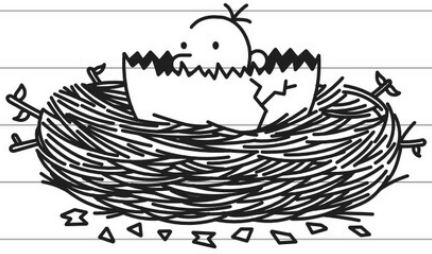
DIARY of a Wimpy Kid

FIGHT OR FLIGHT

OVER 300 MILLION BOOKS SOLD



Jeff Kinney



THE *DIARY OF A WIMPY KID* SERIES

1 *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*
2 *Rodrick Rules*
3 *The Last Straw*
4 *Dog Days*
5 *The Ugly Truth*
6 *Cabin Fever*
7 *The Third Wheel*
8 *Hard Luck*
9 *The Long Haul*
10 *Old School*
11 *Double Down*
12 *The Getaway*
13 *The Meltdown*
14 *Wrecking Ball*
15 *The Deep End*
16 *Big Shot*
17 *Diper Överlöde*
18 *No Brainer*
19 *Hot Mess*
20 *Partypooper*
21 *Fight or Flight*

MORE FROM THE *WIMPY* WORLD

Diary of an Awesome Friendly Kid: Rowley Jefferson's Journal

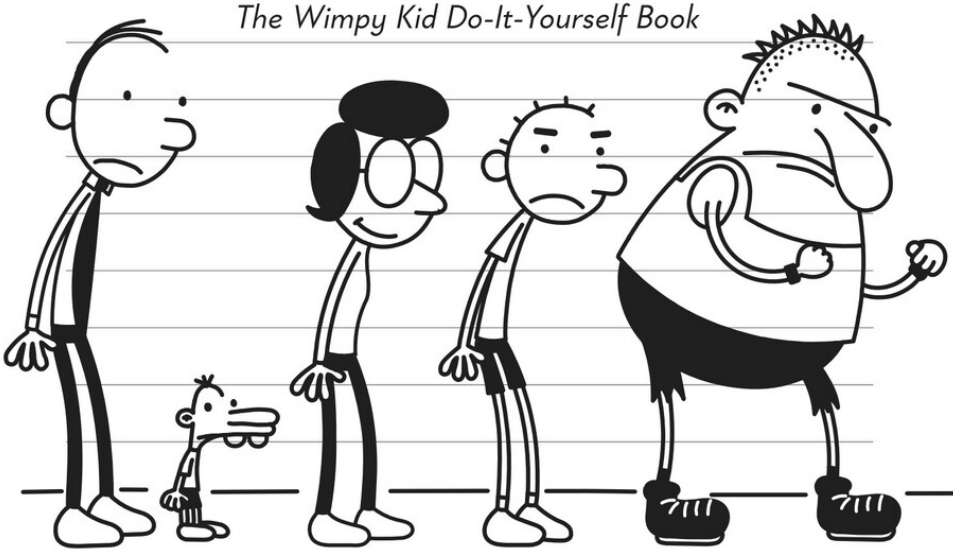
Rowley Jefferson's Awesome Friendly Adventure

Rowley Jefferson's Awesome Friendly Spooky Stories 1 + 2

The Wimpy Kid Movie Diary

The Wimpy Kid Movie Diary: The Next Chapter

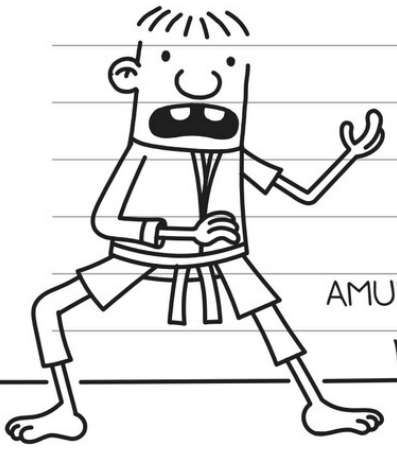
The Wimpy Kid Do-It-Yourself Book



DIARY of a Wimpy Kid

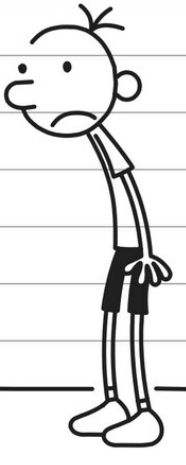
FIGHT OR FLIGHT

by Jeff Kinney





AMULET BOOKS
New York



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

Cataloging-in-Publication Data has been applied for and may be obtained from the Library of Congress.

ISBN 978-1-4197-8270-1

Wimpy Kid text and illustrations copyright © 2026 Wimpy Kid, Inc.
DIARY OF A WIMPY KID®, WIMPY KID™, the Greg Heffley design™ and the design of the book's cover are trademarks and trade dress of Wimpy Kid, Inc.
All rights reserved.

Book design by Jeff Kinney
Cover design by Jeff Kinney with Pamela Notarantonio and Lora Grisafi

Published in 2026 by Amulet Books, an imprint of ABRAMS. All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission from the publisher. Please note that no part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner for the purpose of training artificial intelligence technologies or systems.

Printed and bound in U.S.A.
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Amulet Books are available at special discounts when purchased in quantity for premiums and promotions as well as fundraising or educational use. Special editions can also be created to specification. For details, contact sales@abramsbooks.com or the address below.

Amulet Books® is a registered trademark of Harry N. Abrams, Inc.



ABRAMS The Art of Books
195 Broadway, New York, NY 10007
abramsbooks.com

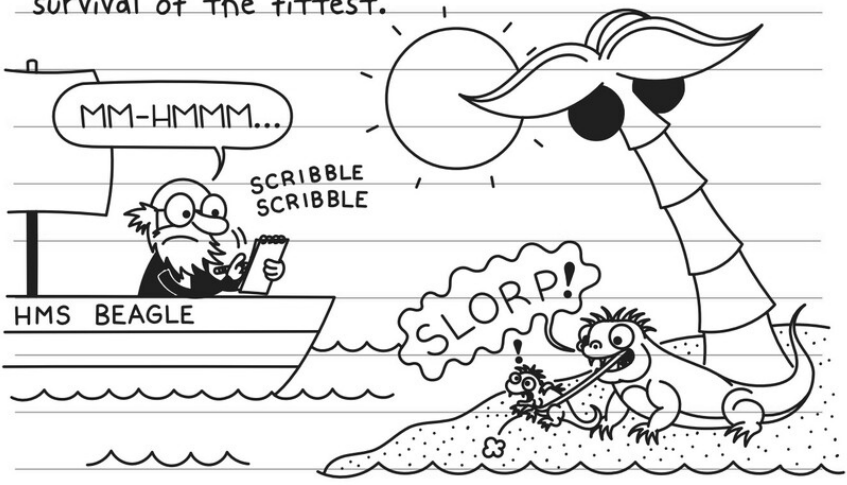
ABRAMS is represented in Europe by Media Participations,
57 rue Gaston Tessier, 75166 Paris, France.
media-participations.com

TO GRAYSON

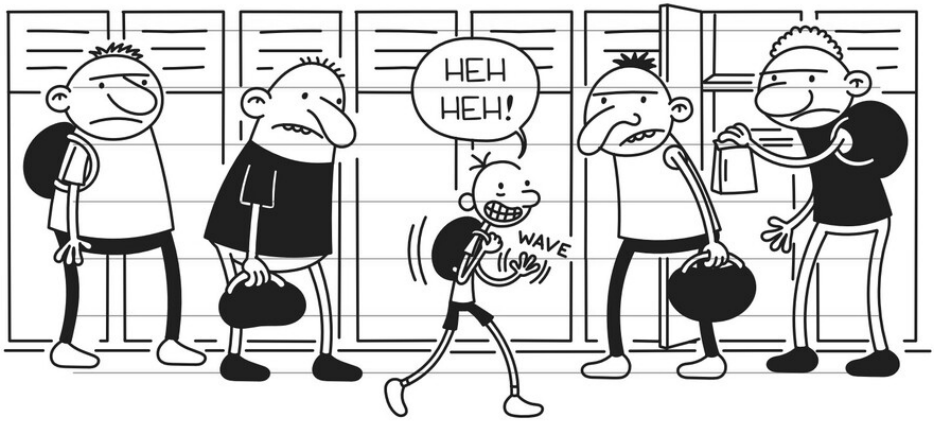
SEPTEMBER

Thursday

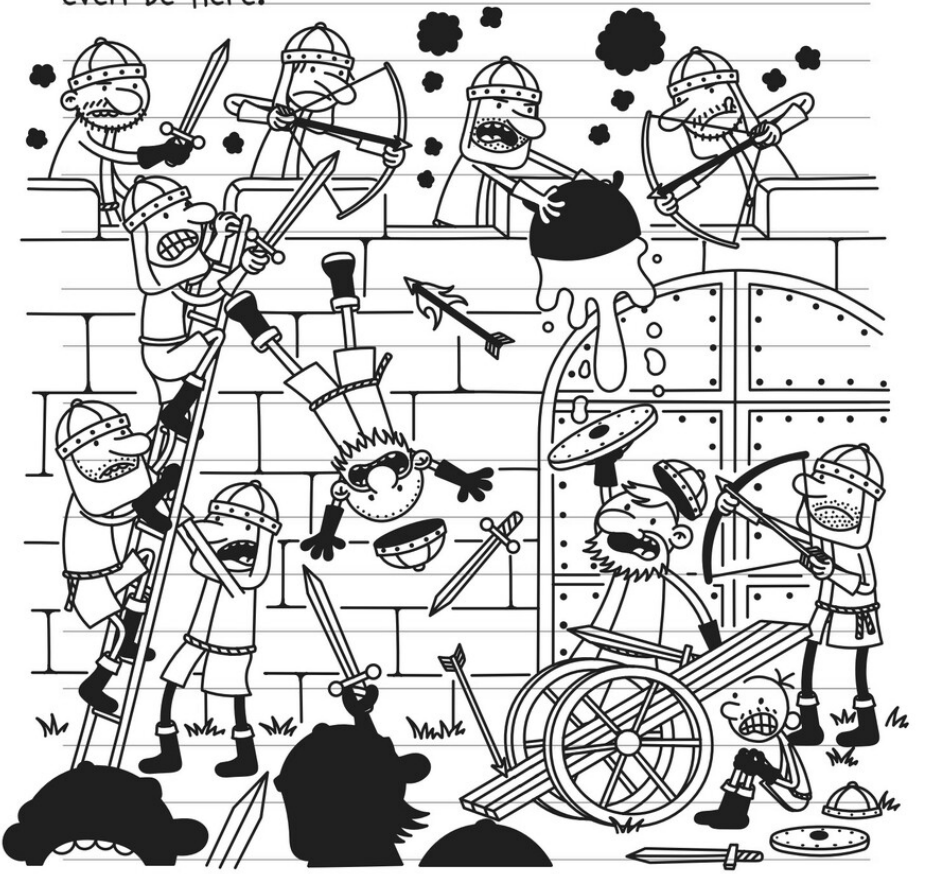
In school they taught us about this scientist who studied animals that lived on some remote islands. That's where he came up with the theory of "survival of the fittest."



Well, I'm sure this Charles Darwin guy was smart, but his idea doesn't explain a person like ME.

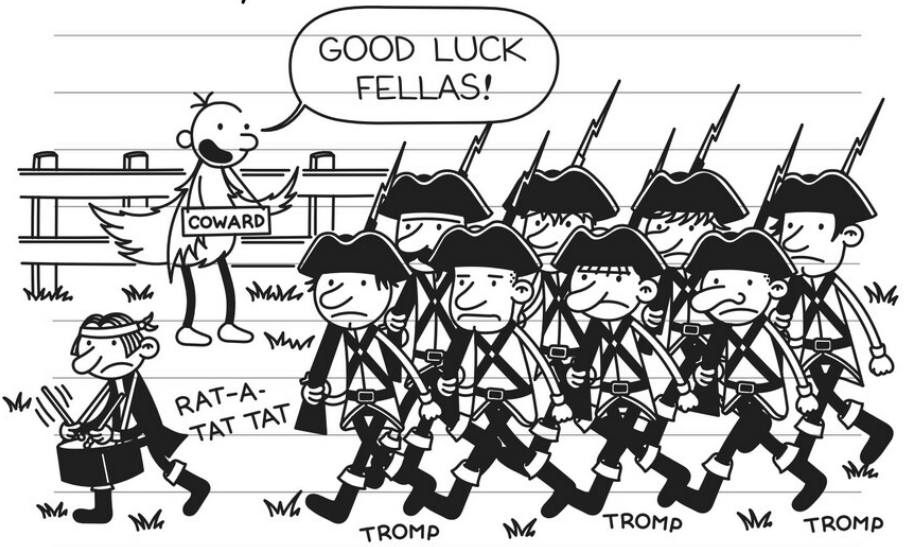


It's true that the strong survive, but so do the ones who are smart enough to not get themselves killed. And I thank my ancestors for making good choices, because if they didn't, I wouldn't even be here.

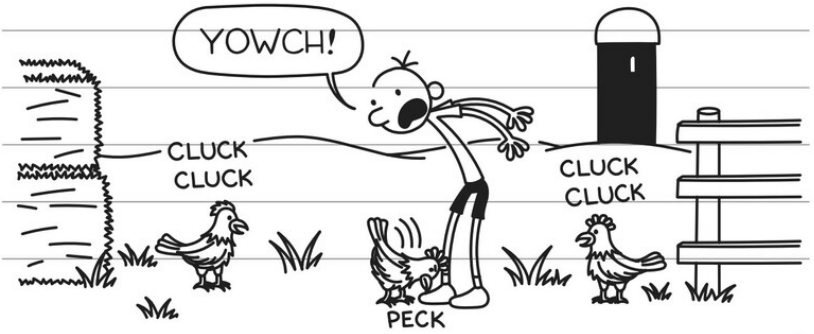


I read that a few hundred years ago, if you were too scared to go into battle, they'd dip you in hot tar and cover you in feathers as punishment.

And even though I'm sure it would be a little uncomfortable, it would be better than getting taken out by a cannonball.



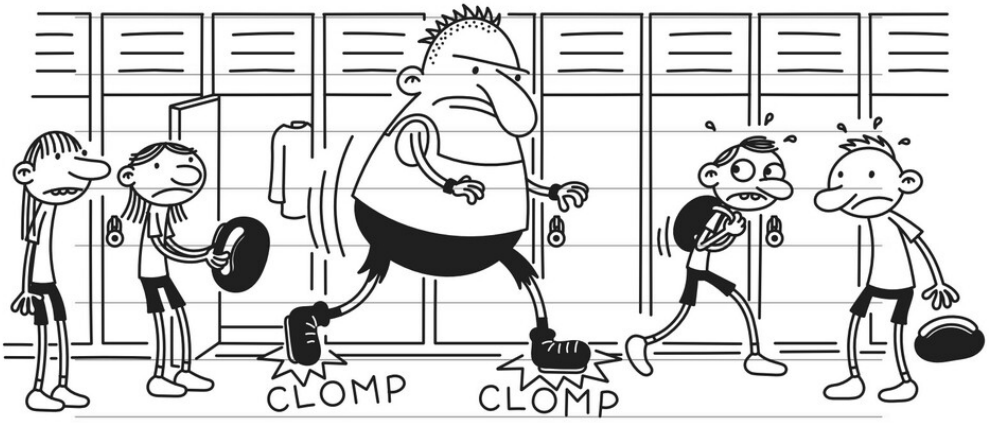
I guess that makes me a chicken, but I'm OK with it. I don't know how chickens got a reputation for being scared in the first place, though, because I've run into some pretty aggressive ones in my life.



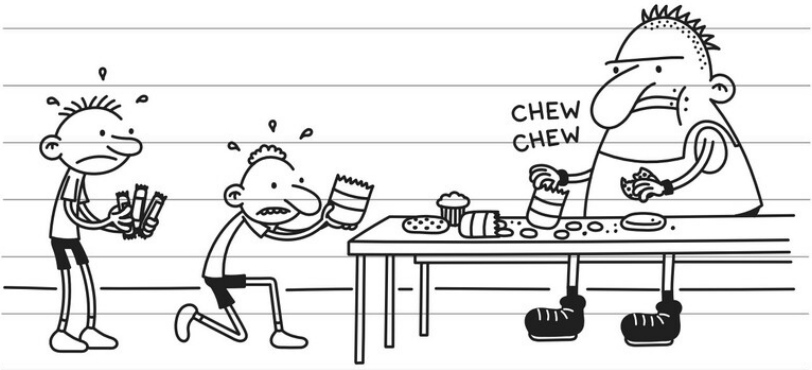
They say chickens have a "pecking order," where the big ones pick on the little ones. And that's exactly how it is at my middle school.



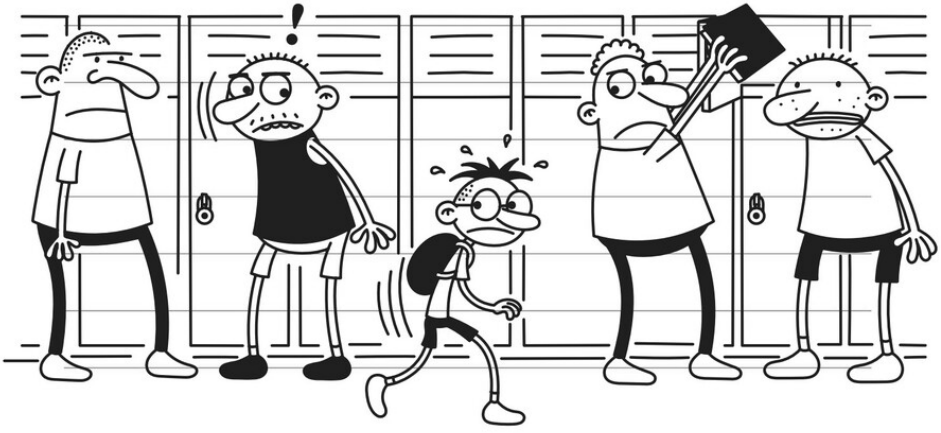
The kid who's at the top of the pecking order is Zander Wrexham, who everyone calls Z-Rex. He's gotten held back so many times that he's supposed to be a high school junior by now.



Zander is so tough that he doesn't even need to do any bullying. When he sits down in the cafeteria, kids hand over their snacks in advance.



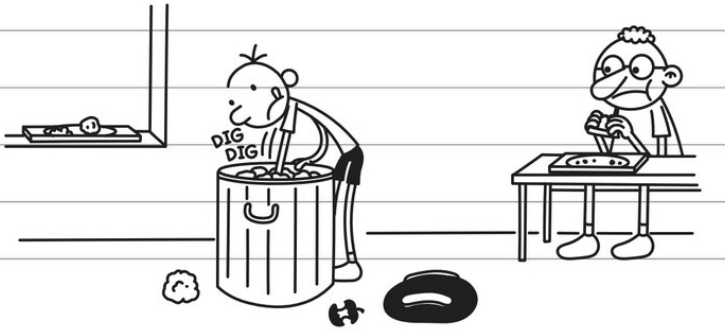
I'm somewhere near the bottom of the pecking order, but at least I'm not at the ACTUAL bottom. That spot belongs to Jarrett Jollifee, who everyone calls the Bully Magnet. There's just something about Jarrett that attracts bullies to him like flies to honey.



I guess he must give off some kind of scent or pheromone. Whatever it is, somebody should study it, because whoever figures out what's in that kid's DNA could package it and turn it into something useful.



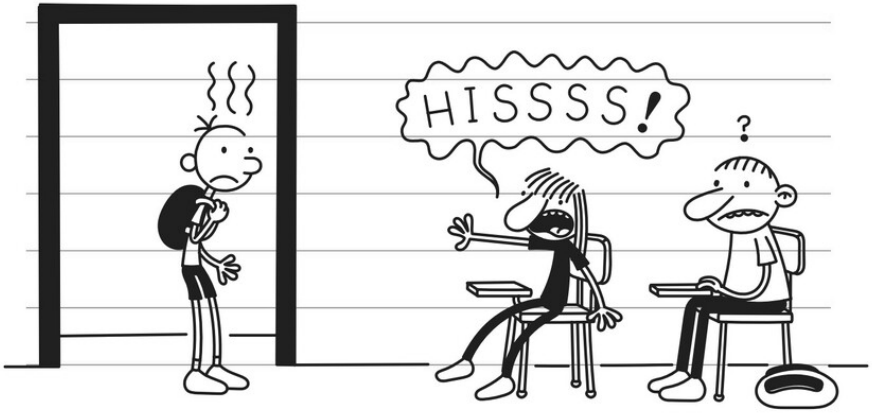
In fact, I've been trying to get a saliva sample from Jarrett. But it's no fun going through the trash in the cafeteria to find one of his used popsicle sticks.



My brother Rodrick says that bullies can SMELL fear, so I've been loading up on my dad's cologne every morning to cover whatever chemicals my body's producing.

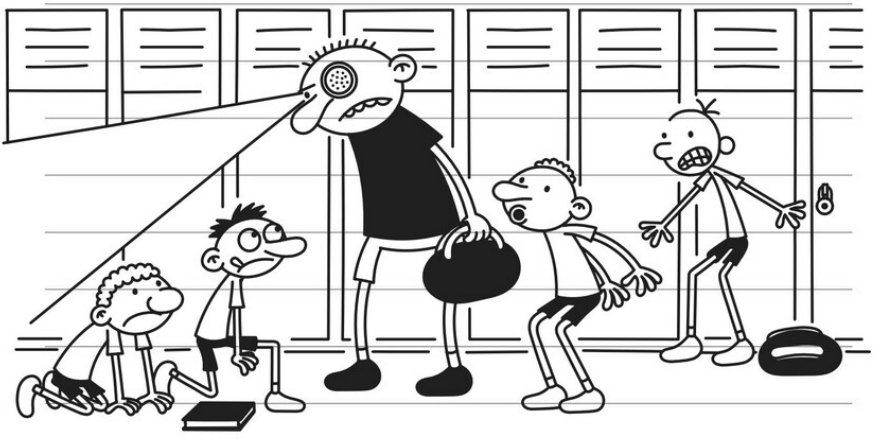


If there's a smell that attracts bullies, there must be something that drives them AWAY, and I've been doing a little experimenting. This morning I rubbed garlic on my clothes, which didn't seem to have any effect on the bullies. But it DID bother Evelyn Trimble, who everyone says is a vampire.



The way I see it, middle school is like a game where the goal each day is to not be "it." So you never wanna call too much attention to yourself.

I do my best not to make eye contact with any bullies when I'm in the hallway, which isn't always easy. But luckily, Harris Cooper got an eye infection and has to wear a patch, which takes care of half the problem.

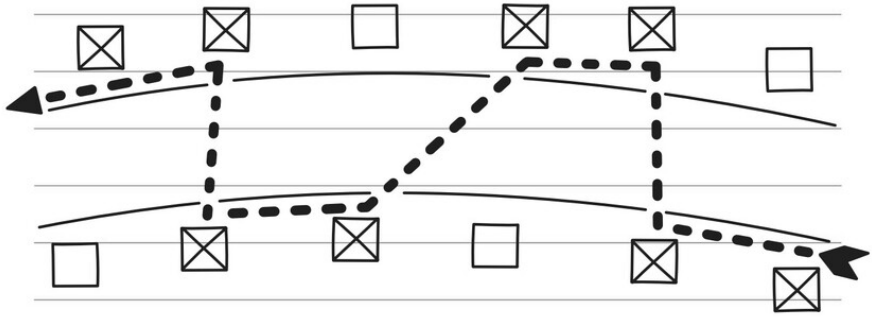


The time that's the most dangerous is the walk home from school, where it's easy to get singled out. But I've come up with a few tricks to keep bullies at arm's length.

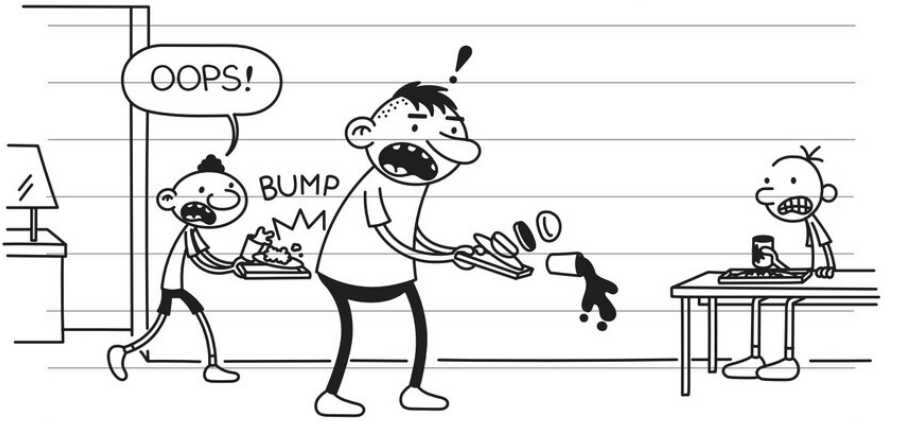
Recently, I've been taking my mom's old cell phone with me. Because I've found out nobody bothers you if it looks like you're on an important call.



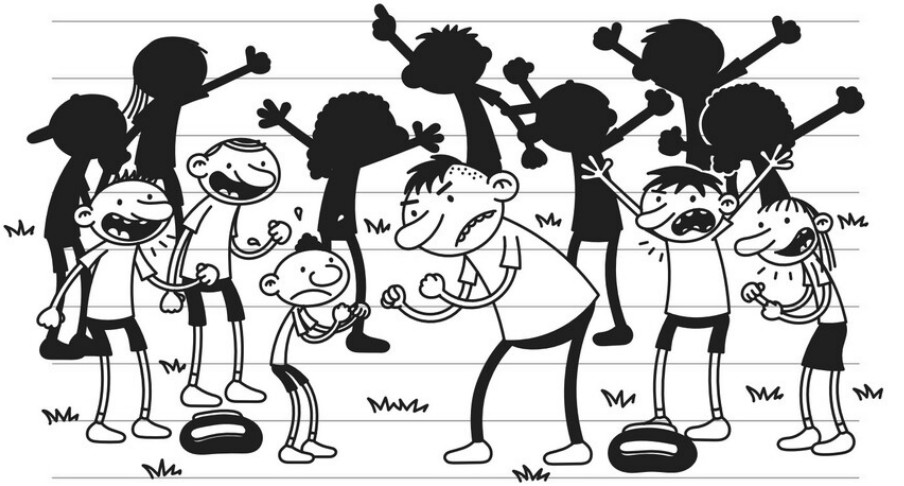
On top of that, I know the location of every doorbell camera in the neighborhood. So I stick to the sidewalks in front of those houses, even though it adds a lot of time to my walk home.



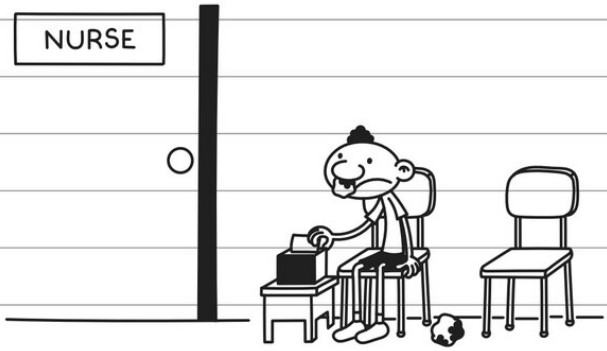
The thing is, even if you're doing your best to steer clear of bullies, it's easy to slip up. And that's exactly what happened when Darius Reedy bumped into one in the cafeteria today.



Before Darius knew it, he was in a full-blown fight with a kid twice his size.



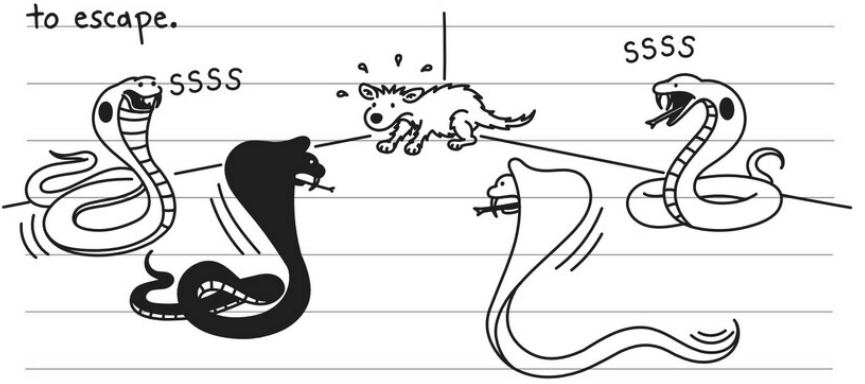
Getting in a fistfight with a bully is my worst nightmare. For one thing, I like being able to breathe through my nose, which might be a challenge for Darius going forward.



Even if I somehow managed to land a punch, I'd worry about breaking a finger or a thumb. Because that would totally mess up my plans for becoming a hand model.

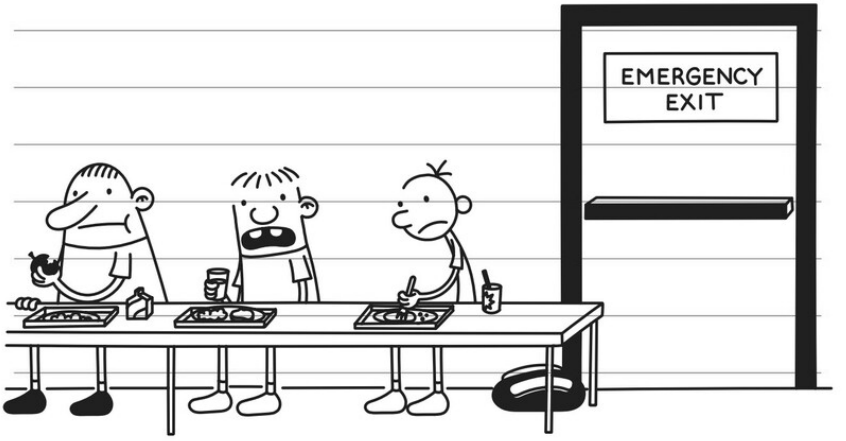


I've read that when an animal is backed into a corner, it has to decide between "fight or flight," which means it has to deal with the threat or try to escape.

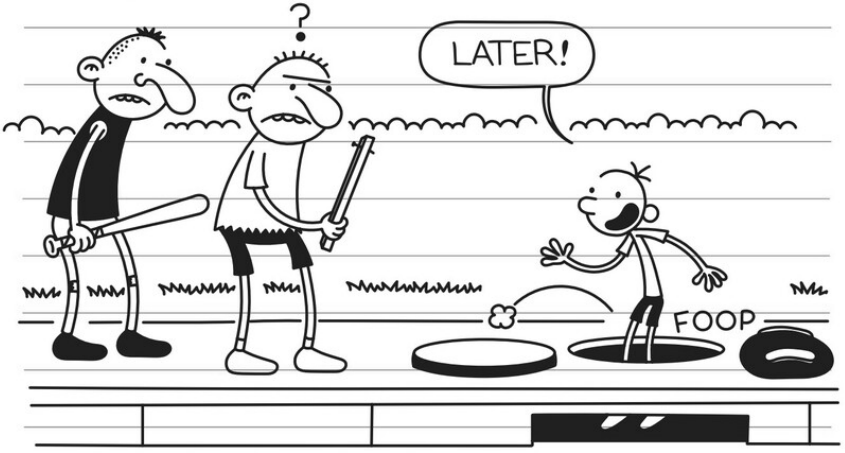


But that's not a hard choice for ME, because I'm choosing flight every time.

In fact, whenever I walk into a room, the first thing I do is look for the exits. And that's the reason I sit in the back corner of the cafeteria.



It's not just when I'm indoors, though. It's OUTDOORS, too. And on top of knowing where all the doorbell cameras are, I know the location of every manhole cover in the neighborhood.



If I actually need to use the sewers as an escape route, I'll stay down there as long as I need to. Because if I have one superpower, it's patience.



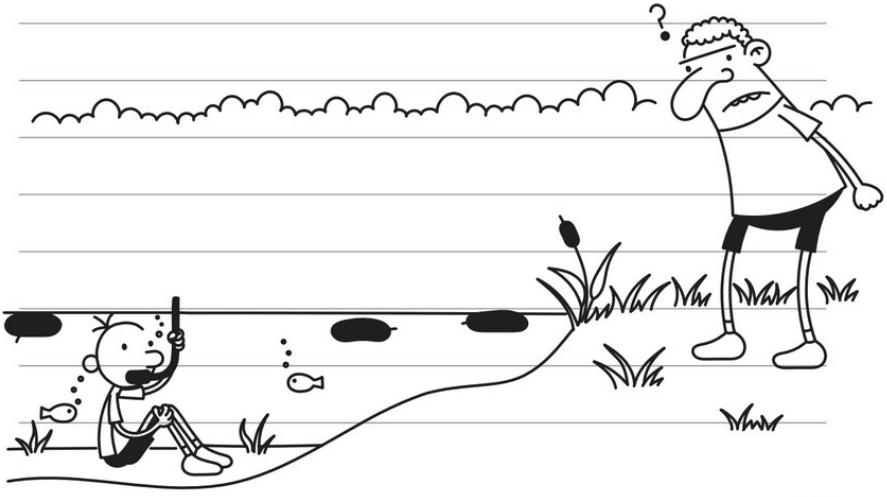
But if I ever have to get out of town for REAL, I'm prepared for that, too. I've packed a bag with some cash and supplies that'll get me by for a while. So if I feel like bullies are closing in, I'll be ready to take off at a moment's notice.



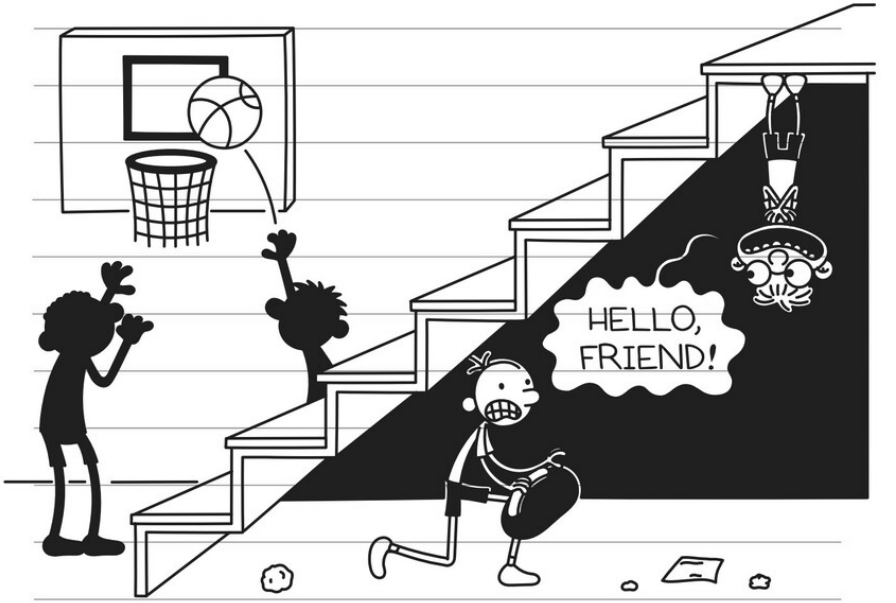
I realized I should probably throw in a disguise and a fake ID, just in case. But since I'm not old enough to get a driver's license, I had to settle on a fake library card.



I even packed a snorkel in my bag, because like I said, I don't have a problem being patient.



I decided to stash the bag underneath the bleachers in the gym. But then I discovered that's the spot where Fregley likes to hide during Phys Ed, so I had to look for another location.

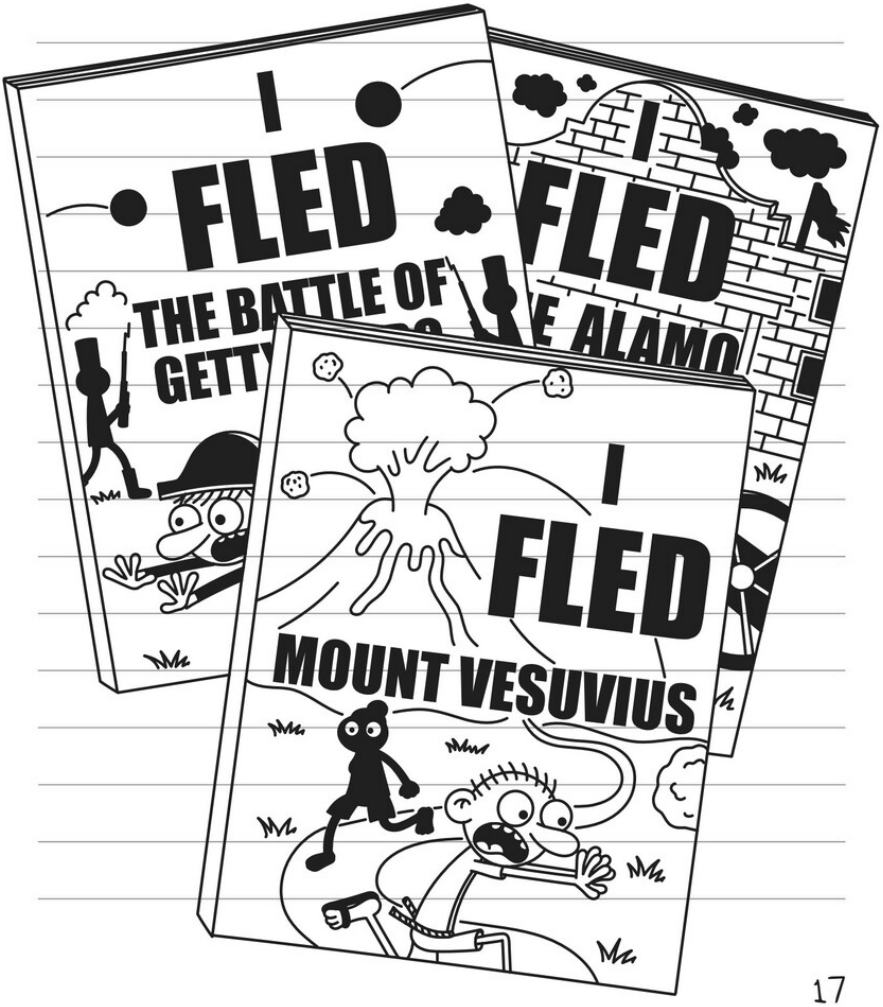


I settled on a space in the ceiling tiles above one of the stalls in the second-floor boys' bathroom. And even though it's a little less convenient, at least it's safe there.

I know it might seem like I'm being a little paranoid, but the way I see it, it's smart to be ready to run at any moment.

One thing I've learned is that history's full of people like me who take off at the first sign of danger.

In fact, one of my favorite book series is about people whose quick thinking is the reason they lived to tell their stories.



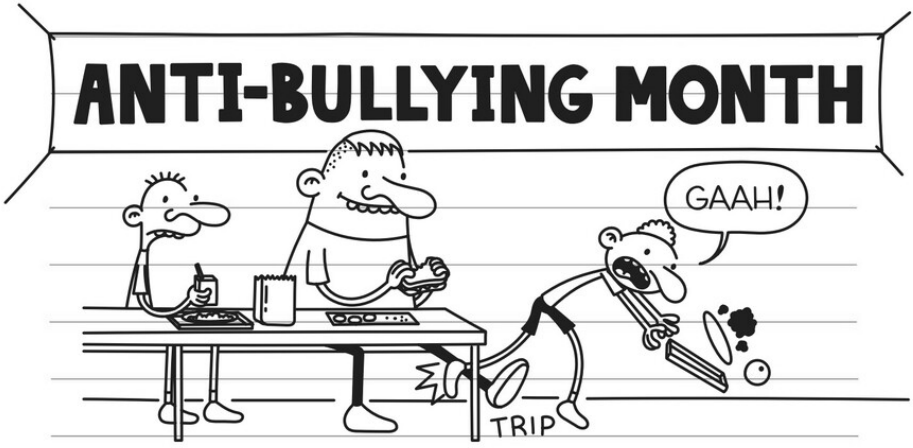
But if I ever have to leave the COUNTRY, I'm gonna regret not paying more attention in Spanish class. Because I'm not sure if I'm going to be able to get by on the stuff I've learned so far.



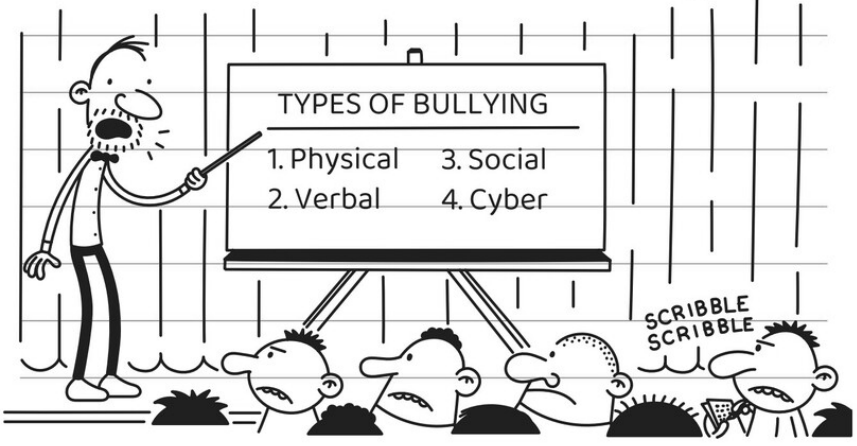
Anyway, the thing about chickens is that after millions of years, they're still AROUND. And if they could survive all this time, it gives hope to a guy like ME. So even though I'll never rule the roost at my middle school, if the going gets tough this year, I'll be ready to fly the coop.

Friday

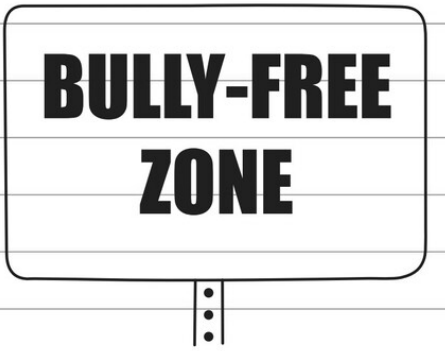
September is Anti-Bullying Month at school, but somehow I get the feeling the message isn't getting through to the people it needs to reach.



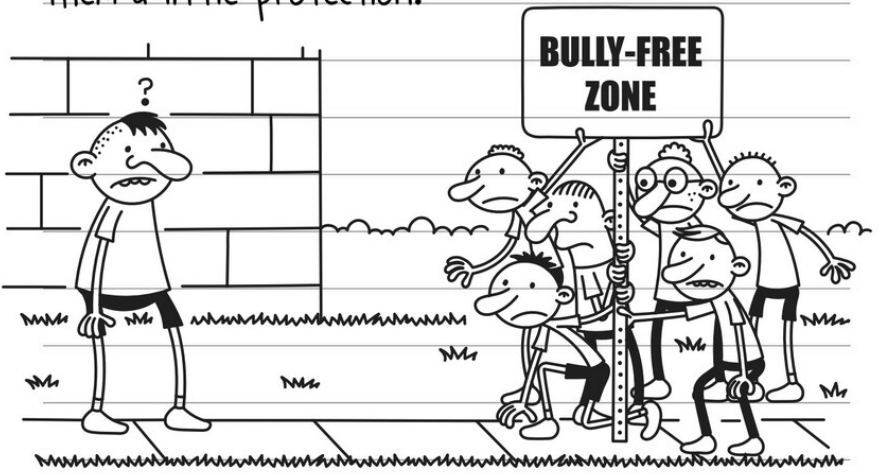
Vice Principal Roy kicked off the month with an assembly where he taught us about different types of bullying. But I wish he hadn't invited the BULLIES, because some of them were taking notes.



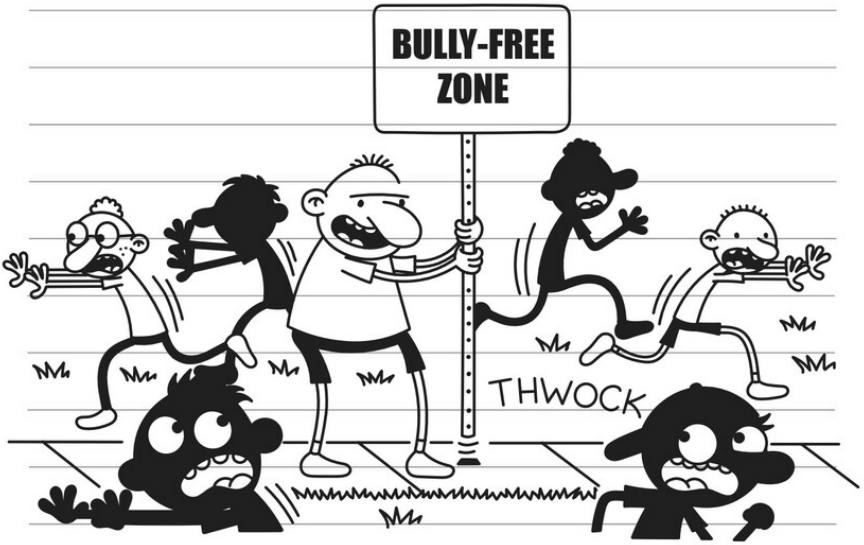
The school's always trying different ways to deal with the bullying problem, and the latest plan was to install a metal sign near the car pool drop-off. But if you ask me, it was a giant waste of money.



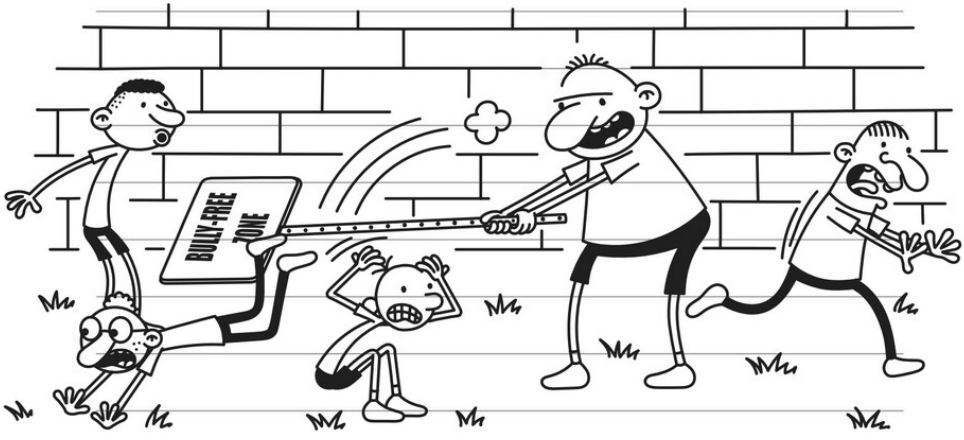
First of all, it wasn't clear where the bully-free zone started and where it ended, so kids just hung out close to the sign, hoping it would offer them a little protection.



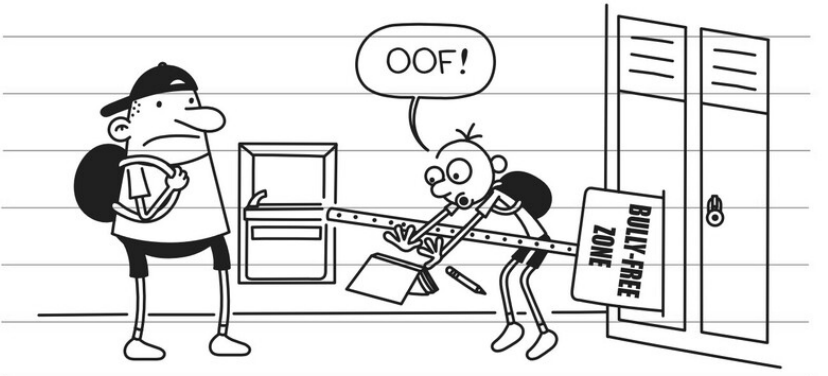
But Ryland Rynherd realized the sign wasn't secured in the ground, so he pulled it out.



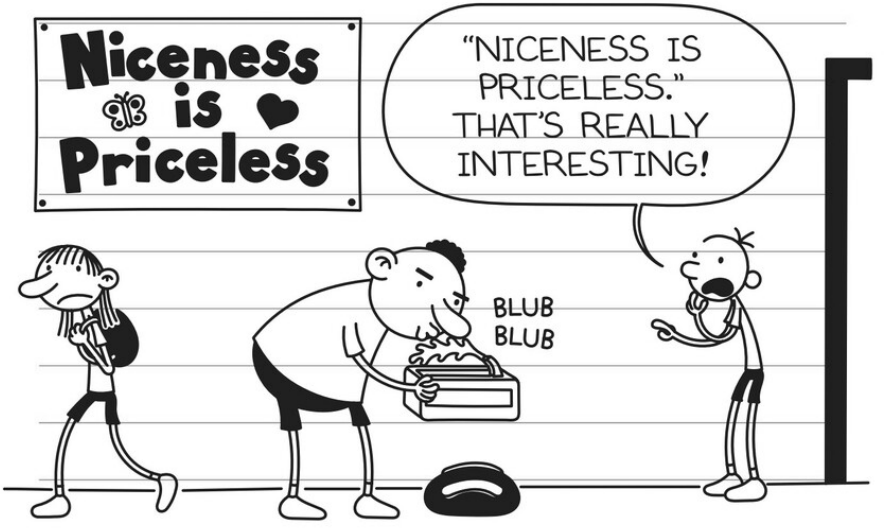
Then he turned the sign into a WEAPON, which made recess a lot less fun.



