

Diary of a Wimpy Kid

DOG DAYS



Book
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Discussion Guide

to accompany Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days by Jeff Kinney
(978-0-141-33197-3, £6.99)

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About the Diary of a Wimpy Kid and this guide.

Jeff Kinney's Diary of a Wimpy Kid series is one of the most popular series of children's books currently on the market. Alongside the books, published in the UK since 2007, there have also been three films, stationery ranges, calendars, board games, apparel and other merchandise. As of 2015, there were over 150 million Diary of a Wimpy Kid books in print worldwide.

The humorous nature of the books provides a familiar context through which universally recognisable childhood issues, both at home and at school, can be addressed without children feeling threatened or awkward. Consequently the books are enjoyed by children, parents and teachers alike. The fictional experiences of Greg Heffley, the main character, mirror events in children's own lives and they therefore find it very easy to relate to the antics in which Greg becomes involved.

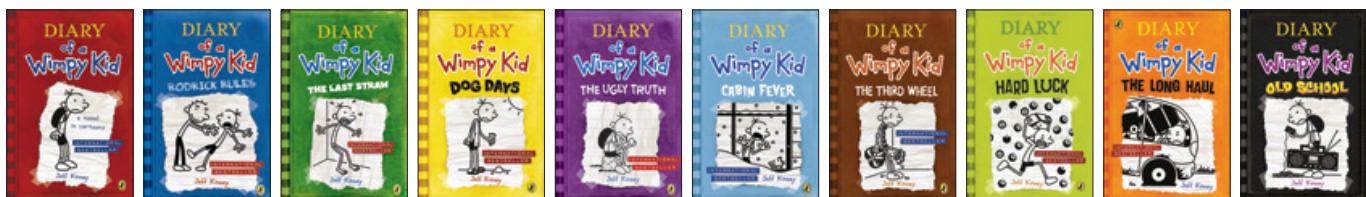
Jeff Kinney's cartoons, which reinforce the text, provide a visual reference, helping the children to understand what they are reading and adding to their enjoyment as they picture what Greg, his friends and family are up to. For many children, especially younger or more reluctant readers, the addition of the cartoons helps to make the books accessible and ensures greater engagement with these hilarious stories.

The Diary of a Wimpy Kid books make excellent starting points for discussion. These guides outline a host of ideas for discussions and other activities that can be used in the classroom, in a reading group or at home.

The activities within the guides are suitable for ages 7-11. They provide teaching ideas to help you deliver the literacy components of the primary curriculum as well as many additional ideas for PSE, Health and Wellbeing, Drama, Art and Technology. There are lots of ideas for discussion sessions, both to help the children further understand the texts they are reading and to probe more deeply into the problem areas with which the characters engage. The guides provide stimulating ideas which will encourage collaborative learning and real engagement with the books.

We hope you will find the ideas useful when planning for your students' activities as our aim is to ensure learning is fun!

MILLIONS OF KIDS ARE READERS BECAUSE OF THESE BOOKS



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Diary of a Wimpy Kid

DOG DAYS

Introduction

Dog Days is the fourth book in the Diary of a Wimpy Kid series which follows the antics, schemes and frustrations of the one and only Greg Heffley. Greg plans the perfect summer of lazy days indoors playing his favourite video games, but Mom and Dad have different ideas.

