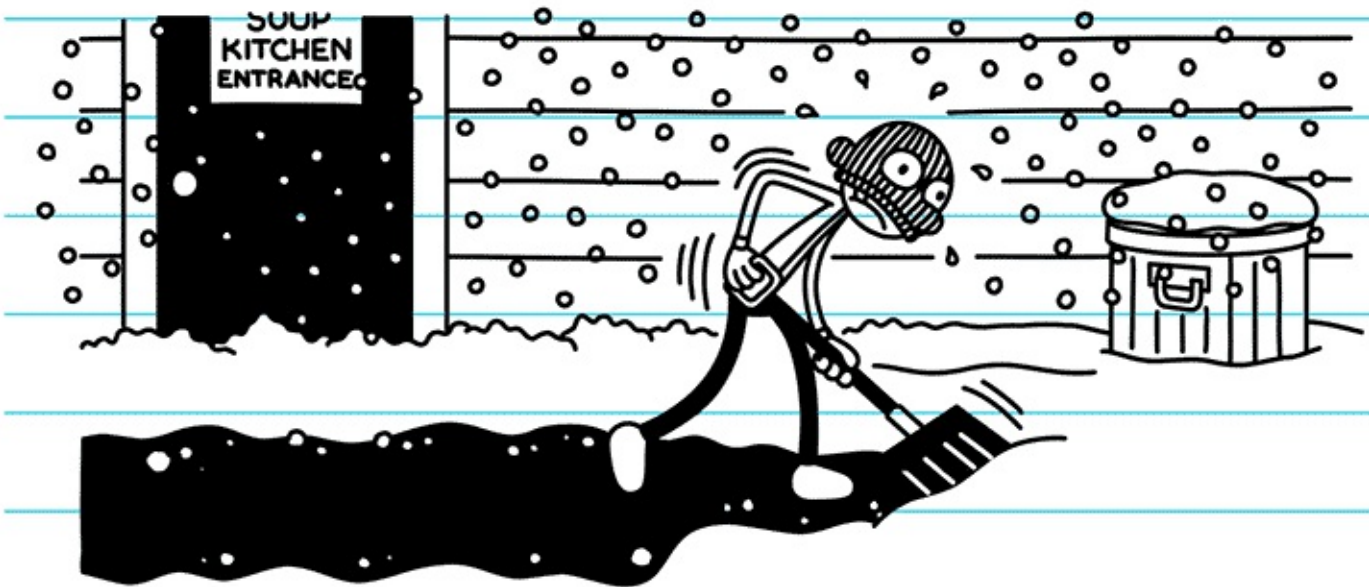
envelope to leave my cash under the recycling bin

behind the church.

The church parking lot was covered in snow.

I was pretty sure the recycling bin was buried somewhere behind the church, but I didn't know the exact spot.

Luckily there was a shovel leaning up against the wall, and I started digging to find the recycling bin. But it wasn't in the place I thought it would be, and I ended up clearing out a HUGE area looking for it.



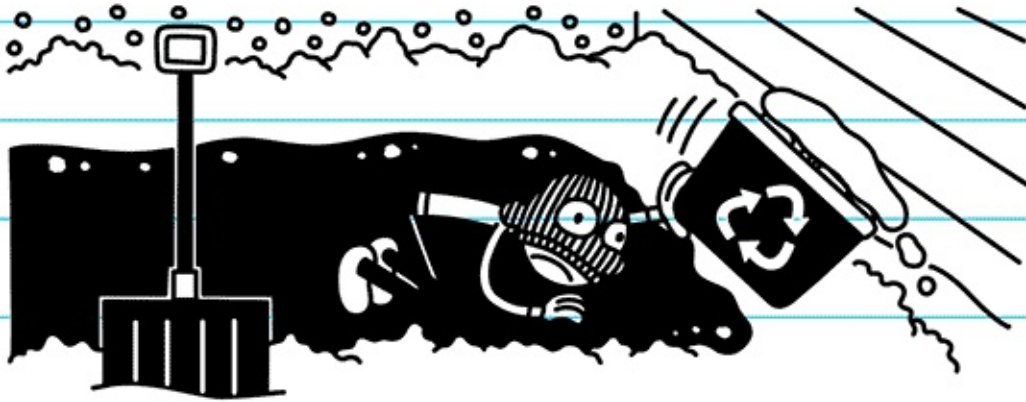
I wish the church had a hose attached to the back of the building, because that would've made the job go a lot easier. I was pretty desperate to find that envelope, because I figured if I was gonna

start my life on the run, I could really use a big

wad of cash to get me by for the first few weeks.