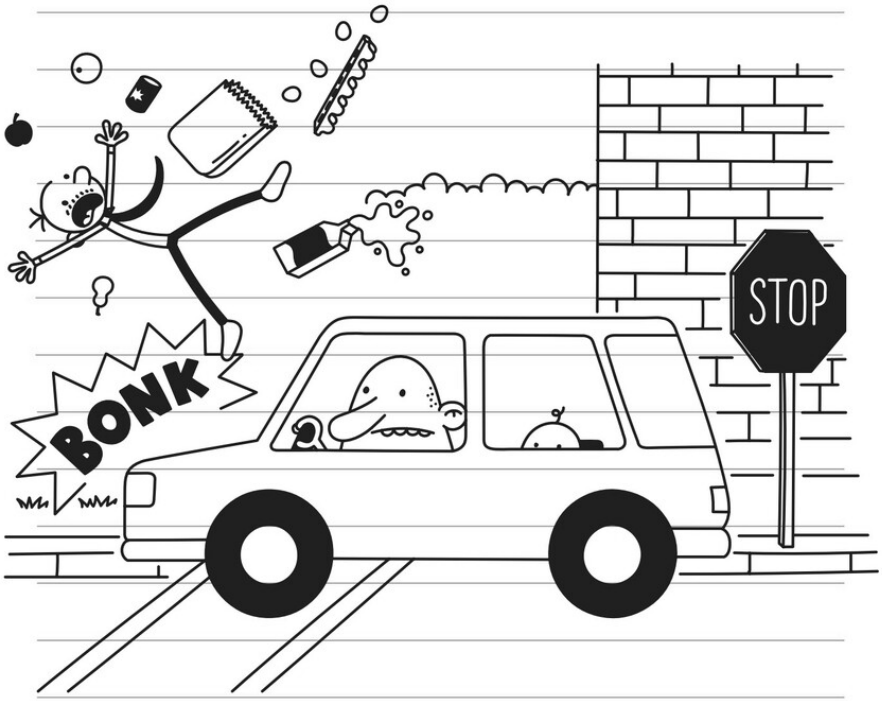
Eventually, Ryland embedded the sign in a locker near the science lab. So you've really got to watch where you're going when you're coming around the corner on the first floor.



There are anti-bullying posters everywhere you look at school. The problem is that a lot of bullies don't bother READING, so I try and be helpful.



I'm pretty worried, because if these guys aren't reading now, that means they won't read as adults. And that could make things dangerous.



The school's trying to do its part to help with the reading issue, but so far nothing's working.

Last year they created a program called "Drop Everything and Read," where if you heard a bell over the loudspeaker you were supposed to stop what you were doing and read a book.

They had to cancel the program, though, because kids liked the dropping part but didn't follow it up with reading.



The school realized that the way to get kids excited about reading is to have books with lots of illustrations in them. So they replaced the encyclopedias with picture books we used to read back in kindergarten.



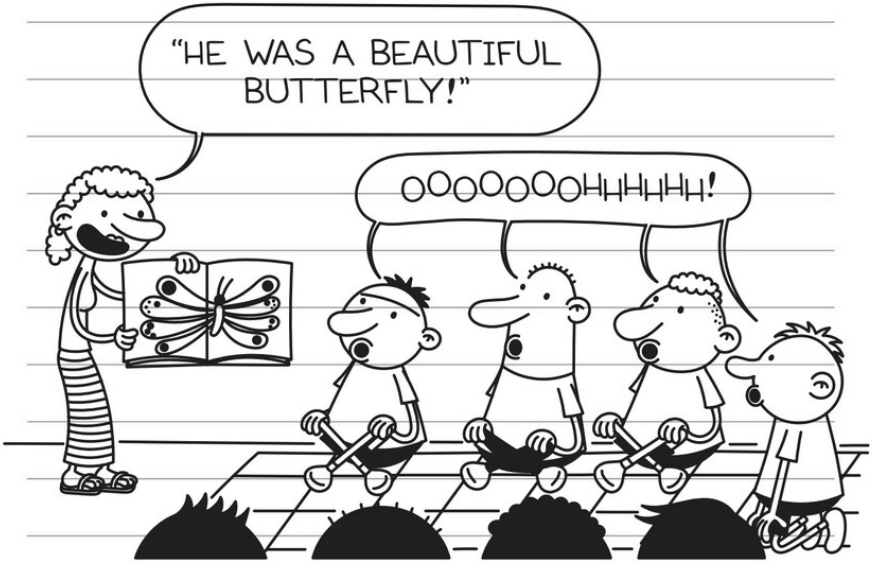
And even though that makes doing book reports a whole lot easier, it kind of feels like cheating.

BOOK REPORT:
The Very Hungry Caterpillar

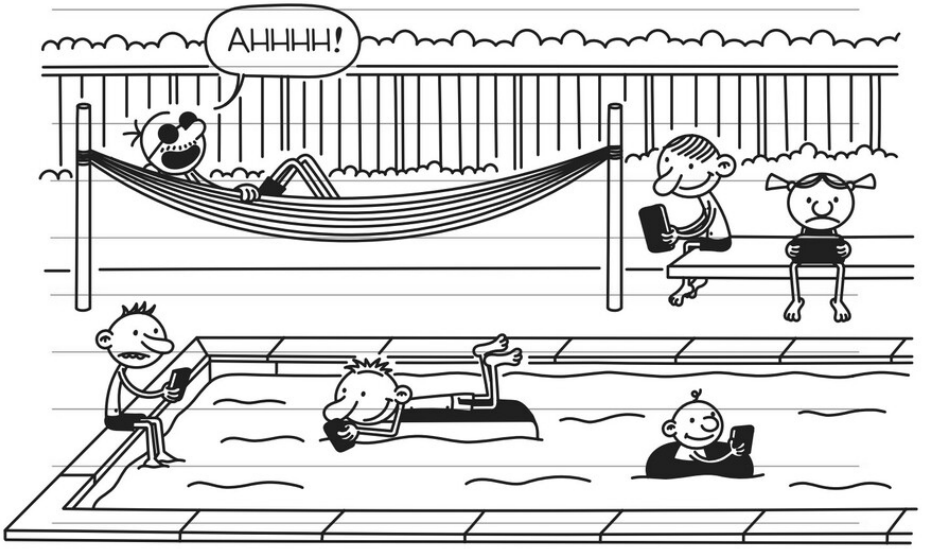
Greg Heffley

A bug ate some food.

The thing I miss the most about kindergarten is story time, because it was the only part of the day when even the bullies calmed down and behaved. And I'll bet if they brought back story time, it would solve a whole lot of problems at school.



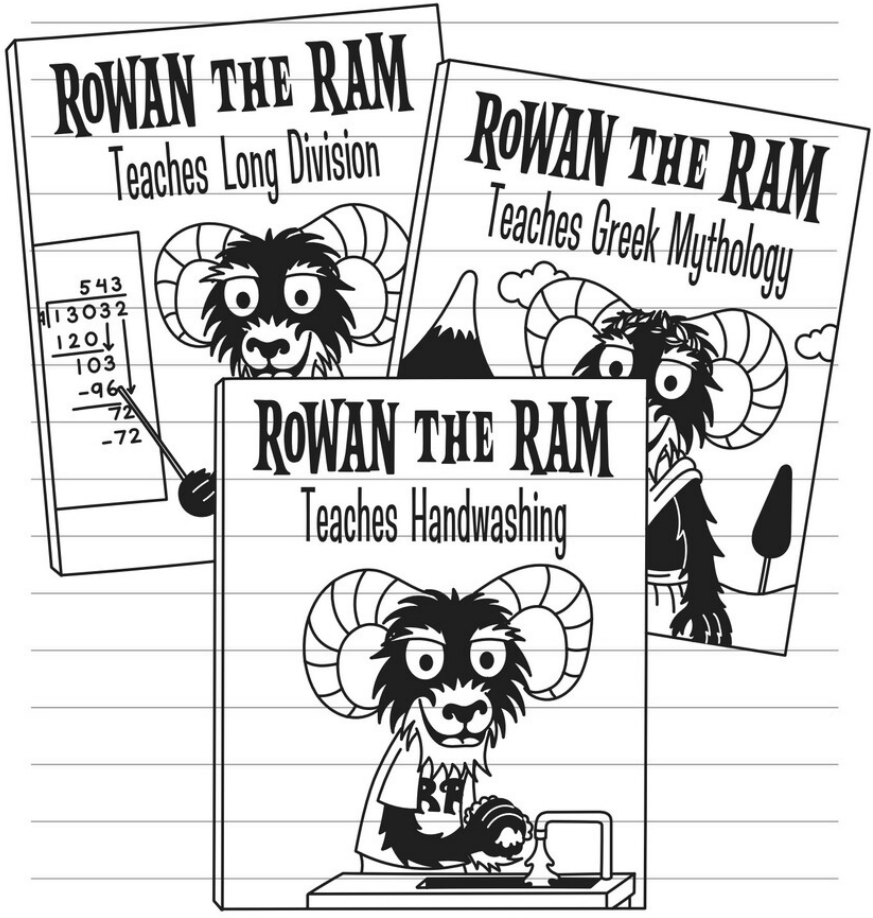
The reason kids don't read these days is because they're always on some kind of screen. And I get why parents let that happen, because I'll probably do the same thing when I'm a grown-up.



The problem is that nowadays kids get all their information from videos. And it's even changed the way some teachers do their jobs.

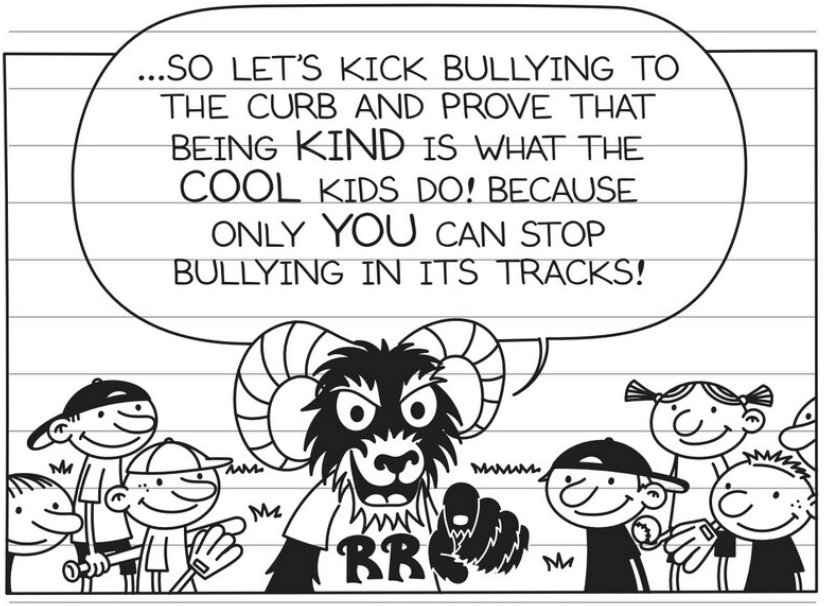
Instead of standing in front of a whiteboard and lecturing the old-fashioned way, they'll turn on a TV and play a video on whatever topic they're supposed to be teaching that day.

There's a video about everything you could possibly imagine, which makes those teachers' jobs pretty easy. And there's a whole series featuring this character named Rowan the Ram.



There's even one where Rowan lectures about how to stop a bully.

Since it's Anti-Bullying Month, every teacher plays that video. And after seeing it seven times in one day, I'm pretty sure I've got Rowan's whole speech memorized.



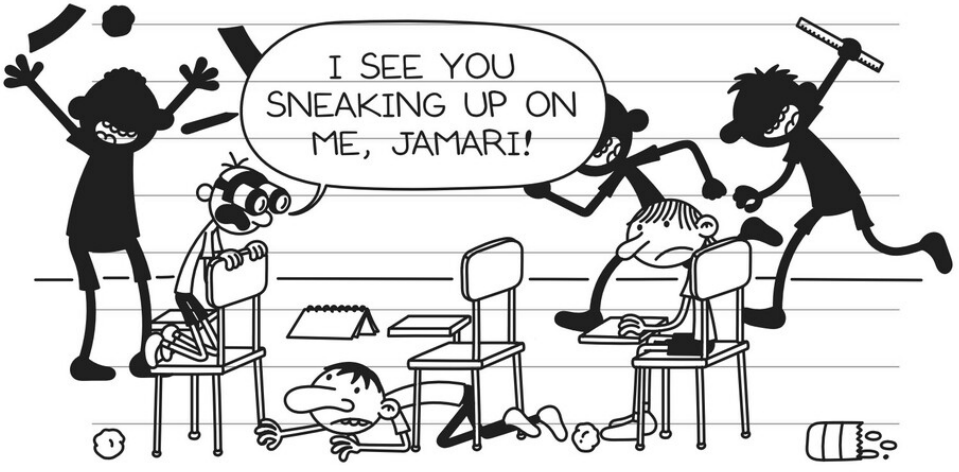
I wouldn't mind watching videos during class if the teachers actually stuck around after they hit "play." But as soon as a video starts, they turn off the lights and leave the room.

In a middle school classroom, there's nothing worse than darkness. The best you can do is just tuck yourself into a spot where you won't get injured.

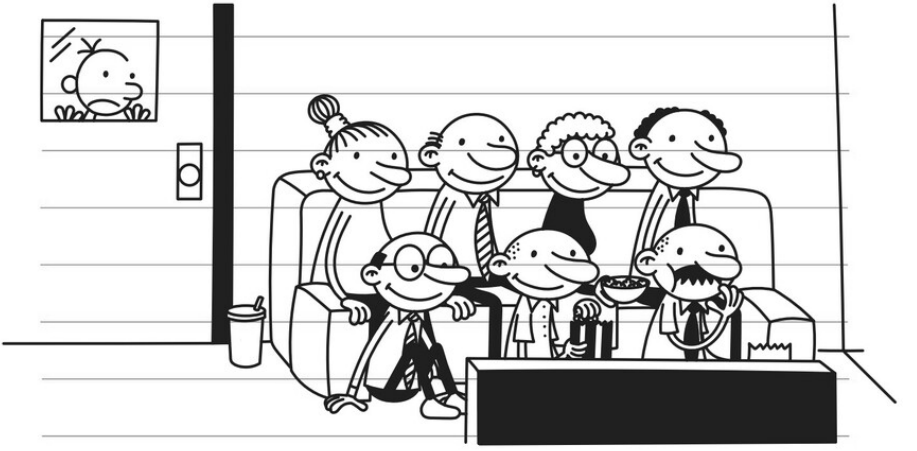
Because when you're trying to make it through a school day, you need to do whatever it takes.



This problem doesn't look like it's going away anytime soon. So I've been saving up my allowance for some of those night-vision goggles.



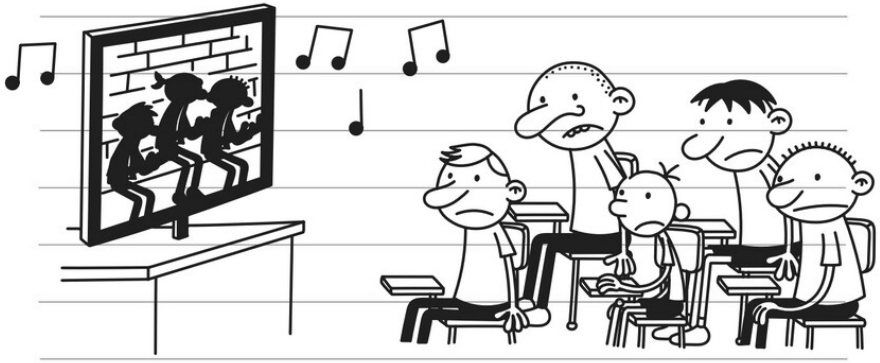
Earlier this week, when I left class to use the bathroom, I found out where all the teachers go when we're watching videos. They're in the teachers' lounge, watching their OWN movies.



So us kids decided to make a movie club of our own. Unfortunately, all the films in the school library are more than fifty years old.



One of the movies we watched was called "West Side Story," which is about these two gangs who fight over territory in New York City. And there's a lot of singing, because it's a musical.



There's dancing, too, and it's kind of weird seeing gang members fight that way.



Half the class had never seen a musical before, so they thought that must've been how people used to fight for real back in the old days.

The conversation got heated, and the next thing you knew, it was an all-out rumble. But thankfully our teacher came back before someone got seriously hurt.

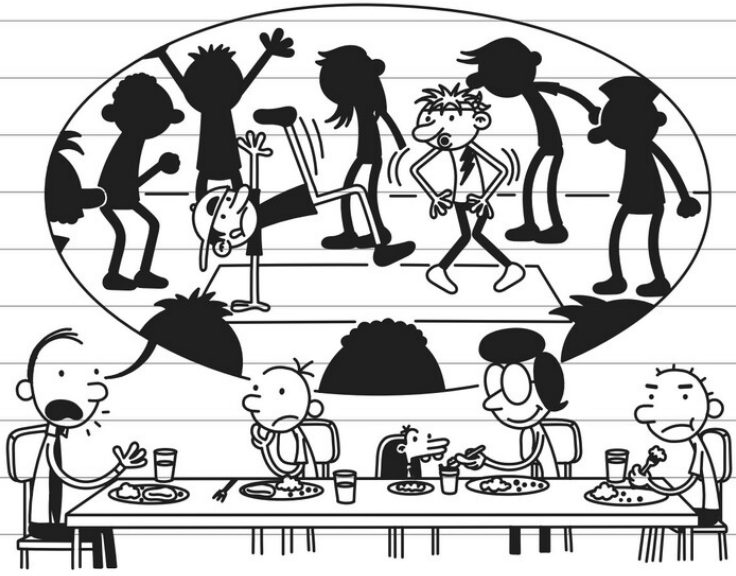


So I guess that's the end of our movie club, which might actually be a good thing. We were supposed to watch "Titanic" next week, but I've heard the ending is kind of a bummer.

Tuesday

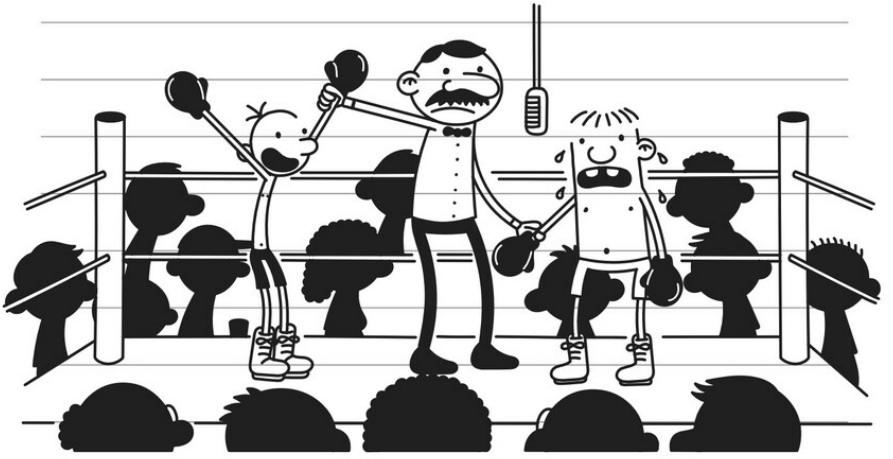
I thought dancing gangs weren't a real thing, but now I'm not so sure.

Last night my dad said that when he was my age, they used to settle things on the playground with breakdancing battles. And even though I have a little trouble believing him, he swears it's true.

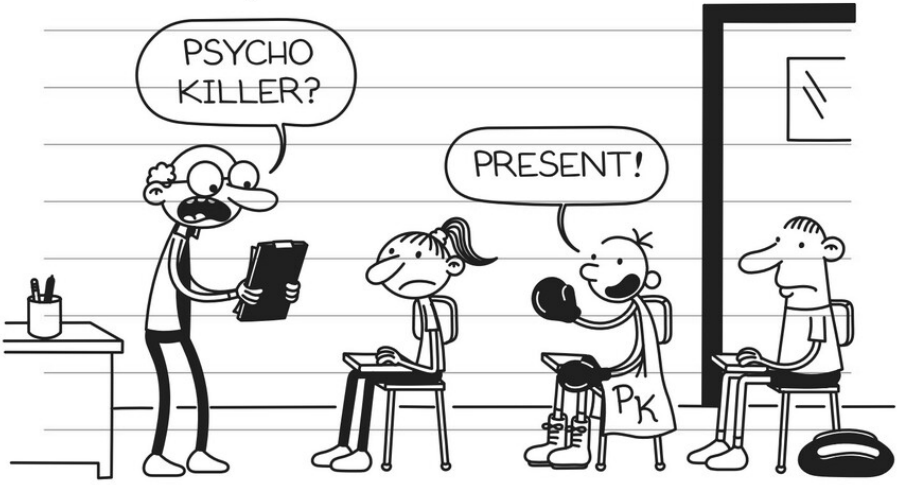


In a regular fight, it's pretty clear who's the winner and who's the loser. But don't ask me how you're supposed to figure out who wins in a fight with DANCING.

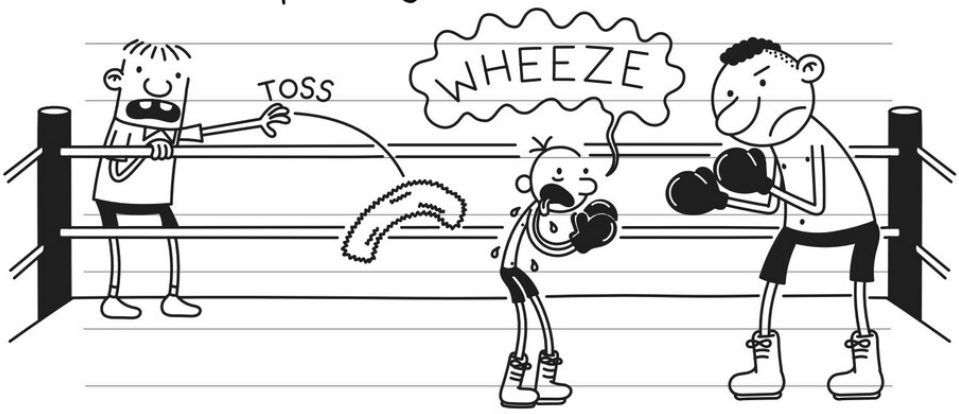
At least in a sport like boxing you know for sure who wins, because there's a referee who decides. But that's not the only thing boxing gets right.



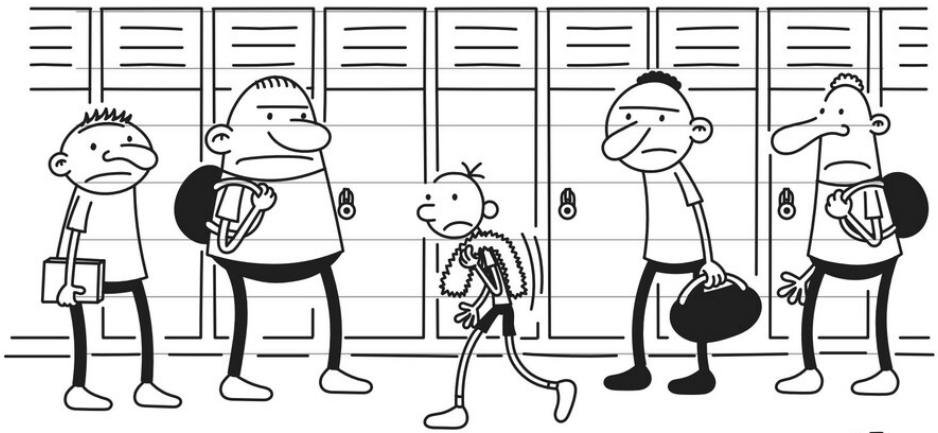
If you're a boxer, you get to wear silk robes and have a cool nickname. And those two things alone would make my life a lot better at school.



Plus, in boxing you get a water break and a time-out to catch your breath every few minutes. And if you want to quit, your manager can throw in a towel to stop the fight.



When I learned about the towel thing, I started carrying one around school. I'm hoping the bullies know there's no point in starting a fight with me since I can just END it.



I'd rather use my words than my fists, though. One time, I saw a movie where these guys did rap battles to settle scores. And if that ever becomes a thing at my school, I'll be ready with some sick rhymes.



But if the dancing gang thing ever catches on, then I guess the theater club is gonna be the most feared group in school.



Speaking of clubs, the school started a new group to help fight the bullying problem and posted a sign-up sheet in the cafeteria. So far the club's only got one member, and it's no surprise who it is.

Kindness Klub

SIGN-UP SHEET

Jarrett Jollifee

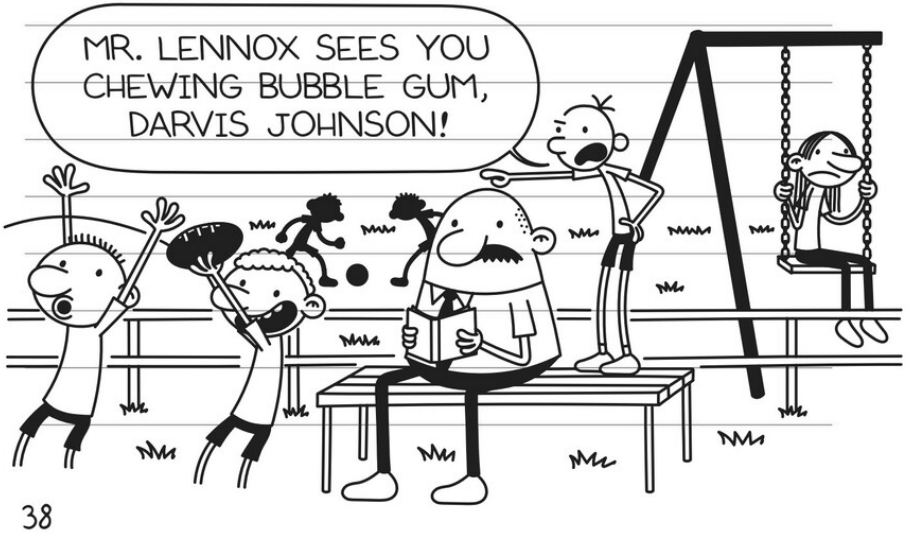
Jarrett tried to recruit more members by bringing in cupcakes that his mom made at home, which probably seemed like a good idea to Jarrett.



But I guess Jarrett doesn't understand how middle schoolers behave, and it was like throwing raw meat into a shark tank.



He could've gone right down to Vice Principal Roy's office and told him what happened. But there's nothing that'll put a target on your back quicker than being a tattletale. And that stinks, because snitching is something I'm good at.



The school doesn't like snitching, either, but that's because they don't like having to deal with all the complaints they get about bullying.

Last year the school set up a box in the front office for kids who wanted to file a report.



But anyone who filled out a report wasted their time, because the forms went straight into a recycling bin under the front desk.



I figured if any bully got their hands on those forms, it would be bad news for the kids who filled one out. So I filed a report on Zander, just in case.

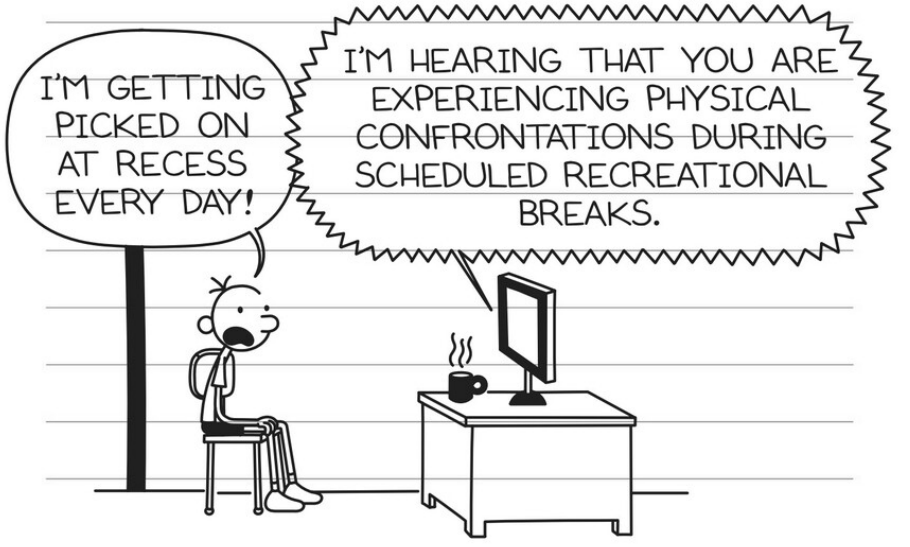
BULLYING INCIDENT FORM

Report filed by: GREG HEFFLEY

Describe the incident in as much detail as possible

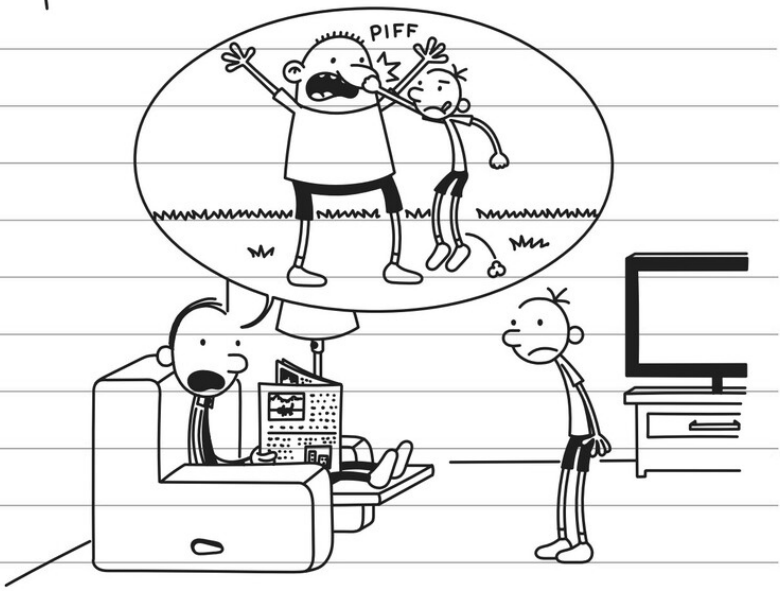
I THINK ZANDER IS COOL

This year the school switched to a computerized system to record kids' complaints. But that's just as much of a waste of time as the complaint box.



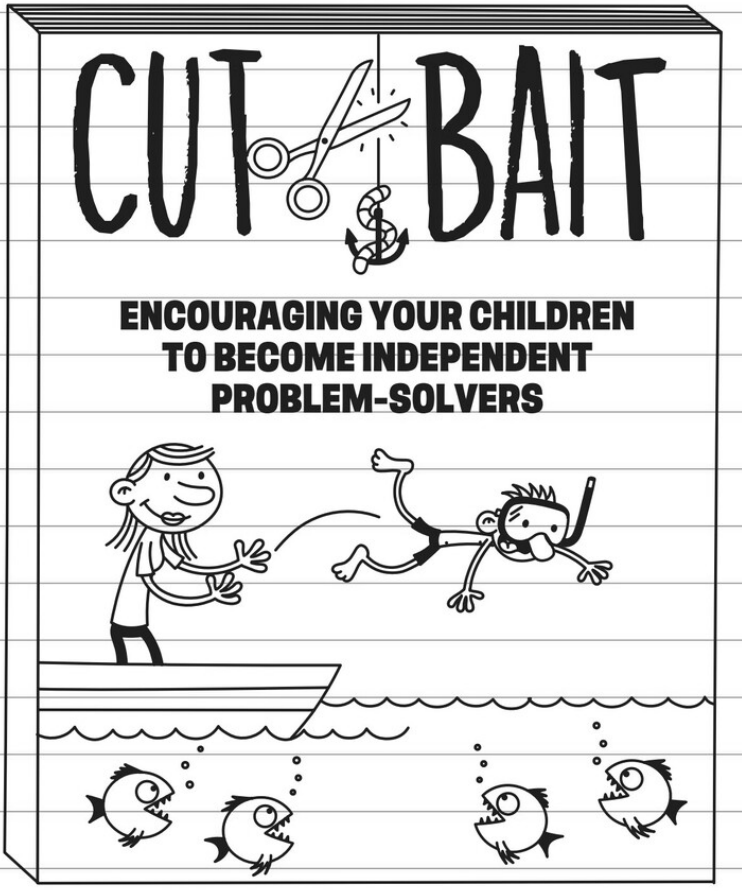
So when it comes to dealing with bullies at school, you're basically on your own. And my parents aren't any help, either.

My dad always tells me that the way to deal with a bully is to punch them in the nose. But it's easy to give that kind of advice when you're not the one who has to deal with what happens AFTER the punch.



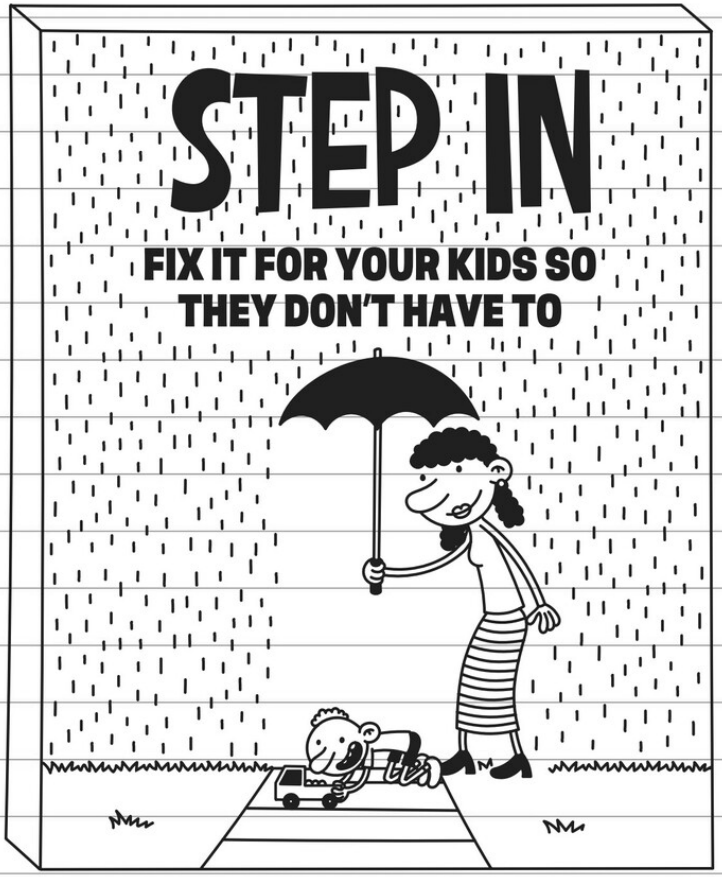
My mom used to be the person I'd go to for advice on this kind of thing, but she hasn't been much help lately.

That's because she's been reading this book that's super popular with parents right now.



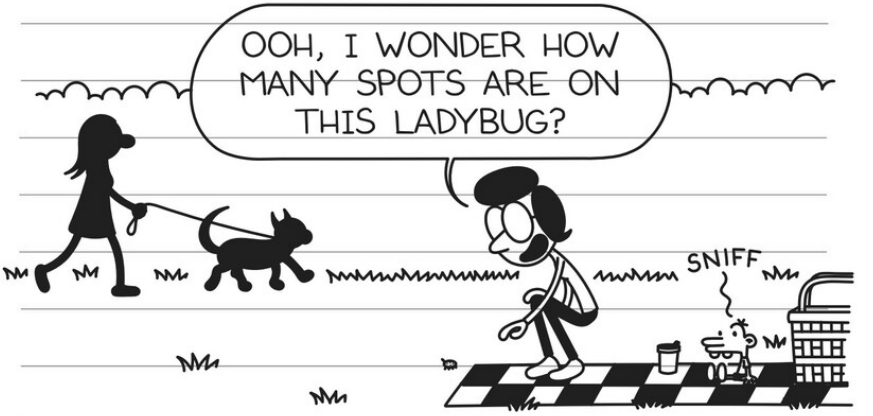
I guess it's a good idea to let kids figure out how to solve their own problems. But the truth is, life was a lot better when Mom handled all of my problems FOR me.

I just wish this book that was popular a few years ago would make a comeback, because I liked that parenting style WAY better.

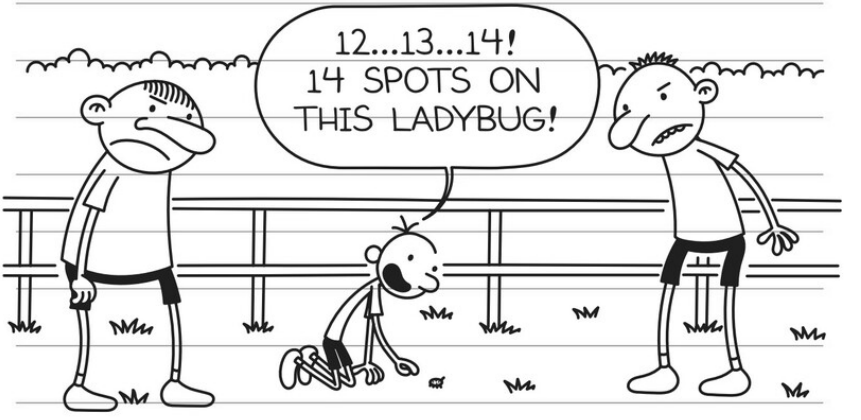


Mom's always reading books that teach her parenting tips, and lately I've been wondering if some of those strategies would work on the bullies at school.

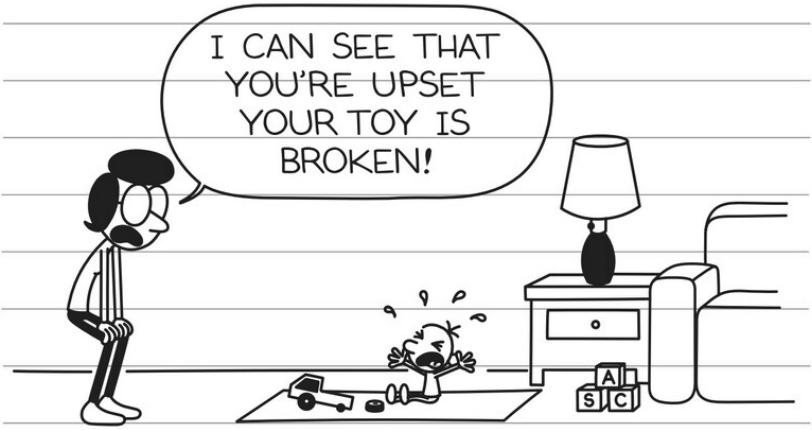
One of the things my mom does when my little brother Manny throws a tantrum is called "redirecting," which is getting him to focus on something that's not the thing he's upset about. And most of the time, it actually works.



Unfortunately, that trick doesn't seem to have the same effect on bullies at my school.



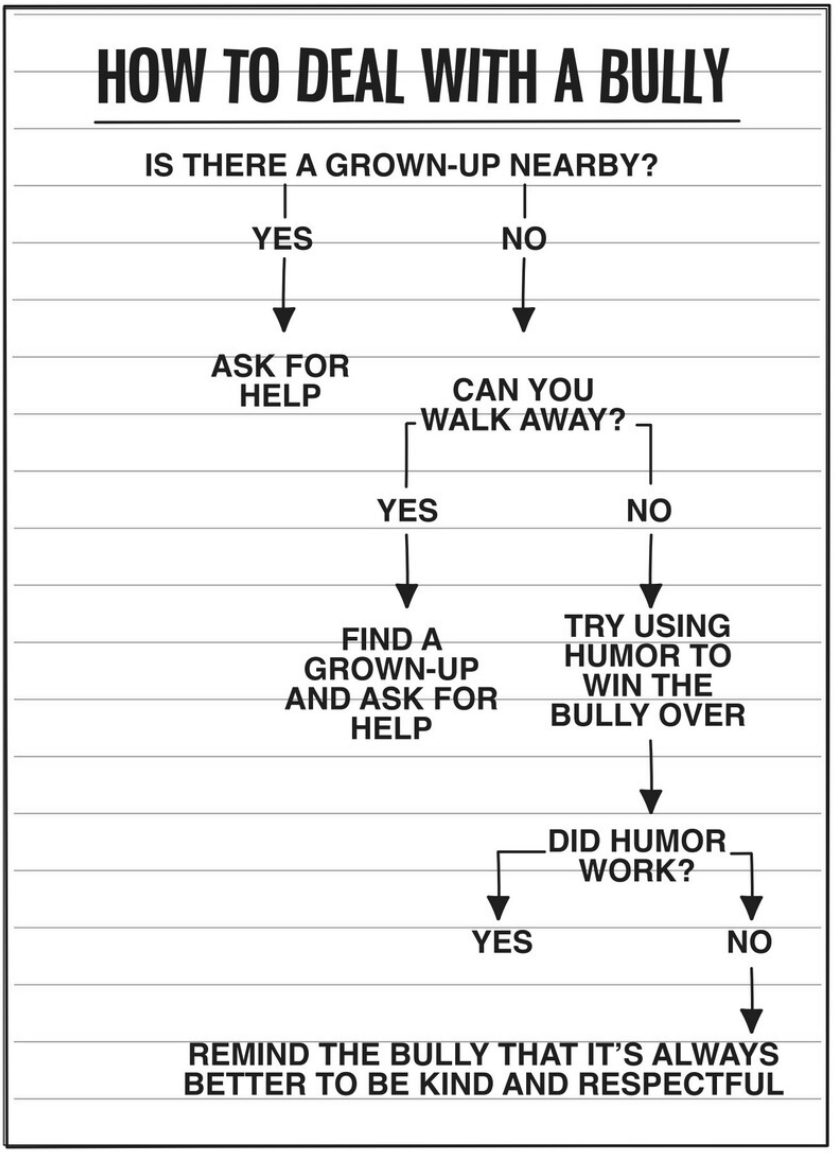
Another strategy my mom uses on Manny is called "validating," which means describing his feelings to get him to calm down. And I remember her using that on me back when I was his age.



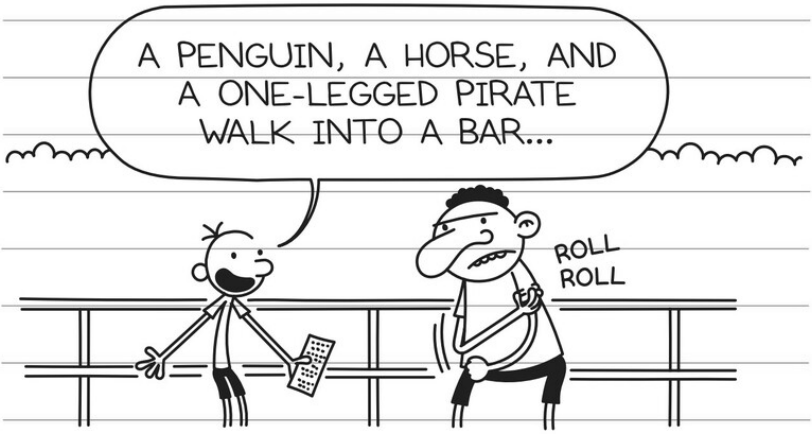
But that one doesn't really work with bullies, either. In fact, it just seems to make them MADDER.



In another book Mom's reading, there's a chart that's supposed to teach your kids how to deal with a bullying incident, and she shared it with me.



But I've followed the steps all the way through, and all I can say is that whoever wrote that thing has probably never dealt with a bully in real life.



Mom says it's important to remember that most bullies are the way they are because they have a tough home life. But Ryland Rynherd goes to my church, and it looks to me like he comes from a pretty loving family.



You'd think that going to church every Sunday might have a positive effect on a kid like Ryland. But by Monday morning he's right back to being a jerk.

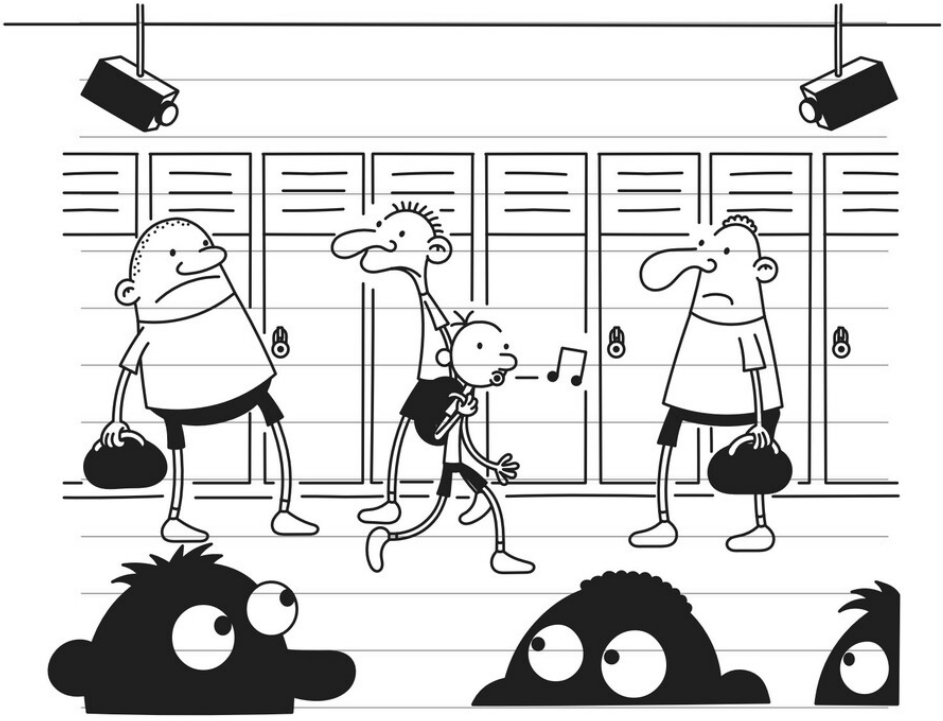


Lately, I've been trying to remind him of what we learned on Sunday, in case something clicks. But I'm not sure I'm getting through.



Friday

A while ago, the school got sick of dealing with bullying complaints, so they installed a bunch of security cameras in the hallways. And even though it hasn't been a popular decision with my classmates, I'm happy to give up a little privacy for some extra safety.



The school even put cameras in the classrooms so that teachers didn't have to keep turning around to deal with an issue every five seconds.

But that created a new problem, because teachers were spending their evenings at home watching the playback to catch the stuff that happened when their backs were turned during class.



So the school gave parents access to the cameras so they could watch what was going on in the classrooms live. And some kids' parents got way too into it.



That turned into a new headache for the teachers, because they started getting complaints about the way they were doing their jobs.

TO: Finn, Christopher

FROM: Heffley, Susan

SUBJECT: Correction

Dear Mr. Finn-

On Wednesday, you said that the capital of Australia is Sydney, which is a common mistake. It's actually Canberra.

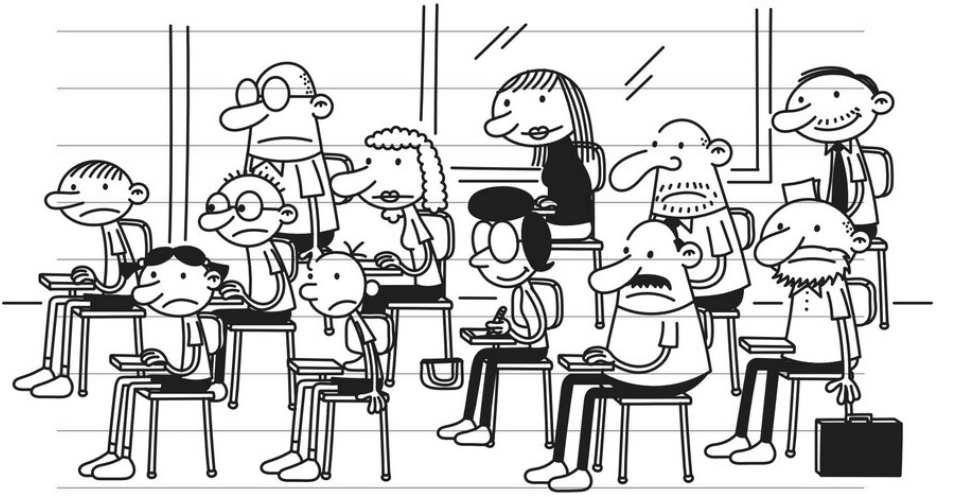
But things got even worse during parent-teacher conferences, when some parents complained that their kids weren't getting called on enough in class. That's when the teachers realized they had to make a change.



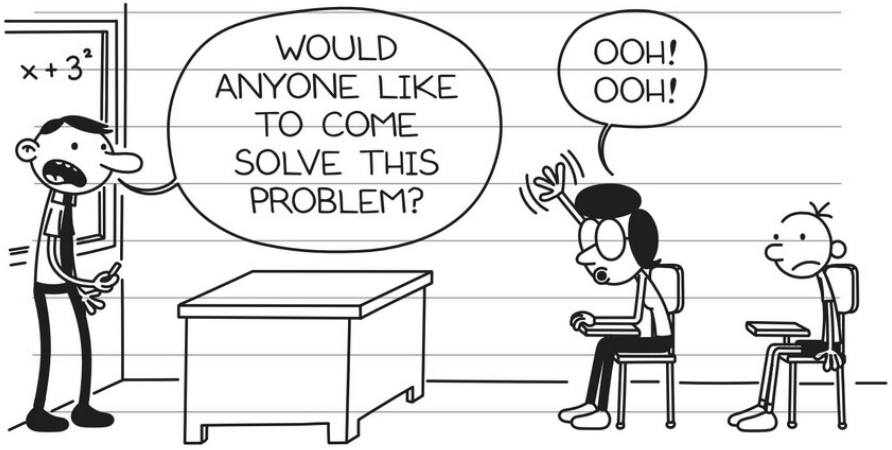
So they disabled the cameras in the classrooms, hoping that would solve the problem. But a lot of parents had gotten used to seeing what was going on in their kids' classes, and they called the school to complain.

The school decided to allow parents to attend classes in person, thinking no one would take them up on their offer.

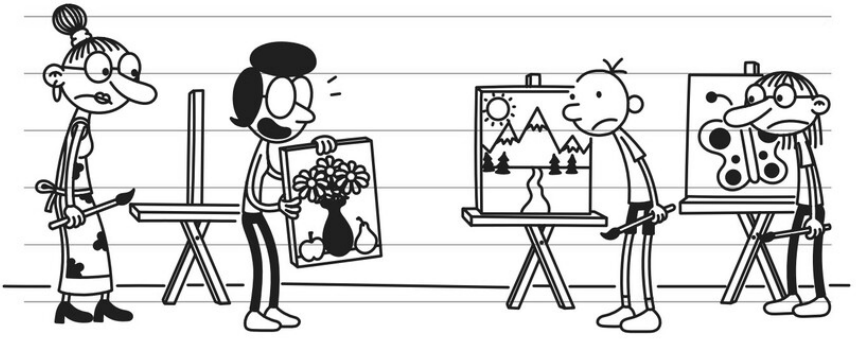
But I guess some grown-ups have a lot of free time on their hands, and all of a sudden every class was crowded with parents, including one of MINE.



Some parents even started participating in class and would call out an answer before any of us actual students had a chance.