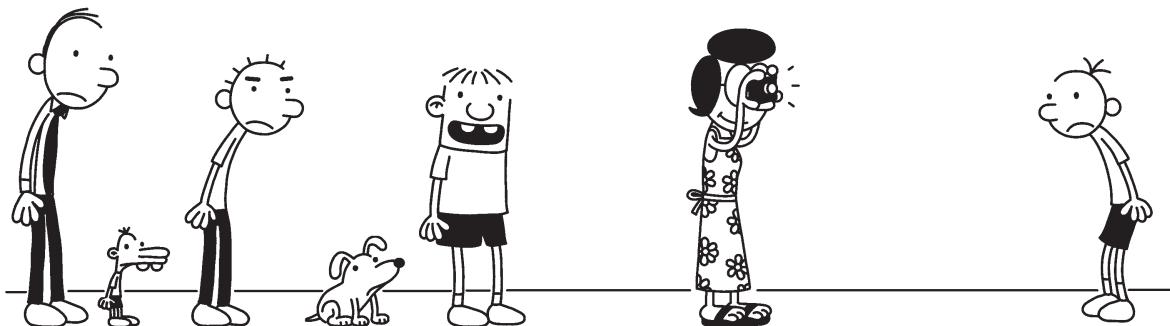
With no family holiday planned this year, it looks like Greg might get his wish. However, Mom soon gets her way and Greg is forced out of the house to spend time with his best friend Rowley at the Country Club pool. Greg believes that the bar at the Country Club is free, so is surprised when Rowley's dad presents Mom with a large bill. Greg decides to get creative to pay the bill, inviting Rowley to be his partner in a VIP lawn service. Inevitably the scheme backfires and Greg ends up in his dad's bad books and falls out with Rowley.

Greg does have a birthday party to look forward to, however, and lets us all in on his birthday wish list, from a dog to a mobile phone and a recliner chair. Unfortunately it's not quite the birthday Greg had wanted, as all the gifts of money from his family are taken by Greg's mom to pay Rowley's dad, and the birthday cake is eaten by his Uncle Joe's dog.

After that, Mom plans a family day to the Slipslide Water Park, but Greg is not impressed. When it starts to rain, everyone has to pack up as the park has to close. On the journey home Mom accidentally gets left behind at a petrol station and Dad has to drive all the way back to collect her.

One day Greg's dad brings home a new addition to the family: a dog, which they decide to call 'Sweetie'. Greg's idea of the ideal pet soon disappears when the dog starts causing trouble. From barking at the TV to stealing Greg's bed and running away from home, the dog, Greg realizes, is a lot more fun as an idea than reality.

Greg and Rowley become friends again and Greg is invited to go on a holiday with Rowley and his parents, Mr and Mrs Jefferson. But Greg's idea of how a holiday should be is quite different from the Jeffersons'. Having to share a bed with Rowley leads to the usual arguments between best friends, then Greg accidentally sends an email to Mr Jefferson's business associates, and even the highly anticipated Cranium Shaker rollercoaster is not all it is cracked up to be. All this and more are in store for Greg as he, once again, gives readers an insight into being a wimpy kid.



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Diary of a Wimpy Kid

DOG DAYS

Understanding the text

- 1. (Page 1)** 'I've always been more of an indoor person.' Ask the children to discuss. Is it good to always play indoors? Do they miss out on anything if they don't play outdoors? Do their parents insist the children play outside? Why do the children think they do that? What are the benefits?
- 2. (Page 9)** Greg's brother, Rodrick, says that you are not a man until you ride the Cranium Shaker. What do the children think Greg's brother meant by this comment? Do they think an action should define how brave they are?
- 3. (Page 13)** Greg likes to stay up all night playing video games and sleep during the day. Do the children think this is acceptable? Why do they think their parents want them to sleep at night and be active during the day?
- 4. (Page 21)** When Greg gets his hair cut at the beauty salon, he finds the best part about it is finding out all of the gossip. Do the children think that gossip is a good thing or a bad thing? What are the dangers of spreading gossip? Read page 81 to the class. What might Greg have thought about gossip when he found out he was being gossiped about too?

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

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

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



Unfortunately, Mom came to pick me up right in the middle of a story about Mr. Peppers and his new wife, who's twenty years younger than him.

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Understanding the text

5. **(Page 23)** Is it OK to look through other people's belongings when they are not around just to find something 'interesting', like when Greg was looking through his brother's room? How would the children feel if someone looked through their things?
6. **(Page 48)** Rowley thought Greg's holiday napkins were really fancy toilet paper so he asked Greg if he was rich, and Greg didn't want to pass up the opportunity to impress him. Ask the children why Greg thought being rich would impress Rowley. Do they think being rich makes a difference to how cool or popular people are?
7. **(Page 73)** For his birthday Greg has a family party. Would the children prefer to have a family party or a party with their friends? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each? Ask the children to think about what their birthday wish would be. Would it be for a present or something else? Greg wishes for a recliner to watch TV!