But when I finally found the recycling bin, there

was no envelope beneath it.



I was pretty bummed on the walk back home, and

I forgot all about being careful not to be seen.

So I was totally unprepared when I got to my

front door and a police car pulled in the driveway

right behind me.

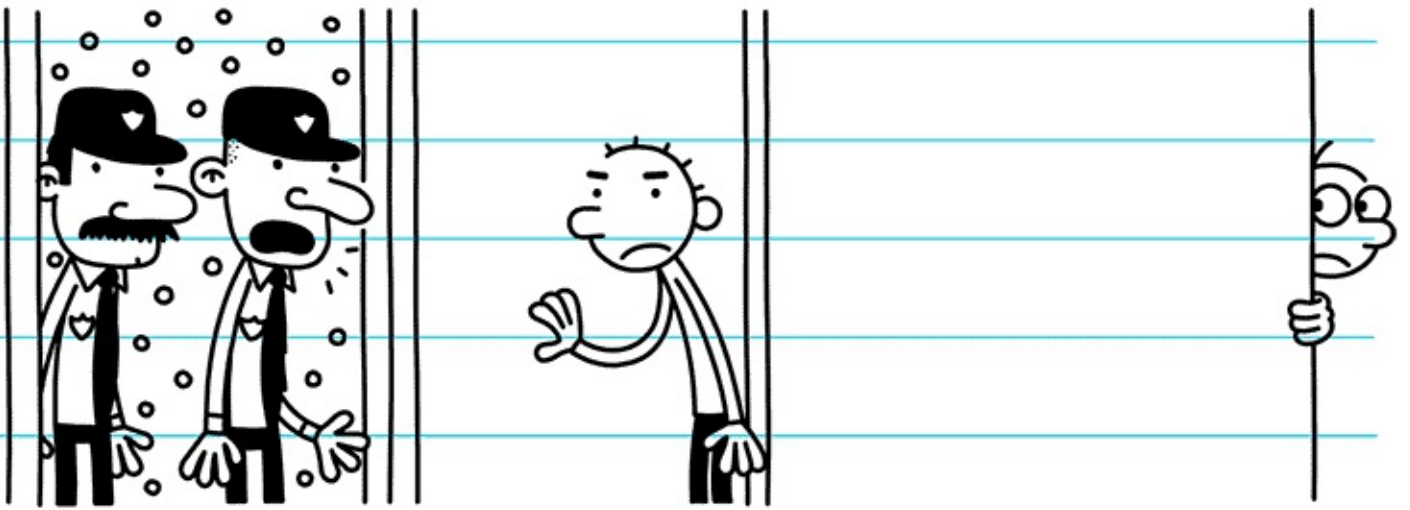


I thought this was it for me, so I ran inside

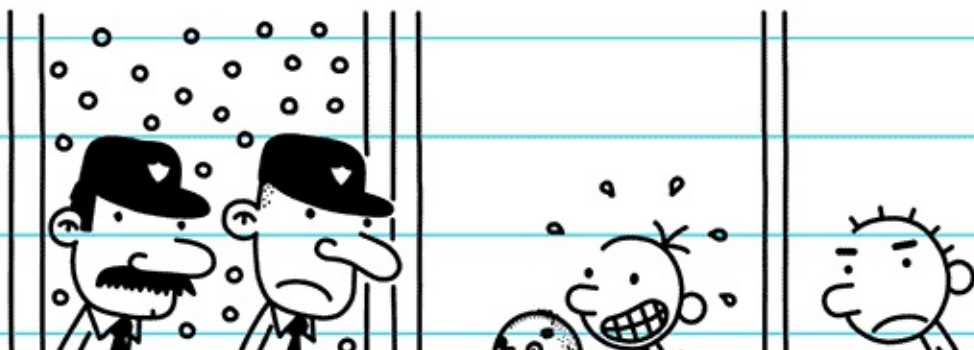
and locked the door. But when the police knocked,

Rodrick let them in.