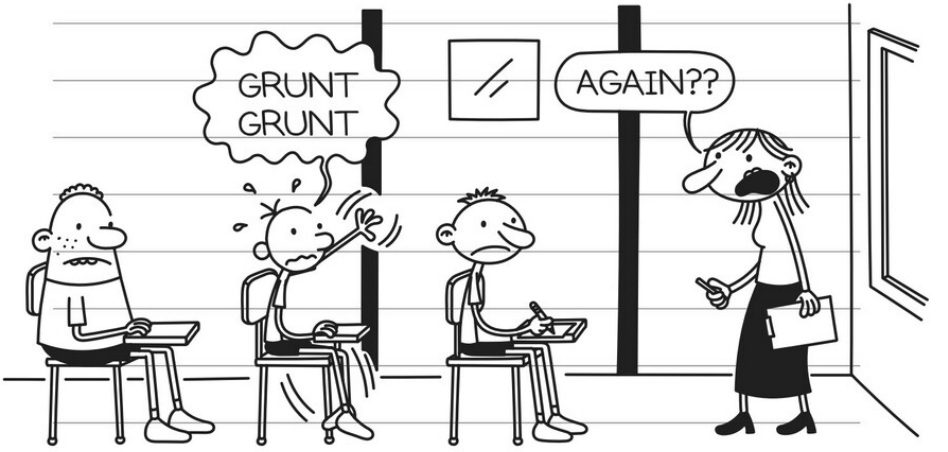
It became a real issue, and the school had to put a stop to it. Especially after the parents burned through the art supplies that were supposed to last the whole year.



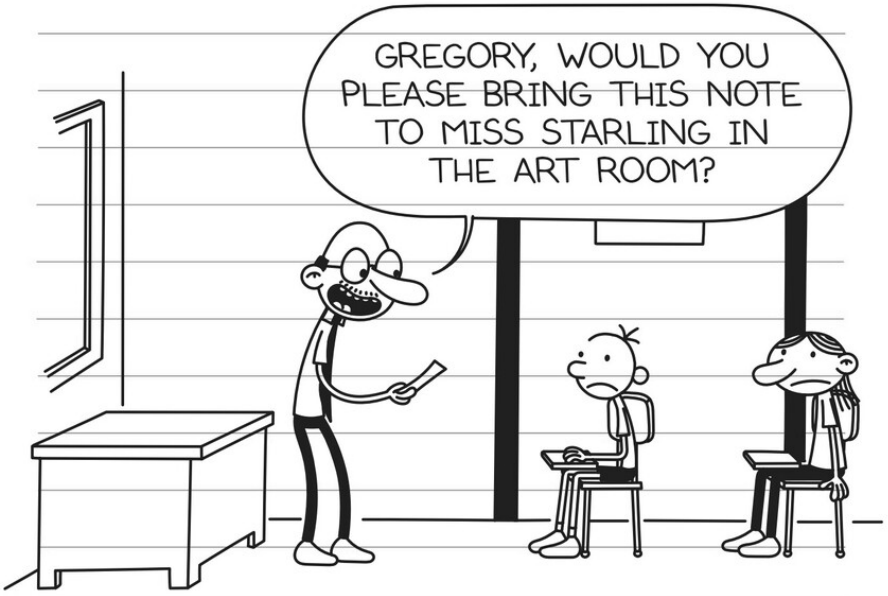
The school went back to how things were before they put cameras in the classrooms, because that was a lot less hassle for the teachers. Unfortunately, "back to normal" was bad news for ME.



So I started looking for reasons to get out of class any chance I could. But there are only so many times you can ask to use the bathroom before your teacher gets annoyed.



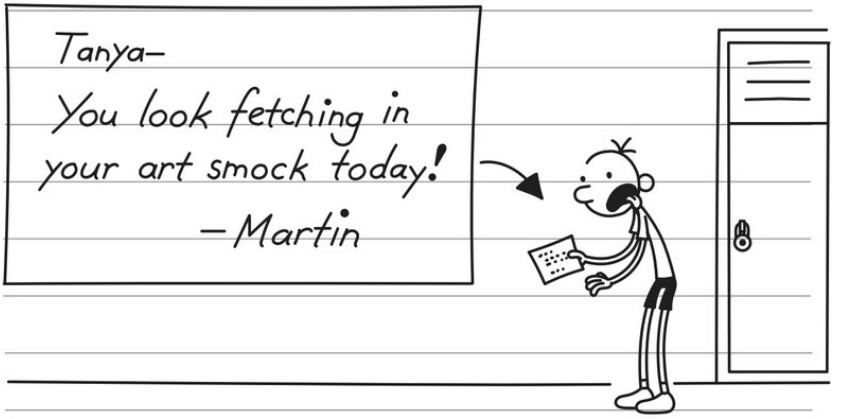
Luckily, I'm able to get out of Social Studies all the time. That's because Mr. Finch is in love with Miss Starling, the Art teacher, and he's always looking for a student to deliver her a message.



For some reason, there's a rule at my school against teachers dating. That means Mr. Finch and Miss Starling have to keep their relationship under wraps. But their secret's safe with me, especially if it gets me out of Social Studies twice a period.

Plus, I get out of Art class whenever Miss Starling sends a note BACK.

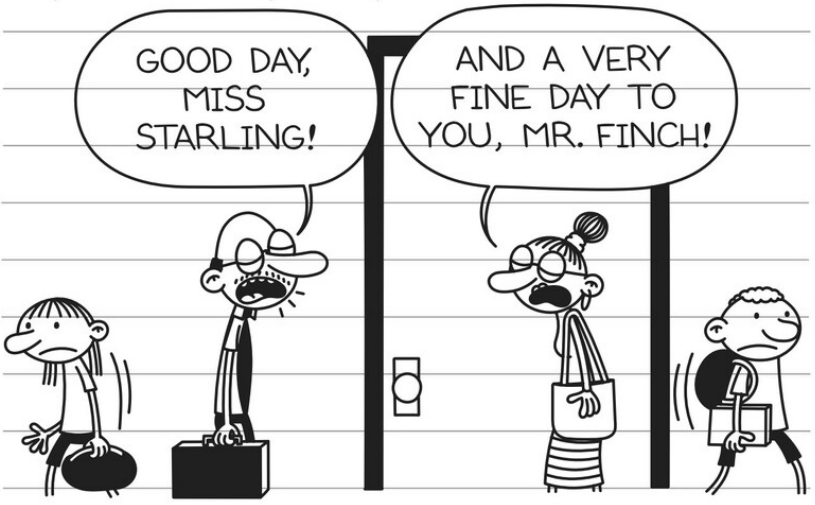
Sometimes I get curious about what the notes between these two lovebirds look like, so I'll sneak a peek when I'm in the hallway. But I always end up regretting it.



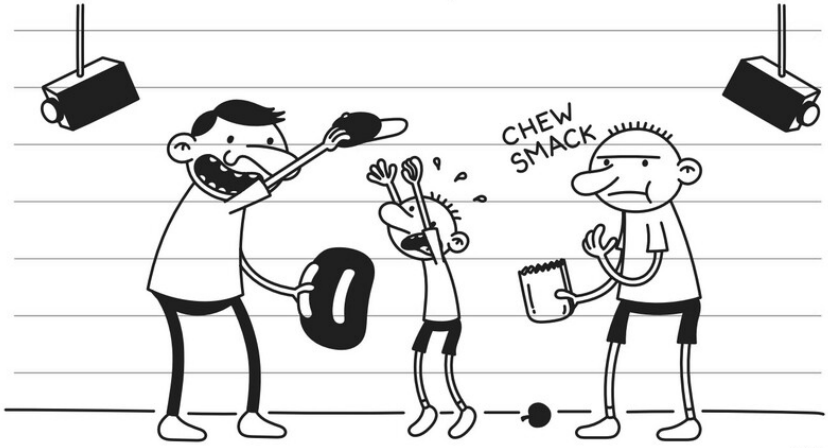
I'm actually worried that Miss Starling is gonna break up with Mr. Finch, and then I won't have an excuse to get out of class. So sometimes I'll throw in something extra to help Mr. Finch up his game.



It must be stressful for the two of them to be in a relationship with all those cameras in the hallways. And every time I see them in public, they act like they barely know each other.

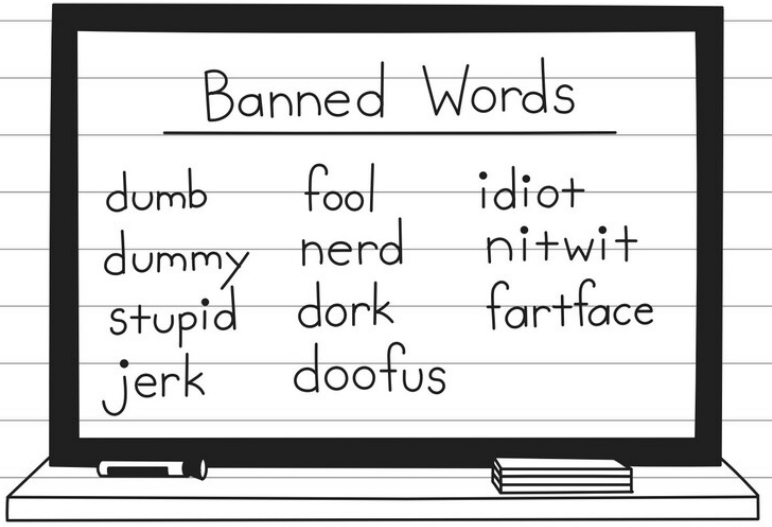


But if they want to meet up out of the camera's eye during the school day, they should learn where the blind spots are, the way the bullies have.



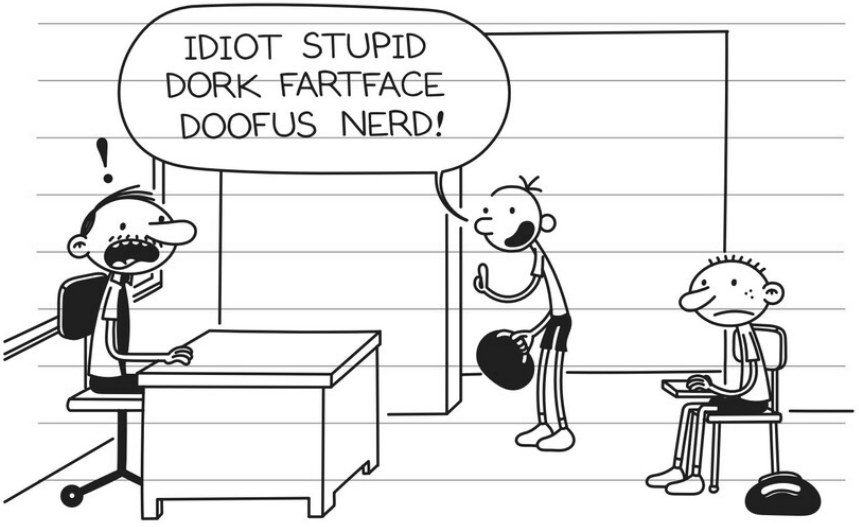
I think the school has given up trying to tamp down on bullying, because there are so many ways kids can hide it.

So now the school's focused on verbal bullying, which is another way of saying name-calling. Every class has a list of banned words on the whiteboard in the front of the room, and the lists keep growing.

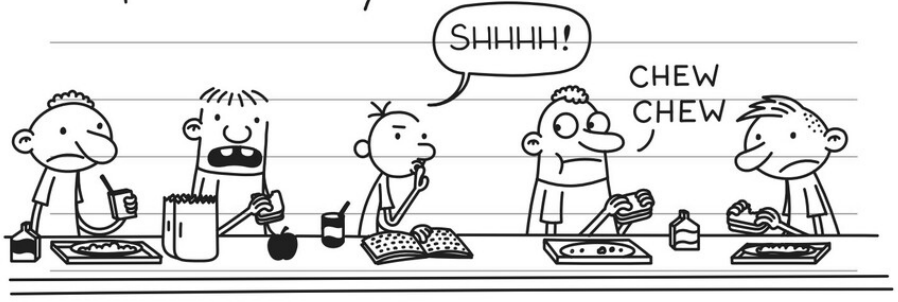


The punishment for a kid saying one of the banned words is losing their recess privileges for the day. But once a certain number of banned words is reached, the whole CLASS gets punished with silent lunch.

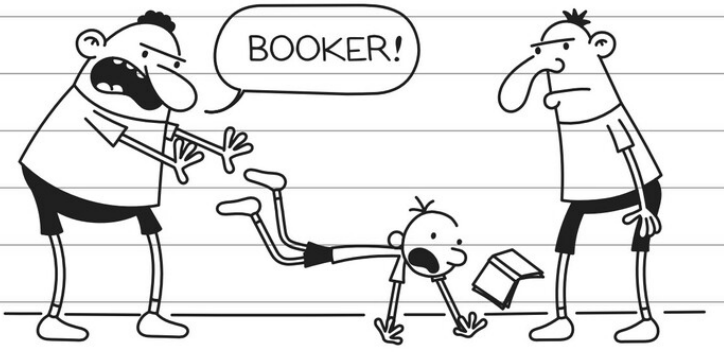
Personally, I don't see silent lunch as a punishment, because I'm the kind of person who likes to read in the cafeteria. So when I walked in Mr. Bittner's classroom today, I rattled off enough words to get us over the limit.



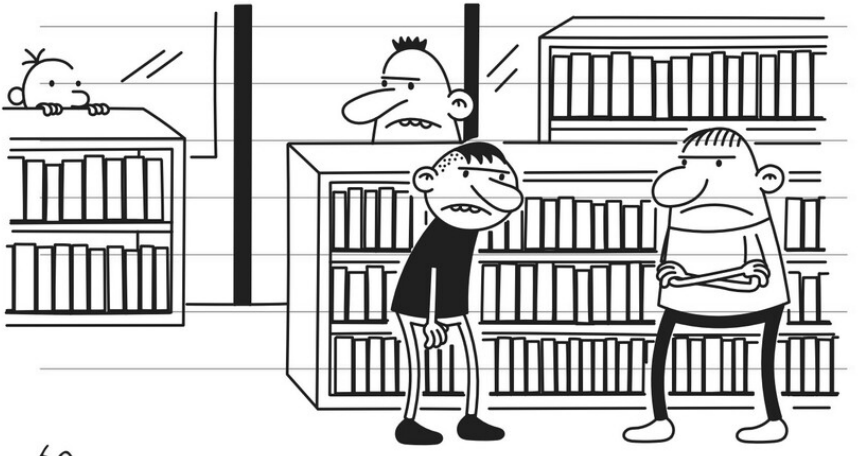
The thing is, silent lunch isn't TOTALLY silent. And it's hard to concentrate on your book when the person next to you is a loud chewer.



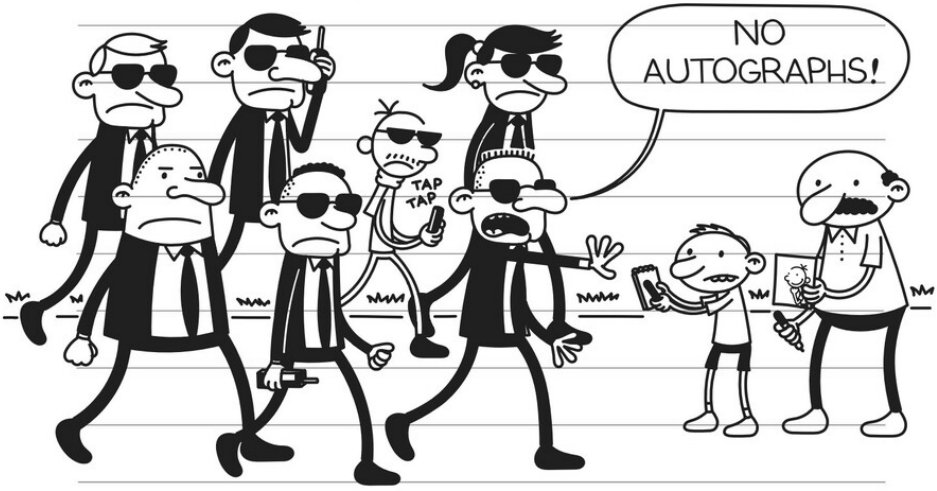
It turns out there are a LOT of kids who aren't big fans of silent lunch, and a few of them let me know about it when lunch ended. But I'm pretty sure they don't actually know my name, which is probably a good thing.



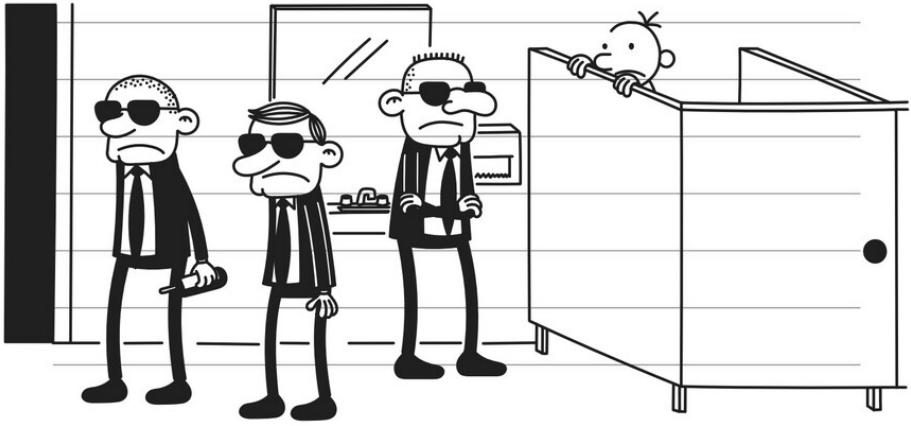
Now I have to avoid the library, where I found out some bullies have been waiting for me. And that stinks, because I just finished a book and I wanted to grab the next one in the series.



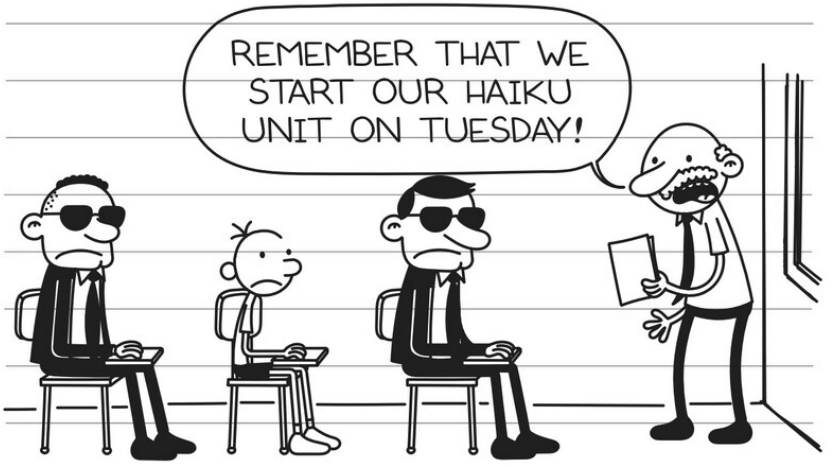
What I could use right about now is a bodyguard, or maybe a whole TEAM of them. But I haven't made my fortune yet, so that's a long way off.



Even if I COULD afford bodyguards, I'm not sure how comfortable I'd be with guys hanging around me every second. Because I like my personal space.



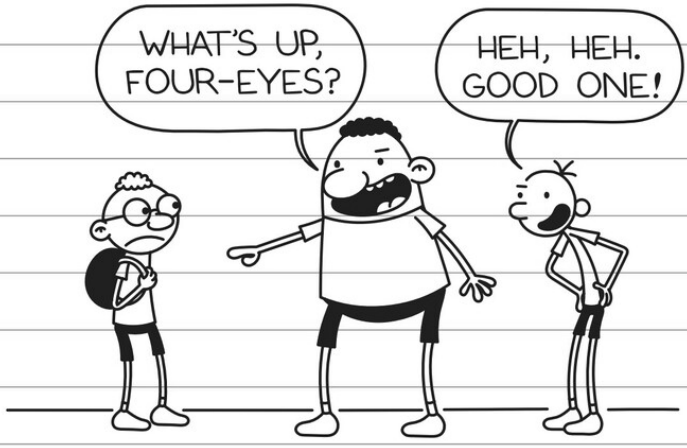
The only people my age who have their own bodyguards are the kids of politicians and celebrities. But it would stink training to be a bodyguard just to find yourself back in a classroom.



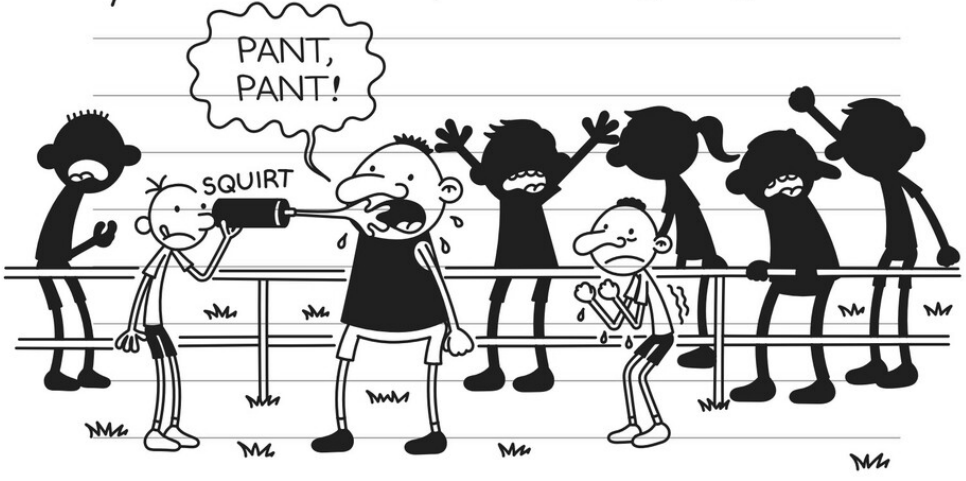
The kids at school who actually DO have protection are the bullies' sidekicks, like Zander's right-hand guy, Tarik Montgomery. And I've always wondered how a person gets that job.



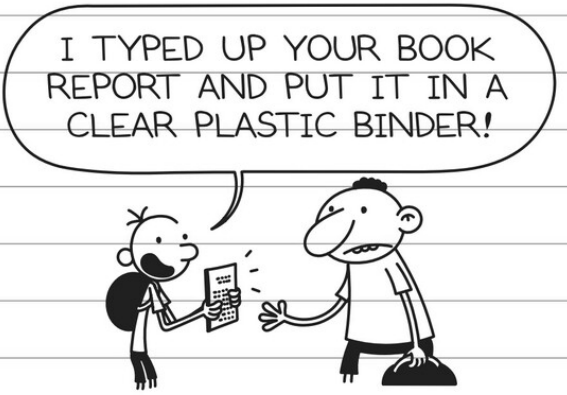
As far as I can tell, the main requirement is that you laugh at a bully's jokes. And even though most bullies aren't very funny, I'll bet I could fake it if I had to.



The other thing you've gotta be willing to do as a sidekick is make sure your bully is properly hydrated, which is important during a fight.



I guess sidekicks do other stuff, too, like carrying their bully's backpack and helping with their homework. And that doesn't seem so bad.



Unfortunately, those sidekick jobs are pretty hard to come by, and once a kid gets one, they hold on to it. But if a slot ever opens up, I'll be ready to throw my hat in the ring.

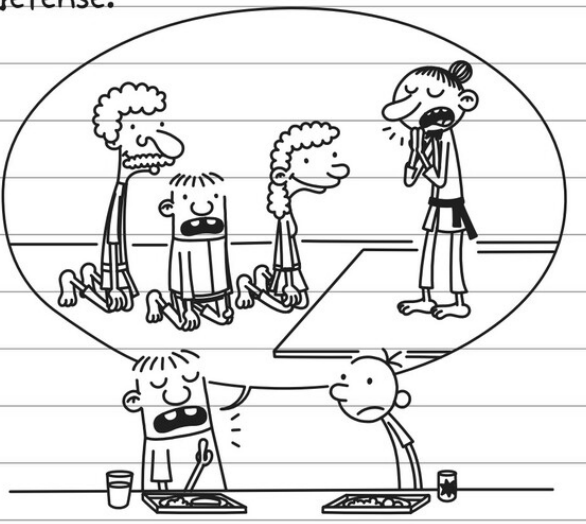


I've actually got my own sidekick, and that's my best friend, Rowley Jefferson. But lately we haven't been hanging out as much. That's because Rowley started taking karate, and now he doesn't really have time for anything else.

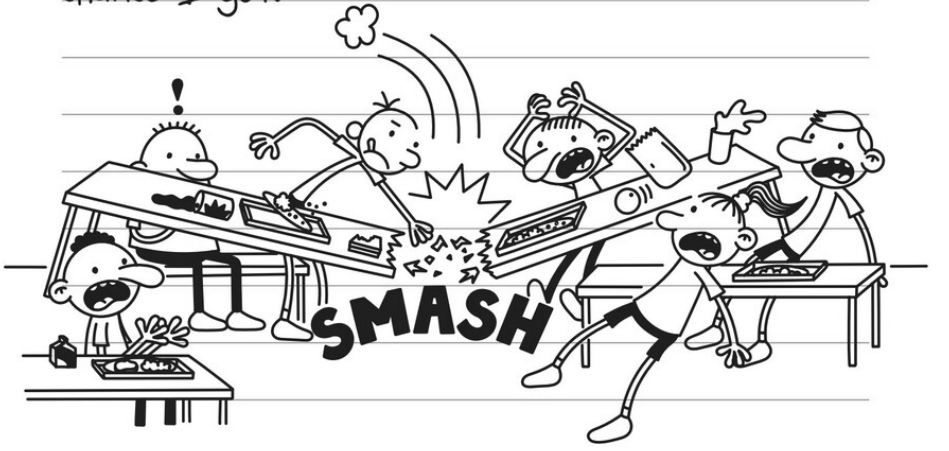
When Rowley signed up for karate, I got excited, because I thought he could be MY bodyguard. And that could change my whole situation at school, especially in the cafeteria.



Apparently Rowley's dojo teaches that fighting is a BAD thing, though, and it should only be used in self-defense.



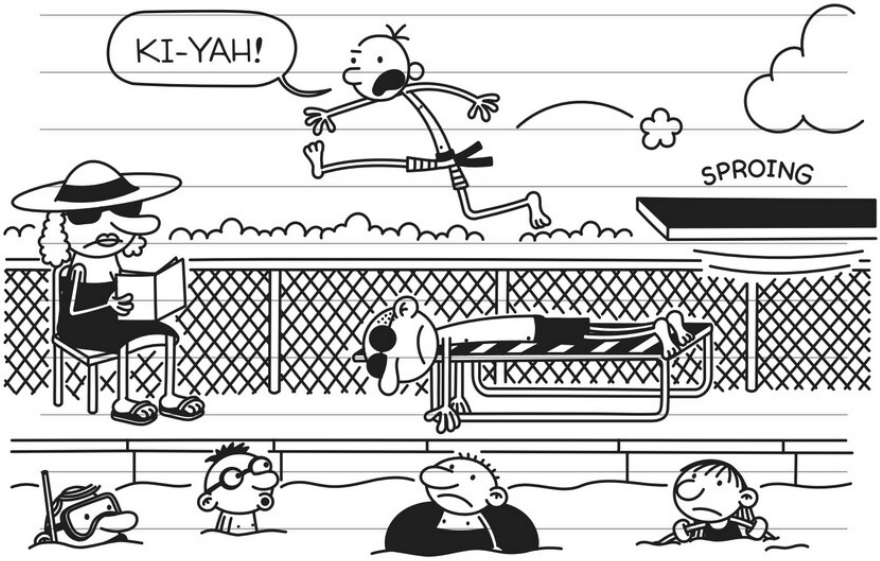
I really don't see the point of learning karate if you're not gonna actually USE it. And if I could break boards with my bare hands I'd do it every chance I got.



Plus, if I knew how to do karate kicks, I wouldn't have to bother memorizing my locker combination at school.

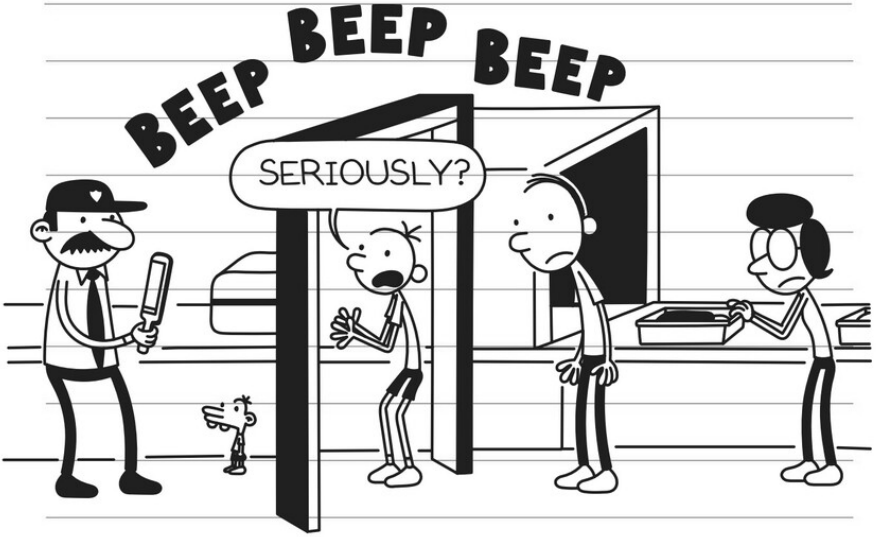


But those karate outfits look like they'd be a little too warm in the summertime. So I'd probably just wear the belt on pool days.



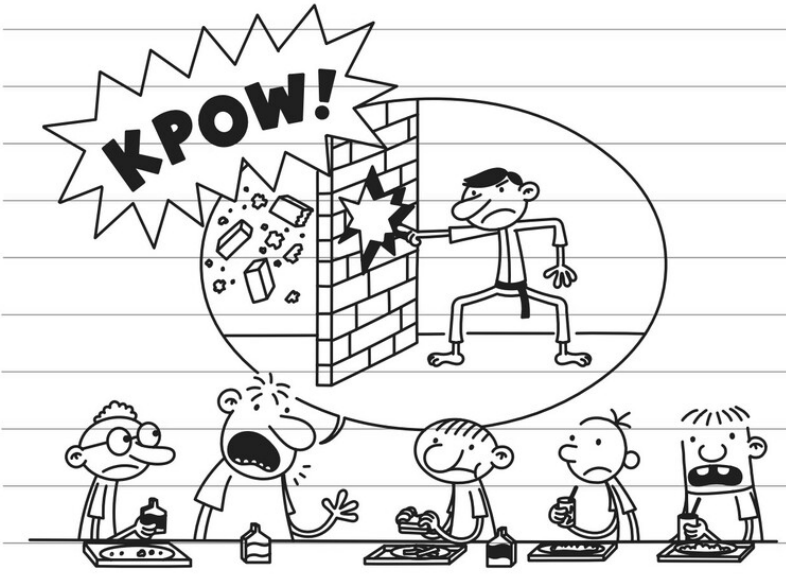
There's a studio near my house called Iron Fist Karate, but I worry that if I start going there, it'll mess up my hand-modeling career.

Plus, Albert Sandy said that if you get to be a third-degree black belt, you have to register your hands as lethal weapons. And that could be a problem, because getting through airport security is enough of a hassle as it is.



Albert told us he heard about a guy who trained with some monks for five years and got so good at karate that he learned to concentrate all his power in just one PINKIE.

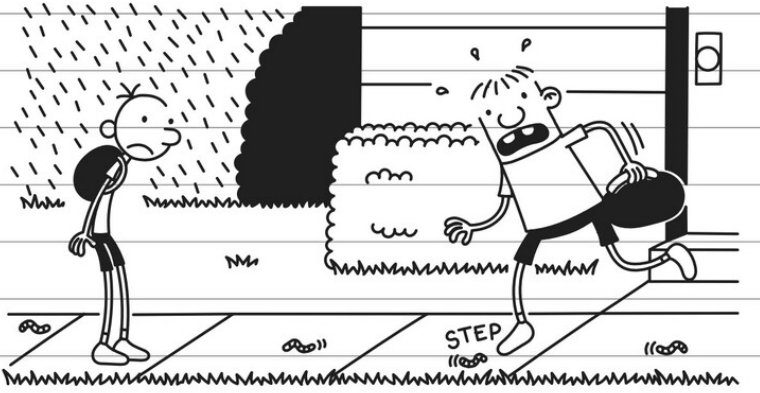
Albert said this guy's pinkie punch could blow a hole clear through a brick wall.



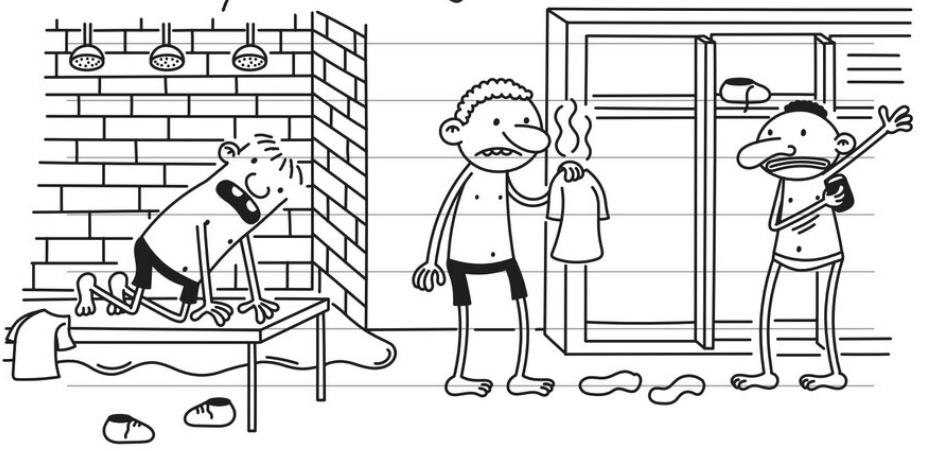
But I've tried doing it myself, and either I'm concentrating too hard or I'm not concentrating hard ENOUGH.



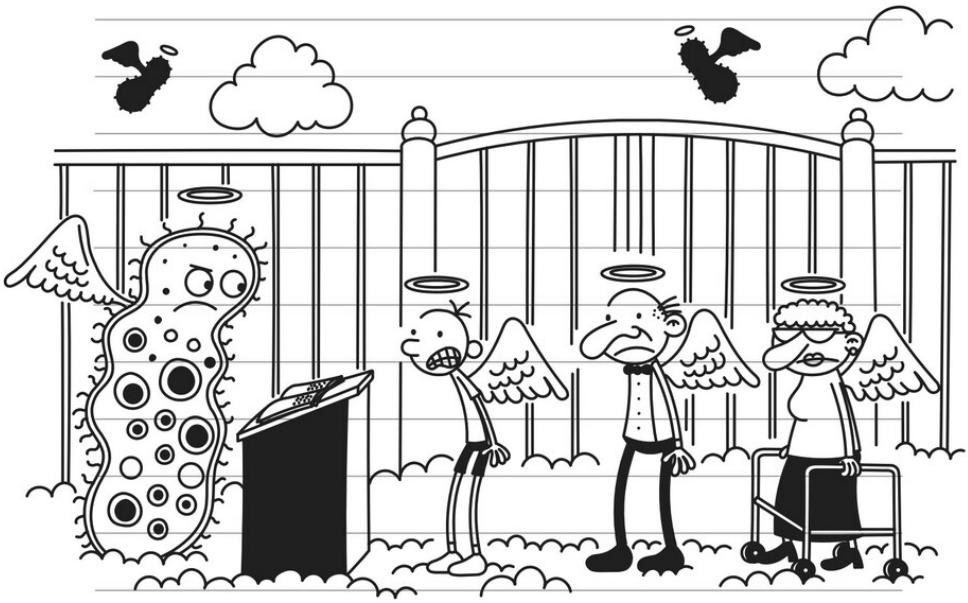
Rowley's serious about this nonviolence thing, and he won't even hurt a bug. In fact, I had to stop walking to school with him because he takes way too long, especially after it starts to rain.



It's not just worms, though. It's microbes and amoebas, too. And Rowley won't set foot on the locker room floor, because he's worried he'll accidentally kill something.



Don't ask me how many microbes I've stepped on in my lifetime. I only hope when you get to Heaven those things aren't the ones in charge. Because if they are, I could be in trouble.



But it's not just in real life where Rowley's worried about hurting someone or something. It's in make-believe, too.

Me and Rowley play this role-playing fantasy game called Magick and Monsters, and Rowley's character is named Targor Ironhide, who's a dwarf warrior.

My character is a wizard named Snorrek the Wicked, and the two of us have slain a lot of Dark Orcs over the years.



After Rowley started taking karate, I guess he got uncomfortable with all the orc-slaying. So he retired Targor Ironhide and created a new character, a druid named Sarmon Hollowind.

At first I didn't mind, because I thought a druid could use mind powers as a weapon.

But this guy didn't have any powers at ALL, and he spent most of his time healing the creatures we were supposed to be FIGHTING.

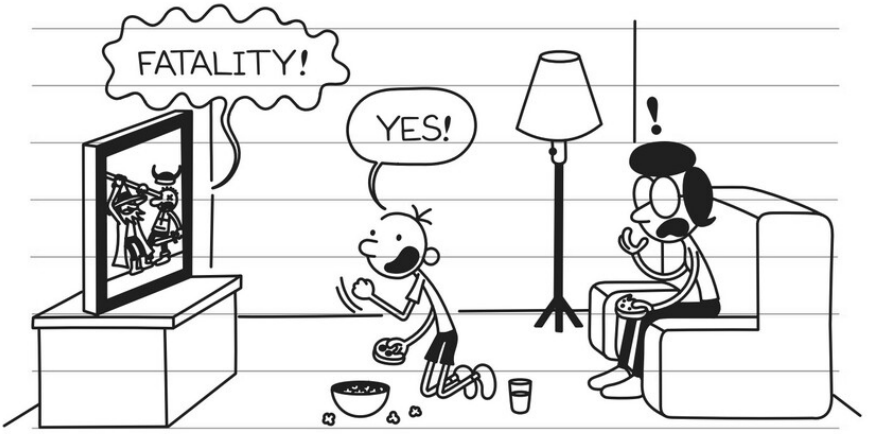


After a while, Magick and Monsters wasn't fun anymore, so I quit playing. And even though I'm not a fan of the new Rowley, sometimes I wish I could tune things out the way he does.



Saturday

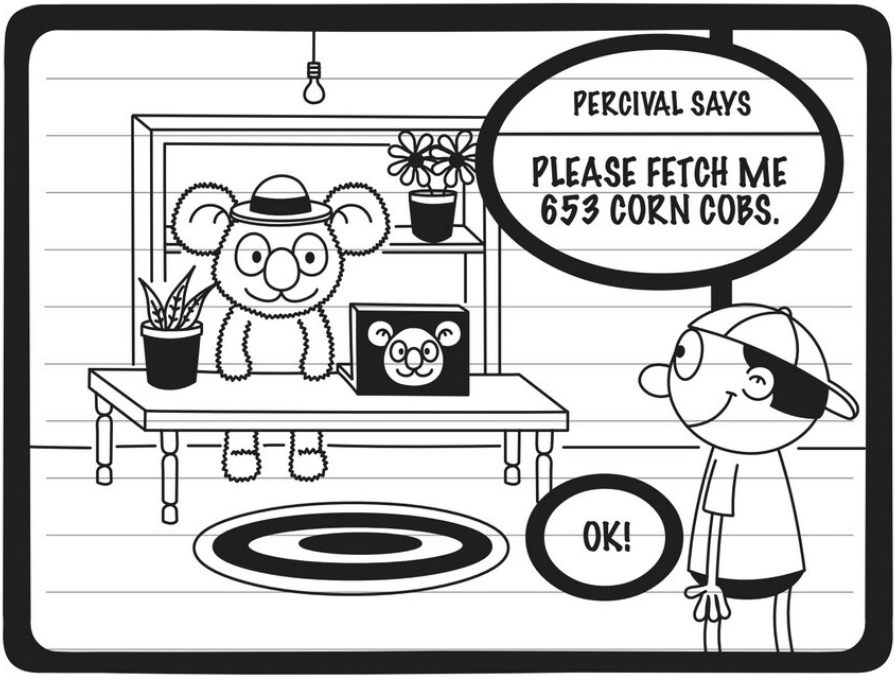
Ever since Rowley joined karate, I've had to play my fighting video games solo. But recently I asked Mom to play with me, and I made the mistake of WINNING.



That made Mom ban every video game with any kind of violence in it, which is pretty much everything I own. That means I've had to go back to playing my OLD games, which aren't as much fun as I remembered.

The best one I could find was a game called Critter Crossing, where you create a house and pay for stuff like furniture and artwork by doing these random tasks for other characters.

But don't ask me why I ever thought that doing chores for a koala bear named Percival Pookie was a good way to spend my time.

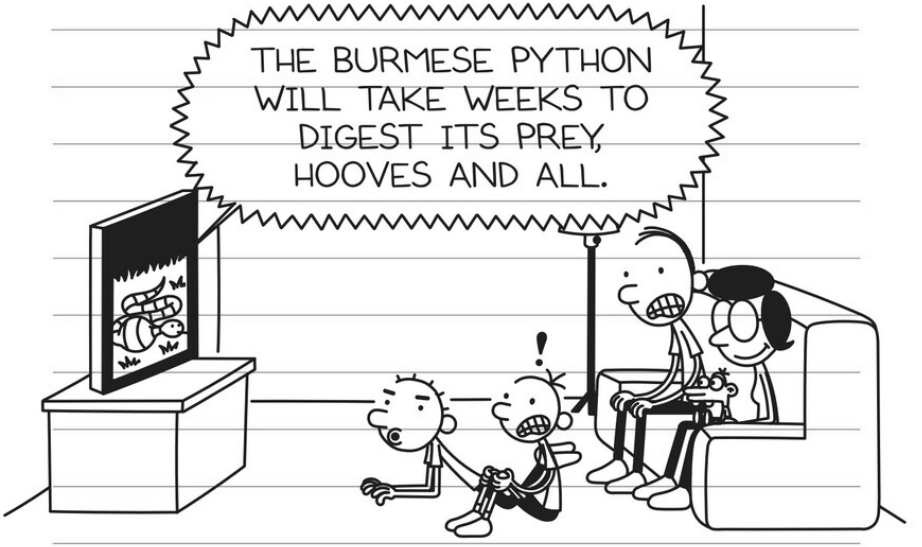


Mom's ban went way beyond video games, though. I'm not even allowed to watch TV shows with any violence in them, and neither is anyone ELSE in the family.

In fact, she made a rule that all the television we watch has to be educational.

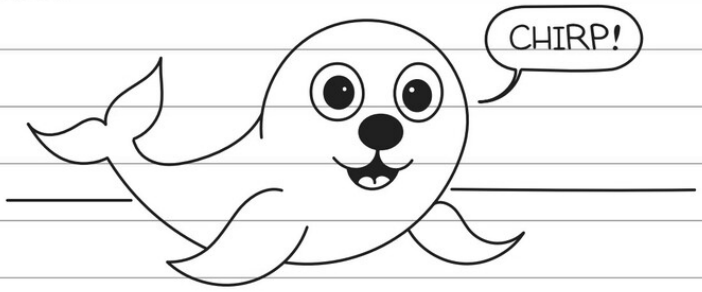
But the only educational channel the whole family could agree on is the National Wildlife Channel, which has a bunch of shows about animals.

The crazy thing is, some of those shows are WAY more violent than anything in my video games. And I've been having nightmares ever since I saw an episode where a giant snake ate a full-grown goat.

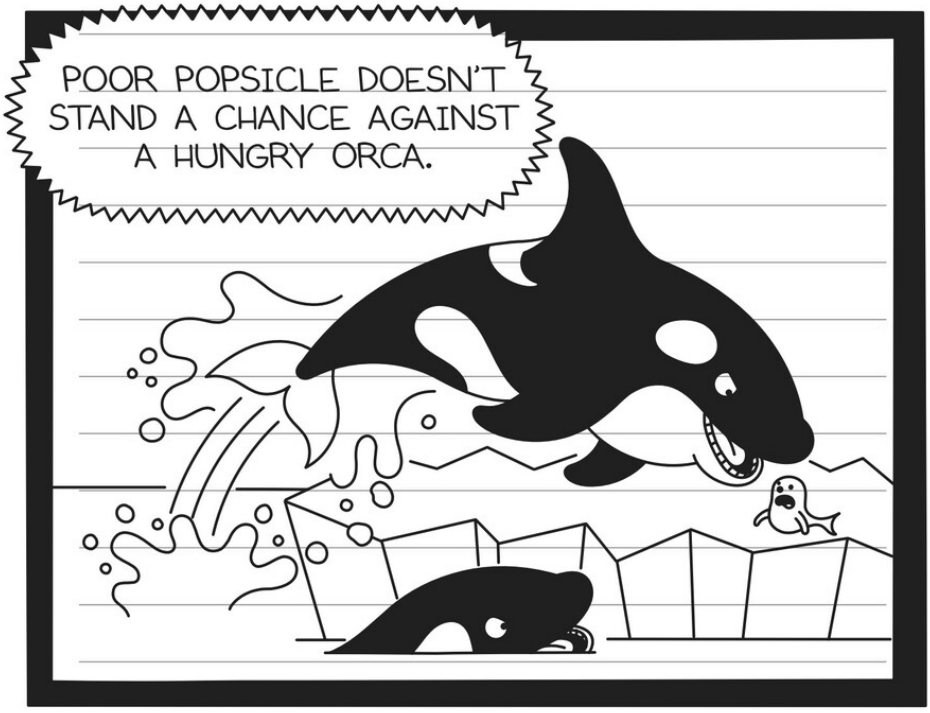


What I've learned from watching the National Wildlife Channel is that you should never get too attached to any of the animals, because the chances of them making it out of an episode alive are pretty slim.

One time, we watched a show about seals living in Antarctica, and the star was a pup named Popsicle.



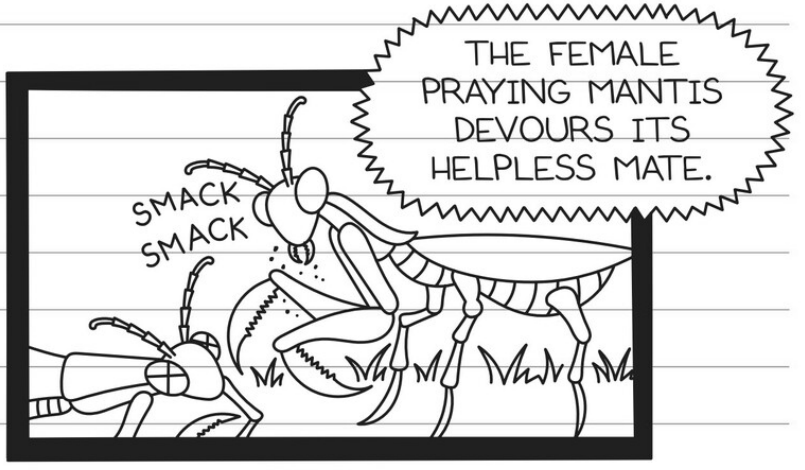
But when Popsicle was ready to take his first swim, I had forgotten what usually happens in these things.



After 9:00 p.m., the National Wildlife Channel runs shows about insects, which are even worse than the ones with animals. And I'm pretty sure the reason they're on so late is because they're totally inappropriate for children.

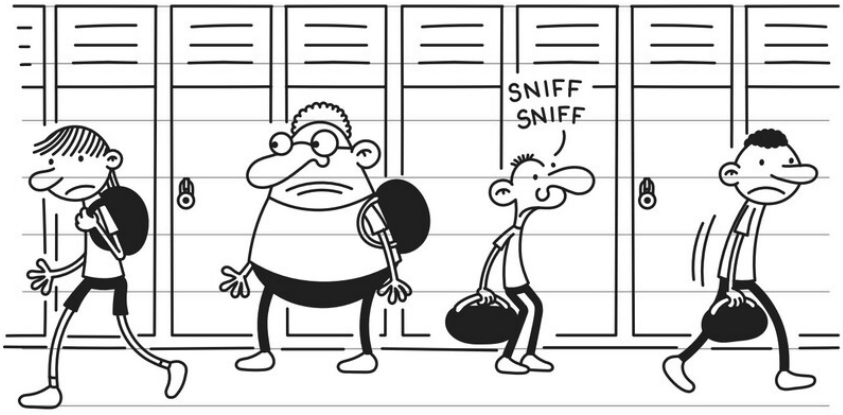


Those shows are worse than any horror movie I've ever seen. In fact, one episode about praying mantises made me decide I'm never getting married.



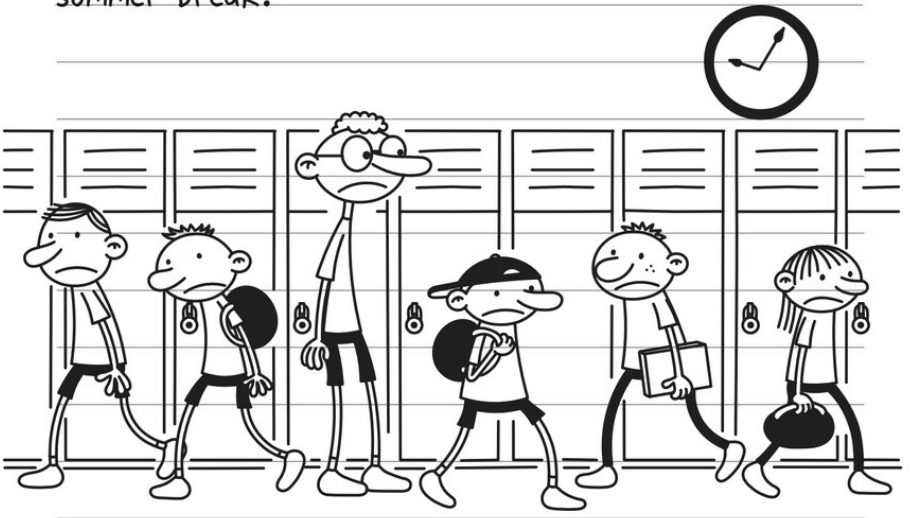
The shows I like the best on the National Wildlife Channel are the ones set in the African savanna, where there are a bunch of animals like lions and giraffes and rhinos. But the more I watch those shows, the more I realize that middle school isn't so different from the animal kingdom.

On the savanna, some animals work together to survive. I learned that the reason why zebras and wildebeests hang out with each other is because zebras have great eyesight and wildebeests have a great sense of smell, so together they can sense when a predator is approaching. And that's probably the reason Jeffrey Swanson and Jake McGough have always been such good friends.