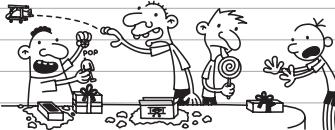
But Mom must've seen the look in my eye, because she passed the basket to the row behind us before I could take what I needed.



Monday

My birthday's coming up this weekend, and it can't get here quick enough for me. This year I'm gonna have a FAMILY party. I'm still really burned up with Rowley for bailing out on our lawn care business, so I don't want him thinking he can come over and eat my birthday cake.

Plus, I've learned my lesson about friend parties. When you have a friend party, all your guests think they have the right to play with your presents.



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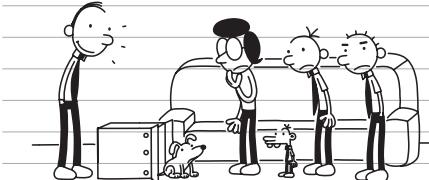
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DOG DAYS

Understanding the text

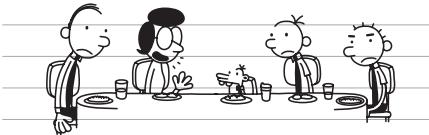
- 8. (Page 82)** Mom thinks Rowley's close relationship with his dad, Mr Jefferson, is 'neat'. Why do parents want their children to do activities with them as part of a family? What might they hope children will get out of it? Ask the children to give examples of when a family activity went well and one when it didn't go so well.
- 9. (Page 98)** We all see famous people on the TV, radio, films, in magazines. Greg says, 'Another thing famous people have to deal with is . . .' What do the children think are the advantages and disadvantages of being famous?
- 10. (Page 118)** When Greg's dad bought a dog for the family, Greg was happy at first. However, he soon started having second thoughts. Ask the children if they think it was fair for Greg's dad to buy a dog for the family without discussing it with them. How would they feel in the same situation? Having a pet is a big responsibility. Have they ever bought or looked after a pet and found that it wasn't as easy as they thought it would be to look after the pet?

Dad put the box on the floor, and believe it or not, there was a DOG in there.



Mom didn't seem too thrilled that Dad went out and bought a dog without checking with her first. I don't think Dad has ever even bought a pair of pants for himself without getting Mom's OK beforehand. But I think she could see that Dad was happy, so she let him keep it.

At dinner Mom said we should come up with a name for the dog.



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- 11. (Page 152)** Greg says, 'See, this is why I always say technology is wasted on grown-ups.' Do the children agree with Greg that grown-ups aren't very good with technology? Why do they think that grown-ups might sometimes have difficulty with technology?

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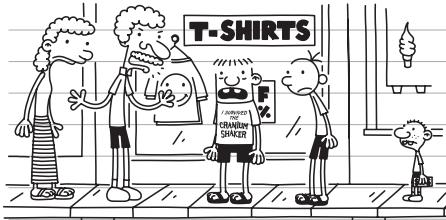
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Understanding the text

- 12. (Page 160)** Compare the Heffley family to the Jefferson family. Which family would the children prefer to live with and why? Ask the class to discuss in pairs the differences between Mr and Mrs Heffley and Mr and Mrs Jefferson. Which family is most like their own?
- 13. (Page 177)** Last year Greg took part in a swimming competition where everyone walked away with first-place ribbons. Greg thought this was a bad idea. Does the class agree with Greg? Should children only experience success if they are the best, or is it the taking part that counts?
- 14. (Page 191)** 'They were ready to call the police to report us missing.' Read this part of *Dog Days* to the class. Why was Mr Jefferson ready to call the police? Why do they think Mr Jefferson was so worried? Ask the class to think about what could go wrong if they wander away from their parents, especially when they are in a place not close to home. What do their families do to stay safe when on a family day out? What rules do they have in place?

But Mr. Jefferson was mad, and I mean REALLY mad. He said he and Mrs. Jefferson had been looking all over for us for the past hour and they were ready to call the police to report us missing.