I thought about jumping out the back window
and making a run for it, but I'm glad I didn't,
because I would've looked like an idiot. It turns
out the police weren't there for me at all. They
were just there to collect last-minute gifts for
the Toy Drive.



I thought they might be bluffing and that they
were just using the Toy Drive as a way of flushing
me out. But I finally worked up the courage to go
to the front door, and I even brought a donation
with me and tried to act casual.





The police said they couldn't accept a used toy as

a donation and that they were only taking new

items in their original packaging. I actually think

they were just a little freaked out by Alfrendo,

because they seemed to leave in a hurry after that.

Christmas

When I woke up this morning, I couldn't believe

it was Christmas and I was in my house with

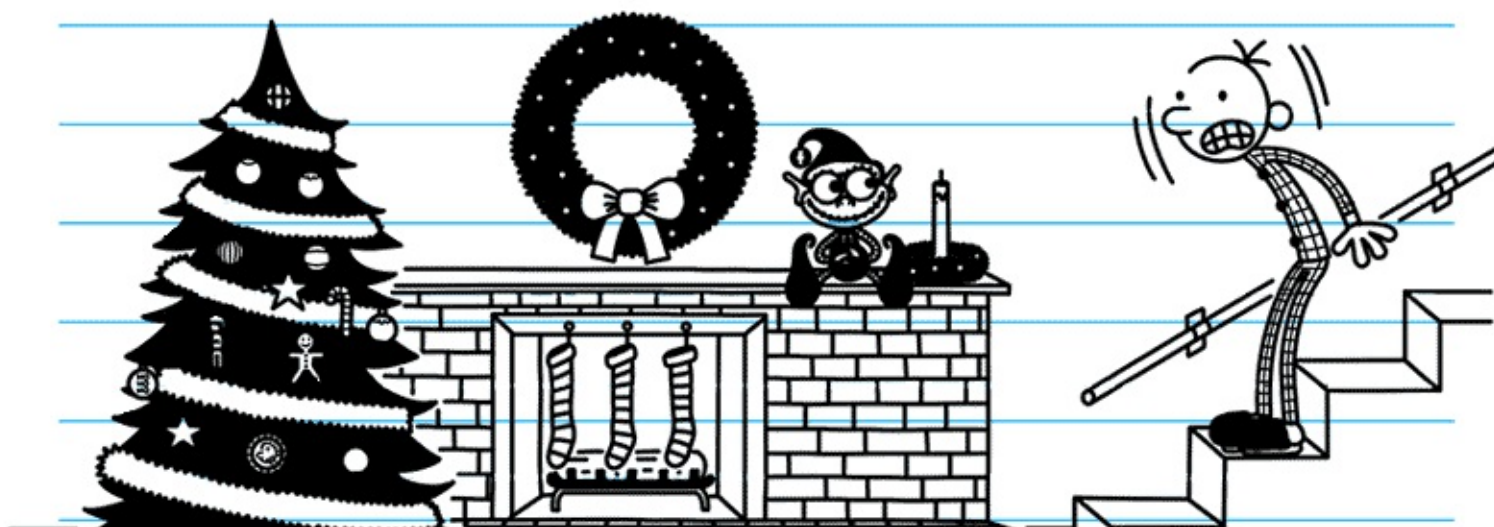
electricity and heat and wasn't on the run from

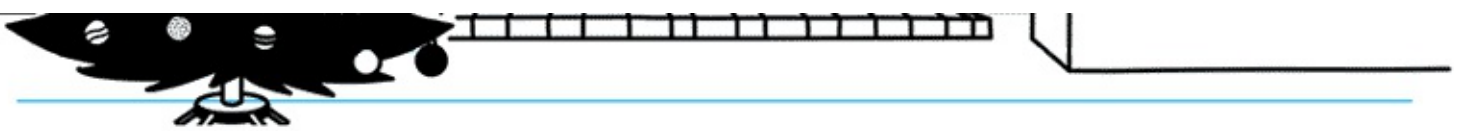
the police.