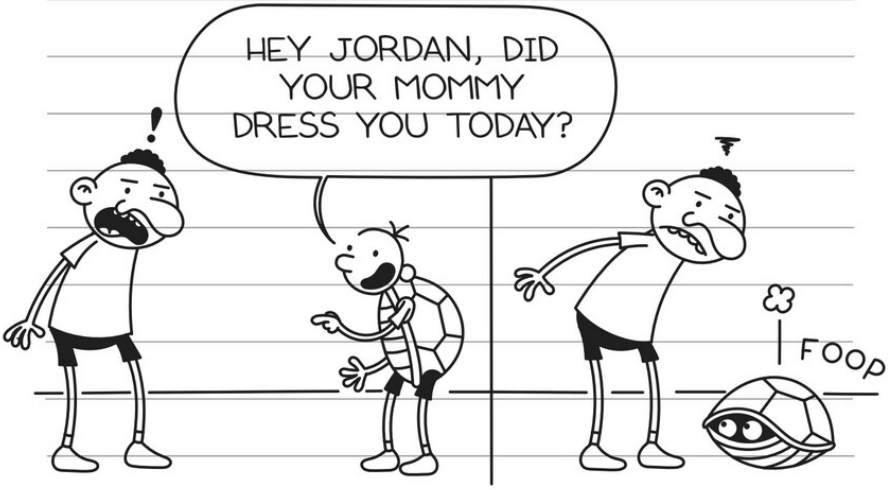
Over millions of years, animals have come up with all kinds of adaptations to survive. Snakes developed poisonous venom, and rhinos grew horns to fight off their enemies.

Giraffes sprouted long necks so they could reach leaves on high-up branches and see predators coming from long distances. Which could explain why Chad Laffley grew eight inches over the summer break.

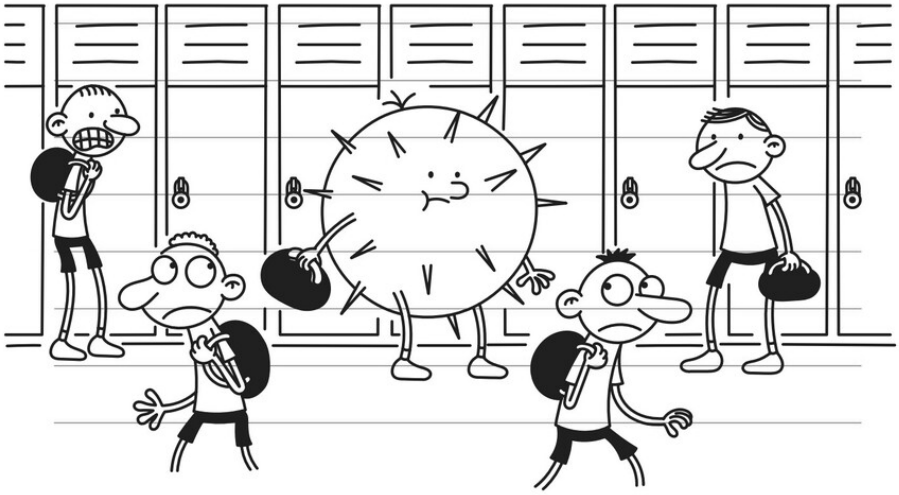


Lots of animals have scales and quills and other stuff to protect them. But if I could be an animal, I'd be a turtle, because nothing beats having a shell you can hide inside.

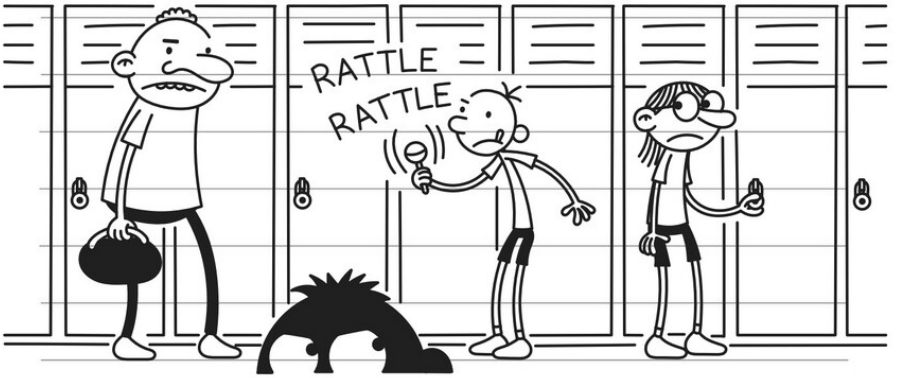
If I had a shell, I'd do a TON of trash-talking in school because I could get away with it.



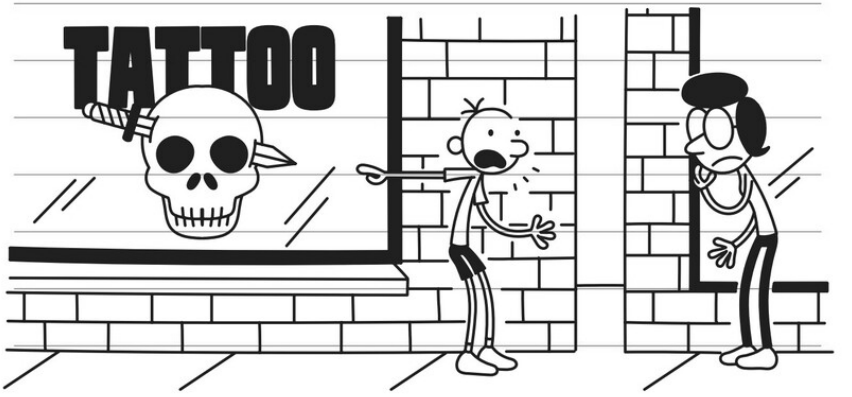
Or maybe it would be better to have SPIKES, like a puffer fish. Because that would give me some extra breathing room in the hallways.



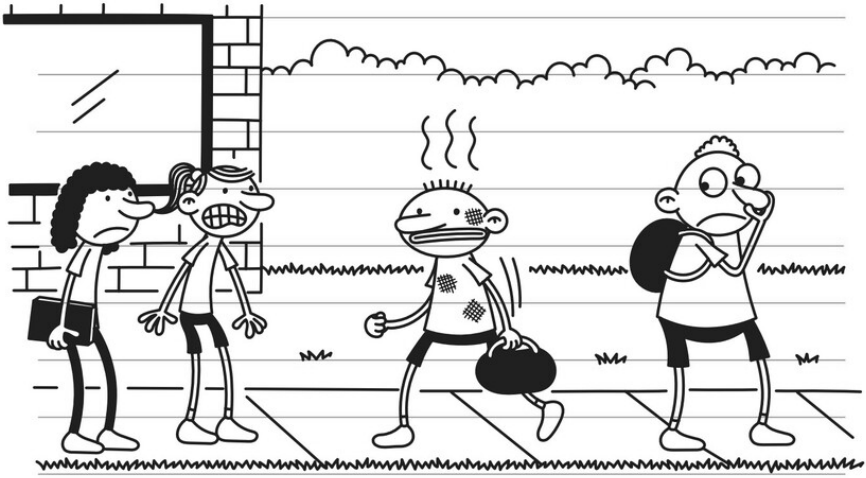
Some animals have ways of getting predators to back off, like when a rattlesnake shakes its tail. That gave me the idea to bring one of Manny's old baby toys to school with me, but I get the feeling it's more annoying than intimidating.



Some moths and caterpillars have markings that make them look terrifying to other animals. But no matter how many times I ask my mom to let me get a face tattoo, I can never get her to say yes.



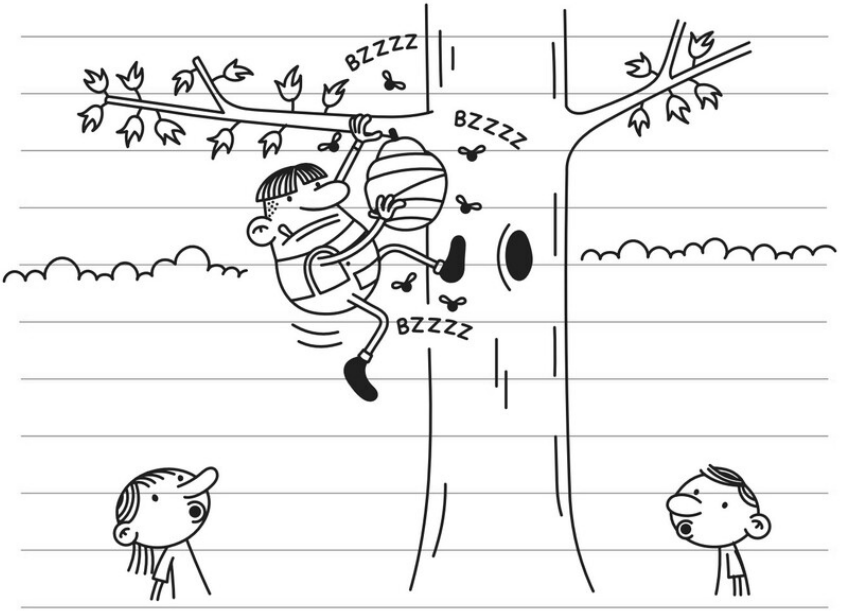
Another adaptation animals use to drive predators away is being able to produce a terrible smell, like a skunk. And I'm pretty sure the reason Ellis George rolls around in a dumpster every morning is to give himself an extra layer of protection.



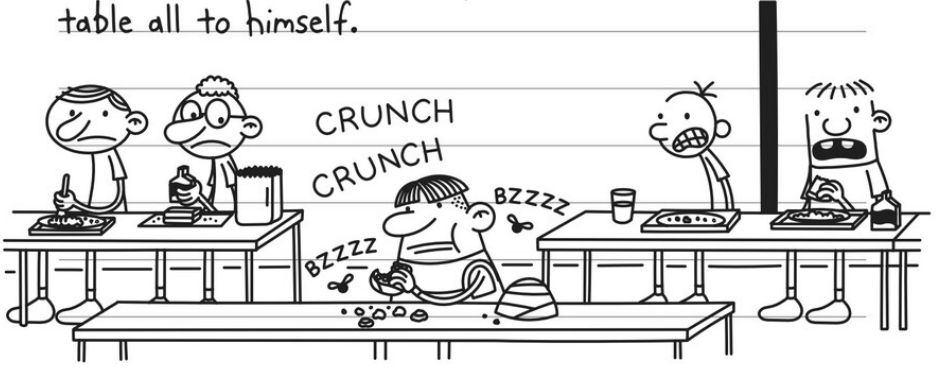
But the kid that NOBODY messes with is named Aaron Nicklesize, who everyone calls Honey Badger.

A honey badger is a kind of weasel with really thick skin, and they're totally FEARLESS. The other night I saw an episode on the National Wildlife Channel where a honey badger got bit by a venomous snake, then just shrugged it off like nothing happened.

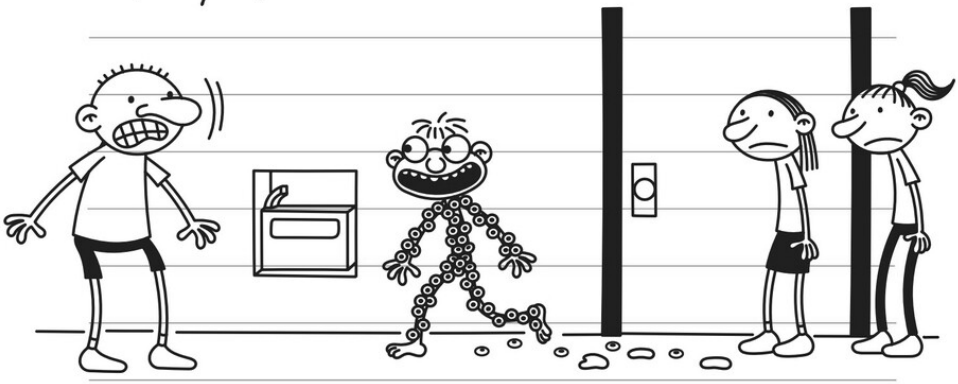
Well, Aaron Nicklesize got his nickname for a reason. Last week, he climbed up a tree and ripped a beehive off a branch, and got stung about fifty times doing it.



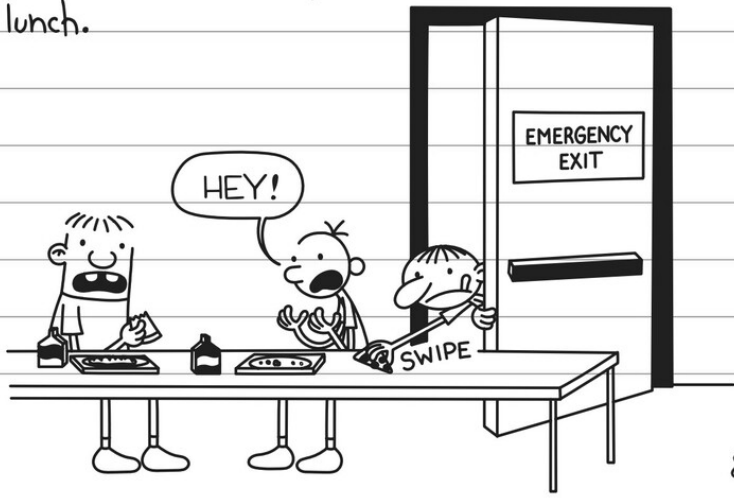
But Aaron didn't even FLINCH. And it's things like that which explain why he's got a cafeteria table all to himself.



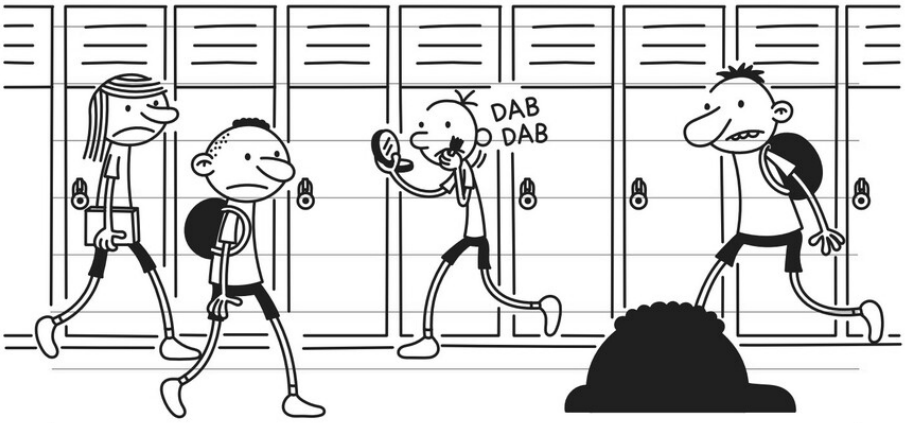
Some animals get predators to stay away just by being WEIRD, like jellyfish and horseshoe crabs. Our school's version of that kind of creature is Fregley, who sometimes comes to school covered in maple syrup and Cheerios.



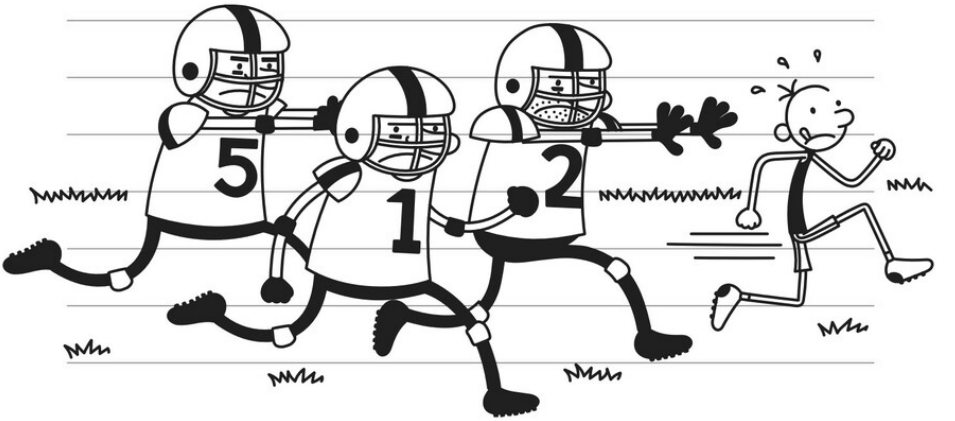
Animals like rabbits and deer have eyes on the sides of their heads so they can see what's going on all around them. And if I had eyes like that I wouldn't have gotten my pizza slice stolen last week at lunch.



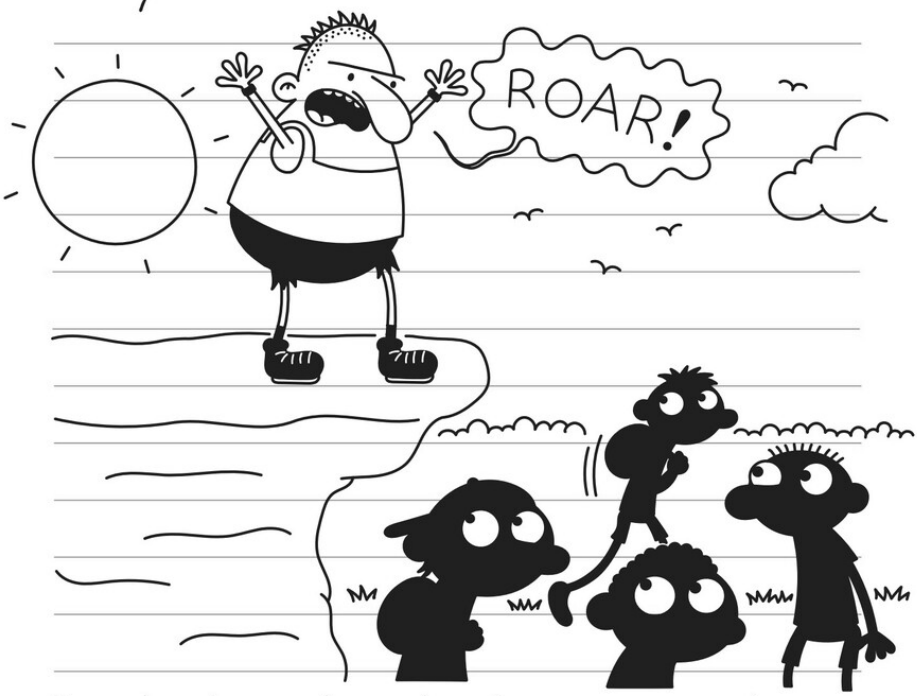
I actually started bringing my mom's little makeup mirror to school so I can catch people sneaking up behind me. And as a bonus, now I've got nice coloring on my cheeks.



Some animals like gazelles and antelopes survive because of their SPEED, which is why I'm thinking about joining the track team when I get to high school.



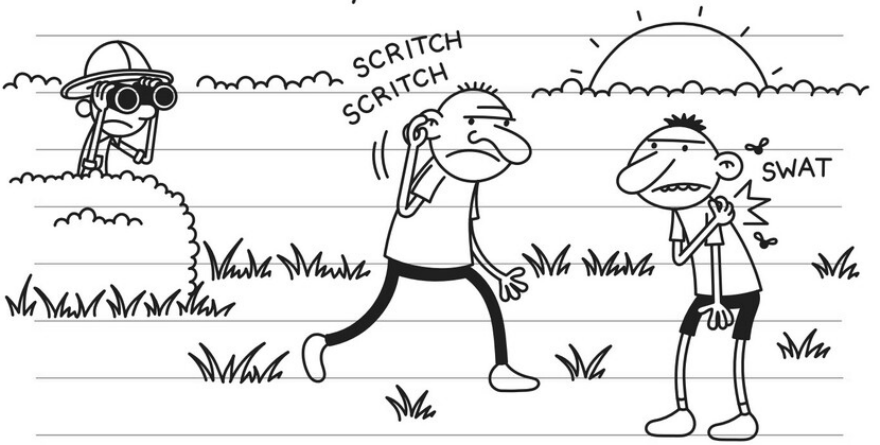
Speed is no match for POWER, though, and that's what makes bullies the lions of middle school. Because if you're not at the top of the food chain, then you're what's for lunch.



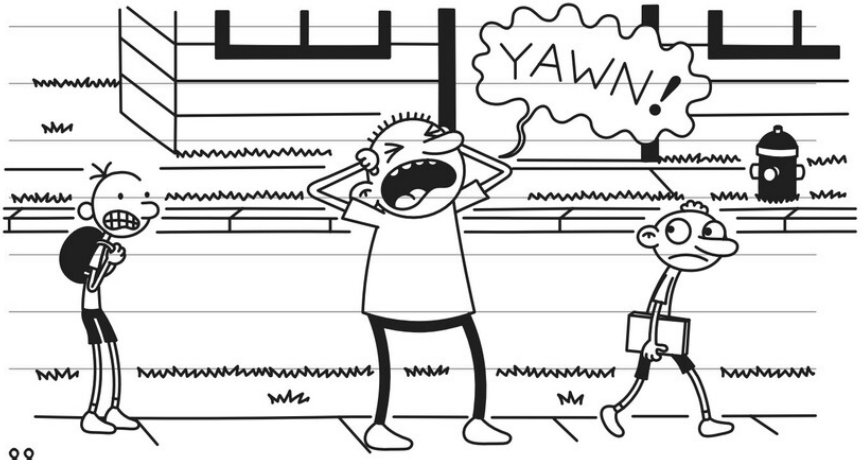
But there's one thing that beats power, and that's INTELLIGENCE. The whole reason human beings rule the planet is because of our big brains.

And that got me thinking. Since I'm never gonna be the toughest or biggest kid, maybe there's a different way to survive middle school.

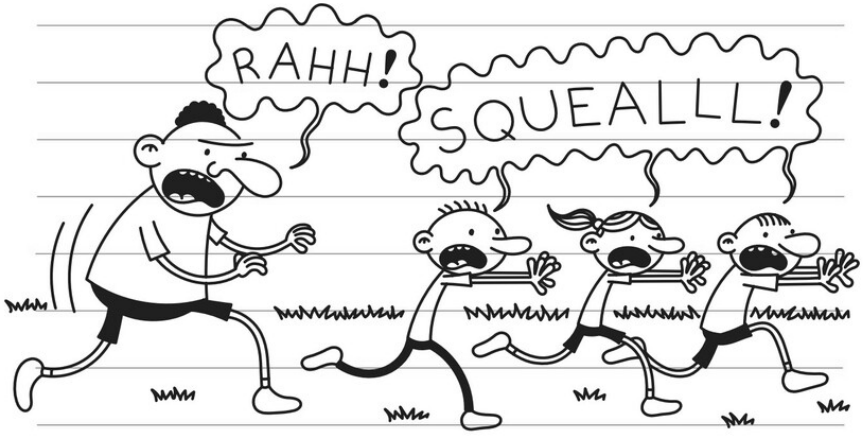
I decided the way I'm gonna do that is by studying bullies, the same way a zoologist studies animals. Because if I can understand the way bullies BEHAVE, maybe I can outsmart them.



As soon as I started thinking this way, I began noticing things I hadn't before. For one thing, most bullies are sluggish in the morning. But if they ever discover coffee, then the rest of us are in trouble.



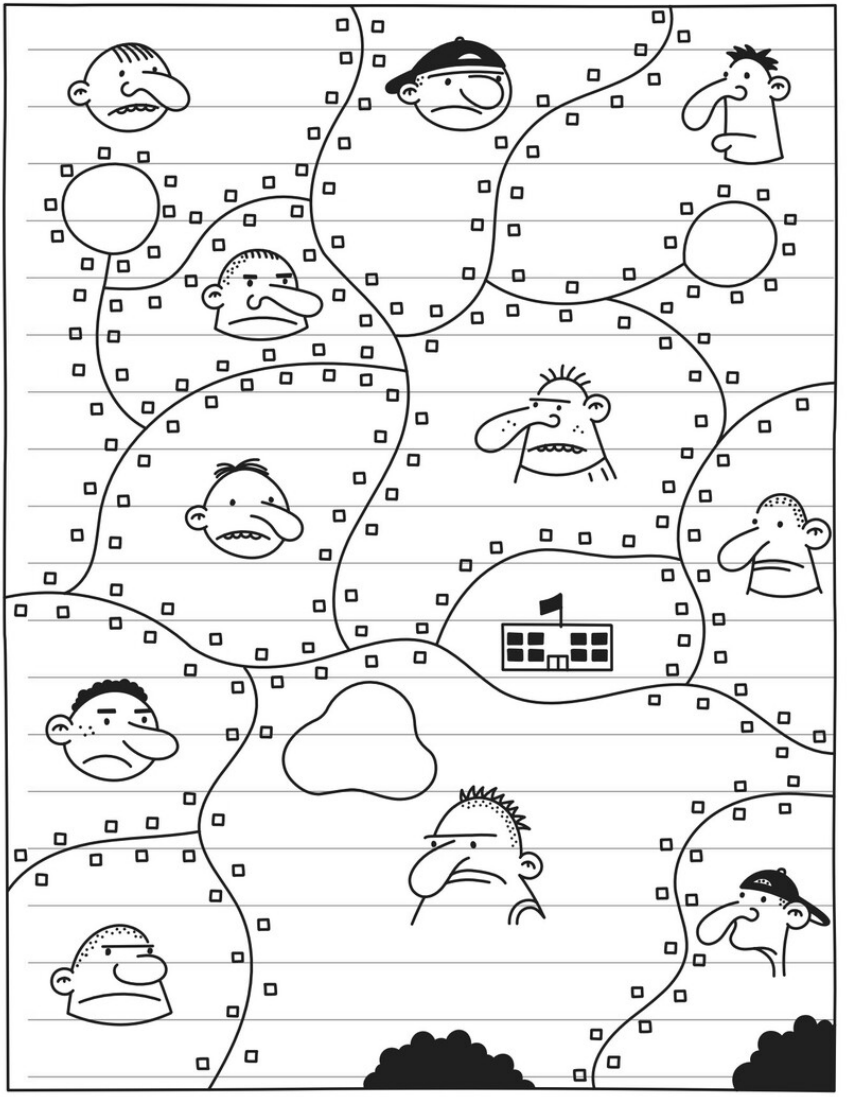
The most dangerous time of the school day is at recess, which comes just before lunch. That's when bullies are hangry and they're on the hunt.



But even a bully is smart enough not to challenge a threat that's BIGGER than them, which is why I always stick close to the recess monitor.



I've discovered that bullies have their own territories, which is good to know when you're trying to plan out your route to school.



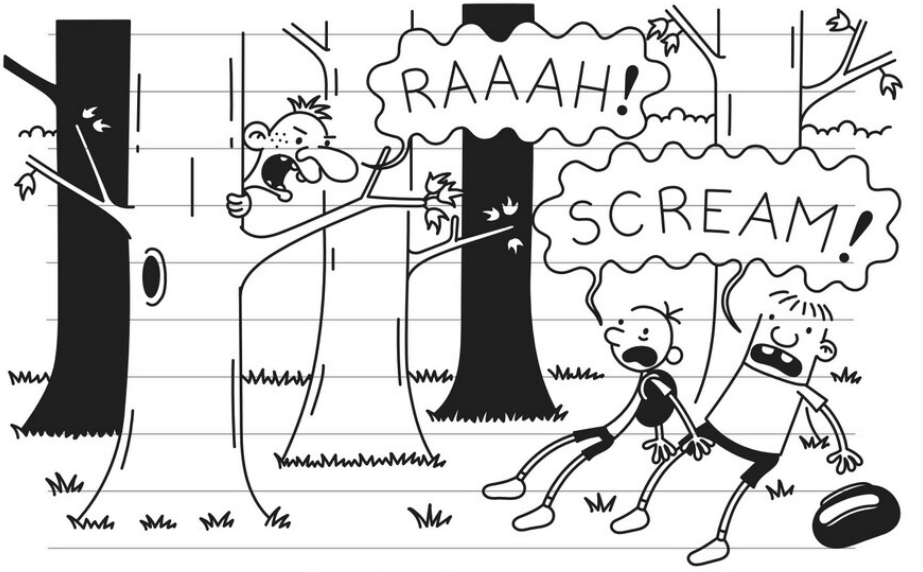
Sometimes bullies have disputes over hunting grounds, and the lines are constantly shifting. This week, Brian Kersey kicked Stefen Cory out of his territory, so Stefen had to go looking for a new area to take over.

Unfortunately for him, all the good spots were already taken, and the only available space was the stretch of sidewalk in front of the police station. But that's not exactly a great location for a bully.



Every once in a while a bully will lose their territory and can't replace it with a new one.

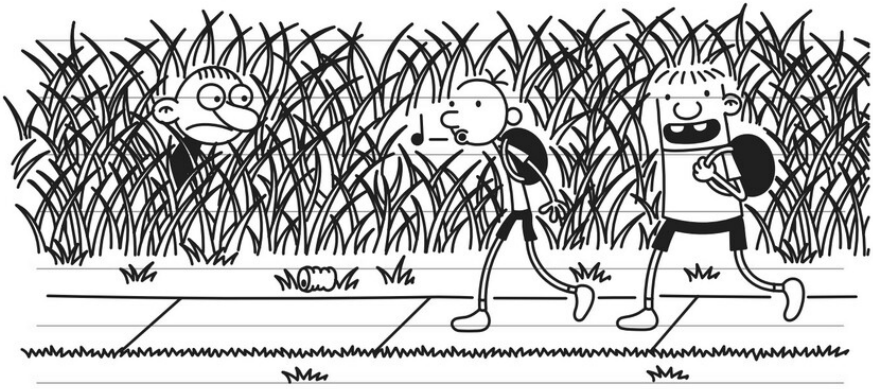
Finn Devlin ruled the woods behind the school for as long as I can remember, which was why we couldn't use it as a shortcut.



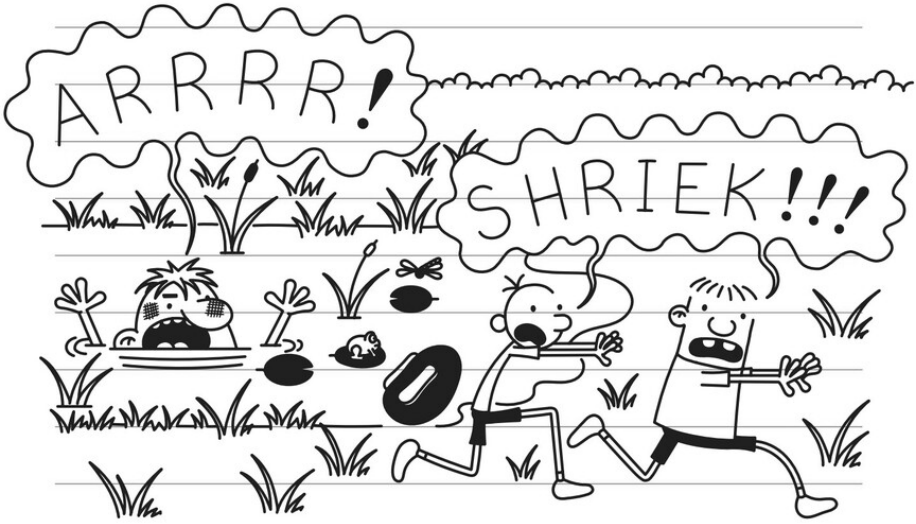
But a developer bought the land, so now Finn's got nowhere to go.



Every bully's got their own natural habitat. Reed Cotter likes grassy areas, and by the time you notice him, it's too late.



Grass bullies like Reed are always covered in ticks, and mud bullies are always filthy. But if you ask me, the worst variety is a swamp bully, which is what Bennie Kott is.



Bullies have their own INDOOR territories carved out, too. Will Brody controls the zone between lockers 55 and 77 on the second floor. But Todd Brown's territory starts at locker 78 and goes all the way to locker 94.



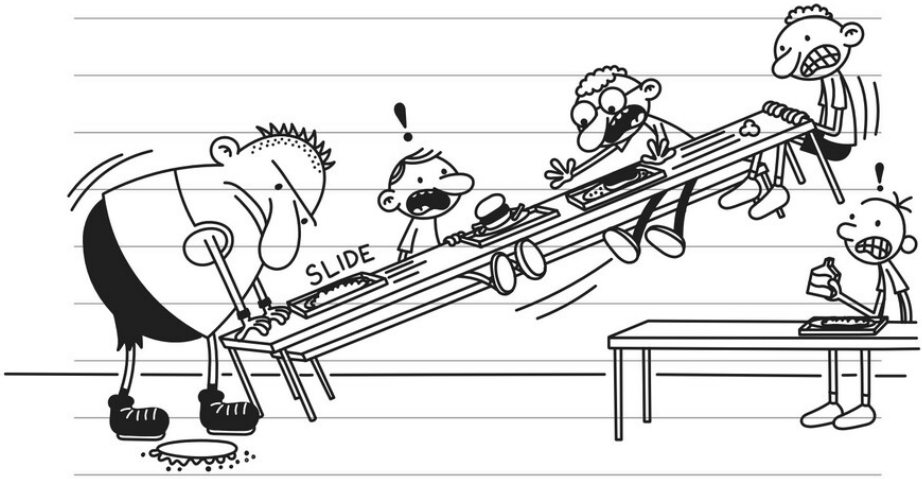
Even the cafeteria is sliced up into different territories. Most bullies control two or three tables, but a bully as big as Ryland Rynherd can control as many as five.

I'm at one of Dexter Platt's tables, and unfortunately he has the same taste in snacks as me. But I'm kind of tired of giving my oatmeal cream pies to a kid like that every day.

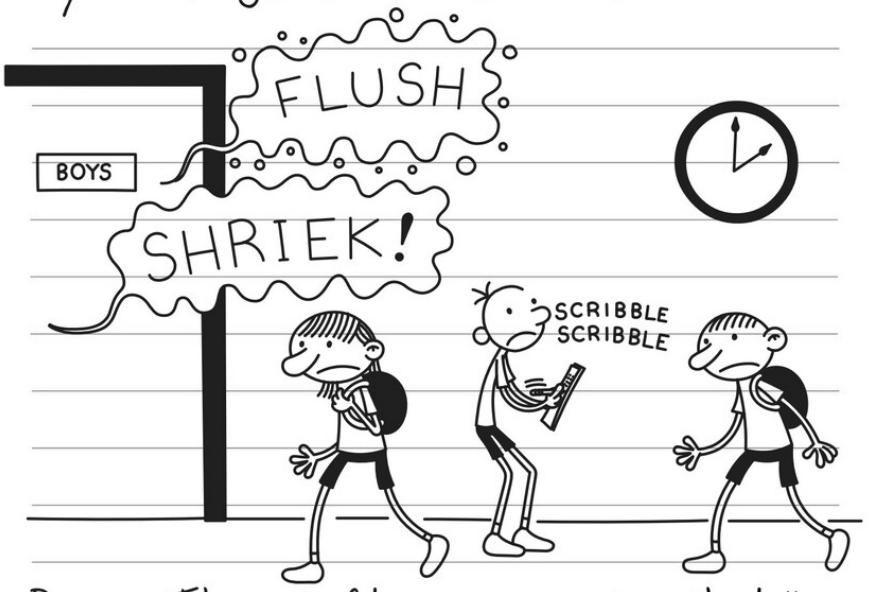
I heard Doug Botcher likes apple slices, and I'd be happy to hand MINE over at lunch. But when I tried getting traded to one of Doug's tables, Dexter wasn't having it.



I guess I should be glad I'm not at one of Zander's tables, because he's got a big appetite that goes way beyond SNACKS.



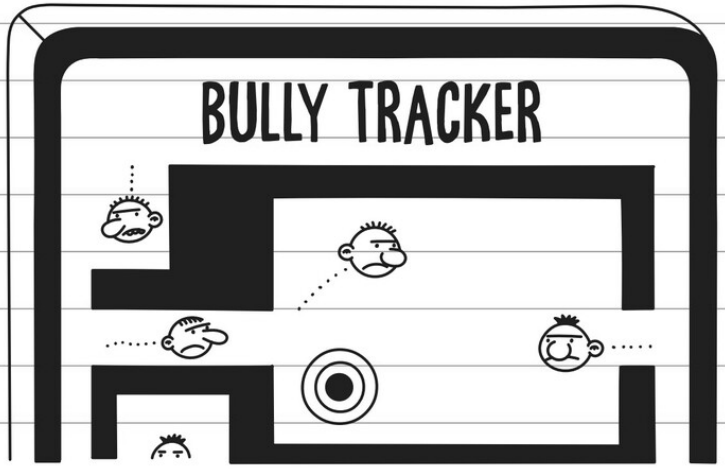
One thing that's surprised me is how predictable most bullies are. And I can tell you exactly when Quintin Sharp is gonna give a kid a swirly in the boys' room, right down to the second.



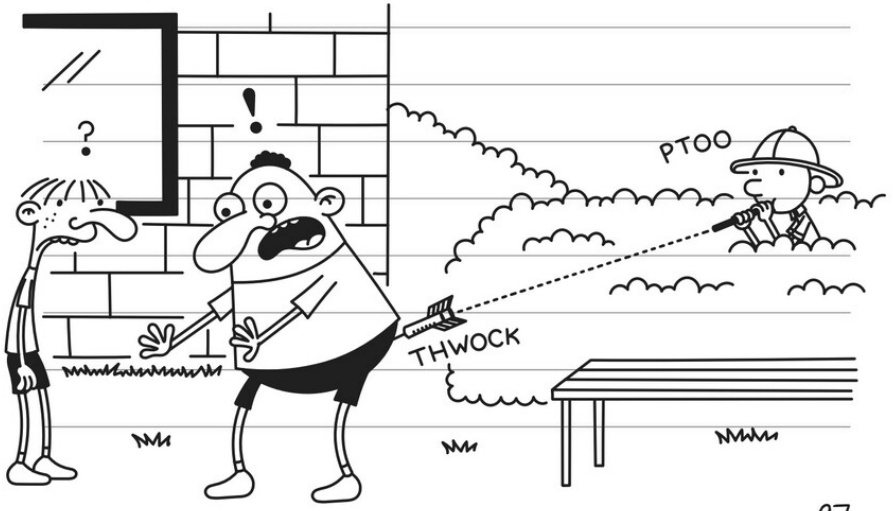
By now, I've sort of become an expert on the bullies at my school, and I've collected a ton of data. But it's too much information to carry in my head, so I've been writing everything down and putting it in Rowley's old Magick and Monsters binder.

Having all this knowledge is nice, but the thing I WISH I had was a way to track bullies in real time, so I knew which areas to avoid.

Then I could create an app and use it on my mom's old phone.



The way zoologists track animals is by shooting them with a tranquilizer dart and then tagging them. But that would be a little tricky, and it probably isn't legal anyway.



Tuesday

I decided to make things more official with all the information I've been gathering. So I typed everything up on a computer and printed it out.

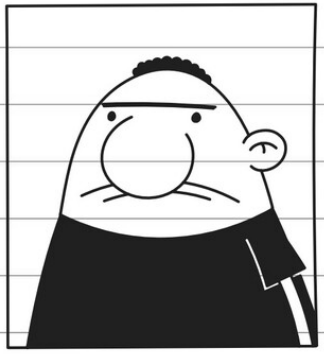


I'm not sharing this stuff with anyone else, though, because if other kids in my grade know what I know, then I won't have any advantage. Besides, everyone needs to do their own research.

I'm actually worried I've got a little TOO much information in my binder, because I'm starting to have trouble closing it. And that's because I created an individual page for every bully.

I even created a power-ranking system, like they have for video game characters. So now I know how the bullies compare to each other.

Name: Terry Goff



Power ranking:

★★★★☆

Attacks:

Atomic wedgie, tripping, poking

Known habitats:

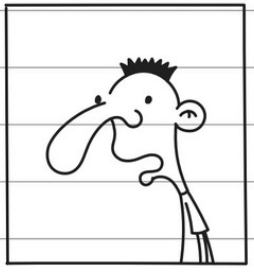
First-floor bathroom, outside music room, monkey bars

Weaknesses:

Fear of worms, poor balance

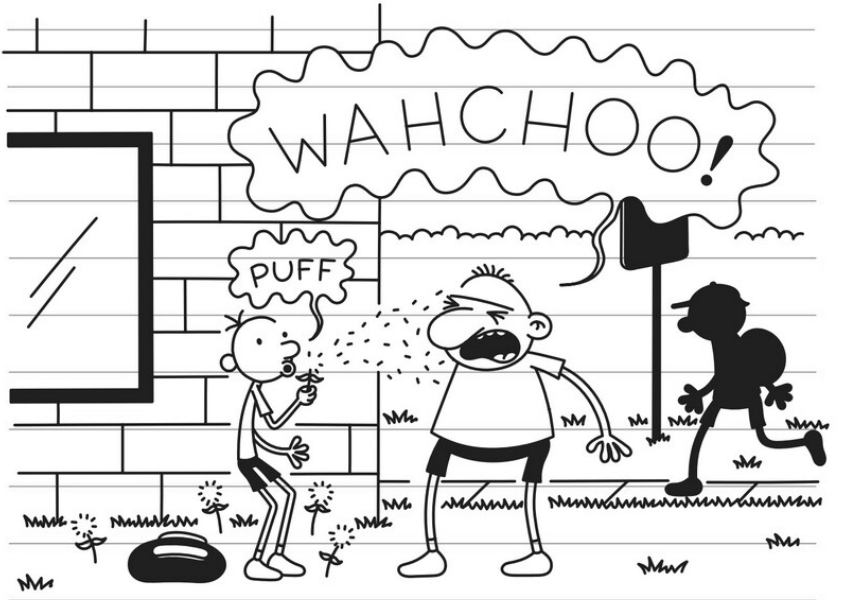
Sidekick:

Eric Deacon



I started keeping track of weaknesses, too, because if you know a bully's vulnerabilities, it can really help.

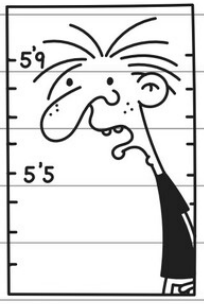
In fact, I just found out that Ryland Rynherd is allergic to pollen, which could come in handy if he ever corners me near the dandelion patch behind the school.



I've also added a new section to the back of each sheet, which is a list of a bully's CRIMES. Because someone should be keeping track of this stuff, and the school's too busy to keep complete records.

But it's taking me a lot longer than I thought it would. Tonight I focused on Mac Duffy's rap sheet for this year, and I only got up to March.

MAC DUFFY RAP SHEET



JANUARY 3:
THREW ICE BALL AT SAFETY PATROL

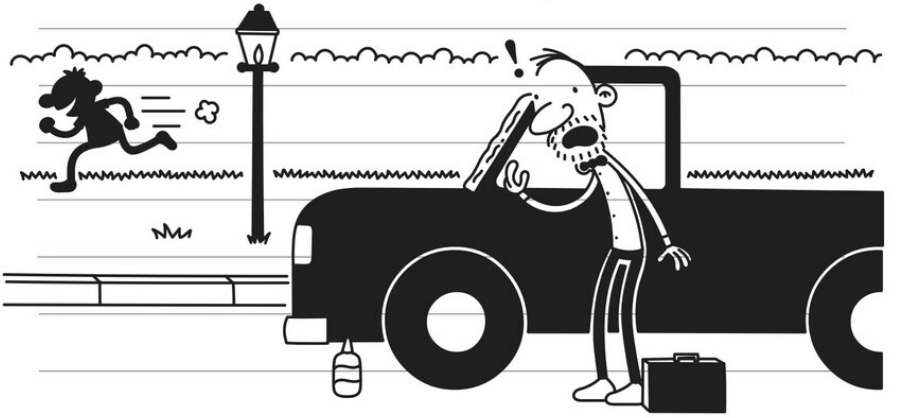
JANUARY 7:
STUFFED SNOW IN VICE PRINCIPAL ROY'S BOOTS

FEBRUARY 1:
DREW RUDE DRAWINGS ON VALENTINE'S DANCE POSTERS

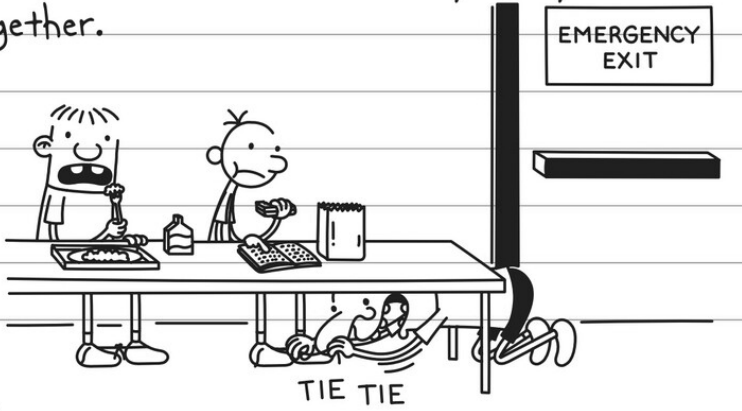
FEBRUARY 14:
PUT RAISINS IN VALENTINE'S DANCE FRUIT PUNCH BOWL

MARCH 1:
PUT VICE PRINCIPAL ROY'S BOW TIE IN TOILET

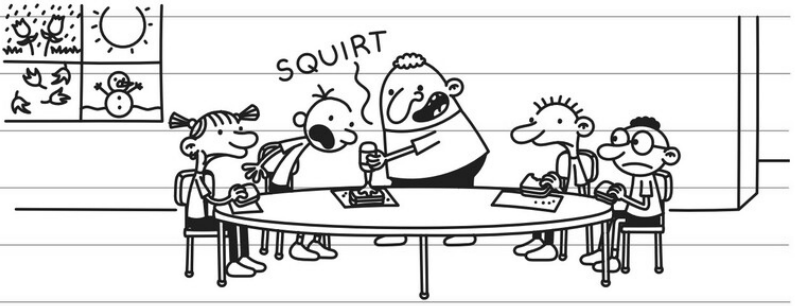
Some bullies like Gerry Stills have gotten into so much trouble that I had to staple an EXTRA sheet to their page. But I wanted to make sure someone had a record of him being the one who spread mustard on the windshield of Vice Principal Roy's pickup truck.



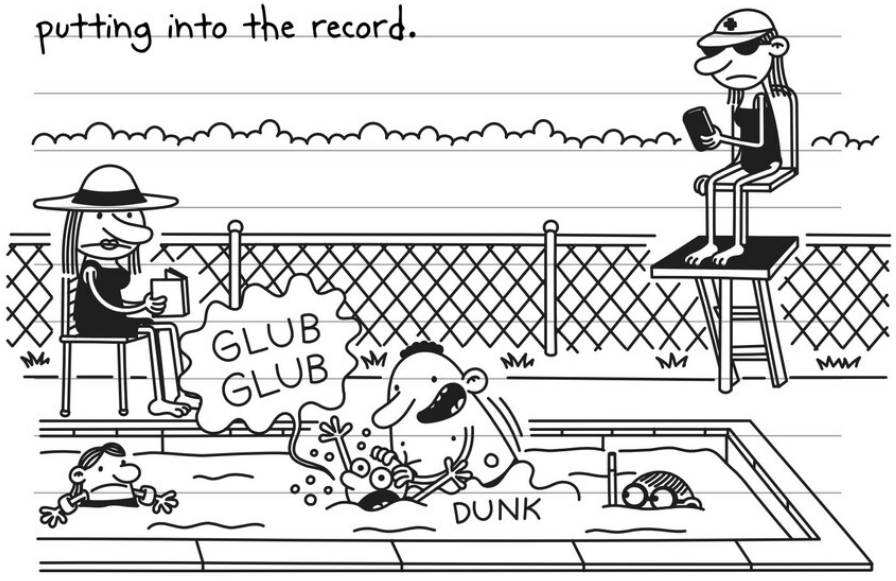
Most of the crimes I listed were ones I'd heard about, but a few items come from firsthand knowledge. And just today I added an entry in Jacob Johnson's record for tying my shoes together.



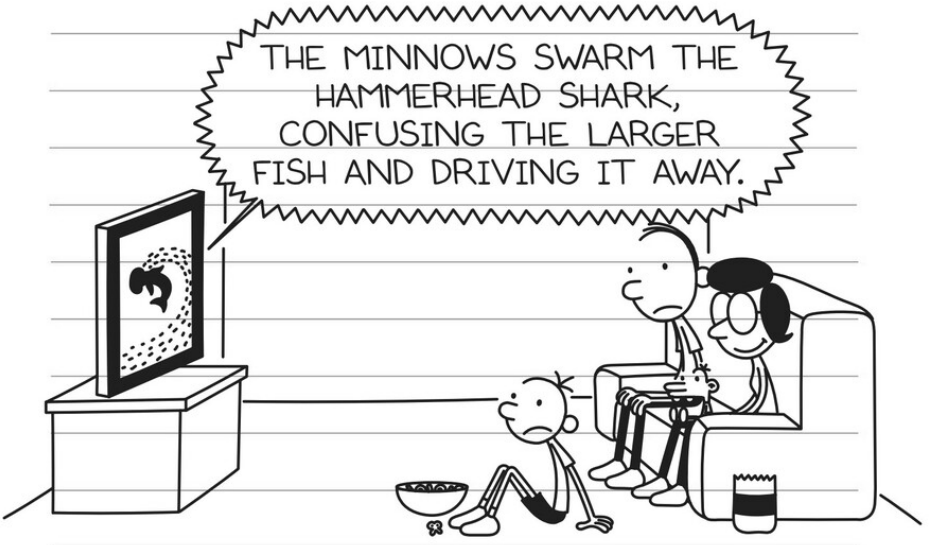
When it comes to a bully's crimes, I've got a memory like an ELEPHANT. The first item on Jason Schwartz's rap sheet is from back in first grade, when he emptied out a tube of glitter glue on my grilled cheese sandwich.



I don't limit my reporting to the school year, though. There are a few incidents that happened over the summer that I think are also worth putting into the record.



One of the games we play at the pool is called Sharks and Minnows. And a few nights ago there was an episode on the National Wildlife Channel about how schools of little fish can work together to fight back against a predator like a shark.