Then he told us we had to get in the car. But on the way to the parking lot, we walked past the arcade. I asked Mr. Jefferson if we could please have another dollar since we never did get to spend that one he gave us.

But I guess that wasn't the right thing to ask, because he took us back to the car without saying a word.

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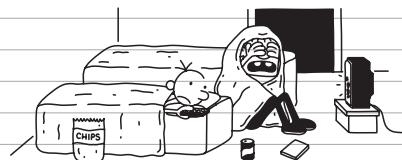
In-depth discussion points

1. (Page 28) Greg and Rowley watch a horror movie. Ask the class to discuss. Why don't grown-ups want children to watch scary movies or films with adult content e.g. war movies? Do the children understand the classification of movies, e.g. PG versus 18 rating, and who classifies films? Why do children want to watch scary movies? For example, is it to be scared, peer pressure and so on? Does the class think that children should be punished if they watch or read something they shouldn't? What would be a fair punishment?

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



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



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In-depth discussion points

2. (Page 33-37) Mom starts the Reading Is Fun Club. Read the extract to the class so they can see what happens. Why do they think that teachers and parents want them to read particular books, e.g. the classics? What might they hope the children will learn by reading them? Do the children have a different idea of what is a 'good read'? For example, football or One Direction magazines. Do they think that children should be allowed to read both? What do they think should classify a book as a 'classic'?

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

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



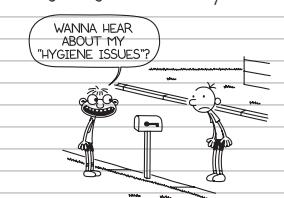
So today was the first meeting of the Reading Is Fun Club. I felt kind of bad for all the boys whose moms made THEM come.

READING IS FUN



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



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

Anyway, Mom told everyone to bring their favorite book to today's meeting so we could pick one and discuss it. All the guys laid their books on the table, and everyone seemed pretty happy with the selection except Mom.

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Mom said the books we brought weren't "real" literature and that we were gonna have to start with the "classics."

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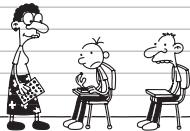
Then she brought out a bunch of books that she must've had since SHE was a kid.



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

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They have a program where if you read a "classic" in your free time, they reward you with a sticker of a hamburger or something like that.



I don't know who they think they're fooling. You can get a sheet of a hundred stickers down at the arts-and-crafts store for fifty cents.

I'm not really sure what makes a book a "classic" to begin with, but I think it has to be at least fifty years old and some person or animal has to die at the end.

Mom said if we didn't like the books she picked out, we could go on a field trip to the library and find something we all agreed on. But that won't work for me.

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In-depth discussion points

3. (Page 89) When Greg's parents buy him a ladybug mobile phone for his birthday, he is not impressed. Read the extract and ask the children why Greg thought it was 'pretty much useless'. Do they think his parents were right to buy him this phone? Why do they think Mom and Dad got him a mobile phone with only two functions? What age does the class think is appropriate for a child to own a mobile phone and why? What are the benefits and disadvantages of owning a mobile phone at a young age?

Then I moved on to the wrapped presents, but there weren't a whole lot of those. The first gift, from Mom and Dad, was small and heavy, which I thought was a good sign. But I was still pretty shocked when I opened it.



When I looked more closely, I found out it wasn't an ordinary cell phone. It was called a "Ladybug." The phone didn't have a keypad on it or anything. It only had two buttons: one to call home and one for emergencies. So it's pretty much useless.