I went downstairs to see if there was anything

under the tree, but I was totally shocked to find

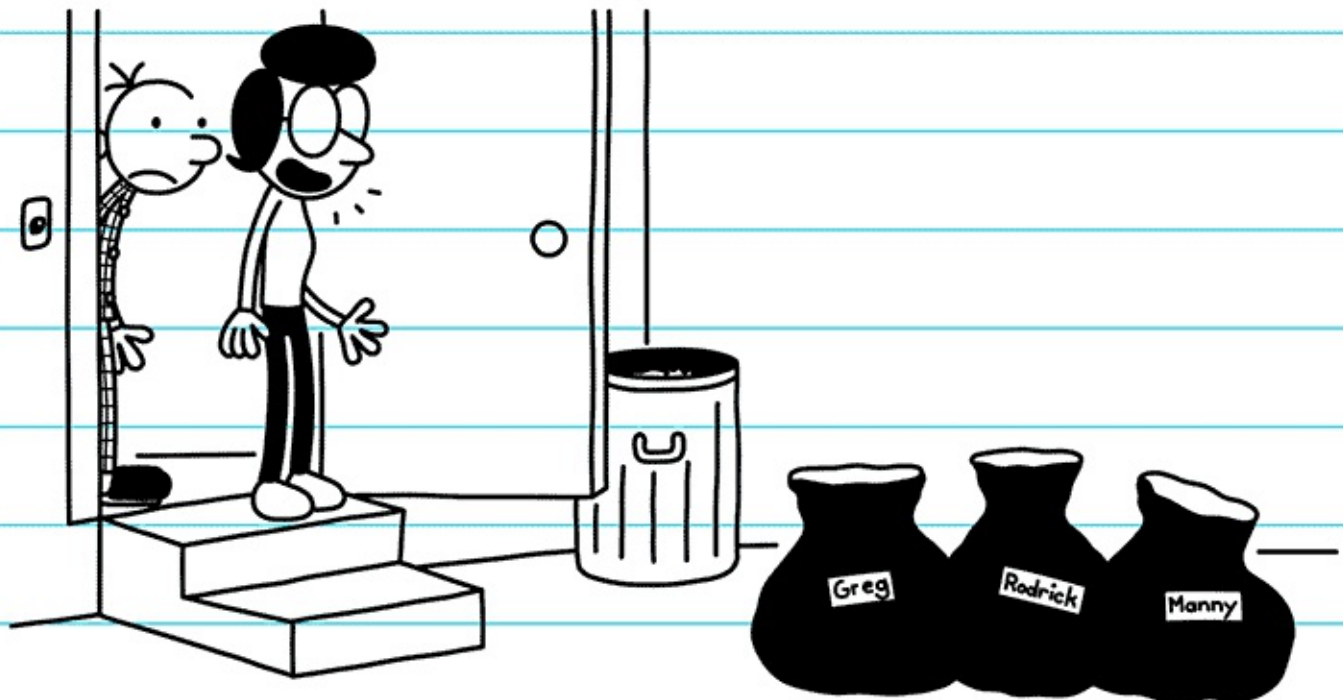
there weren't any gifts at ALL.





At first I thought it was all Santa's Scout's fault and that he'd been running his mouth about the trouble I've gotten myself into lately. But Mom came downstairs a few minutes later and told me Santa DID come last night and that he left our gifts in the garage.

Mom said the snowstorm really messed up Santa's schedule, so he ran out of time to wrap presents and just put them in garbage bags instead. That didn't make a lot of sense to me, but at that point I was relieved to be getting any gifts at all.