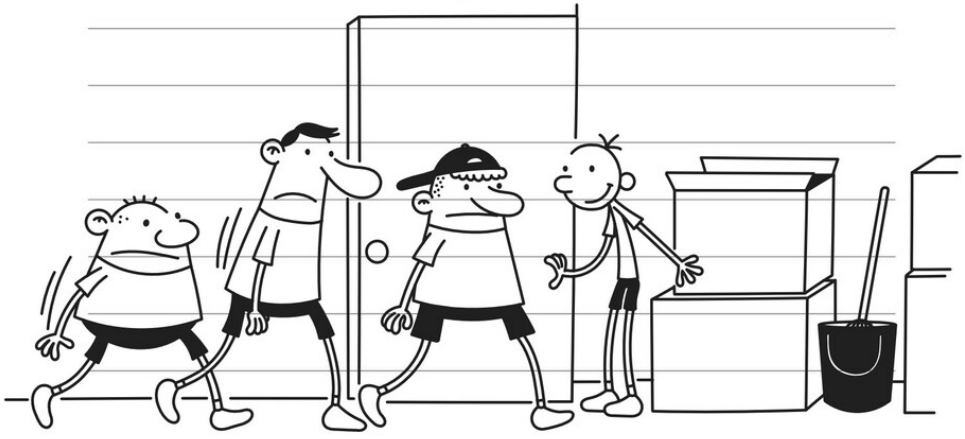
That got me thinking. The reason the bullies get away with doing what they do is by singling out the smaller kids.

So I started wondering what might happen if a bunch of kids like me banded together, the way minnows do when they're being chased by a shark.

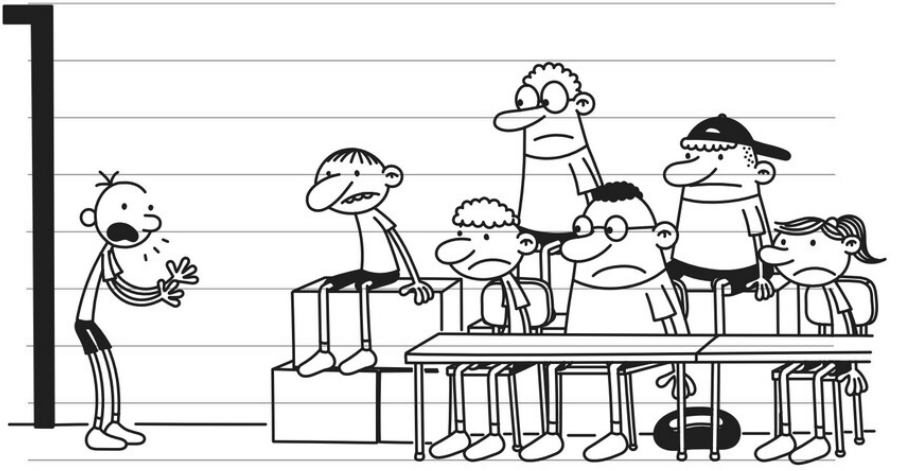
The thing is, I don't have a lot of friends who'd be on board with something like that. But then I had a genius idea, which was to start a club. I even brought in some sunflower seeds to make sure I attracted the right crowd.



Our first official meeting of the Birdwatching Club was after school today. But since all the good meeting spaces were booked by other clubs, the best we could get was a supply closet in the basement.



As soon as the last kid arrived, I shut the door behind me. Then I told them the truth, which was that this wasn't actually a birdwatching club.

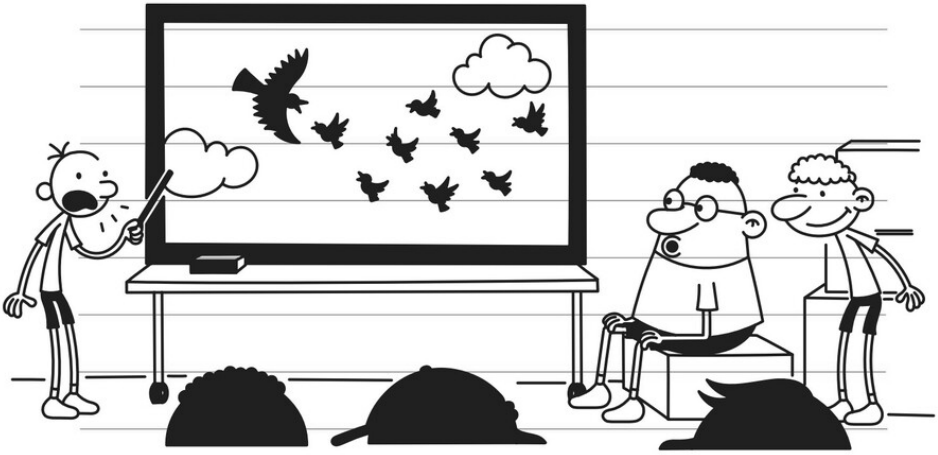


I almost lost half the room right there, because it turns out that these kids were into birds for REAL. But then I gave my pitch.

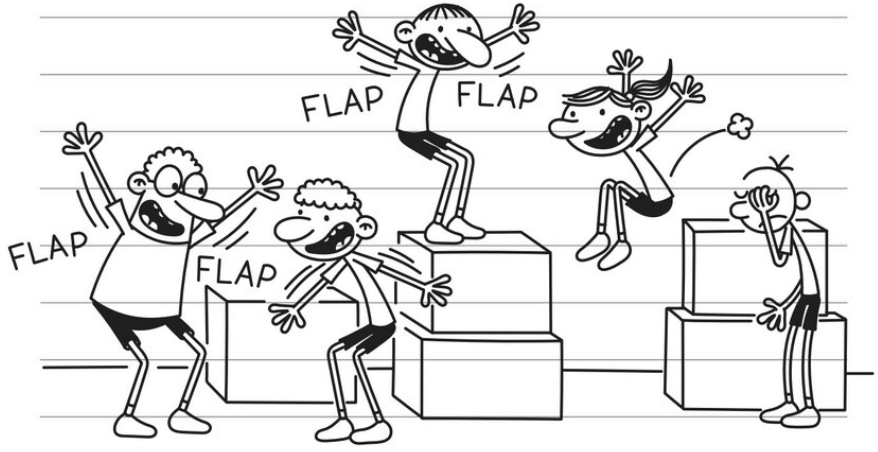
I told them how schools of fish work together to confuse predators, and that maybe we could do the same kind of thing with the bullies at school.

Nobody seemed too excited about that idea, though, so I tried a different angle.

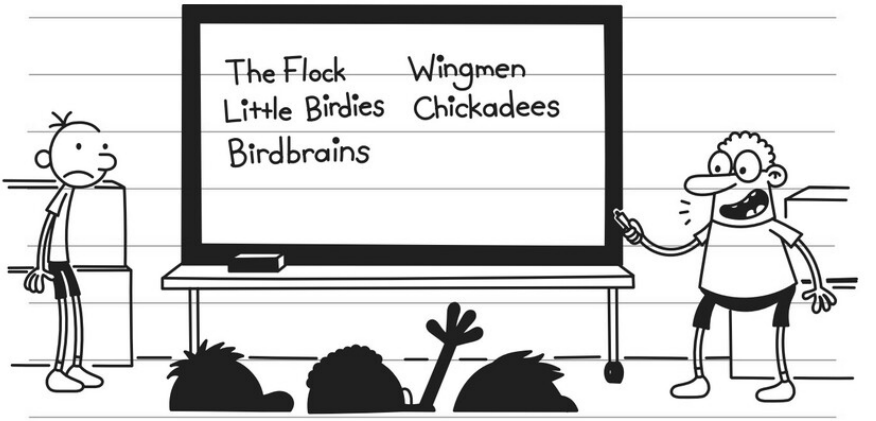
I changed it from sharks and minnows to hawks and sparrows, and all of a sudden everybody was totally on board.



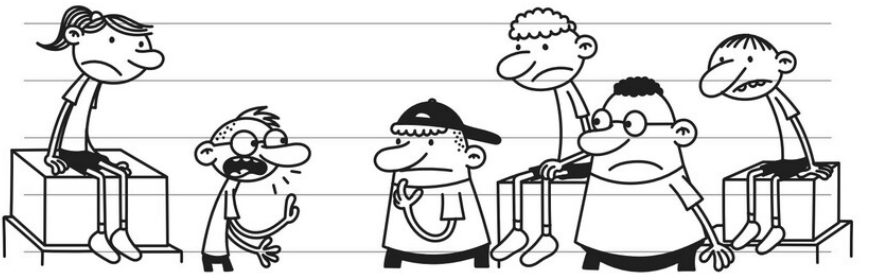
Once I started speaking their language, they were fired up, and it was kind of hard to get them to settle down.



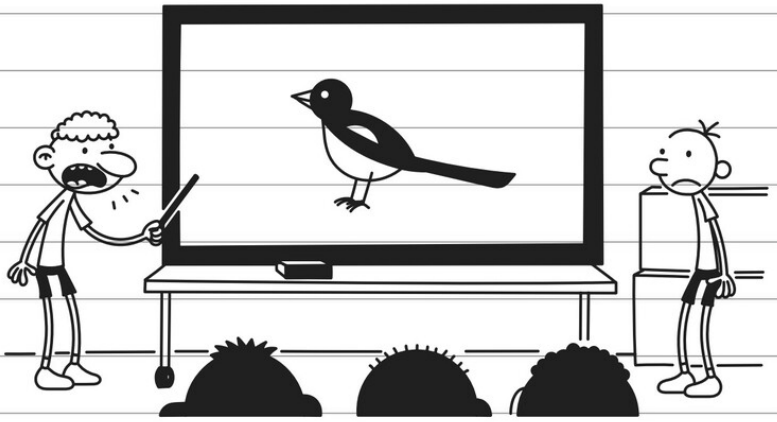
I told them if we were gonna do this, we needed to keep it a secret, so we'd have the element of surprise with the bullies. But Isaiah Goldman thought our group should have a cool name, and started brainstorming ideas for one with the group.



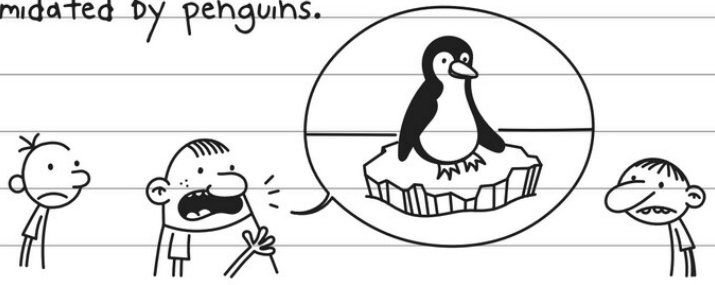
Nobody could agree on a name, so they started talking about UNIFORMS. Some kids wanted the colors to be yellow and brown, like sparrows. But then someone else said yellow and brown are bathroom colors, so that got ruled out.



Grant Thomas said he was colorblind, and we should just go with black and white for the uniform colors so everyone would feel included. Then Sheldon Lee said that some magpies are black and white, which made everybody feel good about things.

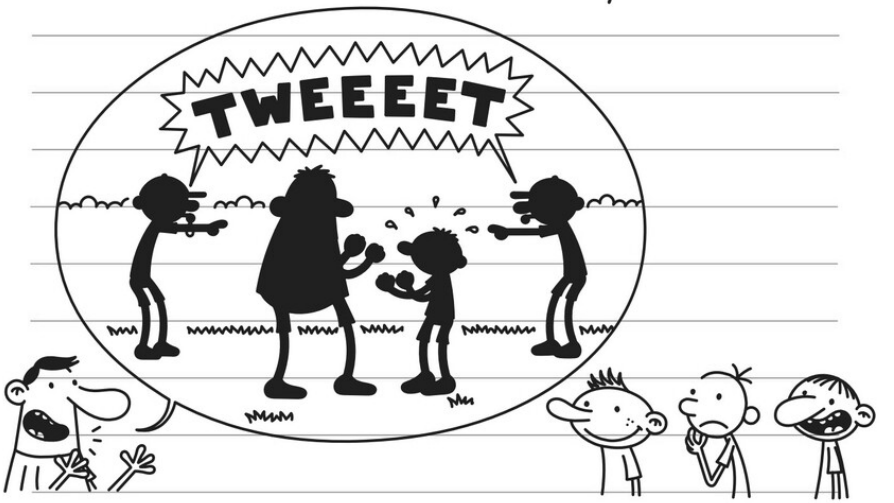


Then someone said black and white are also penguin colors, and that most bullies wouldn't be intimidated by penguins.



Someone ELSE said that black and white are referee colors, too, and even bullies respect referees.

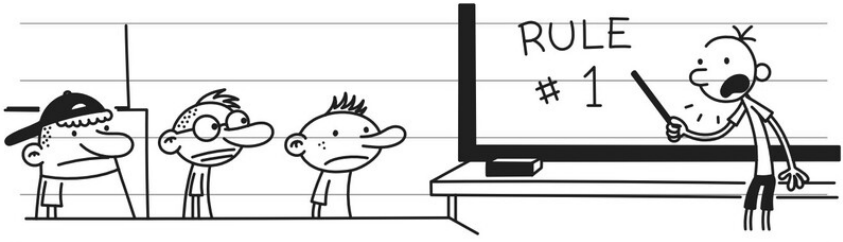
Then another kid said we could all wear ref uniforms and carry whistles with us to stop fights before they started. And even though it was the dumbest idea I'd ever heard, some kids actually liked it.



Then Robert Telly said we shouldn't have uniforms at all, and I was glad somebody had a little common sense. But then he said we should have leather jackets, like the guys in that movie with the dancing gangs.

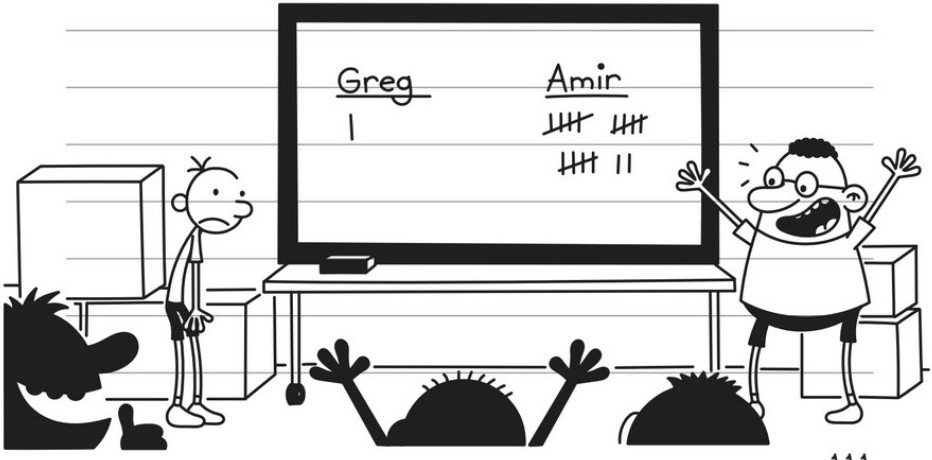
So we were back to the dancing gang thing again, and I knew the meeting was totally off the rails. I tried to get everyone to focus on coming up with a few rules we could all agree on instead.

I started with rule number one, which is that if the leader is attacked, all the other members have to come to his defense.



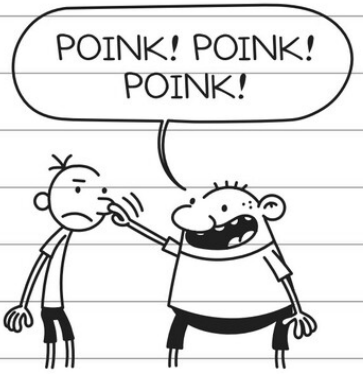
Some kid asked who the leader was, which I thought should've been obvious, since I was the one who created the club and booked the room.

Then Amir James, who's on the student council, said we should VOTE for a leader. And when the final tally came in, the only vote I got was the one I cast for myself.



So now Amir was the president and I was just a regular member. Right away, everyone started calling Amir Big Bird, which is a good name for a Muppet but isn't exactly gonna scare anyone off.

After he got voted in, Amir came up with rule number two, which is that if ANY of the club members get attacked, the rest of us have to help them. But the problem with that idea is that Levi Bigson gets on people's nerves on PURPOSE, and I really don't see myself rushing to his defense.

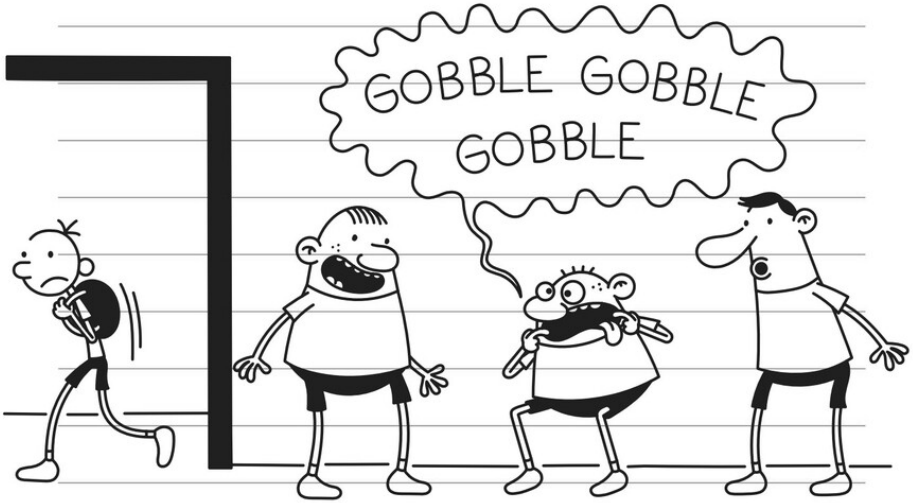


But nobody was focused on that, because they'd already moved on to a different topic, which was how we'd warn each other when a bully was nearby. Somebody suggested that we make bird noises, which wasn't the worst idea in the world.

But then everyone started imitating their favorite bird, and it was total madness.

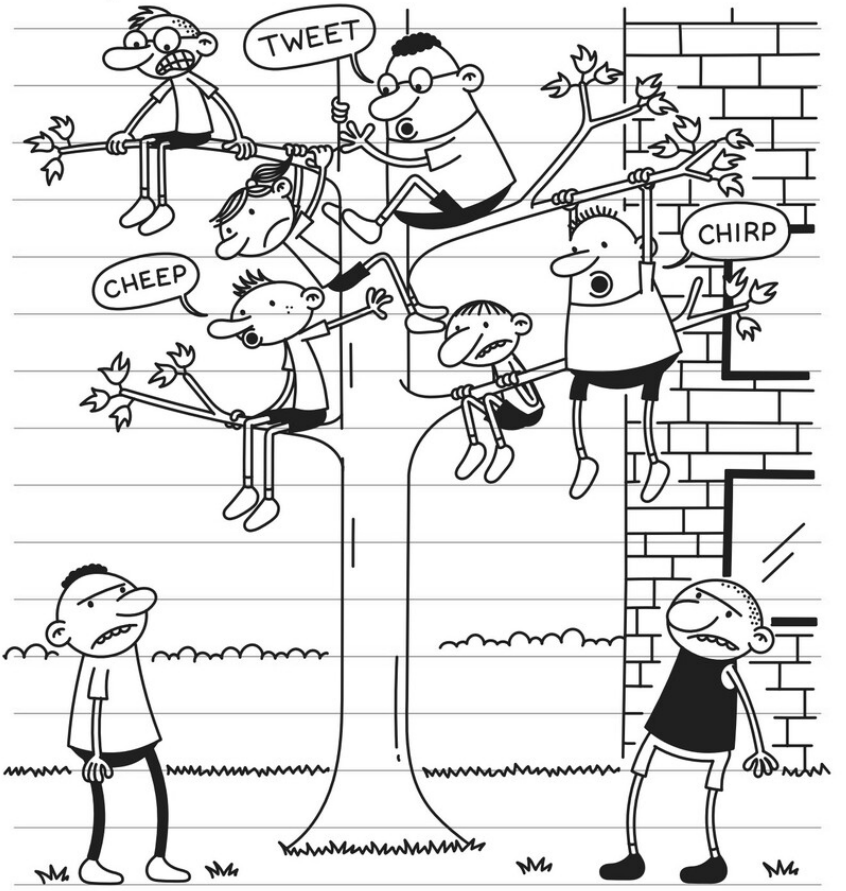


And when Levi Bigson started in with his turkey gobble, it was so annoying that I felt like it was a good time for me to leave.



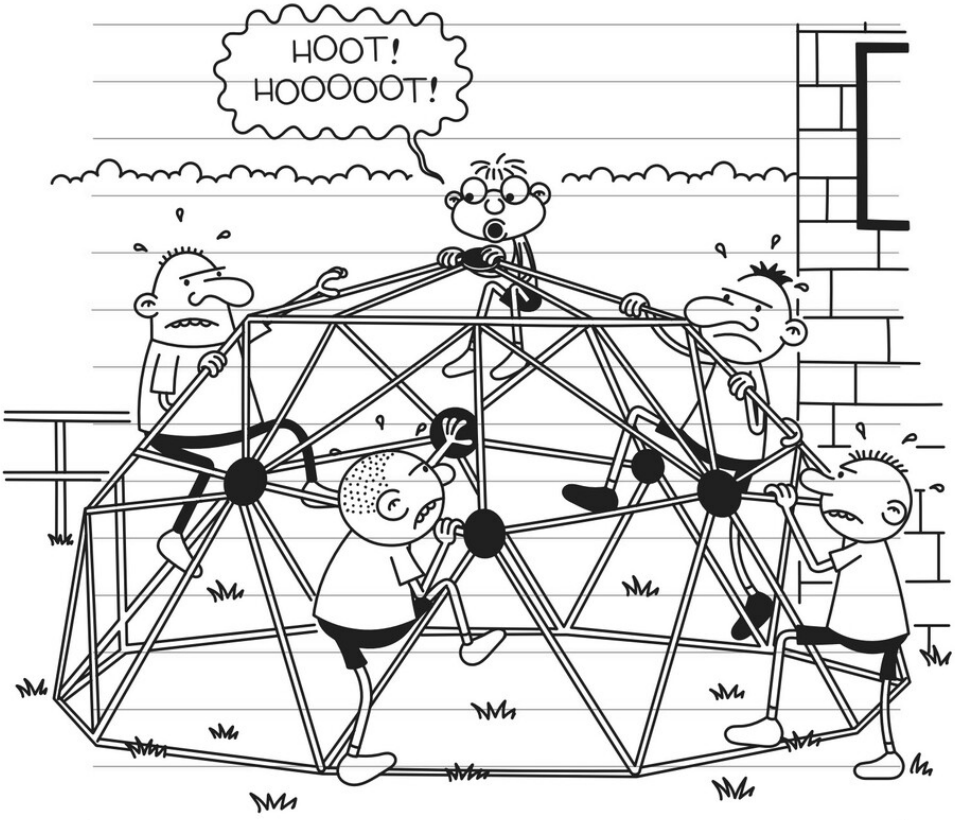
Friday

This week, the kids in the Birdwatching Club have been trying out their new bully-warning system. But they kind of overdid it, and their bird sounds actually started ATTRACTING bullies.



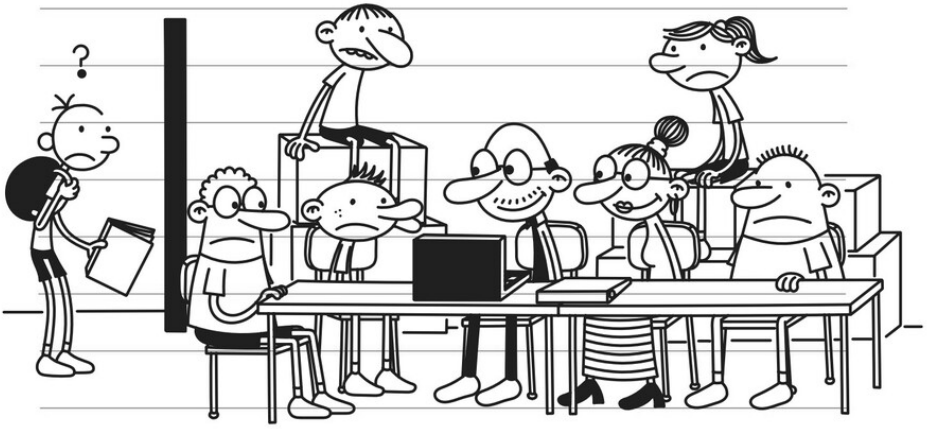
So they made themselves targets, but they're not the ones I'm worried about.

Fregley usually spends recess perched on top of the climbing structure in the playground, making random owl noises. And if he keeps that up, he's gonna get himself killed.

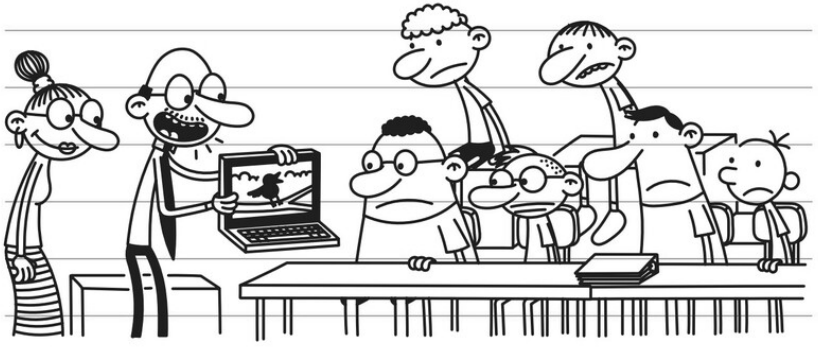


I wasn't sure if the Birdwatching Club was really for me, but I figured I'd go to another meeting to give it one more chance. And I was surprised at who was there when I opened the door.

It was Mr. Finch and Miss Starling, who had joined as chaperones. And I'm sure they only did it to have an excuse to spend time together in a room where there weren't any cameras.



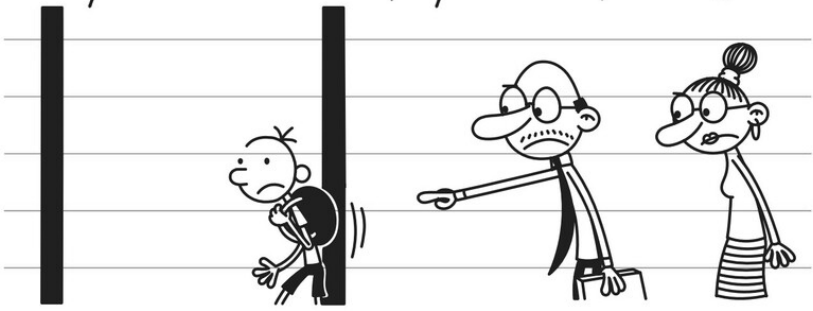
I thought adult chaperones are supposed to sit back and let kids run their club meetings. But the two of them took over, and all they wanted to do was plan a field trip to a bird sanctuary.



I wasn't too crazy about going on a field trip, especially with this bunch. But it turns out I wasn't even qualified to go. Mr. Finch said that from now on, being a member of the Birdwatching Club requires you to be able to identify the sounds of at least five birds. And I couldn't even name ONE.

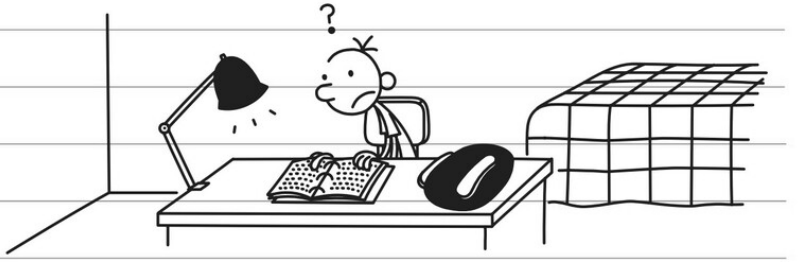


After I flunked the test, I was asked to leave. But by then, I'd made up my mind to quit for good.



The Birdwatching Club has drifted too far from its original mission, which was to deal with bullies. And I've kind of lost track of what I was trying to accomplish, too.

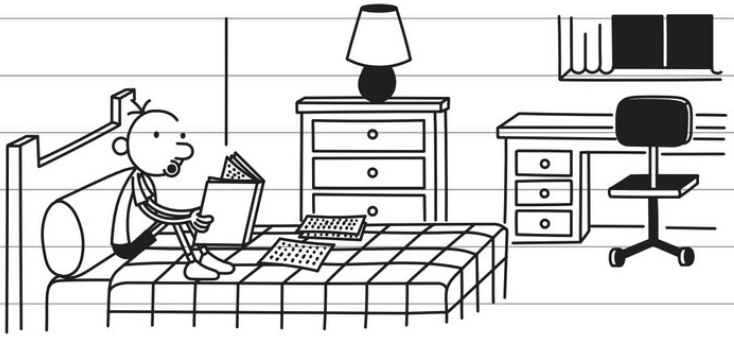
So last night, I cracked open my bully binder for the first time in a few days. But when I did, I didn't recognize the pages inside.



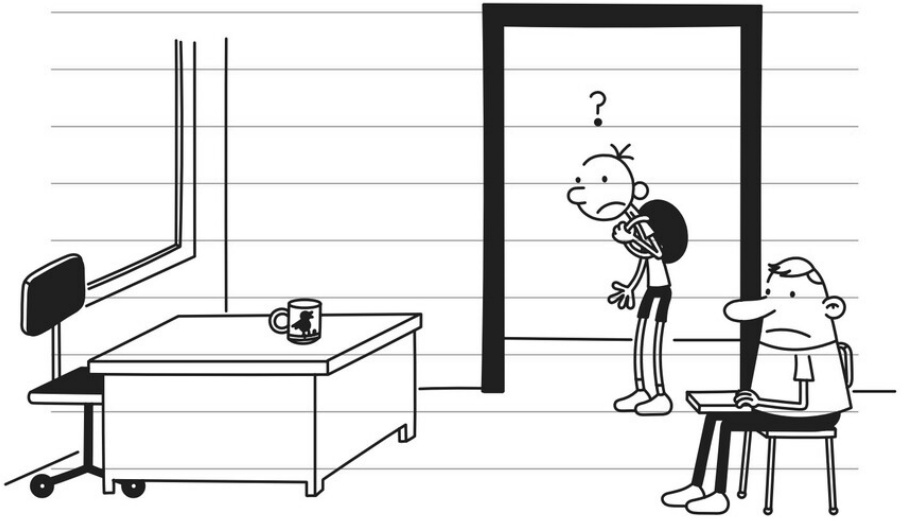
It was full of Social Studies lessons and quizzes, and for a second I was confused. But then I realized what had happened. I must've picked up Mr. Finch's lesson plan at that Birdwatching Club meeting by accident. And if I had his binder, that meant he had MINE.

I decided that as soon as I got to school in the morning, I'd swap binders with Mr. Finch and hope he hadn't opened mine.

But I figured as long as I had Mr. Finch's Social Studies materials for a night, I might as well take a sneak peek at the quiz coming up.



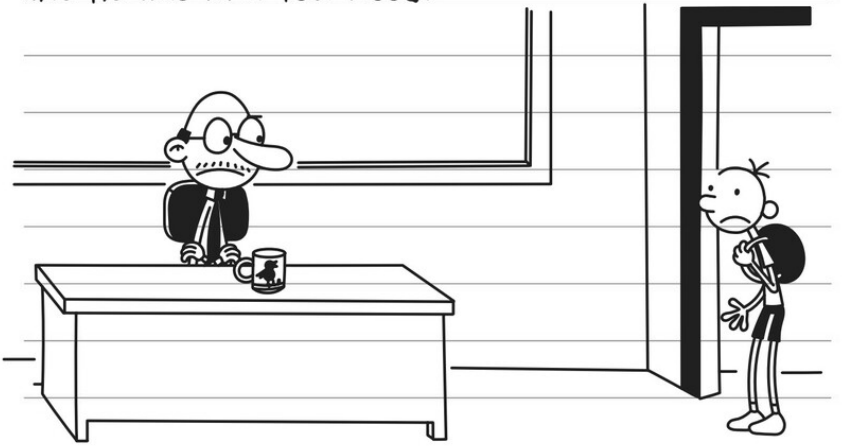
This morning I went to school, and my mission was to go straight to Mr. Finch's room before the first bell rang so I could make the swap. He's usually there super early, but today he wasn't.



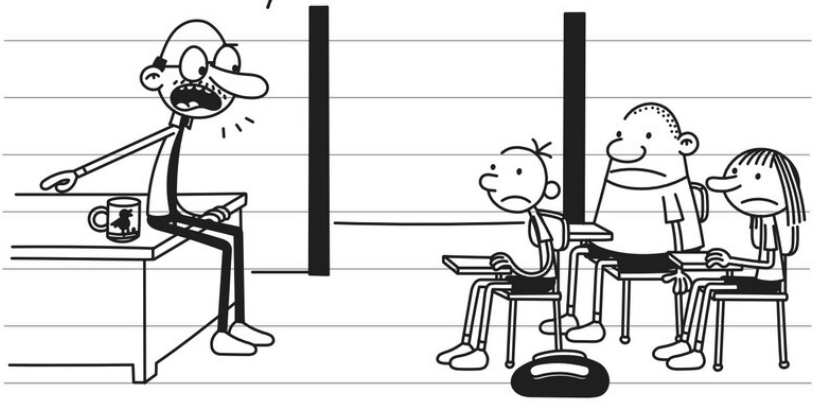
So I went looking for Mr. Finch and found him in the front office, talking to Vice Principal Roy. And I wasn't thrilled to see what he was holding.



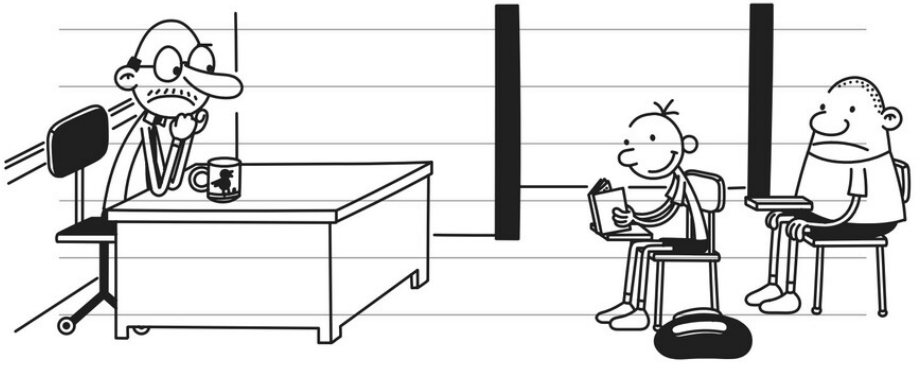
I had to wait all the way until fifth period to see Mr. Finch again, because that's when I have Social Studies. But when I got to class, he looked like he was in a foul mood.



After everyone took a seat, Mr. Finch said some "prankster" had stolen his lesson plans from his desk and left him with a binder filled with maps and other nonsense. And I was glad he hadn't read it too closely.

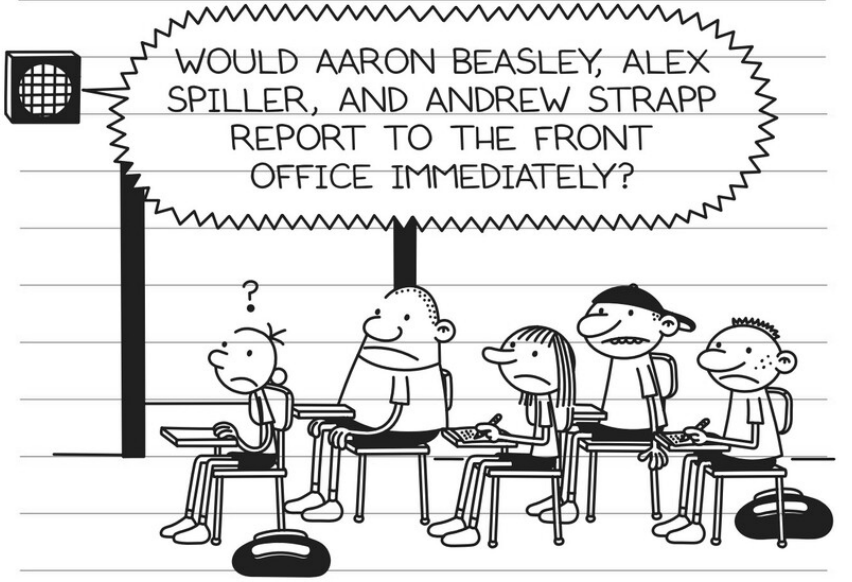


Then Mr. Finch said he was gonna give whoever took his binder a chance to return it, or we were all gonna sit in silence until the bell rang. But I was OK with option two, because I'm into a good book right now.



I figured I'd just wait until Mr. Finch had cooled down a little and then swap binders when he wasn't looking. But I didn't see my binder on Mr. Finch's desk, and it didn't look like it was in his satchel, either. Then I found out WHY.

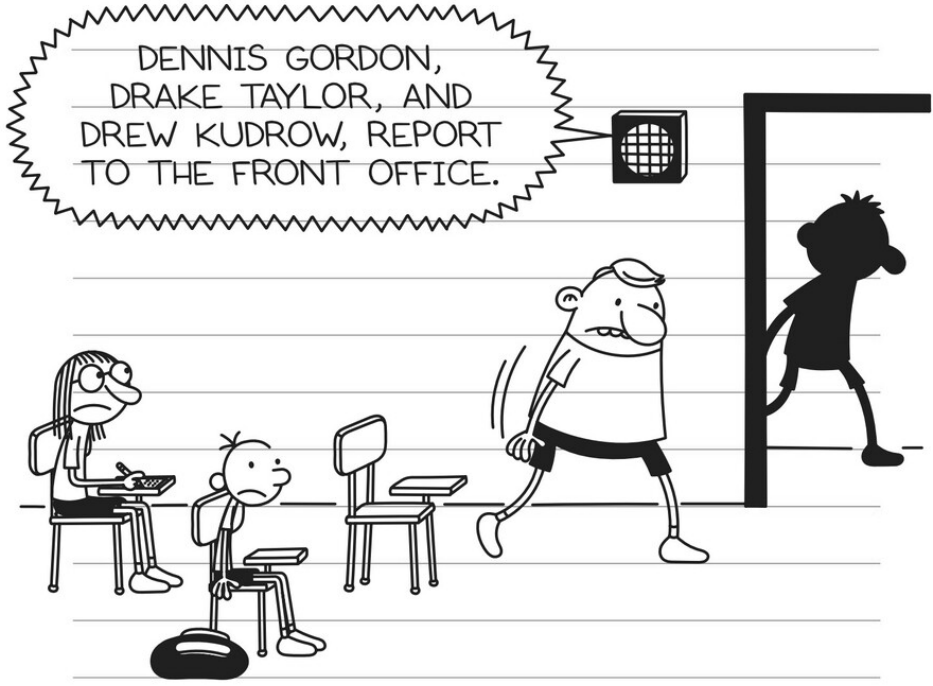
He'd given it to Vice Principal Roy, whose voice came on the loudspeaker halfway through class.



Everybody at my school knows that if you get called to the front office, it means you're in trouble.

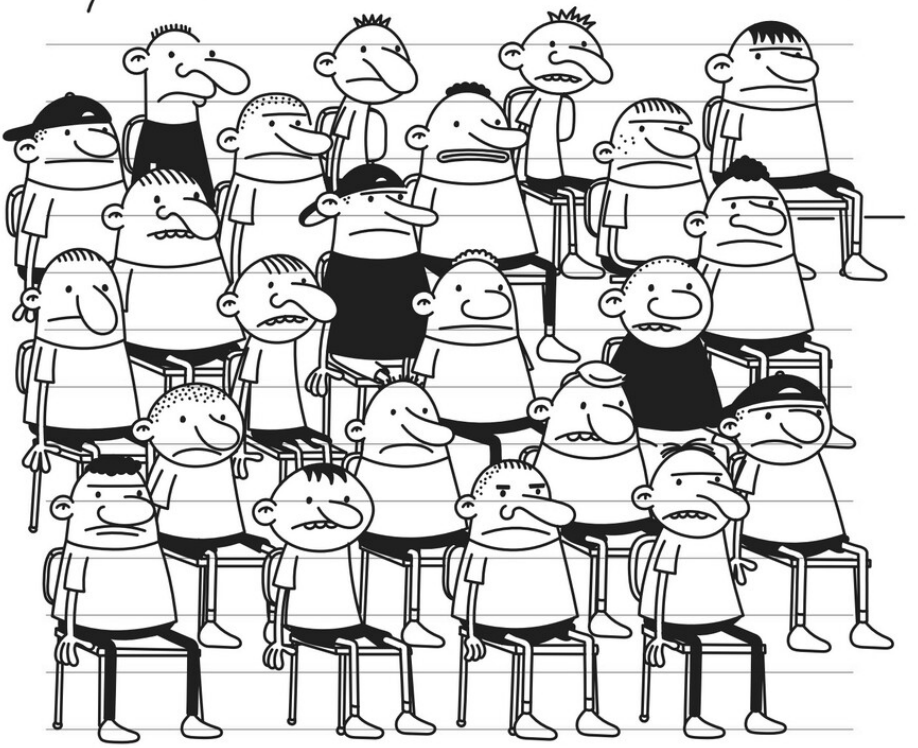
Those three kids who got called down all had pages in my binder, which was organized alphabetically by first name.

For the rest of the day, Vice Principal Roy announced more and more names. But by the time the bell rang he was only up to the Ds.



After kids got called down to the front office, they didn't come back. So I was curious where they all went.

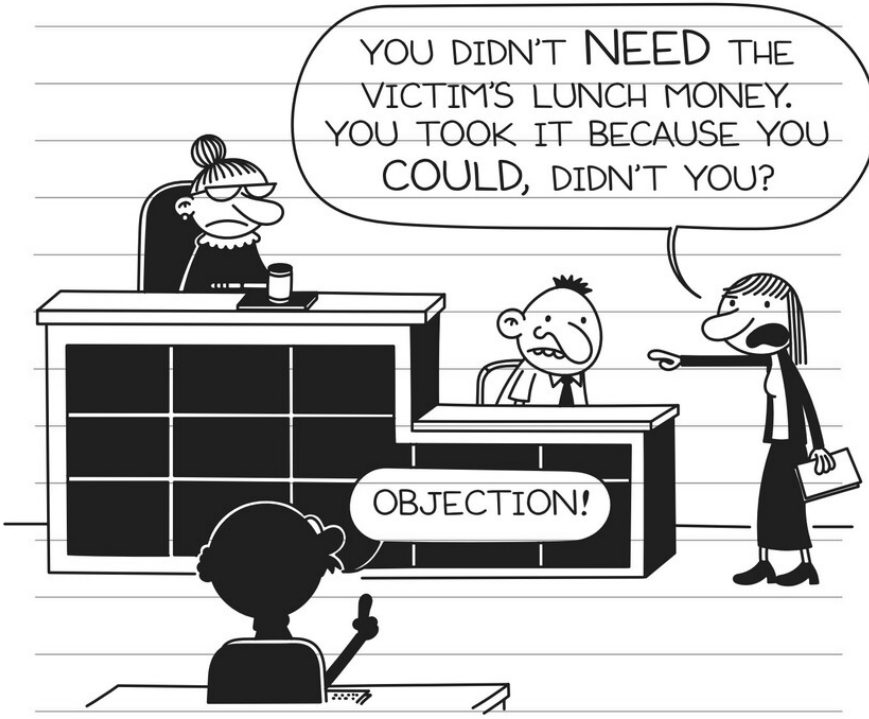
It turns out they were all in DETENTION, which was being held in the gym because it was the only room that could fit all those kids.



So basically Vice Principal Roy was using the information in my binder to punish the school bullies for the stuff they did wrong.

And even though everything I wrote is accurate, it's not like those guys had a chance to defend themselves.

But I guess if the school held a full trial every time they wanted to send a kid to detention, the system would be clogged up for YEARS.

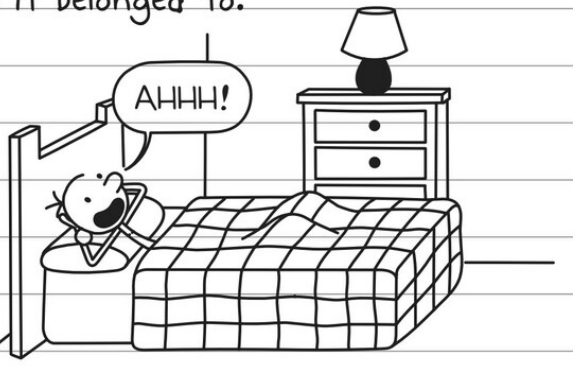


Still, I felt bad that the reason those guys went to detention was because of ME.

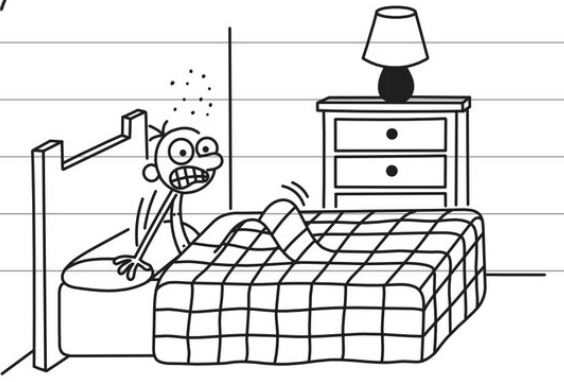
But at least justice was being served. And my walk home after school was a breeze, since I was finally able to take a shortcut through Bennie Kott's territory.

Monday

When I woke up this morning, I was feeling pretty good about things. Vice Principal Roy still had my binder, but he was using it to take bullies off the playing field one by one. Plus, my name wasn't anywhere in the binder, so the school didn't know who it belonged to.



Then I realized something TERRIBLE. A few of the guys coming up in the alphabet had bullied me when no one else was around. So as soon as Vice Principal Roy told them what they were in trouble for, they'd know EXACTLY who sold them out.



That meant when Evan Rubman was accused of giving a kid a wedgie in the locker room, he wouldn't have to think too hard about which kid it WAS.



Worse than that, Zander Wrexham was at the end of the alphabet, and if he found out the stuff I wrote about him, I'd be COOKED.

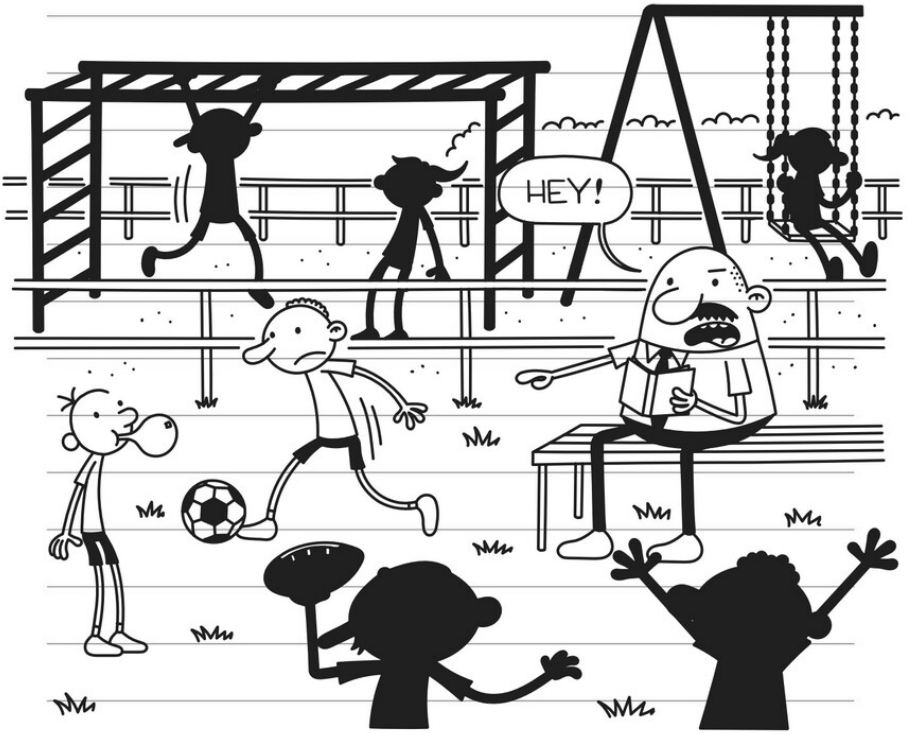
So I had a new mission, which was to get that binder before any more bullies got sent to detention. The only question was how I could pull it off.

I didn't want Vice Principal Roy knowing whose binder it was, so I couldn't just go to the front office and ASK for it.

Plus, then he'd know who took Mr. Finch's binder, which would land me in hot water.

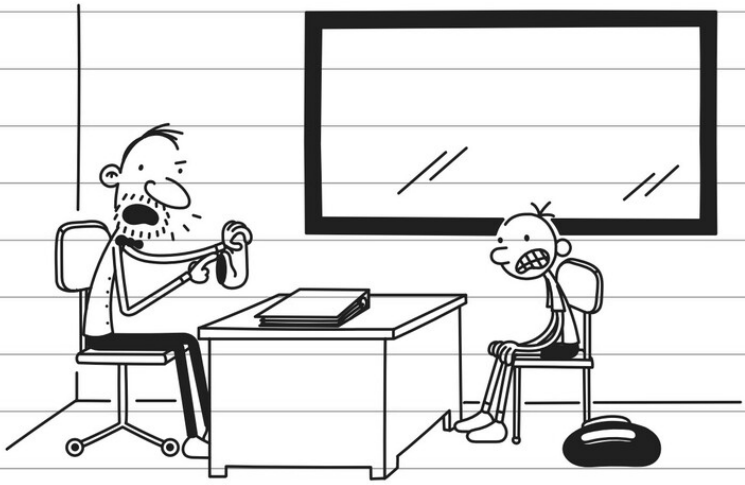
I realized I needed to get in trouble MYSELF, so I'd get sent to the front office, and I could try and get my binder back.

But I couldn't get in TOO much trouble, or I'd end up in detention with all the bullies. So I did the bare minimum, which I hoped would be enough.



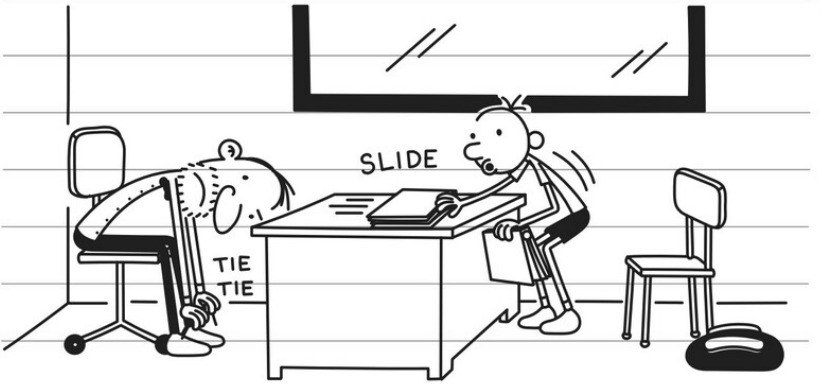
You're not allowed to chew gum on school property, so the recess monitor sent me down to Vice Principal Roy's office, like I hoped he would.