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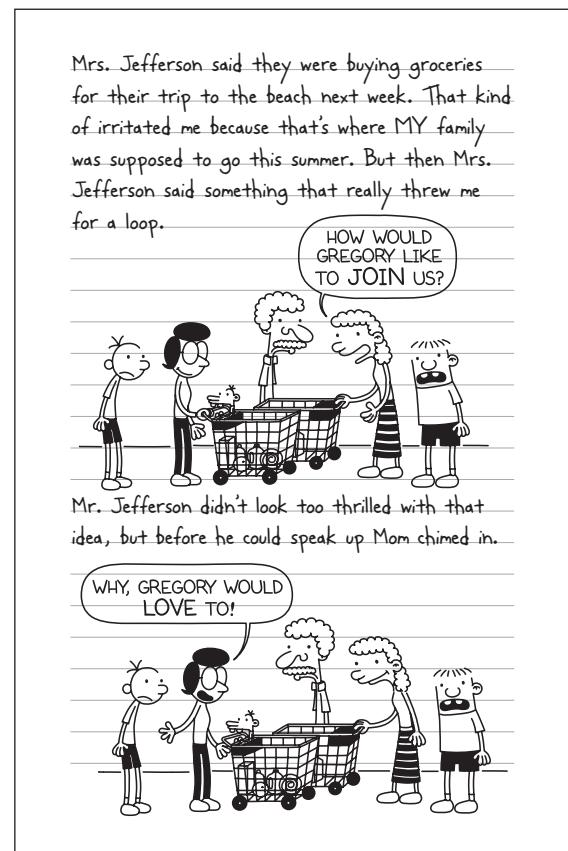
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In-depth discussion points

4. (Page 161) At one point in the book Greg had not spoken to Rowley in over a month and described meeting the Jeffersons at the supermarket as 'kind of awkward'. When Mom said he should go to the beach with the Jeffersons, Greg was annoyed as Rowley was 'the last person' he wanted to spend a week with. Ask the class to discuss in pairs if they think Mom was right to arrange this without asking Greg. Do they think parents should have a say in this matter? Can a friendship be forced? Greg and Rowley get along well sometimes and sometimes they don't. Is this normal for a friendship? Why (or why not)?



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DOG DAYS

Main project

GREG AND ROWLEY'S

BUSINESS VENTURE!

Objective:

In groups, create a business idea.

Curriculum areas:

Literacy, expressive arts, ICT, mathematics.

Starting point:

Read **pages 49-51** to the class.

I wasn't gonna pass up the opportunity to impress him.



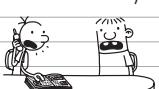
Anyway, I'm NOT rich, and that's the problem. I tried to figure out a way a kid my age could get his hands on some cash, and then it hit me: We could start a lawn care service.

I'm not talking about some average, run-of-the-mill lawn care service, either. I'm talking about a company that takes lawn care to the next level. We decided to name our company the V.I.P. Lawn Service.

We called up the Yellow Pages people and told them we wanted to place an ad in their book. And not just one of those tiny little text ads, but a really big one with full color that takes up two whole pages.

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But get this: The Yellow Pages people told us it was gonna cost us a few thousand bucks to put our ad in their book.



I told them that didn't make a lot of sense to me, because how's someone supposed to pay for an ad if they haven't even earned any money yet?

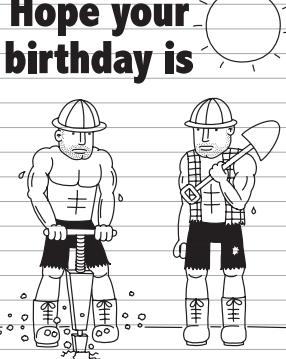
Me and Rowley realized we were gonna have to do this a different way, and make our OWN ads.

I figured we could just make flyers and put them in every mailbox in our neighborhood. All we needed was some clip art to get us started.

So we went down to the corner store and bought one of those cards women get each other on their birthdays.

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Hope your birthday is



HOT, HOT, HOT!

Then we scanned it into Rowley's computer and pasted pictures of OUR heads onto the bodies from the card.

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Explain that Greg and Rowley needed to make money fast. Ask the class if they think that Greg and Rowley planned their business idea properly. What mistakes did they make? What would the children have done differently to make the business a success?

Project outline:

Split the children into groups and give them the following scenario:

Imagine your class has been given the challenge to raise funds for a fantastic school trip.

Have the children discuss within each group what type of business children of their age would be able to set up to help raise the money. They should make a list of the things they would need to do to organize and create their business. Have them allocate each group member with a business role and divide these tasks between each member. They must also agree timescales to complete each task. Use the worksheets provided to help keep them on track.