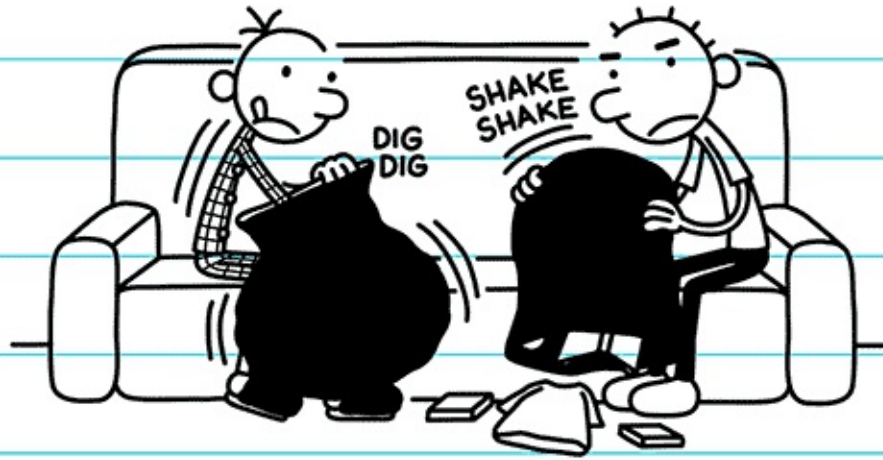


The rest of the family came downstairs, and Mom

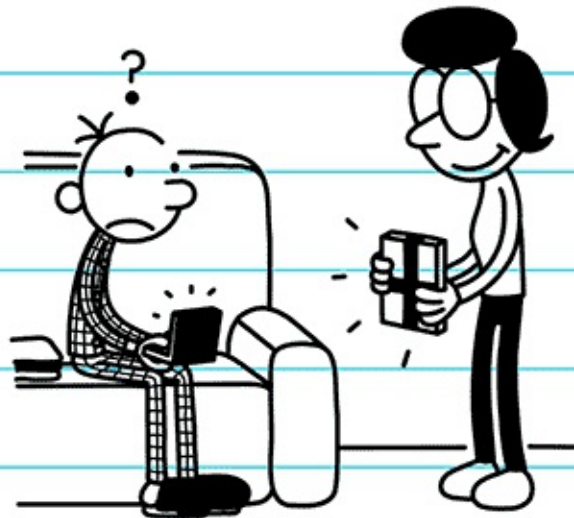
said we could have fun reaching in the trash bags

and guessing what our gifts were.

It wasn't really the same. But I think Dad was pretty happy he didn't have any wrapping paper to clean up.



After I was done with the gifts in the trash bag, Mom handed me a wrapped present that she said was from HER.



It was my "Tower of Druids" graphic novel, so I was a little confused. Mom said she felt bad about forging Kenny Centazzo's autograph, so she found out where he was appearing a few weeks

ago and got my book signed for real this time.

She said she had to wait in line for three hours

but she was happy to do it for me.



But based on what's written in my book now,

I'm guessing Kenny Centazzo didn't hear my

name correctly.

To my biggest
fan, Craig
Kenny Centazzo

Hopefully I can find a rich guy named Craig who's

really into graphic novels so I can sell it to him

for a pile of cash.

Rodrick got a snare drum and some drumsticks,

and Manny got a bunch of toys and a pair of

sneakers. Even though Mom taught Manny how

to tie his shoes yesterday, it looks like he'd

prefer to have her do it for him anyway.



After we were done opening presents, Mom said it

was time to go to church. I told her we couldn't

go because we didn't have any clean clothes to wear,

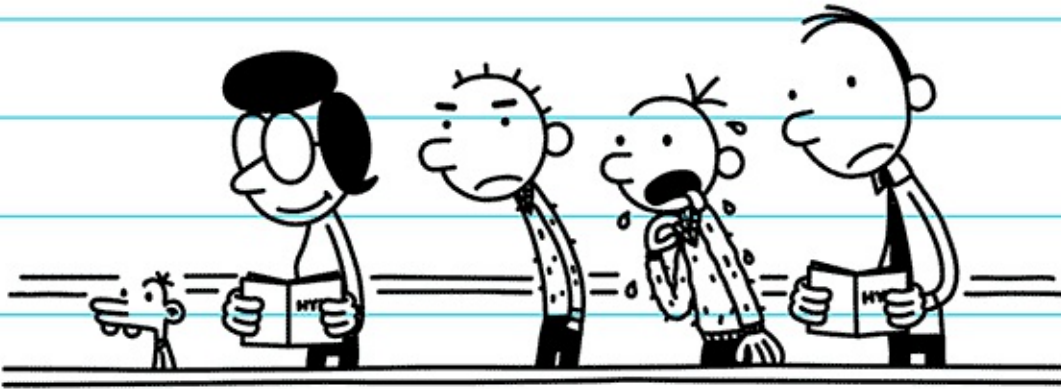
but that's when she pulled out three last gifts.