What I didn't know was that Vice Principal Roy has a thing about chewing gum, which he said had ruined two pairs of his shoes since the start of the school year. So I really got an earful.



The binder was sitting right there on his desk, and it took all my self-control not to just grab it and run. But when it seemed like Vice Principal Roy was winding down, I started getting nervous I was gonna lose my chance.

Then Vice Principal Roy bent down to put his shoe back on, and I made my move by swapping my binder with Mr. Finch's.



Thankfully, Vice Principal Roy didn't seem to suspect anything.

He told me he had bigger issues to deal with, then said I was dismissed. And before I even left his room he was already on the loudspeaker, calling the next round of bullies down to the front office.

But I wish he had given me a minute to get out of there before he called those guys' names, because they were already on their way.

And when I saw Eric Anders, Ethan Jackson, and Evan Rubman in the hallway, I felt trapped.



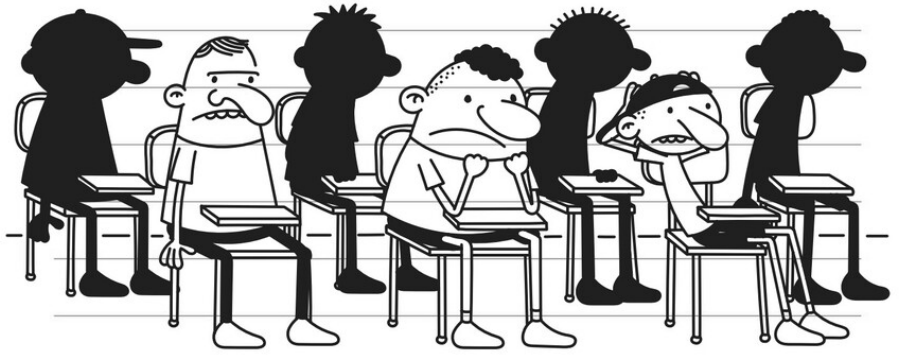
I couldn't risk running into any of those guys with the information I had on me, so I panicked and emptied all the papers into the recycling bin under the front desk.



Luckily, Evan and the other guys didn't seem suspicious of me, and I even managed to make a little small talk on the way out.



I heard later on that when Vice Principal Roy opened the binder on his desk, he thought Evan Rubman must've taken the other one. So Evan went to detention, which kind of feels like fair punishment for giving me that wedgie.



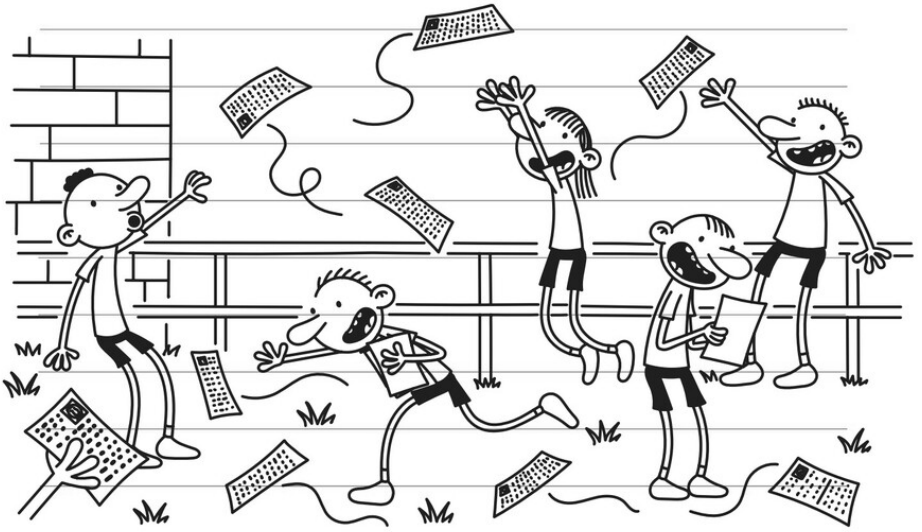
Tuesday

Everything's calmed down at school. The bullies never figured out where the information that put them in detention came from, and Mr. Finch is back to teaching from his lesson plan.

But when the janitor emptied the recycling bin from the front office during recess on the windiest day this year, it all changed in an instant.



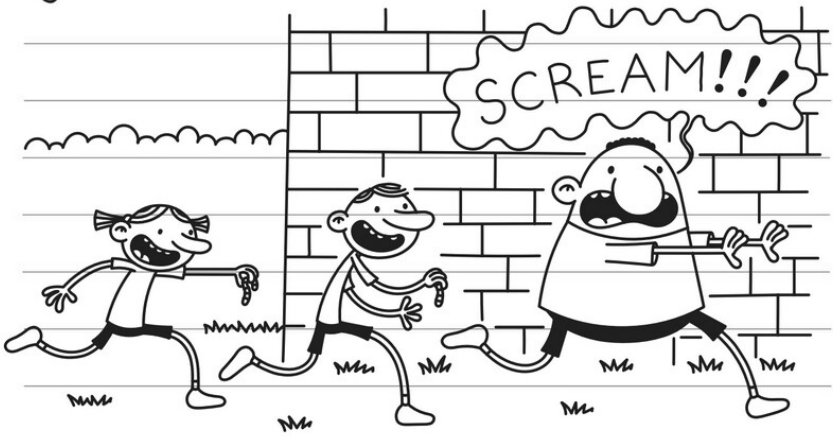
The papers blew through the air like leaves. But from the way kids acted, you'd think they were hundred-dollar bills.



Now all my work was out there for everyone to see. And even though I thought bullies didn't like to read, they were reading NOW.



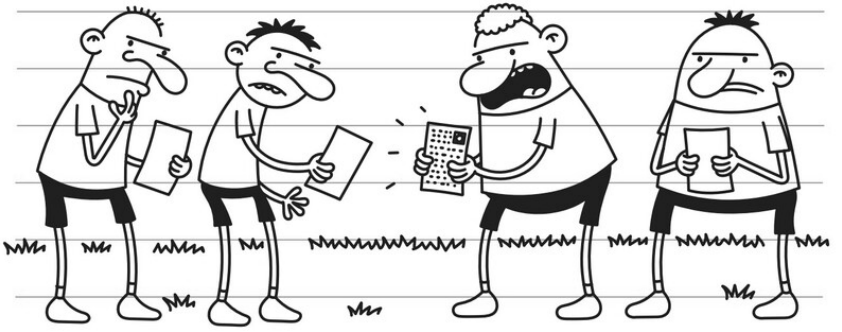
They weren't happy someone had written down all their crimes. But they were more upset about everything ELSE. For example, now everybody knew about Terry Goff's fear of worms and used it against him.



Plus, everyone discovered J.T. McAllister's full name, and he got teased about it.



But the thing that the bullies were MOST upset about was their power rankings. Almost all of them thought their rankings should be higher, and they started comparing scores.



Then they decided to prove how much tougher they were than the OTHER bullies, and things got heated pretty quick.



The bully who was the maddest about his power ranking was Zander Wrexham, who had the lowest score of all the bullies.

Since he was the last one in the alphabet, I hadn't finished filling out his sheet. And that meant I left his power ranking BLANK.

So now everyone was making fun of Zander for having a zero power ranking, which made him mad.

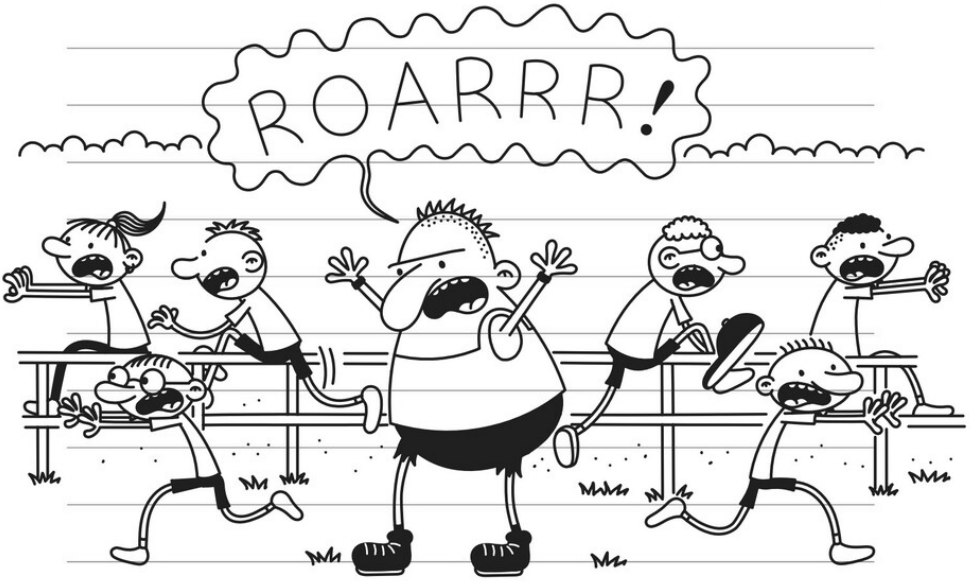


The thing is, I would've been glad to give Zander a five-star power ranking just to make him happy. But it was too late for that, and I didn't want him knowing who I was anyway.

So I'm planning on keeping my mouth shut and hoping he never actually finds out who wrote this stuff in the first place.

But now Zander's going around saying he's gonna "pulverize" the person who gave him a zero power ranking, which is a pretty big word for someone who's been held back so many times.

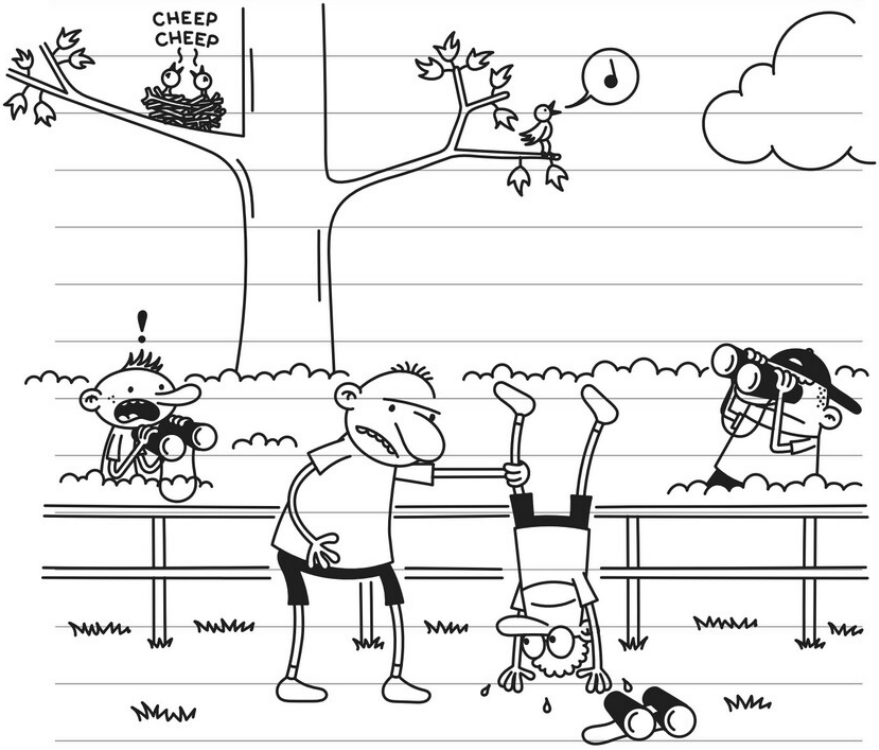
And it seems like he's out to prove that when it comes to bullies, he's still the king of the jungle.



Wednesday

Things have been tense at school. Everybody's trying to figure out the identity of the person behind the bully reports, and it seems like almost everyone's a suspect.

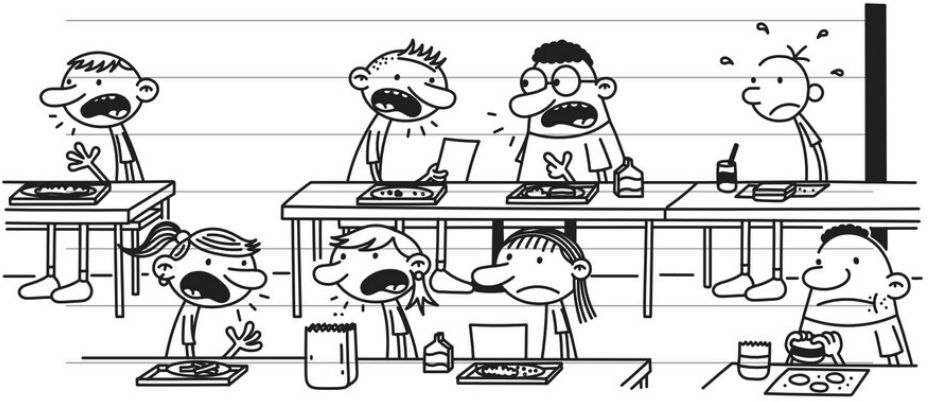
The kids under the most suspicion are the members of the Birdwatching Club, and that's because their binoculars make them look like spies.



I feel bad about that, but I'm hoping the bullies don't turn their attention on ME. Because if they do, I'll crack like an egg.



Everyone's calling the person who wrote the report the Snitch, and they want to know who it is. But I just stay quiet whenever the subject comes up.



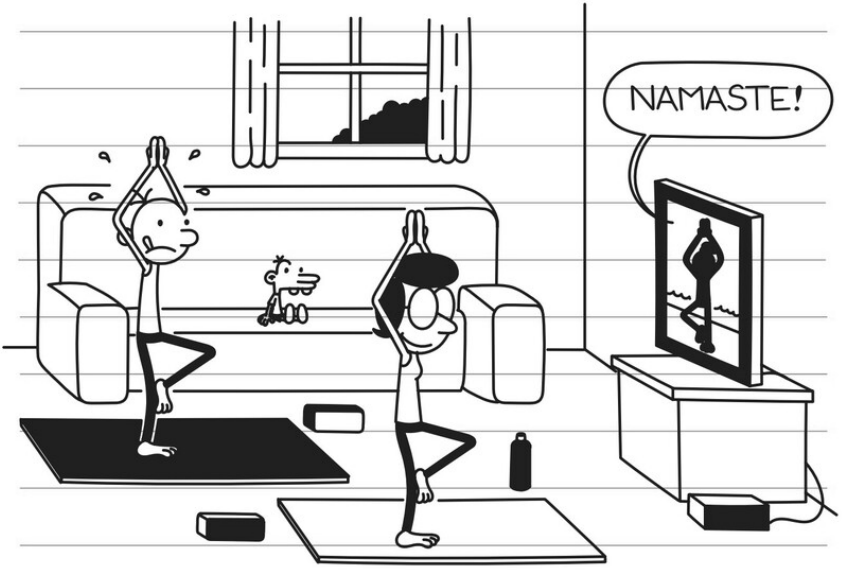
I feel like it's only a matter of time before somebody puts the pieces together, though. So I need to start preparing myself for the moment that happens.

Since Rowley won't use his skills to protect me, I have to learn to defend MYSELF. So I decided that it's finally time for me to learn to fight.

I've actually been training for this all my life, because I'm kind of an expert at fighting games. But the moves you can do in Legendary Fists don't really translate to real life.



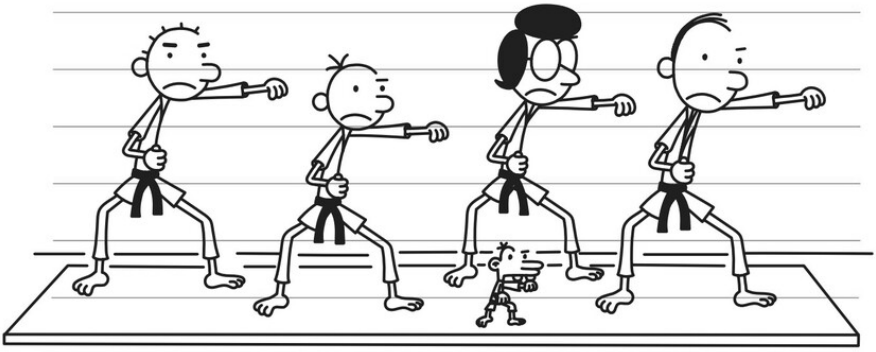
I've thought about trying to learn karate by watching videos at home, the way Mom does with yoga. But I'm worried that kind of approach might not turn me into the fighting machine I need to become.



So I realized that if I was gonna learn karate, I needed to do it the hard way.

One thing I knew for sure is that I didn't want to go to the same place Rowley's been going, because I'm looking for a dojo that's a little more aggressive.

Besides, Rowley's dojo is for FAMILIES, and I really don't want mine involved in this.



So I did a little research and found a dojo that looked like it was a perfect fit.



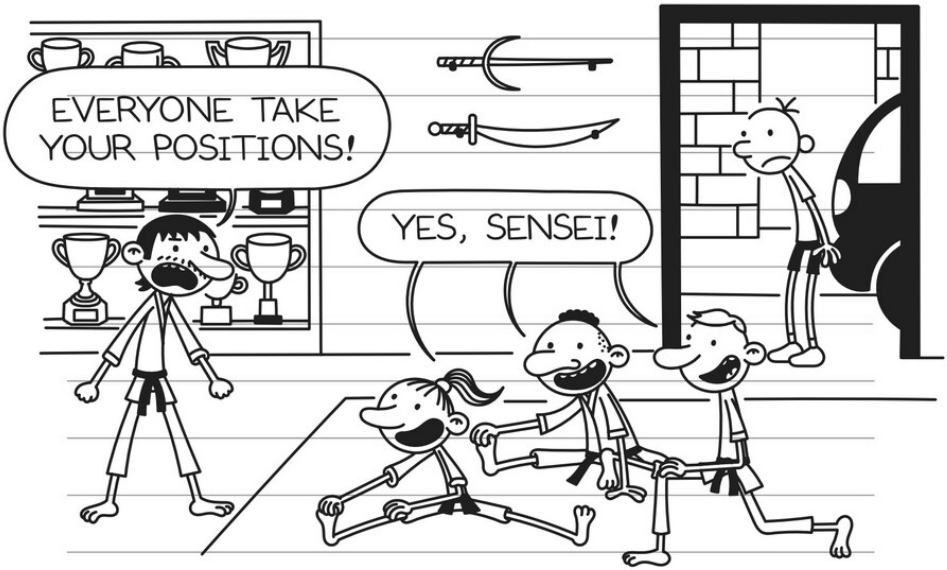
My first session was tonight, and Mom drove me. On the way she was excited, saying that karate builds your confidence, teaches you discipline, and even helps you to be a better student. And all that stuff is nice, I guess, but I've got totally different motivations for learning.



I was a little disappointed when we arrived at the karate studio. I was hoping it was in one of those cool temples with gardens and a koi pond and stuff, but this place was in a strip mall between a laundromat and a pet store.



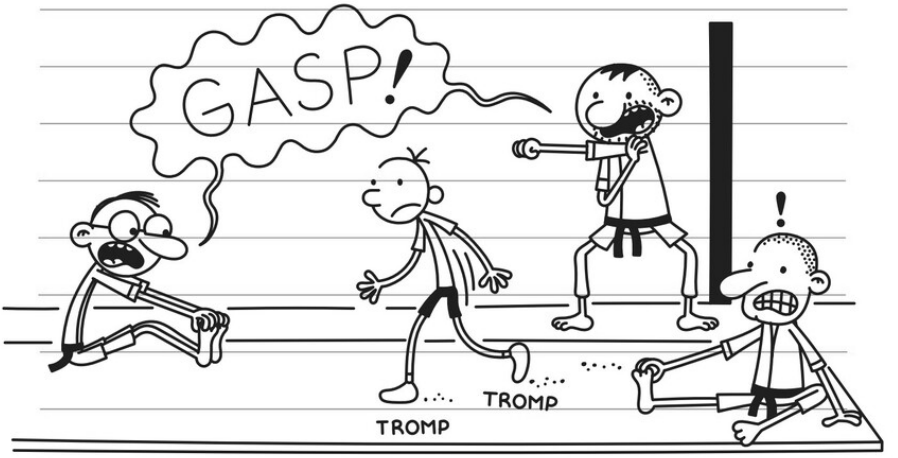
When I stepped inside, I was surprised to see Mr. Steve, the assistant janitor at my school. But in this place, he was in CHARGE. And his students didn't call him Mr. Steve, either.



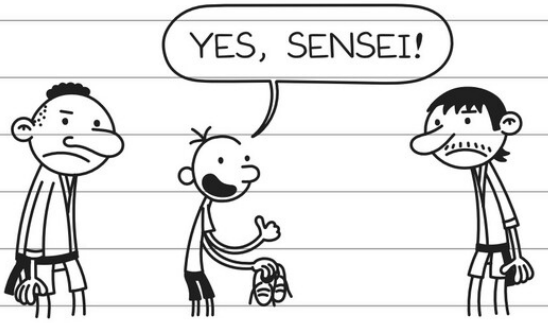
It's crazy because the last time I saw him, he was cleaning up after Drop Everything and Read.



I noticed that the place smelled like feet, and I didn't want to contribute to the problem by taking off my shoes. But when I walked across the mat, everyone totally freaked out.

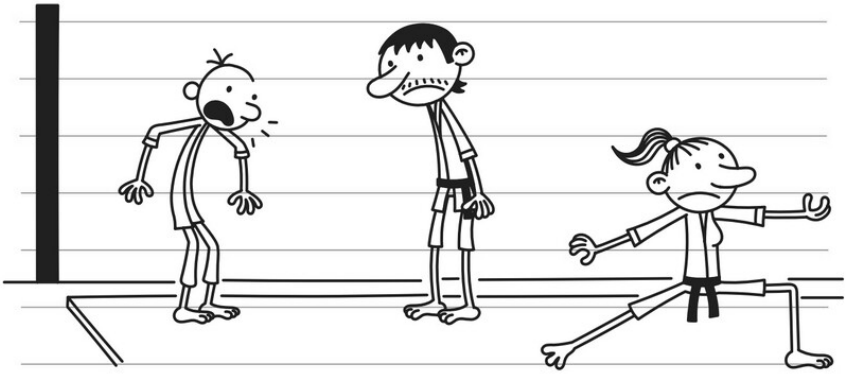


Mr. Steve said that the mat in a dojo needed to be respected, so I had to take off my shoes. And I figured since I was the new guy I probably shouldn't question the rules.

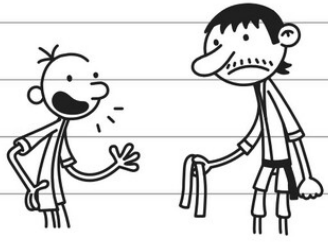


Then Mr. Steve told me I should change into a uniform called a gi, and handed me a folded white outfit that I took with me into the restroom.

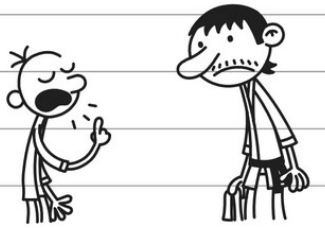
After I changed, I told Mr. Steve that my gi was a little scratchy and I probably needed to go a size up since the sleeves and pant legs were short.



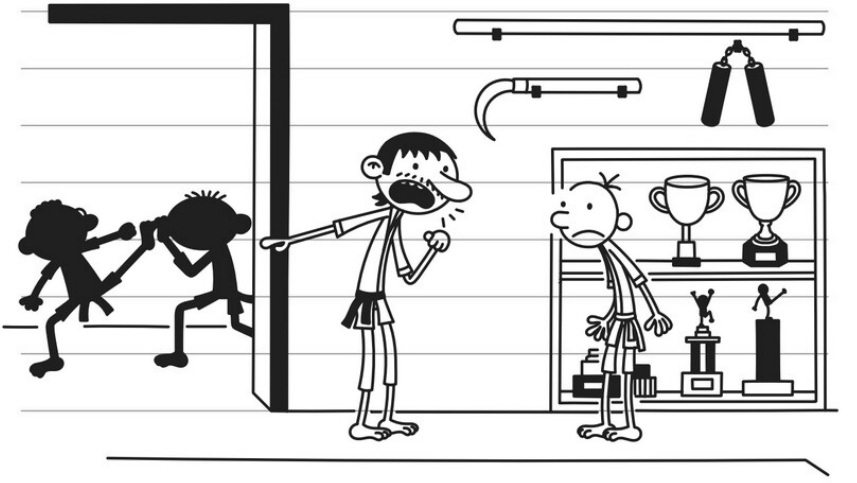
Mr. Steve said it was supposed to be short so you could move freely, and I guess that made sense. Then he gave me a belt, which was white. I asked him if he had one that was blue or green instead, since those are two of my favorite colors.



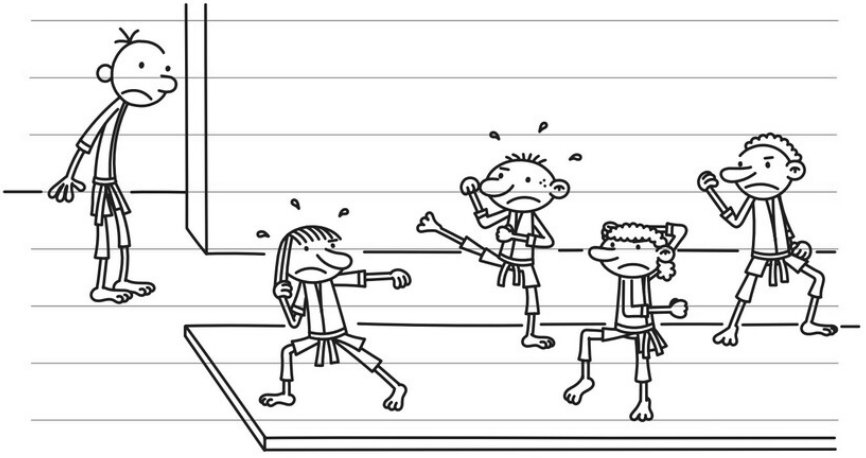
But Mr. Steve said that you had to EARN those belts, and white belts were for beginners. So I told him that I'm a black belt in Legendary Fists, but he didn't seem as impressed as I felt like he should've been.



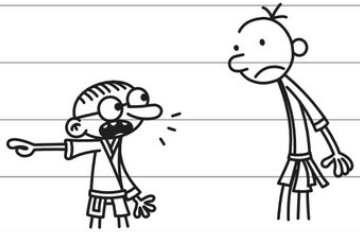
I wasn't really there to talk, though, and I told him we should probably get started with the karate training. That's when he told me that he only taught the advanced students, and I needed to join the Tiger Cubs in the other room.



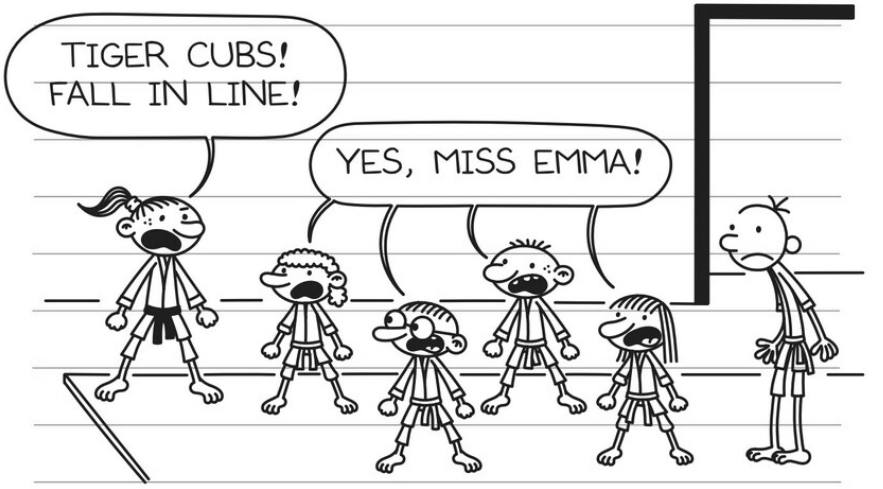
I didn't like the sound of THAT. I thought everyone who went to this place was in the same boat, and if I knew I was gonna be grouped in with the newbies, I would've stayed home. But it got even WORSE when I found out I'd be training with a bunch of kids half my age.



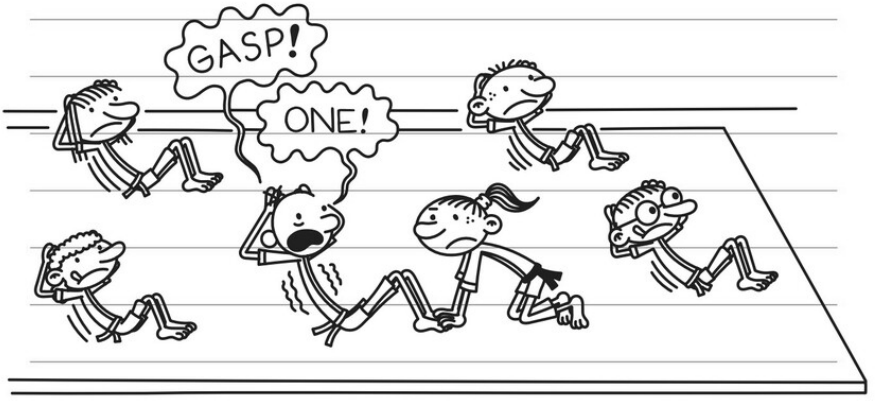
I asked one of the kids who was in charge, and he said our instructor was Miss Emma. But when I looked around, I didn't see any grown-ups.



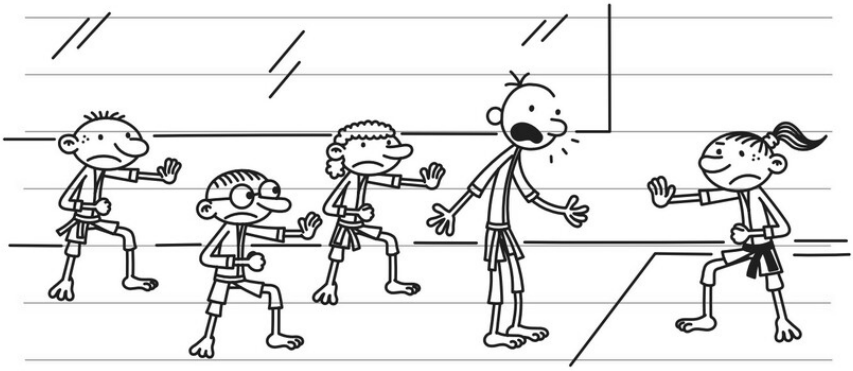
It turns out Miss Emma was a kid HERSELF, and she couldn't have been older than ten or eleven. But when she barked out orders, the class listened.



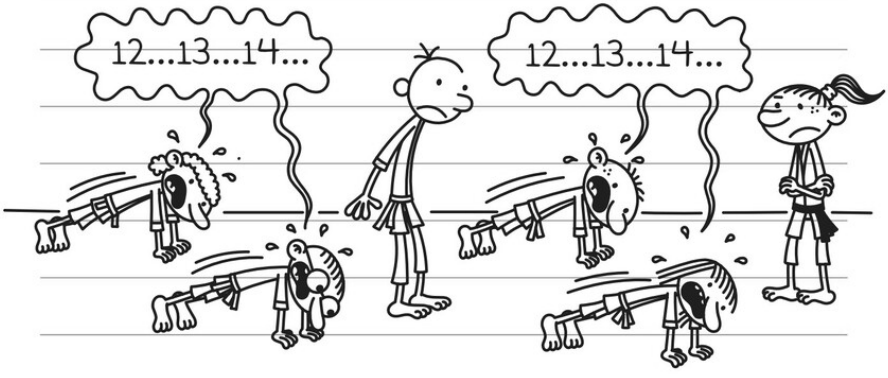
I thought we'd start off with some light stretches to get our bodies warmed up, but Miss Emma wasn't messing around. And she didn't go easy on ME, even though I was new.



After we worked up a sweat, she led us through a "kata," which is kind of like a karate dance. So I asked Miss Emma if we could skip past this part and move things along a little.



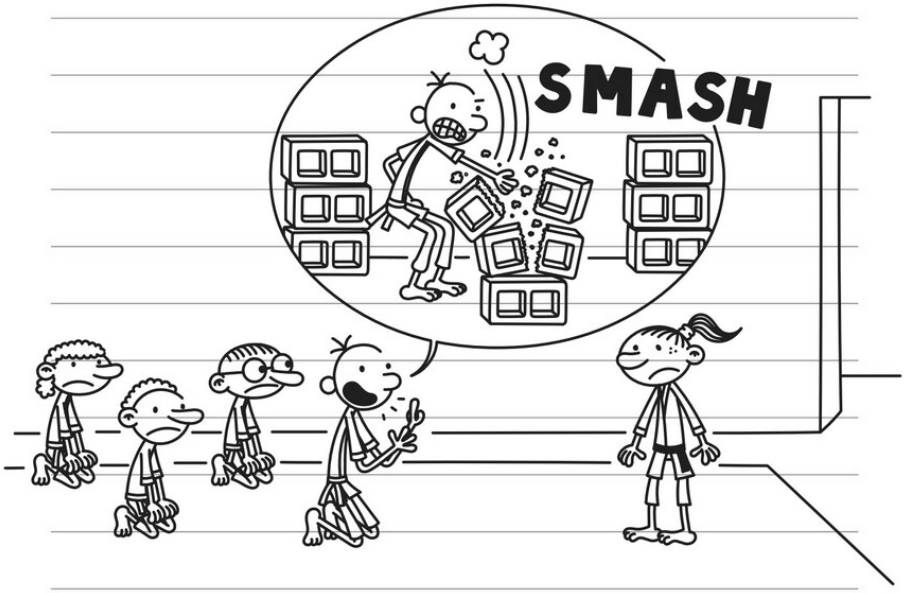
Apparently you're not supposed to interrupt the lesson, though, and Miss Emma made everyone ELSE do twenty push-ups as punishment for me breaking the rule.



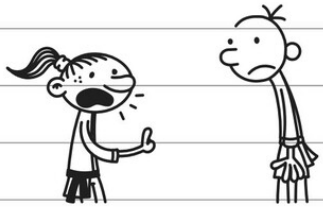
After we finished the kata, Miss Emma told me I could ask my question.

So I asked when we were gonna get to the GOOD stuff, like flying kicks and jab punches and backflips. But she said those moves are for the advanced classes, and white belts focused on the basics.

Then I asked when we could break boards and cinder blocks, but she told me that you don't get to that stuff until you're an orange belt.

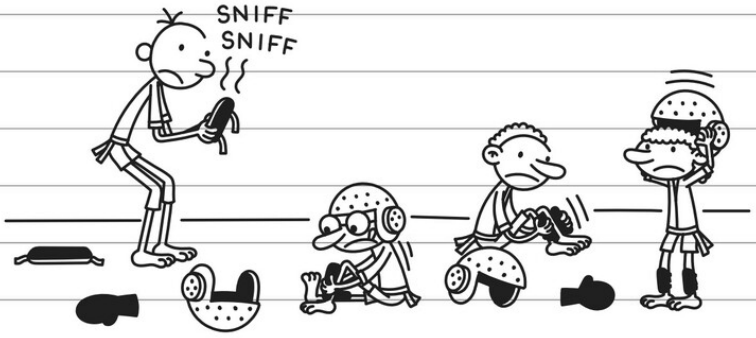


Well, THAT was a disappointment. And when I asked about learning to use nunchucks and bo staffs and stuff like that, she said it takes YEARS to move up to weapons training, which was not what I wanted to hear.

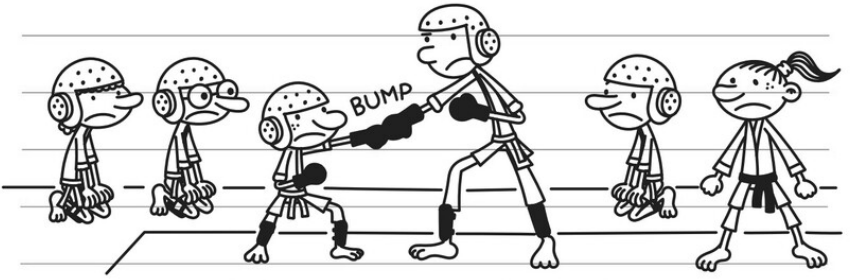


Thankfully, we did some punches and kicks next, so I felt like we were finally getting somewhere. Then Miss Emma said we were gonna do some light sparring, which sounded kind of fun.

And even though the sparring gear smelled like body odor, I didn't want to complain, because I knew that would earn the class more push-ups.



Miss Emma paired me up with a kid who was half my height, and I was worried I was gonna hurt him. But I figured he was wearing protective gear, so he should be OK.

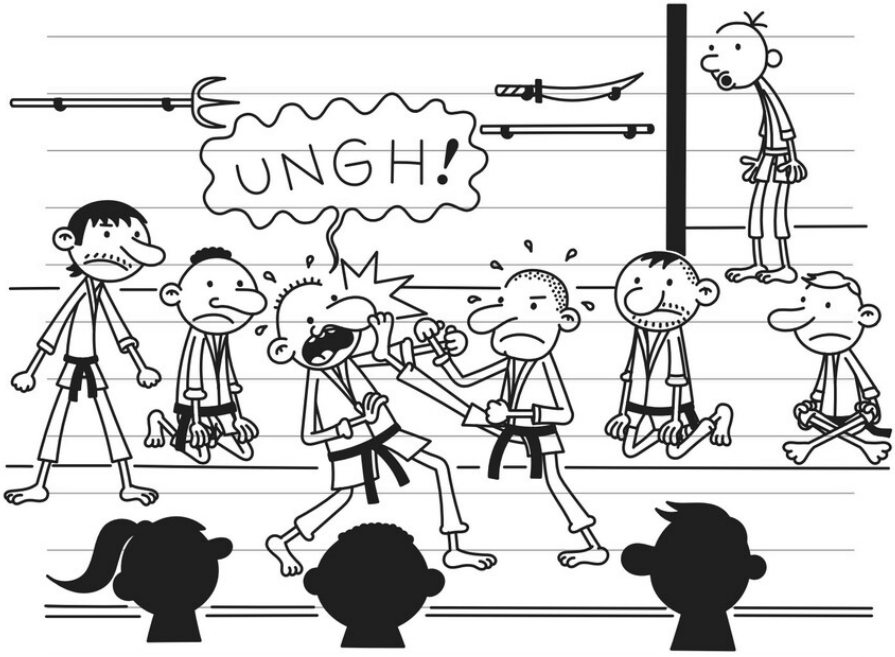


I guess this kid was still mad about those push-ups, because as soon as Miss Emma gave the signal, he came at me with a kick to my stomach.



I'm a little embarrassed to say he knocked the wind out of me, and Miss Emma paused the match so I could catch my breath.

I excused myself and went back in the other room, where the purple belts were sparring. And these guys were doing the kinds of moves I really wanted to learn.



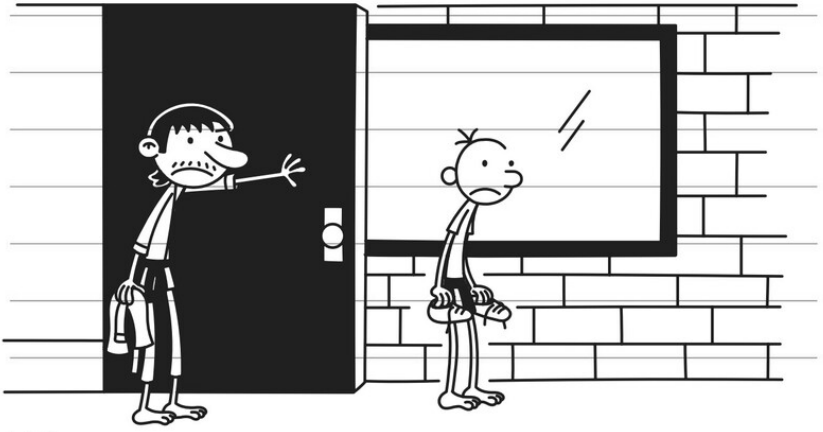
But the grown-ups were working up a sweat, and when you combined that with the smell of feet in the dojo, it was a little overpowering.

That's when I noticed a can of disinfectant spray on the floor near the sparring mat, which gave me an idea.

So when there was a pause in the action, I did everyone a favor.



I found out that kind of thing is frowned on, too, so Mr. Steve asked me to leave the dojo. And I guess I didn't mind, because it's no fun being at the bottom of the pecking order.



Thursday

When Rodrick found out I'd signed up for karate, he told me he could teach me for free. And even though I wasn't sure I wanted him to be my sensei, I didn't have any BETTER options.

Rodrick said we were going to start out with some motions that would help get my body used to doing karate moves, like making circular movements with my arms. So he had me wash his van for practice.

But it didn't take me long to realize that I was being scammed, and when something's FREE, it probably means it's worthless.



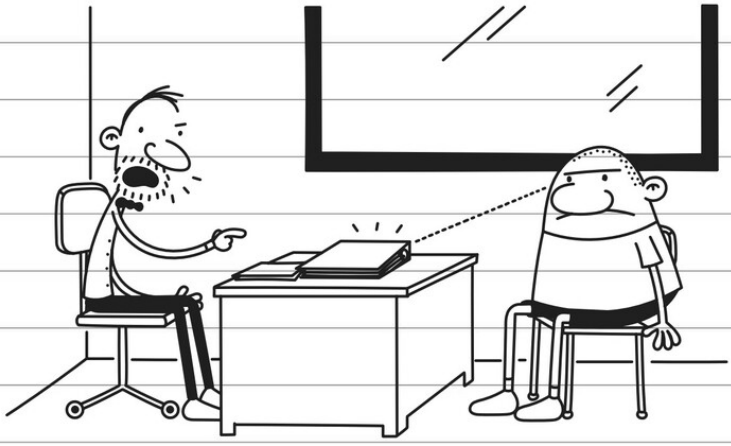
So I gave up trying to learn karate and decided to just lay low at school, where everyone is still trying to uncover the identity of the Snitch.

I've been feeling pretty confident that no one is gonna be able to figure it out, because there's nothing in those papers that people can link back to me.

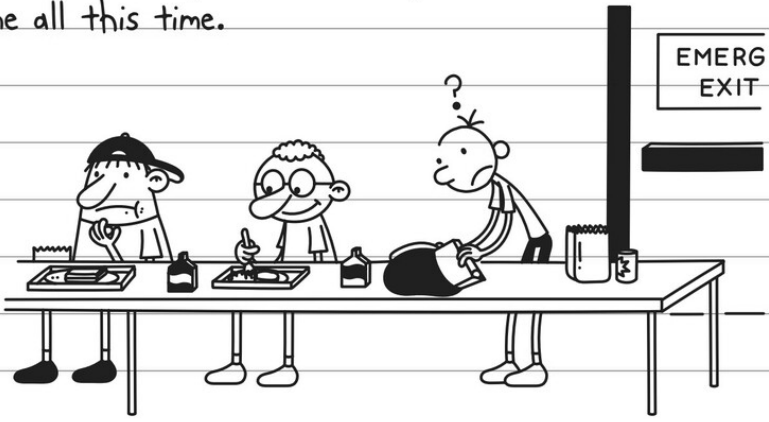
In fact, I'm not even that worried about Evan Rubman anymore, because I found out that he's given LOTS of other kids wedgies in the locker room. So he's got a bunch of kids to go through before he gets to me.



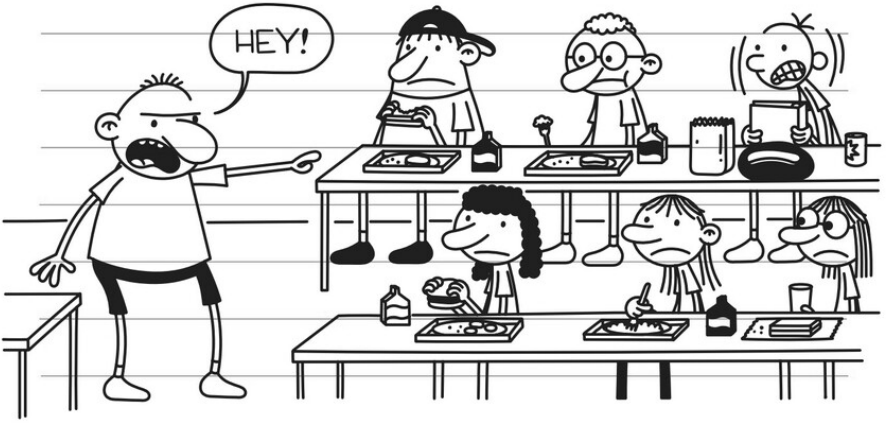
But the thing that's gotten me worried is that kids seem to know about the BINDER, because Vice Principal Roy had it on his desk when he brought those bullies into his office, and they noticed.



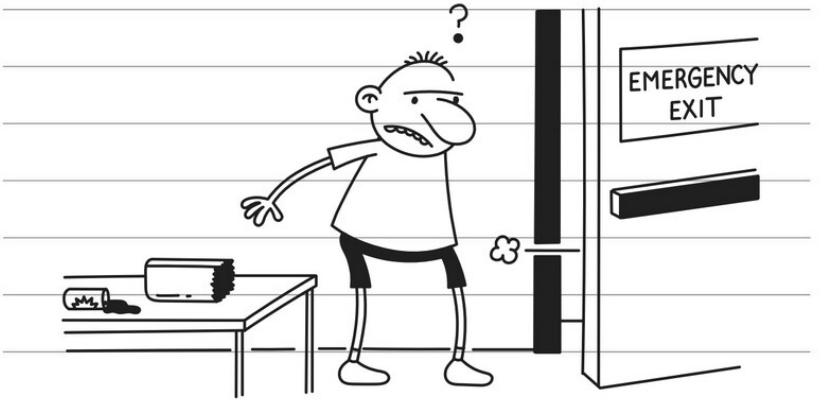
I forgot all about that thing. And when I opened my backpack at lunch today, I realized I'd been carrying the empty binder around with me all this time.



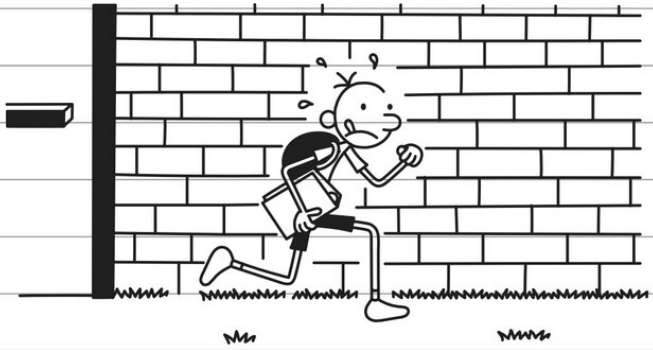
I tried to stuff it back in my bag and hoped nobody noticed. But Ryland Rynherd spotted me from across the cafeteria, and I knew I was cooked.



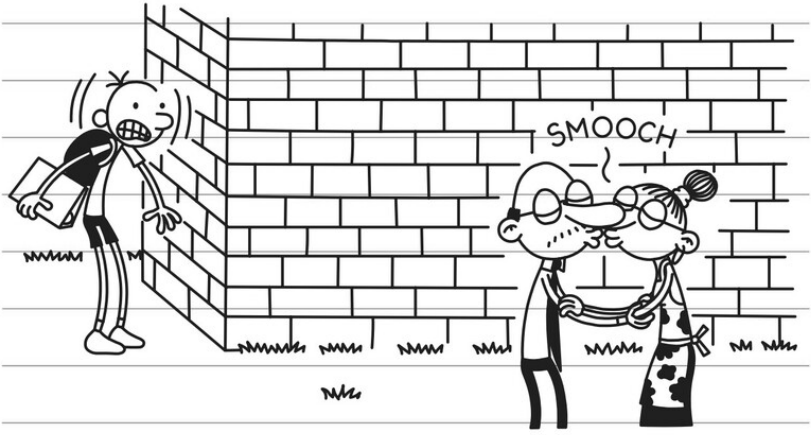
The truth is, I've been preparing for this day for a long time, and it's one of the reasons I sit by the emergency exit. So by the time Ryland got to my table, I was already gone.



The emergency exit leads to a space between the buildings, where there's a clear path to the street. And from there, I could make my escape.



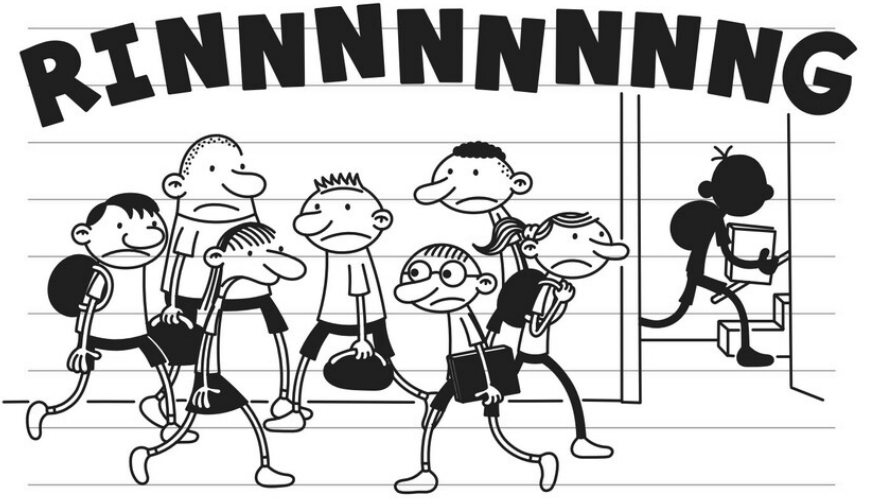
I knew that there weren't any cameras in the courtyard, so the school wouldn't even know where I went. But apparently Mr. Finch and Miss Starling knew about the blind spot, too, and my exit to the street was blocked.