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Main project

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BUSINESS VENTURE!

Main Activities

1. Children should brainstorm different business options. Remind them to be realistic with their business plans.

Some starting questions are:

- What product/service would they sell?
- Who is their target market?
- What input costs would be needed to get started? Devise a risk assessment of the business plan.
- What would they charge for the goods/service (i.e. the break-even point)?
- How would they market their business?

Possible business ventures: tuck shop, healthy fruit sale, badges, birthday/Christmas card design and sale, seasonal ideas, etc.

2. Groups should decide on their business idea and create a formal business plan to present to you, the teacher, for approval.
3. Groups need to allocate specific roles within their business. All the tasks identified within the business plan will be allocated to group members. In any business there will be a managing director, who will oversee the business and ensure all staff members perform their tasks to a high standard and within the timescale.
4. Re-examine Greg and Rowley's flyer on **pages 50-51** (below) and discuss the good and bad aspects of this design. How would the group market their product or service? What do they think are the key features of an advert that would persuade people to use their business?



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Main project

GREG AND ROWLEY'S

BUSINESS VENTURE!

5. Devise a marketing campaign that would get people interested in the business.

- Design and create posters/flyers. Remember to make them eye-catching and memorable, using a catchy headline and graphics.
- Ask children to think of other marketing techniques used that would generate publicity. Ask children to think of current radio jingles that are memorable and catchy. Suggest children create a radio advert using a thirty-second jingle that the public would remember.
- Children could design a storyboard to create a one-minute TV advert. This could be filmed and viewed by the whole class.

6. Most businesses will have a product launch day. How would they plan for this important event? What would they need? Who would be involved? How would they make theirs stand out from the other businesses?

7. Launch day! Hold a business launch day for all the groups to present their ideas to the rest of the class, and other classes and/or year groups, if appropriate.

8. It's time to report back to the teacher. Ask the groups to prepare a written report (up to 500 words) on their business performance. Discuss as a group what their report should include. How successful was it and how did people react to the product/service? Did they encounter any difficulties? What was their favourite part of creating their business? What was the most challenging task?



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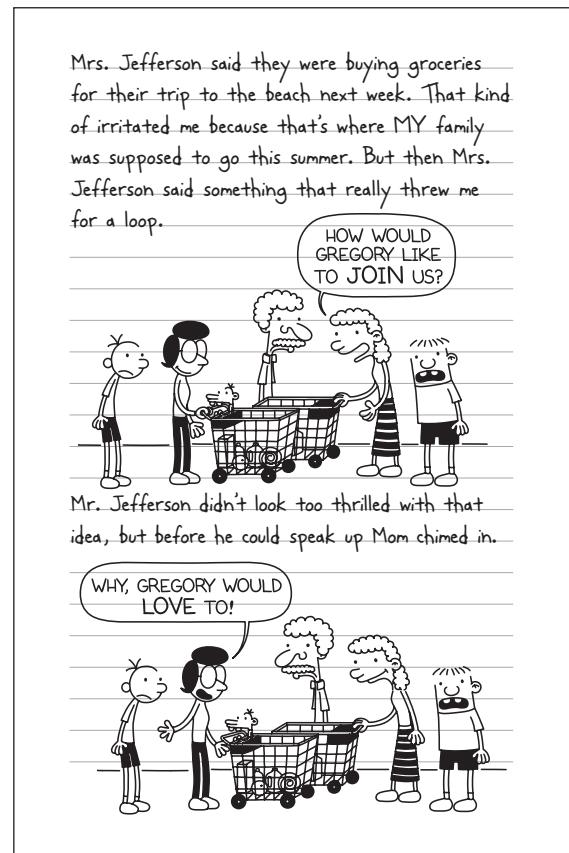
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Other Project Ideas

- 1. (Page 10)** Greg and his dad are united in their dislike of the L'il Cutie cartoons. Have the children split into groups and create their own L'il Cutie-style cartoons. Make up some subject headings as a guide, e.g. sports, birthdays and grandparents. Ask the children to compare each other's cartoons and select a winner for each category.