SANTA GOT ALL
THREE OF YOU BOYS
V-NECK SWEATERS!





I really like to spend Christmas in my pajamas,
and the second you put on dress clothes, it feels
like it's over. So I decided to put my clothes on
OVER my pajamas and pick up where I left off
once we got back home. But it was a mistake to
wear flannel pajamas underneath corduroy pants
and a V-neck sweater for a two-hour service.



After we got home from church, I went upstairs
to change. I actually had puddles of sweat in
my shoes, so I had to empty them out in the
bathroom sink.



When I got downstairs the newspaper was on

the kitchen table, and here's what was on the

front page—

The Daily Herald

Unidentified Do-Gooder Clears the Way



Unselfish Act Allows Soup Kitchen to Open

The blizzard that crippled the town and shut down many basic services threatened to cancel the soup kitchen, which many less fortunate individuals rely on for a hot meal on Christmas. But an unidentified juvenile spent his Christmas Eve shoveling out the church sidewalk to make sure that didn't happen.

See MYSTERY, A2

Well, the newspaper didn't exactly get the story right, but I'm not gonna complain. In fact, that article inspired me to put out a new edition of the "Neighborhood Tattler." And I'll bet we can sell a TON of copies.

The Neighborhood TATTTLER



Masked Hero REVEALED!

The *Tattler* can exclusively report that the mysterious do-gooder who shoveled the church sidewalk on



shoveled the church sidewalk on
Christmas Eve is none other than our
very own editor in chief, Greg Heffley.

"I just wanted to do the right thing,"
said Heffley when asked why he decided
See **HERO**, A2

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to all the teachers and librarians who have put my books in kids' hands.

Thanks to my wonderful extended family for all the laughter and love. We have a really special group, and I feel very fortunate to be a part of your lives.

Thanks to everyone at Abrams for making my dream of becoming a cartoonist come true. Thanks to Charlie Kochman, my passionate and dedicated editor, and Michael Jacobs for taking Wimpy Kid to ever greater heights. Thanks to Jason Wells, Veronica Wasserman, Scott Auerbach, and Chad W. Beckerman. This has been a really fun ride, and it's great to share it with you.

Thanks to Jess Brallier and to the incredibly talented team at Poptropica for your patience and understanding during the craziest of times, and for your dedication to creating great content for kids.

Thanks to Sylvie Rabineau, my terrific agent, for your support, encouragement, and guidance. Thanks to Carla, Elizabeth, and Nick at Fox, and thanks to Nina, Brad, and David for working with me to bring Greg Heffley to life on the big screen.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

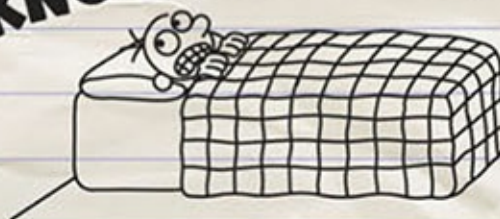
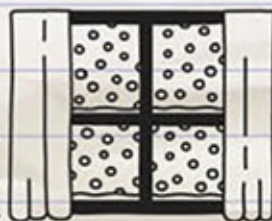
Jeff Kinney is an online game developer and designer, and a #1 *New York Times* bestselling author. Jeff has been named one of *Time* magazine's 100 Most Influential People in the World. Jeff is also the creator of Poptropica.com, which was

world. Jeff is also the creator of Poptropica.com, which was named one of *Time* magazine's 50 Best Websites. 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.

Greg Heffley is in big trouble. School property has been damaged, and Greg is the prime suspect. But the crazy thing is, he's innocent. Or at least sort of.

The authorities are closing in, but when a surprise blizzard hits, the Heffley family is trapped indoors. Greg knows that when the snow melts he's going to have to face the music, but could any punishment be worse than being stuck inside with your family for the holidays?

**KNOCK
KNOCK
KNOCK**



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