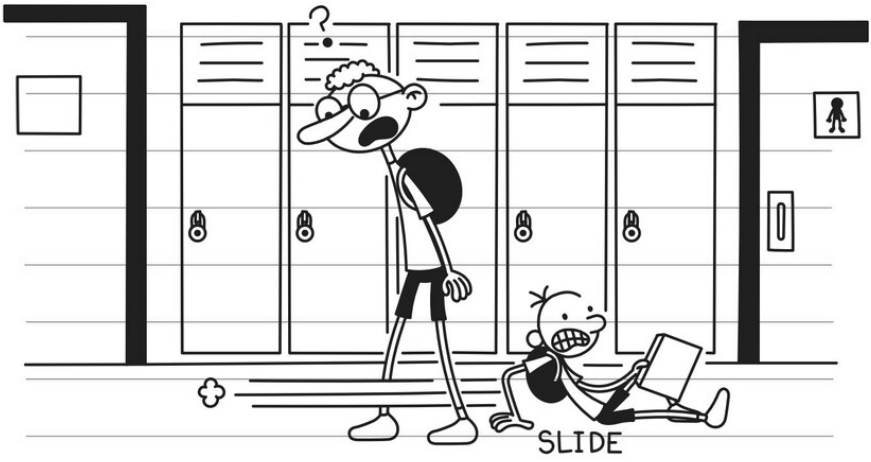
That meant I had to go back inside the building through another door. But by then Ryland had been joined by his two sidekicks, who were hot on my trail.



Luckily, right then the bell rang, and the cafeteria emptied into the hallway. So I used the opportunity to slip through the door to one of the stairwells.



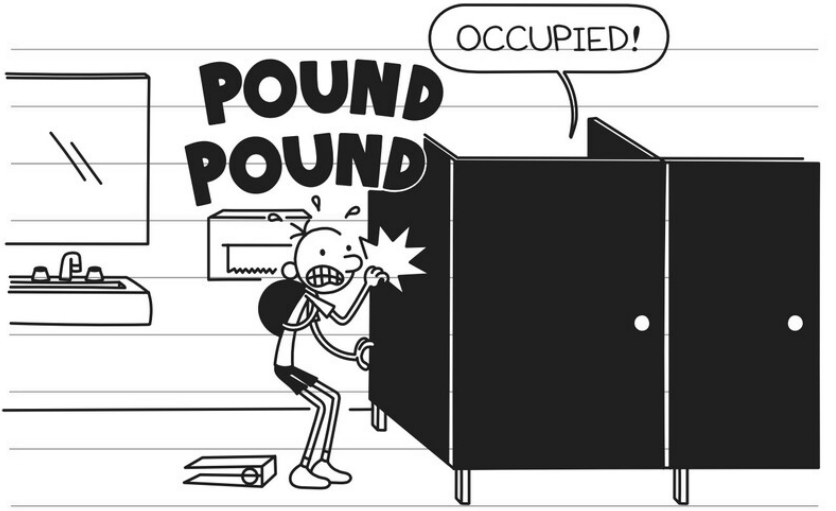
That's when I remembered the bag I'd stashed in the second-floor bathroom, so I made my way there. But not before almost colliding with Chad Laffley in the hallway.



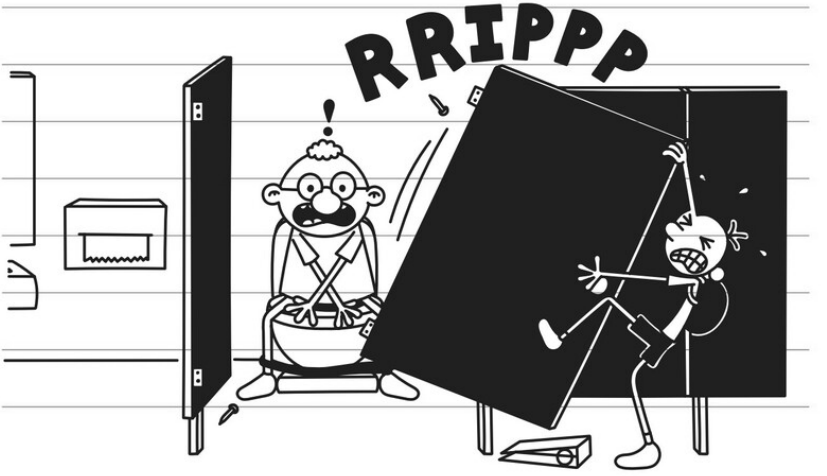
By the time I got to the bathroom, I was pretty sure I'd left Ryland and his goons in my dust. But I knew it wouldn't be long before they figured out where I was, so the clock was ticking.

Unfortunately, luck wasn't on my side. When I got into the bathroom, there was someone in the stall below the ceiling tile where I'd hidden my bag.

But this kid didn't seem to be in a hurry, and he couldn't take a hint.

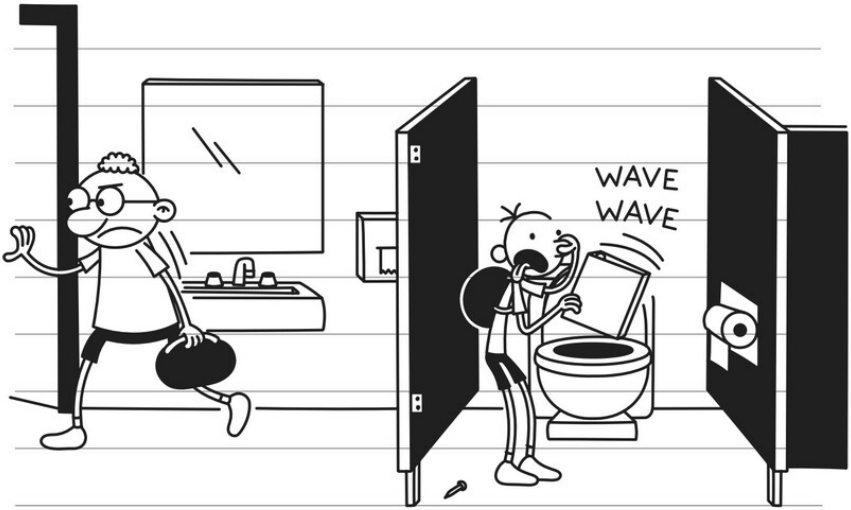


I've heard that when someone is in a life-or-death situation, they get a rush of adrenaline that gives them superhuman strength. And that's exactly what happened to me today.



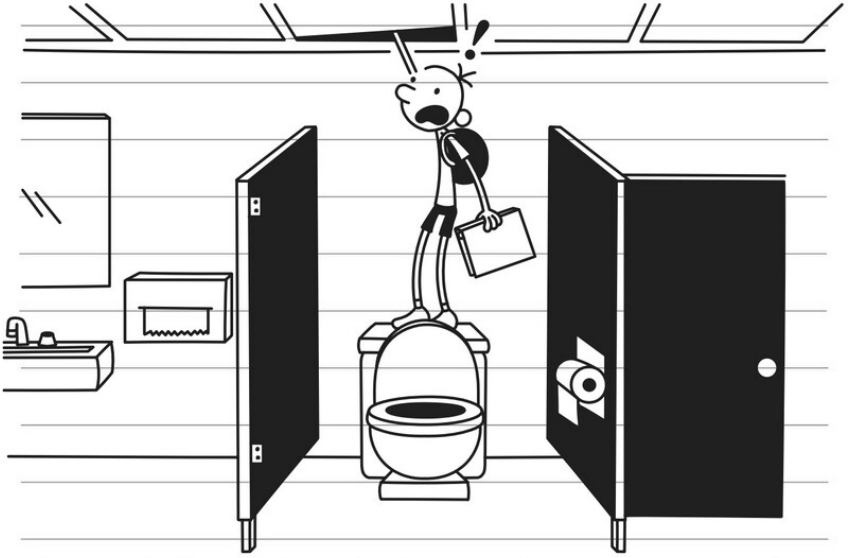
The kid left in a hurry, and for the record, I don't think he washed his hands on the way out. But I had bigger things to worry about than giving him a lecture on personal hygiene.

I wished I could've let the stall air out, though, because it didn't exactly smell like roses in there.



I couldn't let that bother me, because I needed to stay focused. So I climbed up on the toilet tank, popped open the ceiling tile, and felt around to find my bag. But I panicked, because there wasn't anything there.

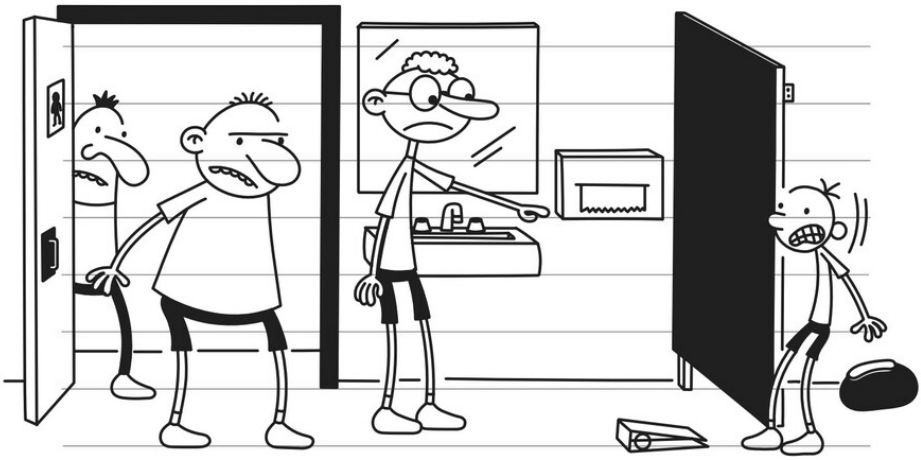
I thought maybe I had the wrong bathroom, because there are two on the second floor. But then I felt a backpack strap, and I knew I was in the right place.



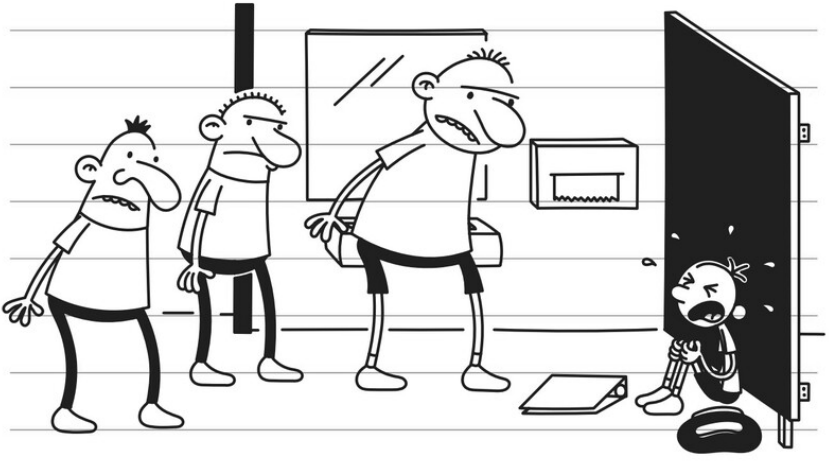
I pulled the backpack down and opened it, and thankfully everything was still in there. Even the fake library card, which I was hoping looked official enough to get me entry into a different country.

I was about to gather my belongings and take off, but then I heard the bathroom door open and I froze.

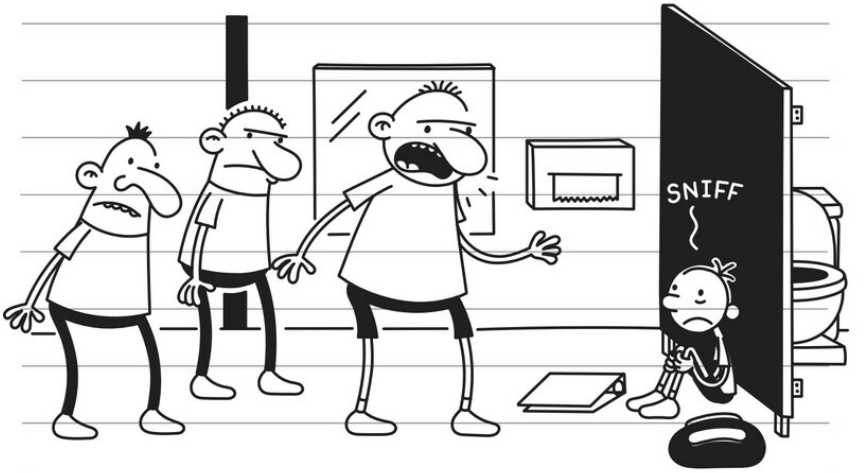
It was Ryland and the other bullies. And it was Chad Laffley who sold me out.



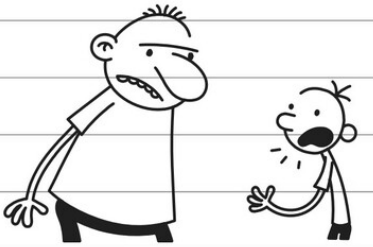
I always thought that when you're cornered, you have to choose fight or flight. But it turns out there's a THIRD option.



Instead of clobbering me, Ryland seemed confused. He said that he was trying to find someone to help track down the Snitch, and since I read books, he figured I must be pretty smart.

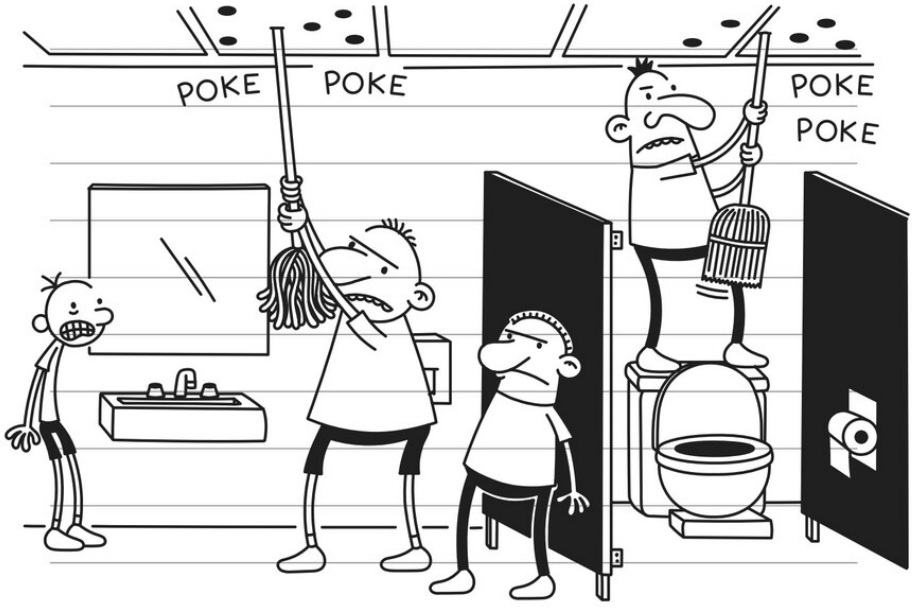


Then Ryland asked me why I ran from him in the cafeteria, and I had to make up an excuse. So I told him it was because I saw a guy carrying a binder leave the cafeteria and I thought he must be the Snitch, so I went after him.

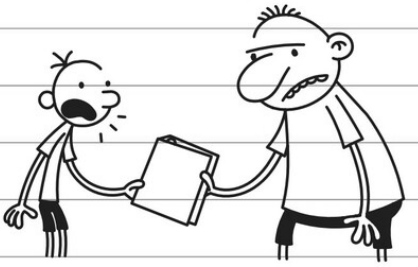


I told these guys that I had cornered the Snitch in the bathroom, but he escaped through the ceiling and got away. And believe it or not, they bought it.

In fact, they were so sure I was telling the truth that they grabbed a broom and a mop from the janitor's closet to see if they could stop the Snitch before he got away. And I was glad I didn't try escaping through the ceiling MYSELF, because if I had, I'd be full of holes right now.



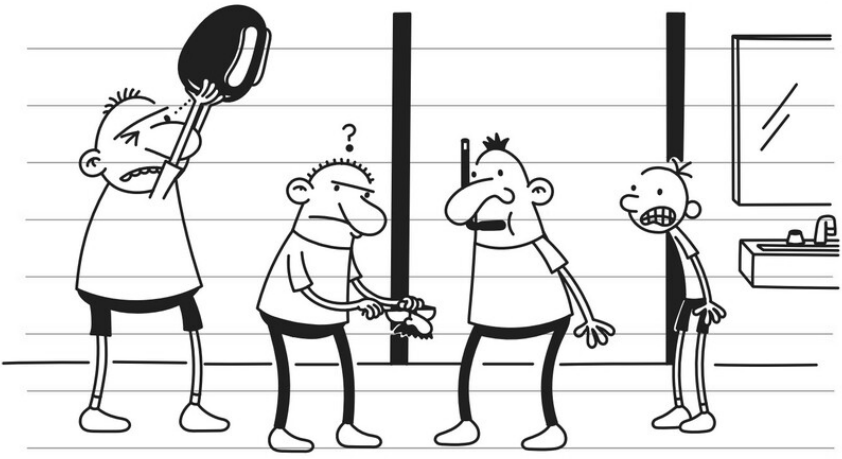
That's when Ryland noticed the binder. I told him that the Snitch had dropped it when he escaped, but there wasn't anything in it.



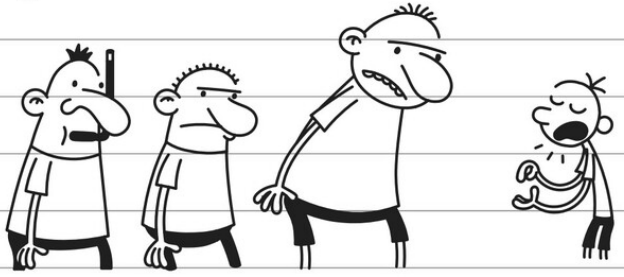
Ryland wanted to know what was in the bag, so I emptied it out onto the floor. I'd actually forgotten about some of the stuff I packed, like the suntan lotion and flip-flops I was gonna use if I ended up escaping to a tropical island.



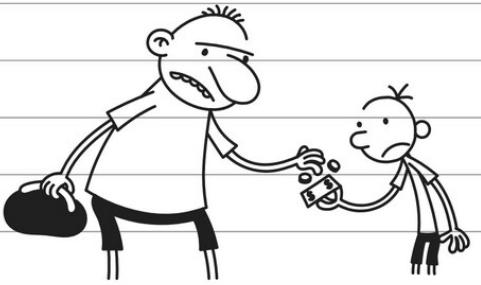
Ryland pocketed the cash from the bag, and James Johns put my snorkel in his mouth, which pretty much guaranteed I'd never use that thing again.



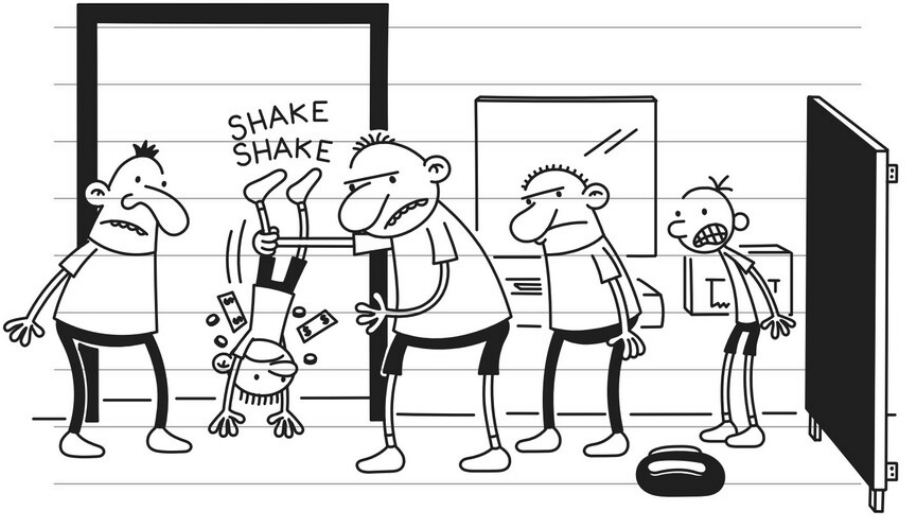
Ryland told me since I was the only person to see the Snitch, it was my job to FIND him. But I said if he wanted me to do detective work, I was gonna need to get PAID. And I figured he'd never agree to that.



But Ryland gave me the cash that had been in my bag, which means I got paid with my own allowance.

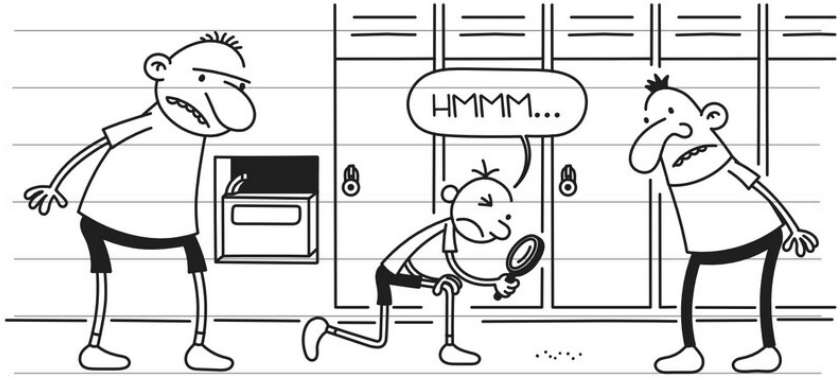


I told him that detective work isn't cheap and I was gonna need DOUBLE what he was paying. But it turns out bullies can basically get money whenever they want, which was bad news for the next kid who walked into the bathroom.

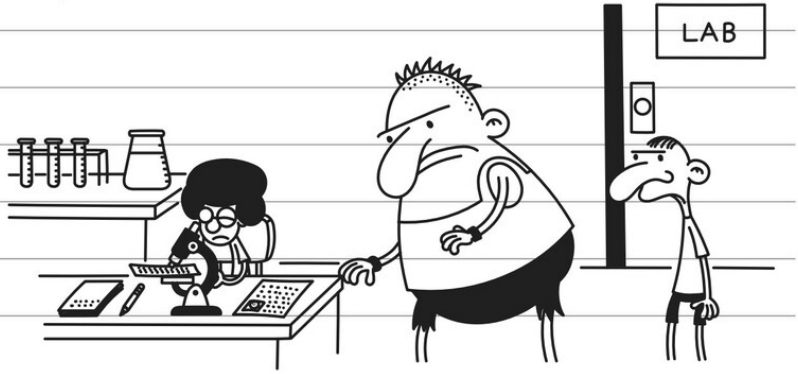


Tuesday

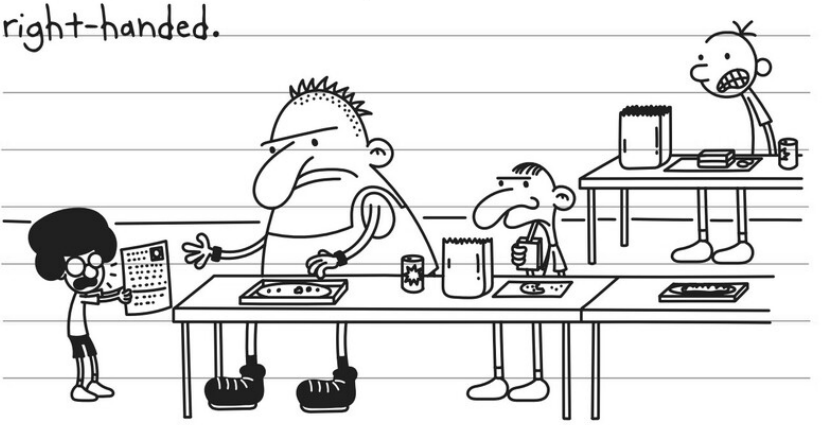
I've spent the last couple of days investigating a person who doesn't exist, and it's starting to get a little exhausting. But Ryland and his friends are trying to get their money's worth out of me, so I've had to fake it.



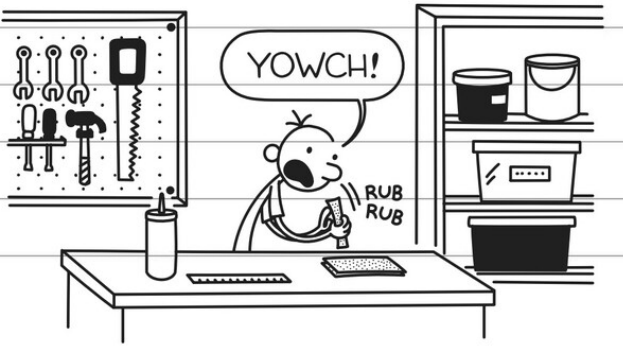
I found out that Zander Wrexham hired Alex Aruda to do his OWN investigation, which means I've got something NEW to worry about. Because if anyone can crack the case, it's him.



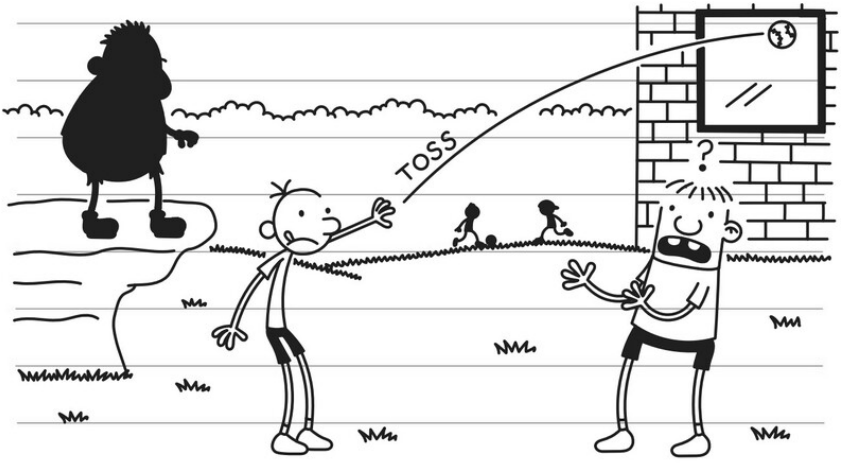
Alex actually made a big breakthrough yesterday. He examined one of the pages under a microscope and found some fingerprints. He said the right thumbprint was slightly larger than the left one, which means that the person behind this stuff is right-handed.



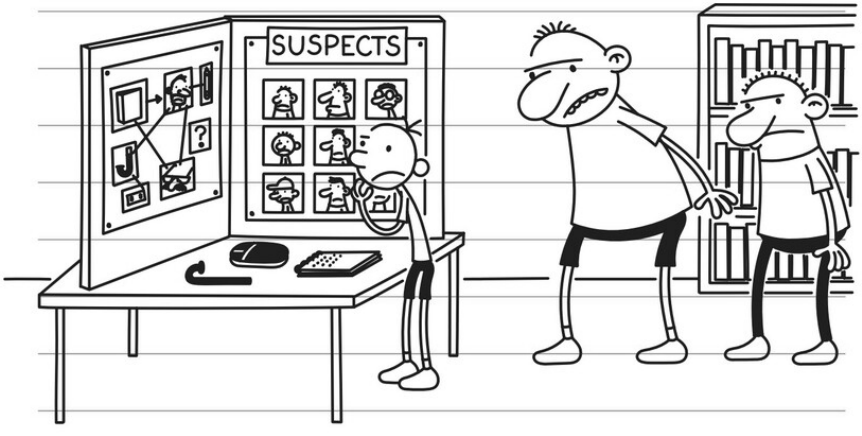
And if Alex had my fingerprints, that meant it wouldn't be long before he linked them to ME. So I tried to sand off my fingerprints in my dad's workroom last night, which is a lot harder than you'd think.



I've been pretending to be left-handed to throw everyone off my scent, but I'm worried it could be making Zander suspicious.



Ryland is starting to lose patience with the pace of my investigation, so I took over a table in the library to make it look like I'm making progress.



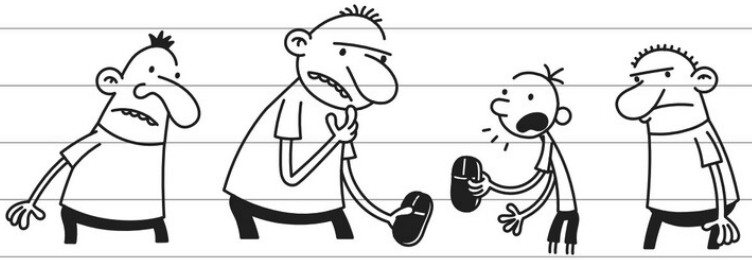
The problem is that Ryland's expectations are too high. We all grew up on the Sherlock Sammy books, where Sammy could always solve a crime in under fifteen minutes.



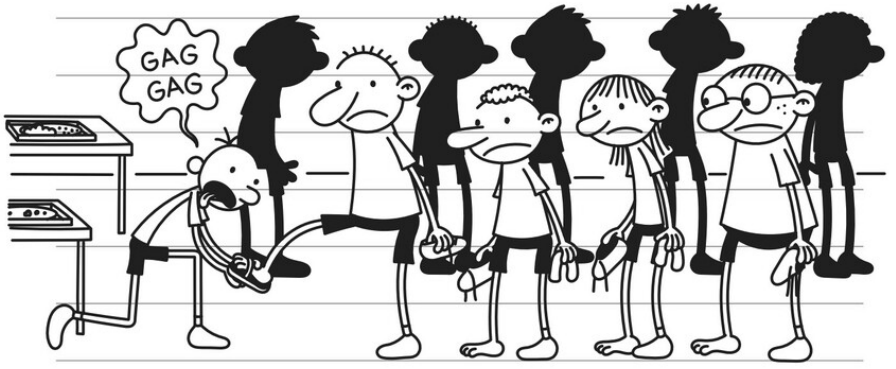
I told Ryland that Sherlock Sammy is fiction and that in real life detective work takes TIME. But Ryland wants to be the person to find the Snitch so he can be first to get his revenge.

That means I have to keep pretending to be investigating, and I'm running out of ways to do that. But I came up with a new idea for how to string this thing out.

I told Ryland that the Snitch left behind a major clue, which were his flip-flops. And that meant whoever's feet fit in the flip-flops was guilty.



I knew that flip-flops are pretty much one size fits all, but I figured it's better to be the investigator than a suspect. And even though I didn't love touching other people's feet, sometimes you've gotta do what you've gotta do.

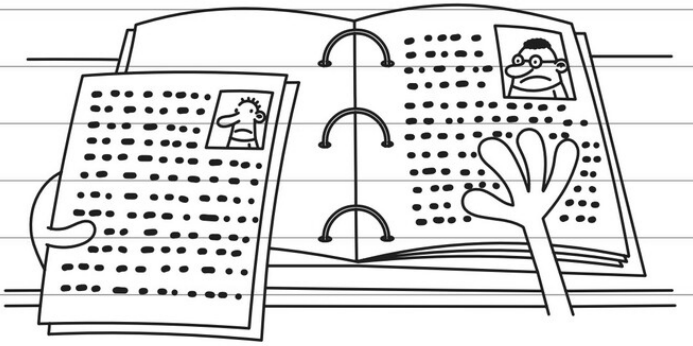


To drag things out even MORE, I promised Ryland I'd interview every kid in our grade, which I knew could take WEEKS.

It's a little awkward interrogating innocent kids, but I'm trying to keep the heat off myself.



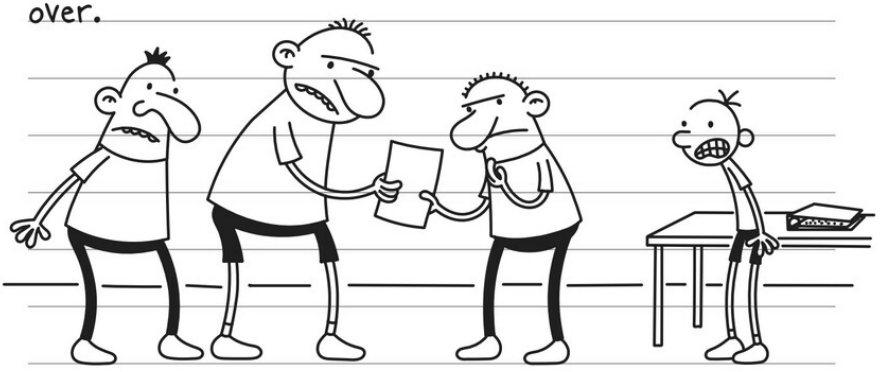
I collected a ton of information in my interviews, and I needed somewhere to keep it all. Luckily, I had just the place.



But something happened when I was putting a new suspect page in the binder.



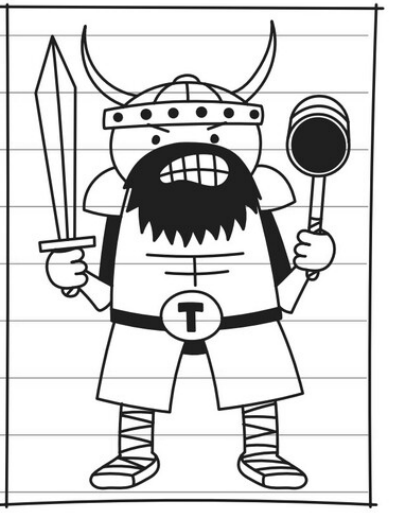
A piece of paper that was tucked inside the flap fell out. And as soon as I saw it, I knew EXACTLY what it was. But before I had a chance to grab it, Ryland was already looking it over.



The paper was Rowley's old character sheet from Magick and Monsters, which I hadn't noticed when I emptied out the binder to begin with.

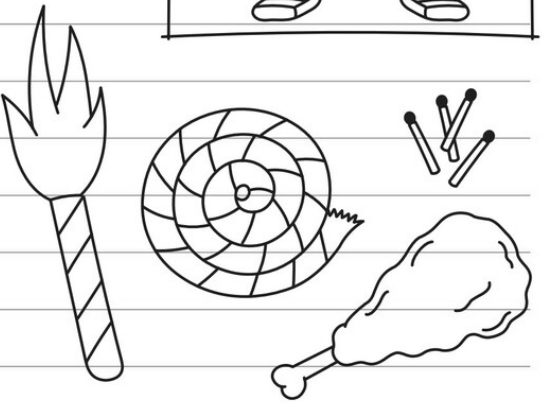
Luckily, Ryland isn't into role-playing games, so he didn't know what he was looking at.

Name:
Targor Ironhide



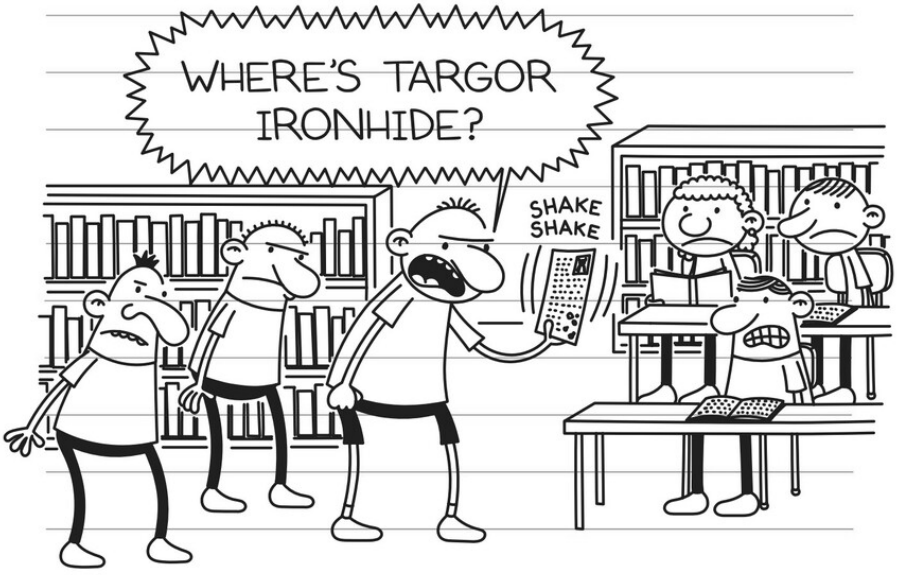
Weapons:
War Hammer
Mace
Magic Sword

Supplies
Rope
Torch
Matches
Mutton

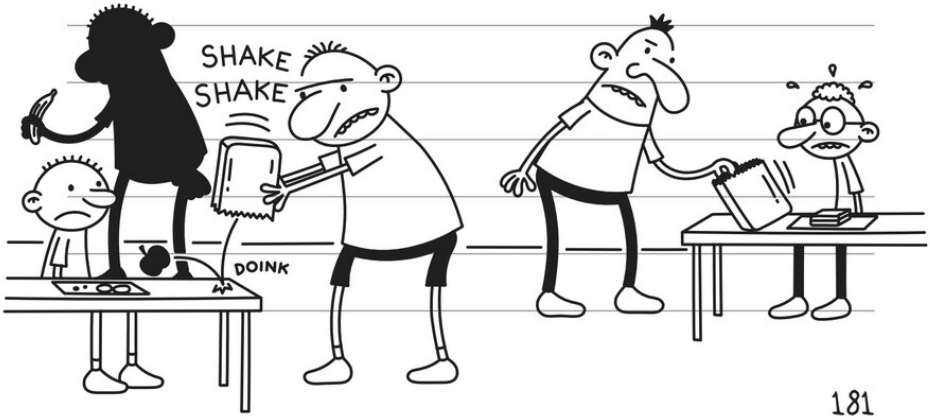


I was SURE Ryland was gonna start going around the cafeteria looking for a kid with the same handwriting that was on the sheet.

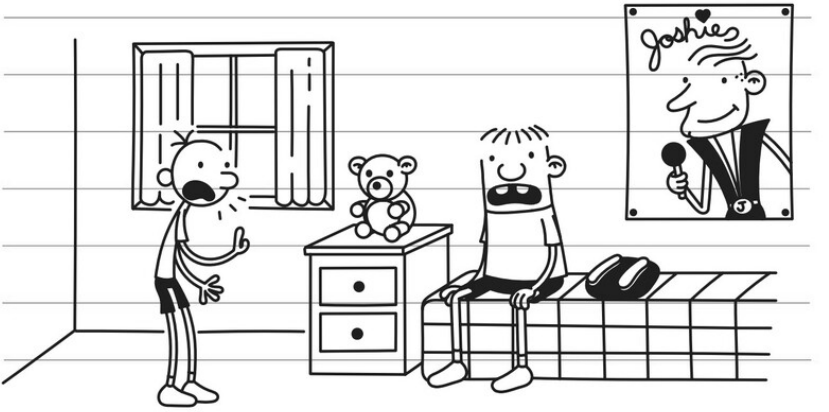
But bullies aren't the smartest guys around, and Ryland took it in a totally different direction.



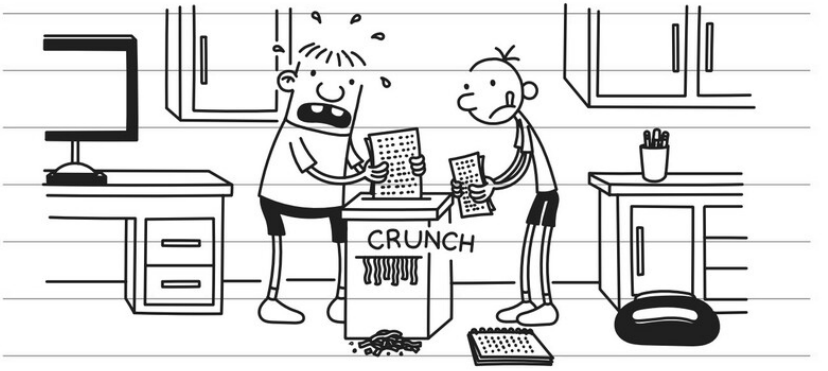
Nobody spoke up, so at lunch Ryland and his goons started looking for kids who had mutton in their lunch bags. But that's not really the kind of thing kids pack for lunch these days.



After school, Rowley was pretty confused why Ryland Rynherd was looking for someone with the same name as his Magick and Monsters character. But I told him the less he knew, the better.



I DID say it might be a good idea to get rid of anything with his handwriting on it, just in case. Then I helped him shred all of his school papers, including a book report he hadn't handed in yet.



It turns out we wasted our time, because today Alex Aruda matched the handwriting on Rowley's Magick and Monsters character sheet to a giant banner everyone at the school signed when one of the cafeteria ladies threw her back out.



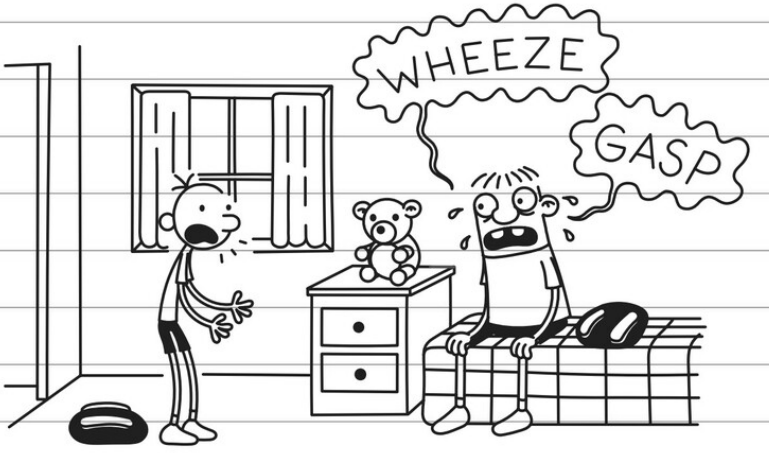
So I guess that goes to show it doesn't always pay to be nice.

Feel better Mrs. N!
♥ Rowley

Wednesday

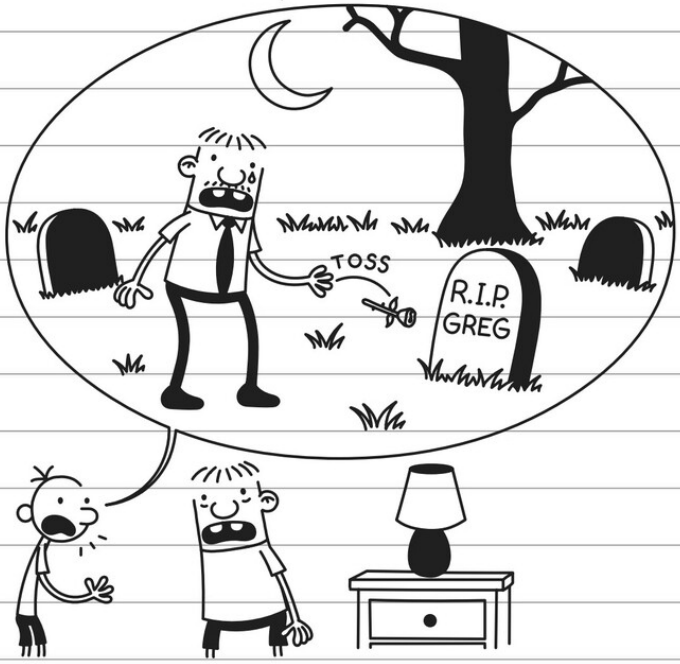
Rowley is totally freaking out, because everybody at school thinks he's the Snitch. And since he hasn't been paying attention to what's been happening, he had no idea what that even means.

So this afternoon I got Rowley up to speed, which took a while. I told him about the bully binder and the investigation and how Zander Wrexham has got first dibs on fighting the Snitch. And the truth is, Rowley didn't take the news that well.



He said that since I was actually the Snitch, then I should be the one to fight Z-Rex.

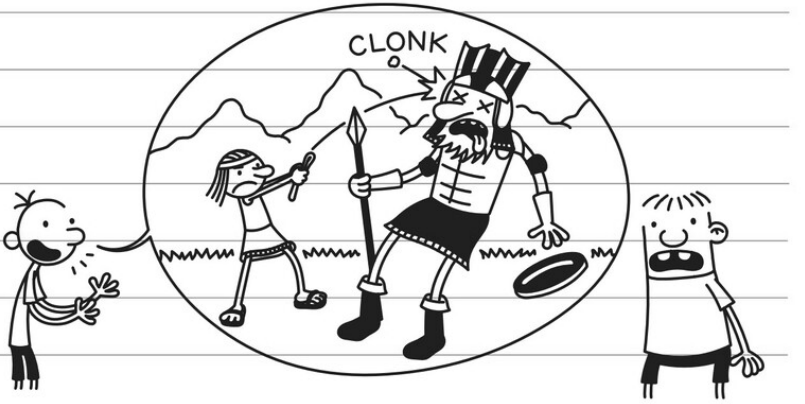
I told Rowley while that might SEEM like a good idea, he wasn't thinking this through. Then I explained how hard it would be living the rest of his life with a guilty conscience.



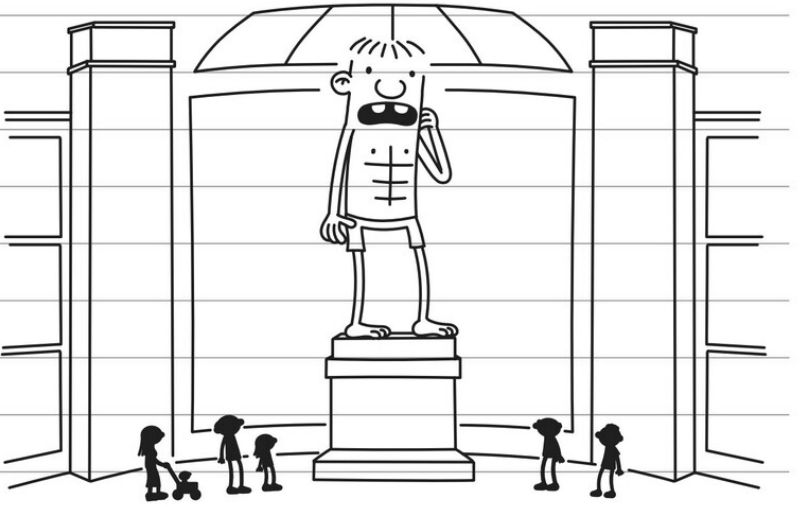
I told him that it would be much better if HE fought Zander, since he knew karate. Plus, he'd be using it in self-defense, which is totally allowed.

But I could tell I wasn't doing a good enough job convincing Rowley he should be the one to face Zander, so I tried a different approach.

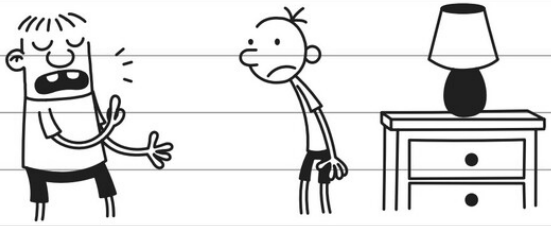
I reminded Rowley of the Bible story where a guy named David beat a much BIGGER guy named Goliath in a fight, and he became a legend doing it.



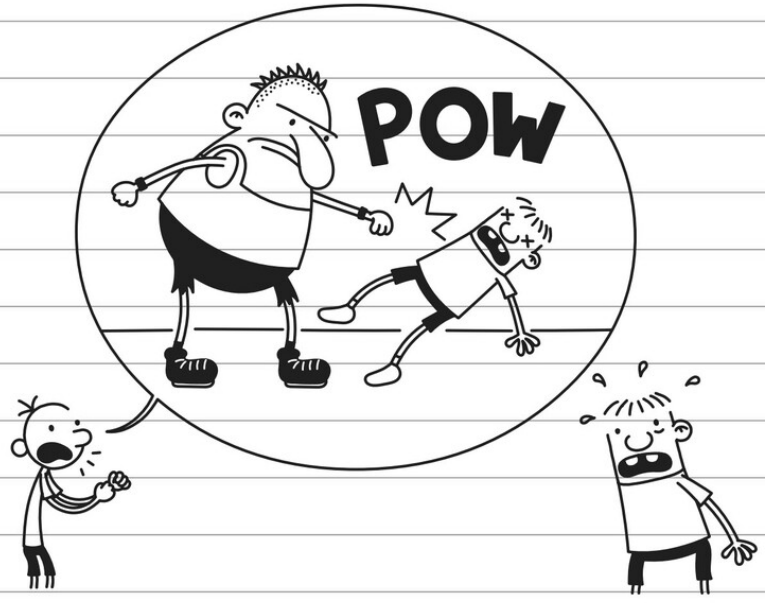
Some famous artist even made a sculpture of David, and I told Rowley that somebody might make a sculpture of HIM.



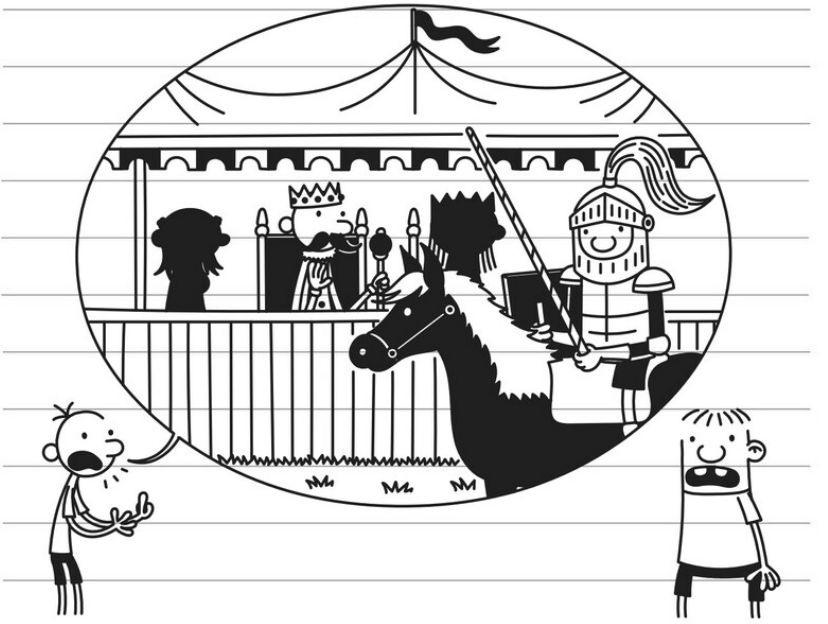
Rowley STILL wasn't convinced, though. He said his dojo teaches that fighting should always be the last resort, and that the best fight is when no one throws a punch.



I reminded him that Zander does his talking with his FISTS. But I probably said the wrong thing, because that really freaked Rowley out.



I told Rowley that back in olden times, a king would choose a champion to fight FOR him. Then I told him that I was choosing him to be MY champion, which he should consider a huge honor.