- 2. (Page 15)** Ask the children to create their own family history timeline with ten photos of important points in their lives. Encourage them to write a paragraph on each to explain why, what happened etc.

- 3. (Page 18) Tabloid headlines.** As a starting point, ask the children whether they know the differences between tabloid and broadsheet newspapers, e.g. the Sun and The Times? Is everything we read in newspapers true? Make them aware that tabloids tend to be more unreliable and biased than broadsheets. You might want to show examples. Why does Mom not approve of Greg or his gran reading tabloids? Now ask the children to split into groups to create a tabloid headline. Encourage them to think of a pun. Again, you might like to use examples from recent newspapers.

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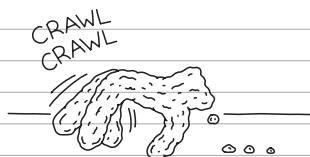
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Other Project Ideas

4. (Page 29) Split the class into groups and have each group create a scary story and then retell their story, like Greg did for Rowley. They could create a storyboard as if it were for a real film, or they could draw the story. The children could also create sound effects to play when retelling their story.

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



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

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

I turned the TV off, and then I described the whole movie to Rowley from beginning to end.



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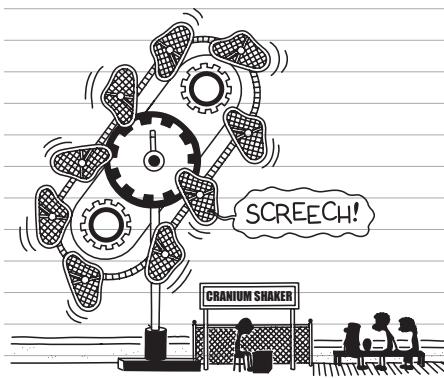
DOG DAYS

Other Activity Ideas

- 1. (Page 32)** Why do children and parents have different ideas on what 'real' entertainment is? Children should create a questionnaire for their parents and grandparents, asking them what they did as children. They should discuss the results with a partner and compare the things children do for fun now with what their parents and grandparents used to do.
- 2. (Page 80)** For his birthday, Greg wanted his own recliner that had a variety of features, such as a neck massager and adjustable firmness. Ask the class to design their own dream chair. What special features would it include? They should draw and label their designs.
- 3. (Page 164)** Rowley's mother is one of those parents that tries to sneak healthy foods into their children's snacks. Ask the class to come up with their own tasty and healthy snack ideas that they think Greg might enjoy.
- 4. (Page 182)** The Cranium Shaker is the really awesome ride at the beach that Greg is looking forward to going on. Get children to design their own Cranium Shaker-style ride. How much would a ride cost? Is there a height restriction? Are there any health and safety notices they would display? Remember, it has to be scary and exciting!

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

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



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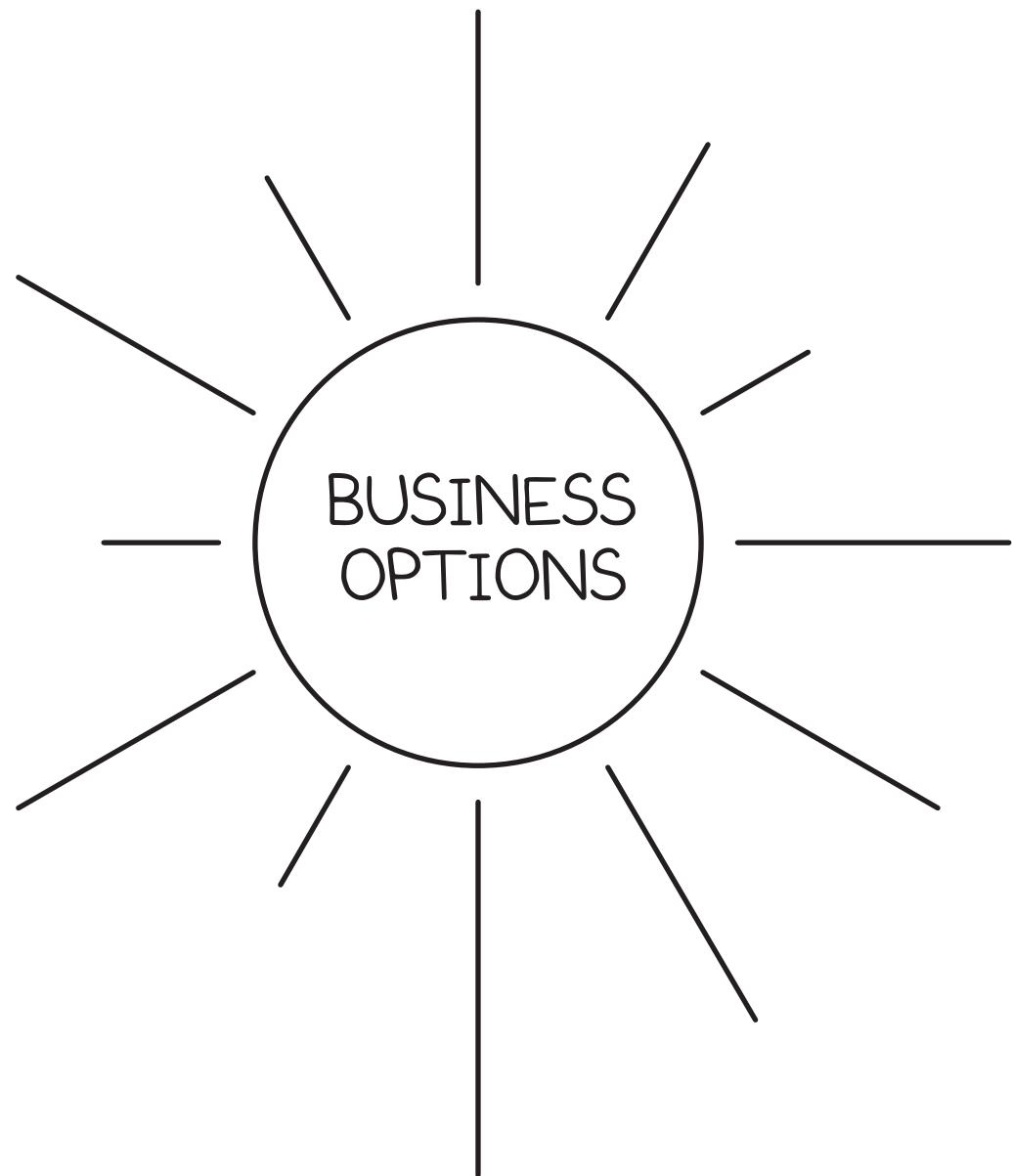


Diary of a Wimpy Kid

DOG DAYS

Brainstorm of Ideas

MAIN
PROJECT
WORKSHEET
1.



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Diary of a Wimpy Kid

DOG DAYS

Our Business Plan

MAIN PROJECT WORKSHEET 2.

Our business is called



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Diary of a Wimpy Kid

DOG DAYS

Who will do what?

MAIN
PROJECT
WORKSHEET
3.

Name:

Role:

Tasks:

Deadline:

Name:

Role:

Tasks:

Deadline:

Name:

Role:

Tasks:

Deadline:

Name:

Role:

Tasks:

Deadline:

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Diary of a Wimpy Kid

DOG DAYS

Marketing Campaign Ideas

MAIN
PROJECT
WORKSHEET
4.

Print (posters/flyers)

Radio and TV





Diary of a Wimpy Kid

DOG DAYS

Marketing Campaign Ideas

MAIN PROJECT WORKSHEET 5.

Product Launch Day Planning

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DOG DAYS

Marketing Campaign Ideas

MAIN PROJECT WORKSHEET 5.

Product Launch Day Planning (cont.)



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Diary of a Wimpy Kid

DOG DAYS

Marketing Campaign Ideas

MAIN PROJECT WORKSHEET 6.

Performance Report write-up

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Diary of a Wimpy Kid

DOC DAYS

Marketing Campaign Ideas

MAIN PROJECT WORKSHEET **6.**

Performance Report write-up (cont.)

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