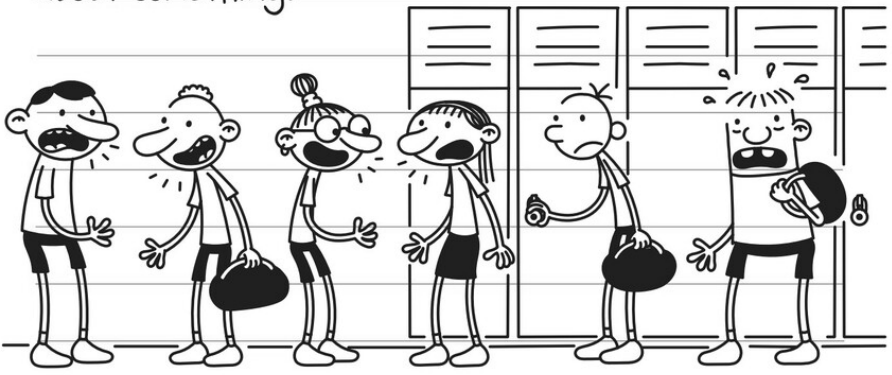


It turns out that was the magic word, because apparently honor is a really big deal in karate. And that's what got Rowley to agree to fight for me.

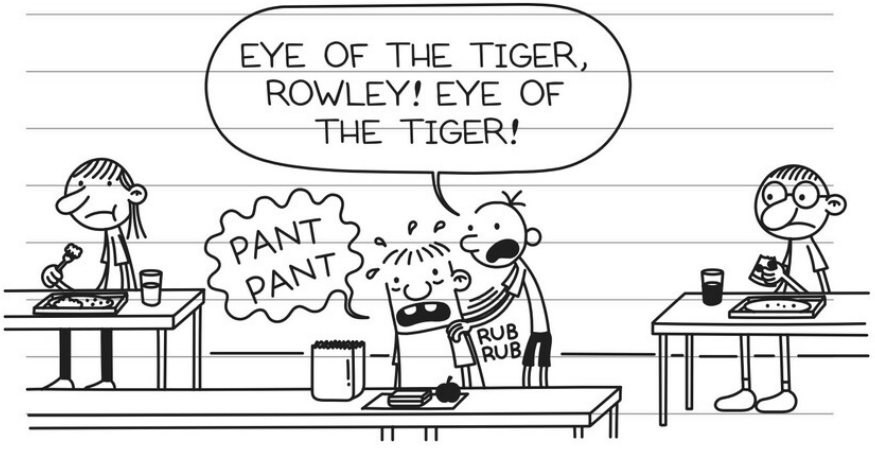
But if he DOES get a statue made of him, I feel like I should probably get a cut of whatever the museum charges for admission.

Thursday

All anybody can talk about at school is the big fight between Z-Rex and the Snitch. And I don't remember kids in school ever being this excited about something.

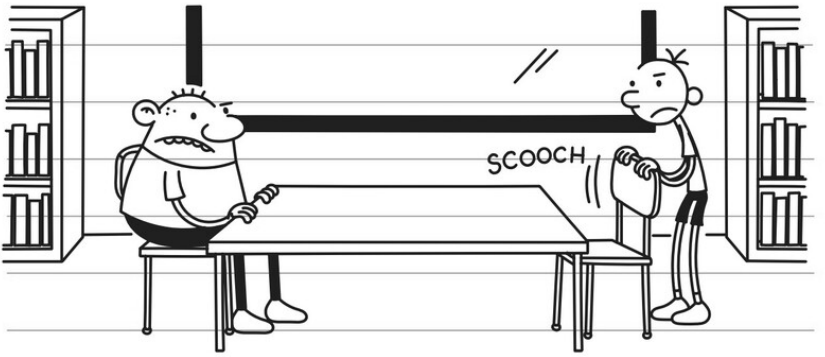


I volunteered to be Rowley's manager, because I figured he needed somebody to give him pep talks and shoulder rubs and stuff like that.



But before the fight actually happened, there were a lot of details that needed to get decided. So I arranged a meeting with Zander's manager to sort everything out.

Zander's regular sidekick Tarik is getting his tonsils out, so Levi Bigson is his new number two. We met in the library before school started to negotiate.

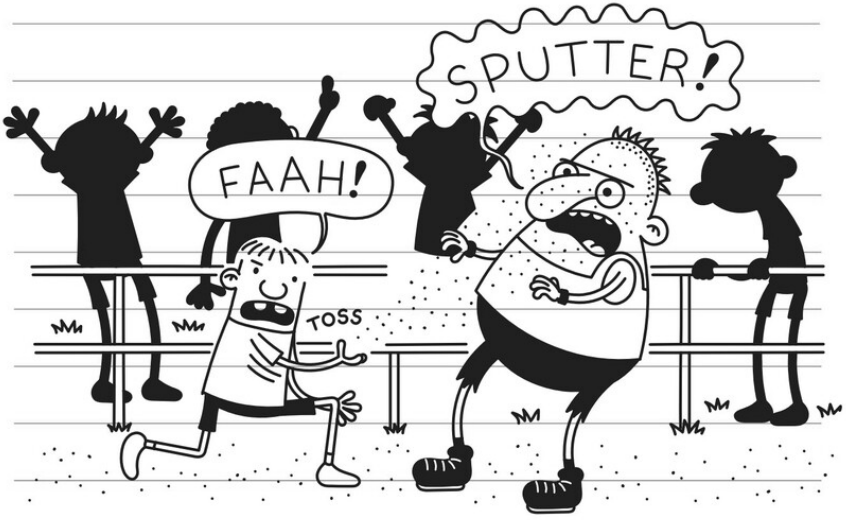


I thought the fight should happen at recess, because if things went the way I figured they would, at least Rowley would get saved by the bell.

But Levi said having a fight during the school day was a bad idea, because it got you an automatic suspension.

That was a fair point, so we agreed on an after-school fight. I still thought it should happen on the playground, because the sand would make for a softer surface when Rowley hit the ground.

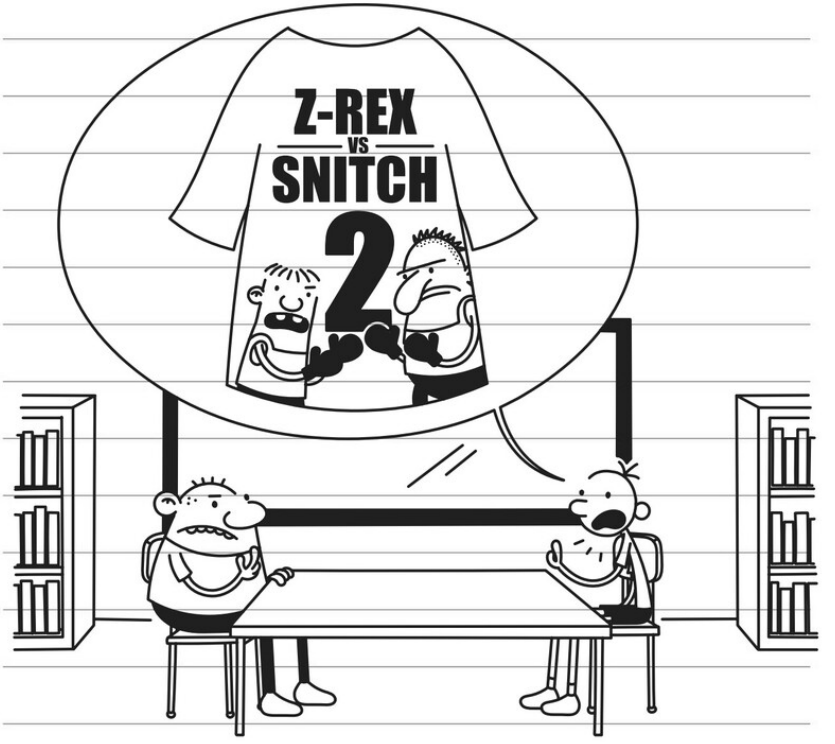
What I DIDN'T mention was that the sand would give Rowley an advantage if he needed to fight dirty.



Levi didn't like the playground idea, though, because he said there were cameras everywhere. He suggested the fight take place at the abandoned ball field where there were no cameras. Plus, there were bleachers, so everyone could get a good view.

Even though that was a good idea, I didn't like that Zander's side was setting all of the terms of the fight.

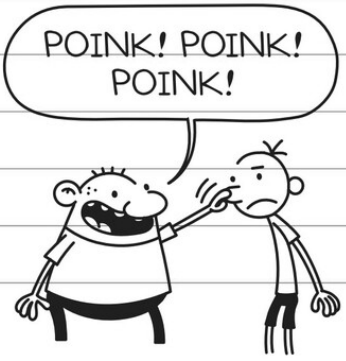
So I made a few rules of my OWN. I said the fight could only go five rounds, and if there wasn't a winner, it would be declared a draw. And I said that if the fight ended in a tie, there'd be a rematch, and my side would get 80% of the T-shirt sales.



Levi was only willing to go 50-50 on any merchandise, and I couldn't get him to budge. Then he agreed to let me sell concessions, which could actually rake in a lot of money.

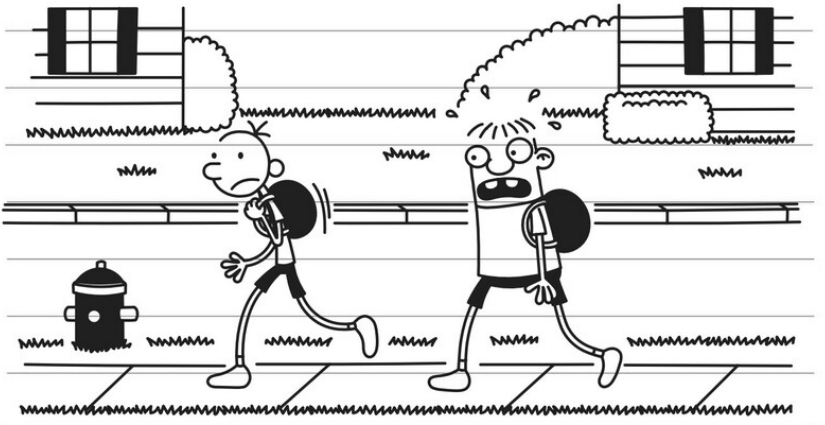


After that was settled, we agreed to end the meeting, and we shook hands to seal the deal. But the next fight at school might actually be me versus Levi, because I forgot how annoying that kid could be.



Friday

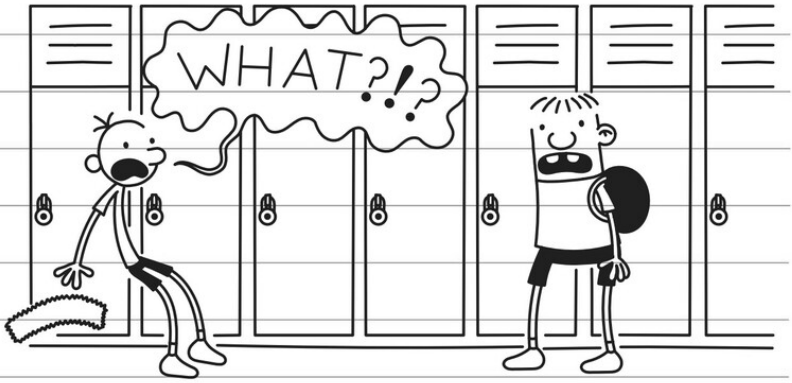
Today was the day of the big fight. We decided to do it on a Friday since everyone would be in a good mood and looking forward to the weekend. But the person who didn't seem to be in a Friday mood was Rowley, who barely said a word on the walk to school.



I tried to pump Rowley up a little, because that's what a good manager is supposed to do. So I told him he just needed to remember his karate training and he'd be fine.

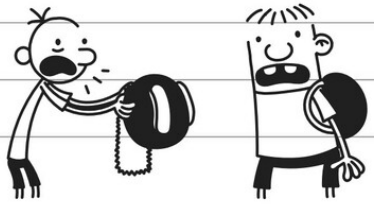
But when we got to school, Rowley told me something a little shocking, which was that he only just got his yellow belt.

I tried not to react, because I didn't want to freak Rowley out. But I guess maybe I did react a little.

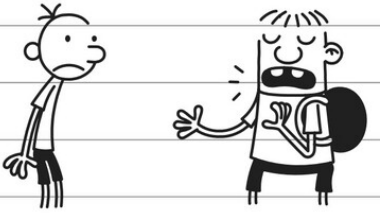


Rowley's been doing karate for a few months, so I figured he'd at LEAST be a brown belt by now. And I would never have pushed him into this fight if I knew he was a beginner.

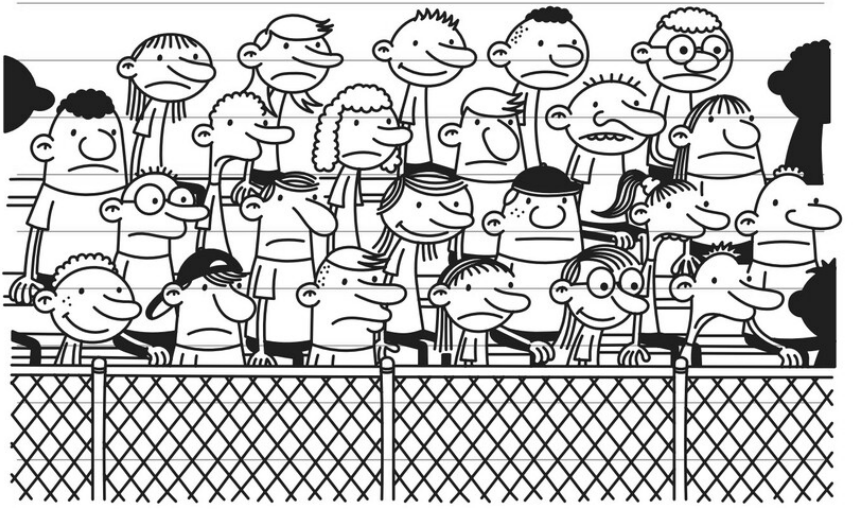
I still had some of the survival stuff with me from that bag I stashed in the bathroom, and I told Rowley that he should take off while he had a chance. I even offered him my towel in case he ended up on one of those remote islands.



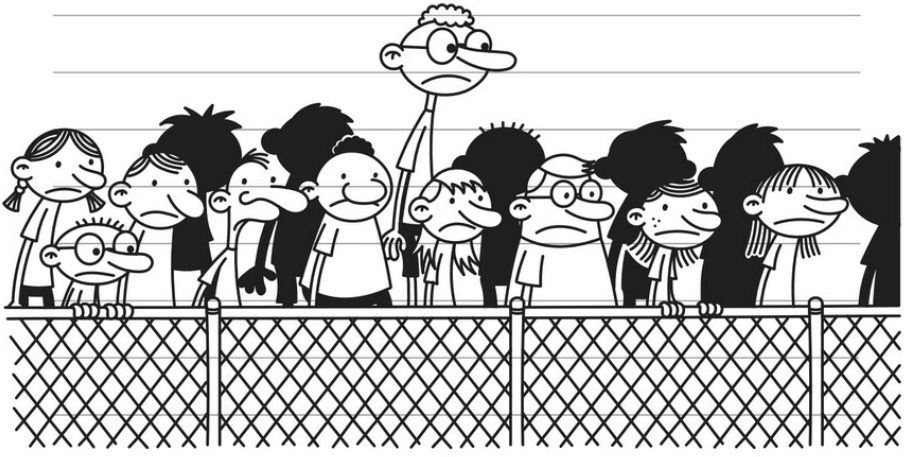
But Rowley said that he'd agreed to fight in my honor, and that a true student of karate would never break his word. And even though I thought he was a little crazy, I decided I should respect his decision.



After school wrapped up, everyone headed for the abandoned ball field. Most of the school was already in their spots in the bleachers, which were completely full.



That meant some kids weren't able to get a seat, which wasn't really an issue for Chad Laffley.



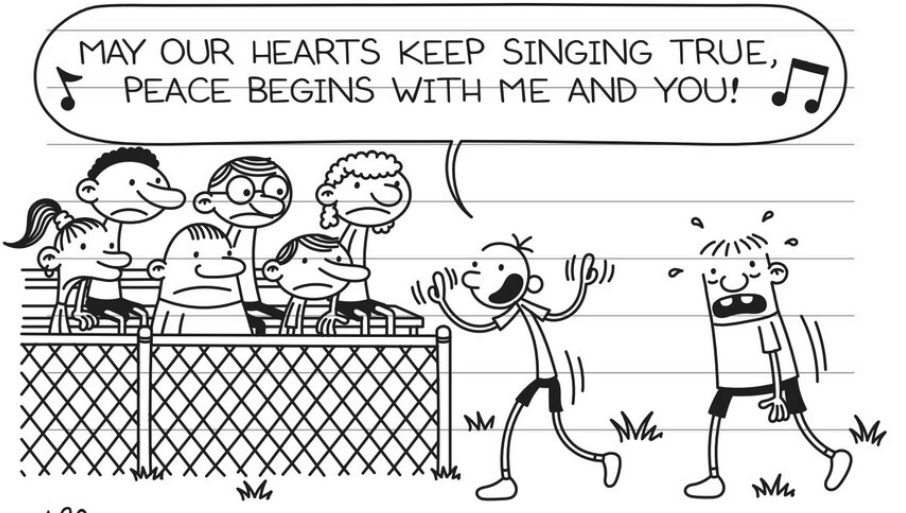
It turns out Zander was nowhere to be found. I was hoping maybe he'd decided the fight wasn't worth it and we could call the whole thing off. But then I heard some music, which got louder as it got closer.



Levi appeared carrying a boom box above his head, with Zander right behind him.



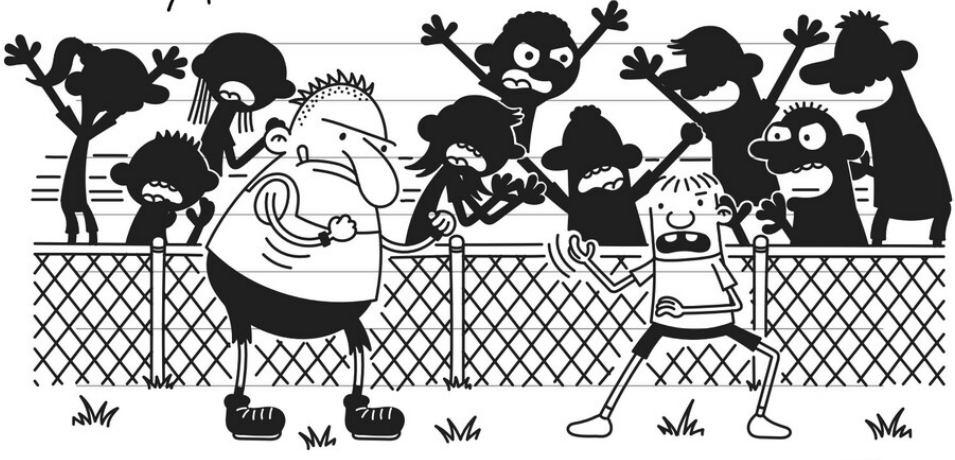
I had TOTALLY forgotten to pick some walkout music for Rowley. So I sang the only song I knew the words to, which probably wasn't a great choice for the situation.



Before the fight got started, Levi listed all the rules, like no hitting below the belt and no headbutts or elbows. And I wished he would stop talking, because he was really freaking Rowley out.



When Levi finally finished, he stepped back and the fight was officially on. Rowley got into a cool karate pose, and for the first time I felt like he might actually pull this off.



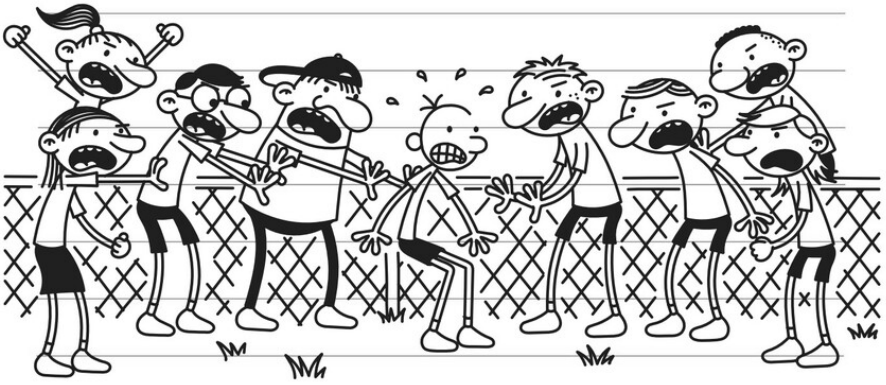
I was hoping Rowley would attack with a roundhouse kick or a flying punch. But Zander came out of the gate with his go-to move.



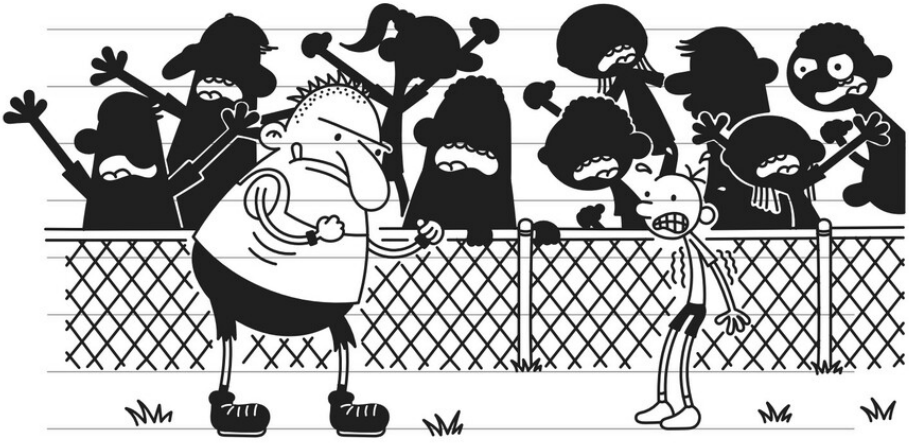
It's situations like this where a person learns what they're made of. Rowley had to choose between fight or flight, and he decided to go with option number two.



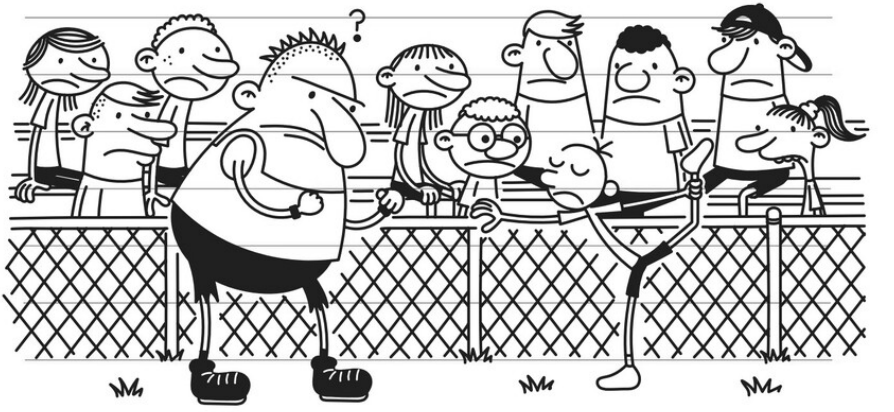
I decided it might be a good idea to take off myself. But when I tried to escape, the crowd formed a wall and blocked me in.



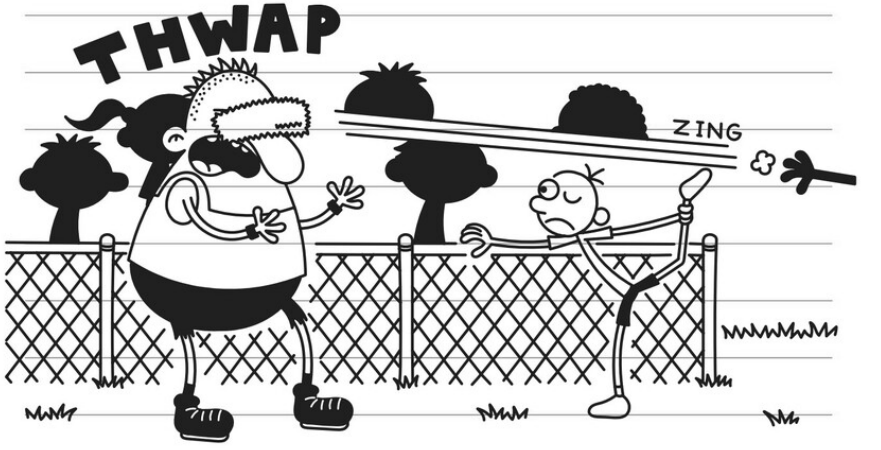
I guess these people came to see a fight, and they didn't really care who was IN it. So I found myself standing toe to toe with the biggest bully at our school.



I tried to remember everything I'd learned in the one karate lesson I went to, and I struck a pose I hoped might be intimidating. But I think it might've been a yoga move.



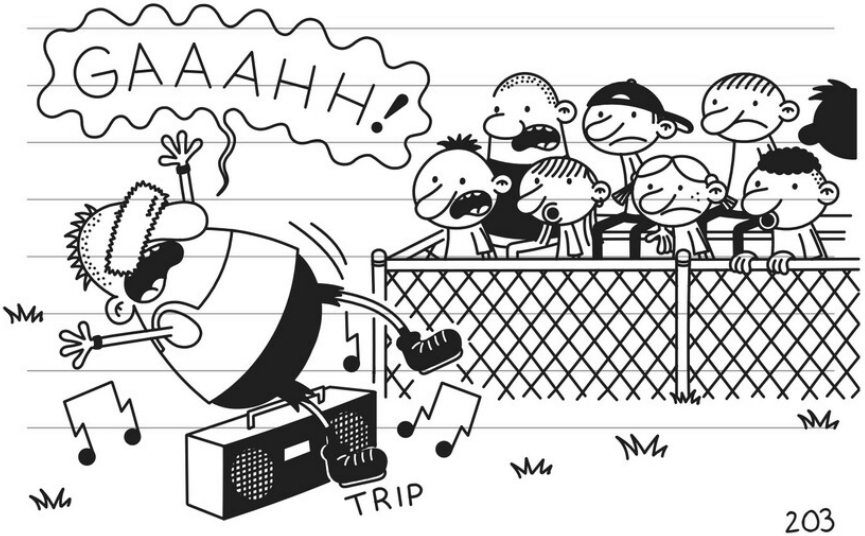
Zander took a step toward me, and I just hoped this would be over quick. But then, out of nowhere, Zander got hit in the face with something.



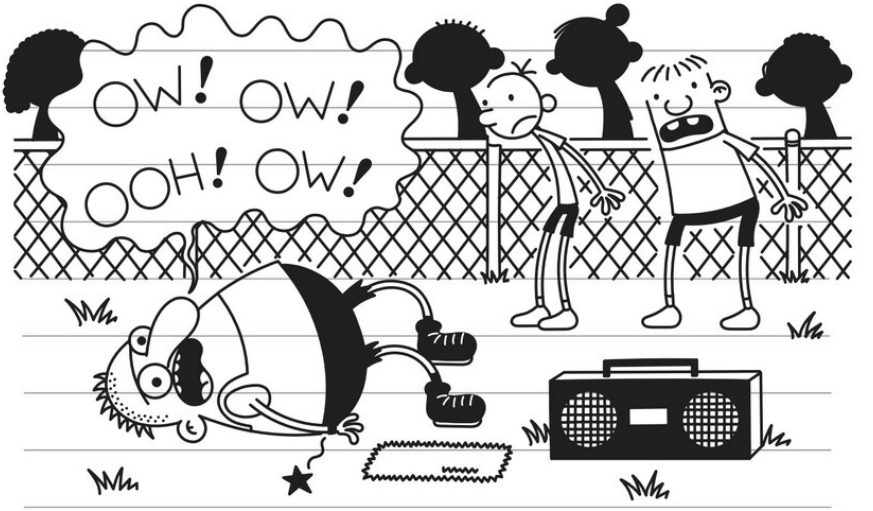
It was my TOWEL. And Rowley was the one who threw it, hoping to stop the fight.



It DID stop the fight, but not in the way he hoped for. The towel hit Zander in the eyes, and he stumbled backward, tripping over Levi's boom box.



Zander took a hard fall on the ground and landed on his rear end. But he must've landed on his tailbone, because he started writhing in pain.

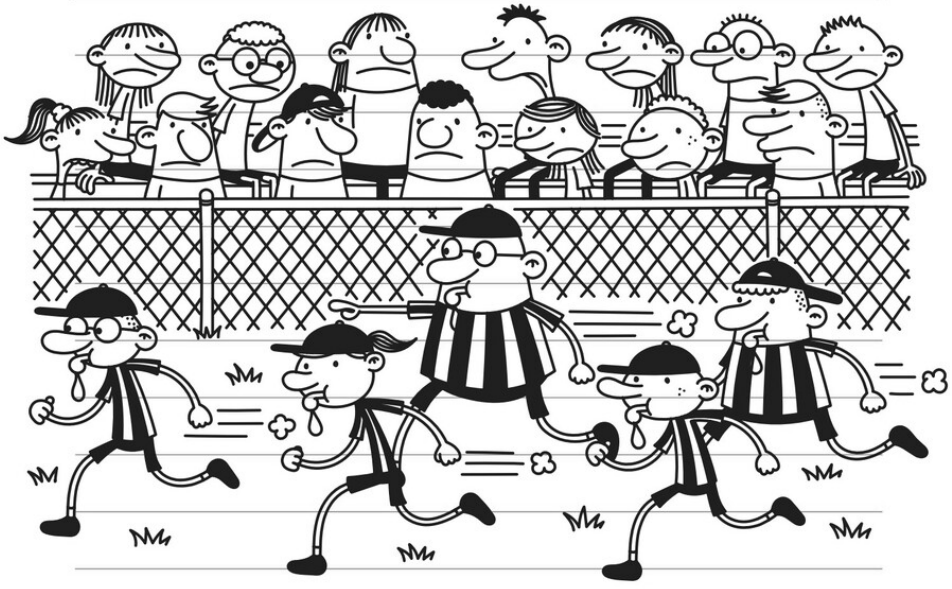


My first thought was that his fall wouldn't have hurt half as bad if we had the fight on sand, like I suggested. Then I started wondering what we were supposed to do NEXT, because Zander wasn't getting up.

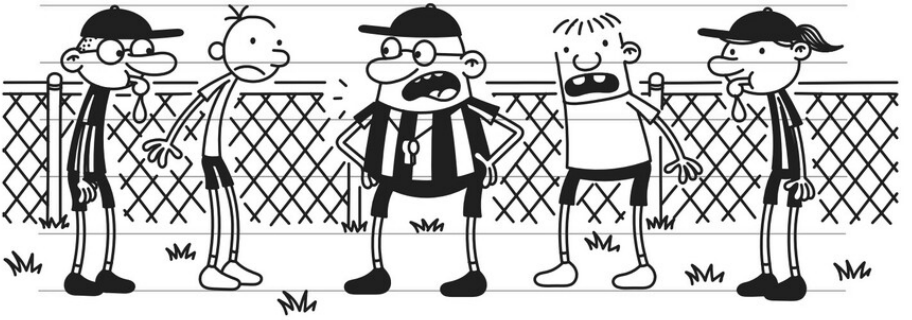
But before we had a chance to help Zander to his feet, a high-pitched noise cut through the air and stopped everyone cold.



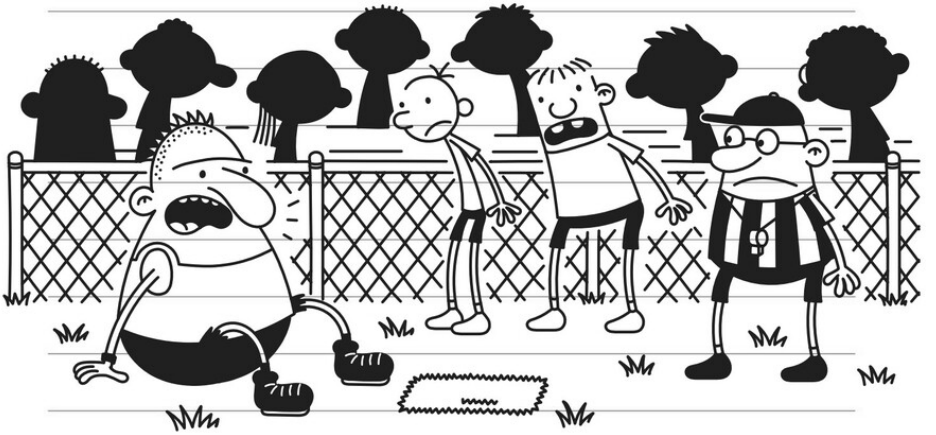
The noise came from the Birdwatching Club, who had finally gotten those whistles and uniforms.



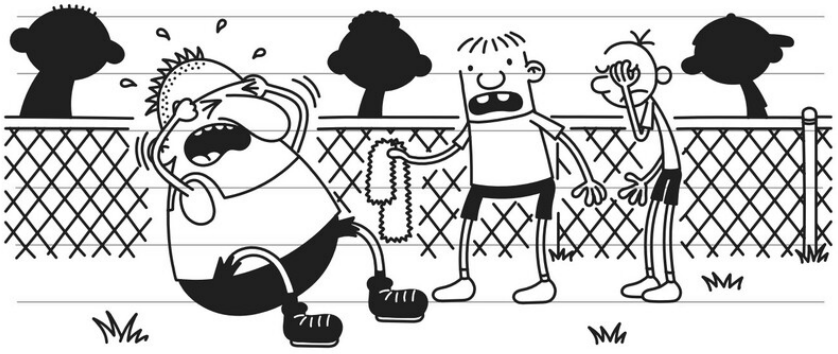
Amir James said they were there to stop the fight. But if you ask me, it would've been nice if they'd shown up five minutes earlier.



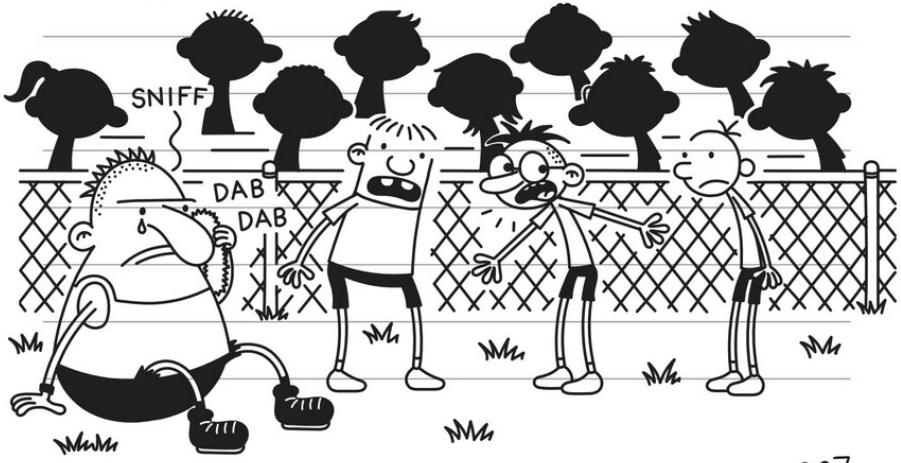
Then Zander surprised everyone by speaking up. He said he never wanted to fight in the first place, and that he wasn't even really a bully. He said the only reason he pretended to be a bully was because everyone at school TREATED him like one.



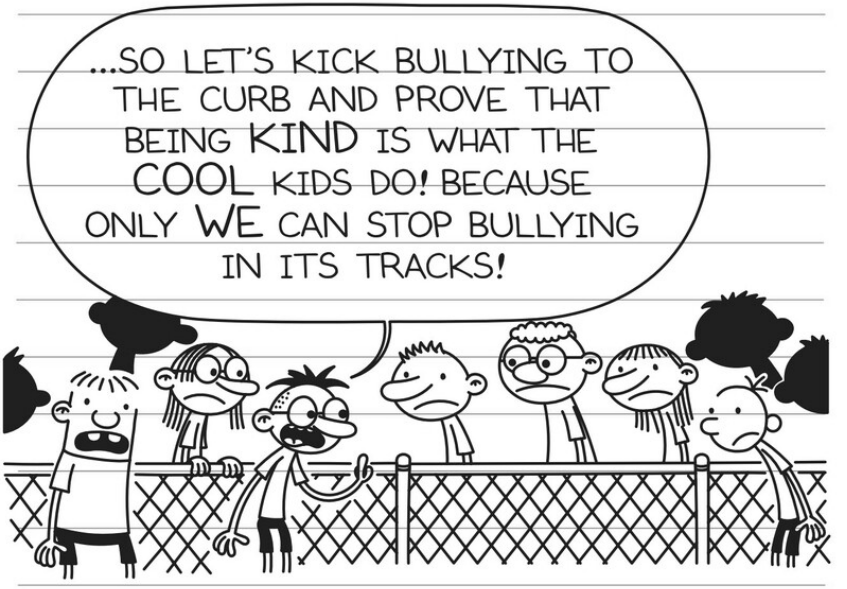
Then Zander said he was supposed to go bike riding with his Grammie this weekend, and now he couldn't because his tailbone hurt. And when he started blubbering, it made everything ten times more awkward than it already was.



But that wasn't the end of the speeches. Jarrett Jollifee stepped in front of the crowd and talked about how fighting never solves anything and we should give kindness a chance.



It was a pretty good speech, but I knew he stole it almost word for word from that Rowan the Ram video the school shows us every year.



I didn't think that kind of speech would work on kids these days, but boy was I wrong. Because it turned Jarrett into a HERO.



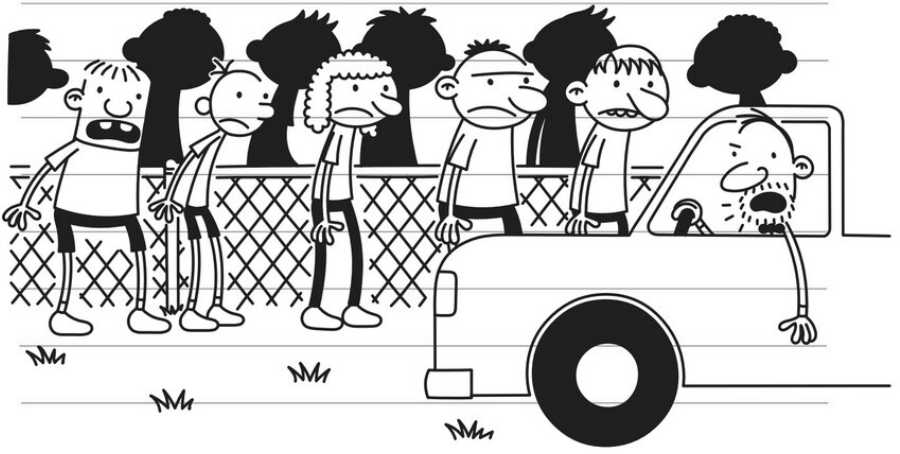
But if Jarrett was the hero, it meant somebody had to be the bad guy. And that's when everyone turned their attention to me and Rowley.



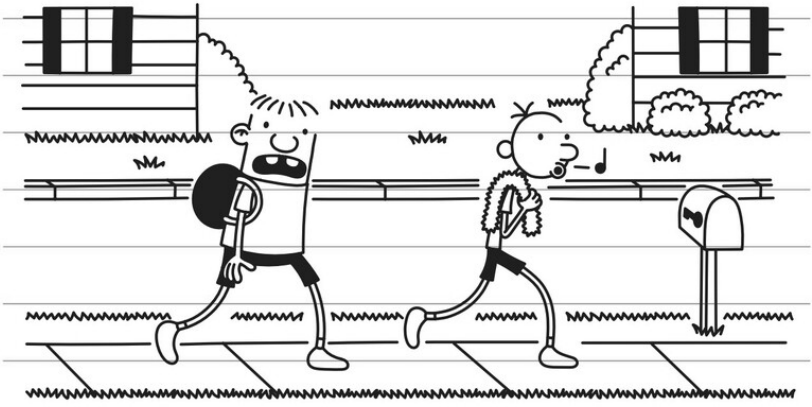
I was actually nervous, because the crowd was closing in, and this time I didn't see a way out. But then a pickup truck rolled onto the field and headed straight for us.



It was Vice Principal Roy, who told everyone we needed to get off school property and go home. And that was perfectly fine by ME.



Even though I wasn't happy me and Rowley turned into the villains, I was glad both of us made it to the weekend alive. Because you've gotta take your wins where you can get them.



Thursday

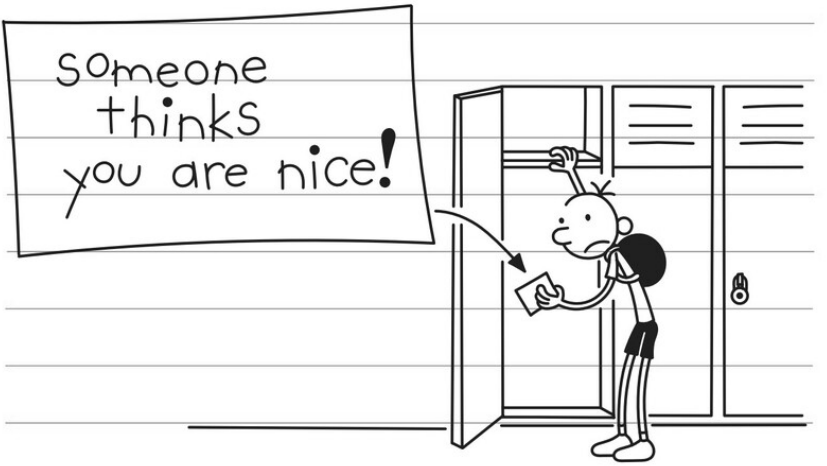
A lot has changed ever since the big fight with Zander. First of all, the Kindness Klub is the most popular after-school organization. But good luck getting in, because Jarrett is being super selective about membership.



One guy who DID manage to get in is Zander, who organized a campaign where club members write anonymous notes and leave them in people's lockers.



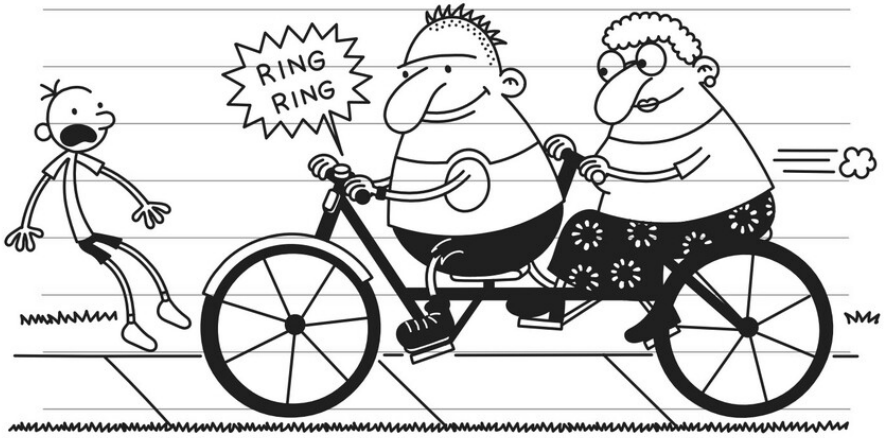
In fact, I'm pretty sure the note I got was from Zander himself, because it looks like his handwriting.



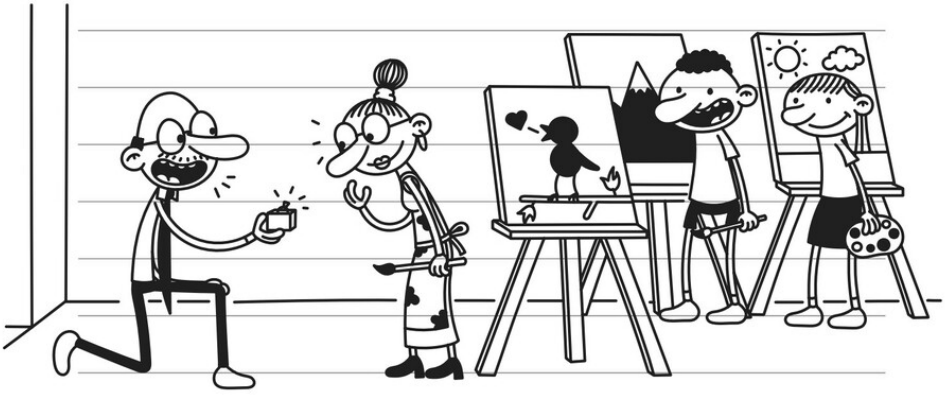
Speaking of nice notes, the whole school made a get-well banner for Zander. And of course Rowley was one of the first people to sign it.



I guess the banner did the trick, because Zander's tailbone seems fully healed. But now you've gotta stay off the sidewalk if you don't want to get run over by him and his Grammie.



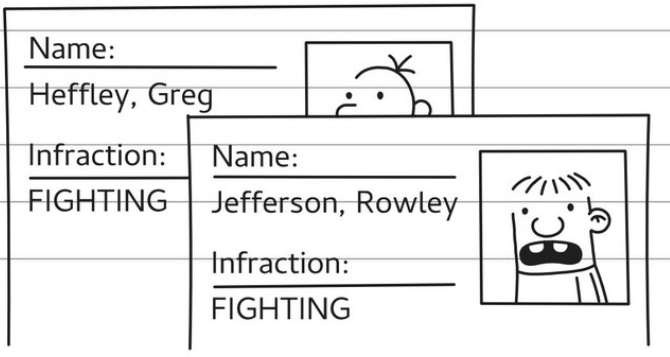
The school made a change to their policy about teachers dating, so Mr. Finch proposed to Miss Starling in the Art room.



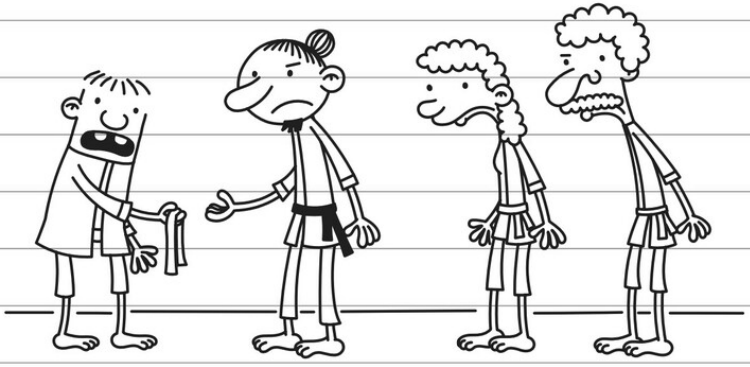
This past weekend, the Birdwatching Club went to Mr. Finch and Miss Starling's wedding. The guests used birdseed instead of rice when the newlyweds left the church, because apparently uncooked rice is bad for birds.



One policy that HASN'T changed is the one about fighting on school property. So now me and Rowley both have it on our permanent records.



Even worse, Rowley's dojo found out about it, so he got demoted to a no-belt.



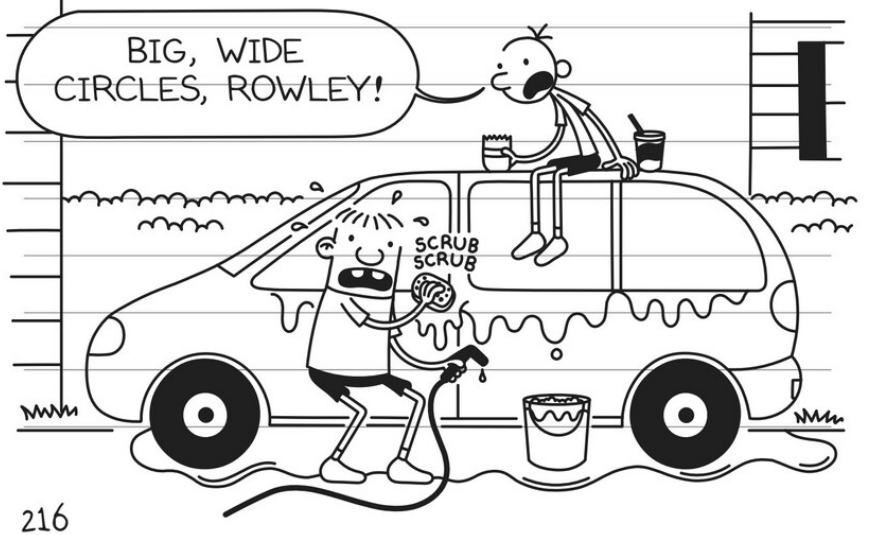
Bullying at school has sort of gone out of style. But if you ask me, now there's too much prey and not enough predators, so everything's all out of whack.



Suddenly the bullies have a lot of free time, so I've been reading to them at recess, which seems to soothe them.



But I wouldn't be surprised if the bullies eventually go back to their old selves. So I've been training Rowley every day after school in case I need someone to have my back.



Just because bullying has stopped doesn't mean kids have stopped fighting, though. It's that they've found a new way to do it.

Apparently the Kindness Klub and the Birdwatching Club have been in a battle over meeting room space, and they decided to settle it on the old ball field. I don't have a dog in this fight, so I don't really care who wins. But I'm happy to have a front-row seat.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to my wife, Julie, for all the support and contributions you've made toward my career as a writer. Thanks to Charlie Kochman for sticking with me for all these years and for bringing your expertise and sense of humor to each book.

Thanks to the Wimpy Kid team—Anna Cesary, Vanessa Jedrej, Shaelyn Germain-Dupre, and Colleen Regan—for your dedication and hard work.

Thanks to everyone at Abrams, especially Mary McAveney, Julie Christopher, Borana Greku, Pamela Notarantonio, Lora Grisafi, Taryn Roeder, Mitch Thorpe, Talia Behrend-Wilcox, Lori Benton, Melanie Chang, Christine Edwards, and Julie Primavera. Thanks to Mary O'Mara for being such a steady hand at the wheel and so positive. Thanks to Steve Roman for being a key player in this project.

Thanks to the amazing team at An Unlikely Story. Thanks also to Rich Carr, Andrea Lucey, Paul Sennott, and Sylvie Rabineau.

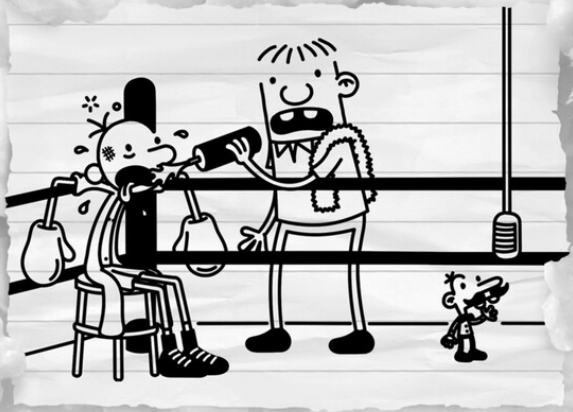
Thanks to everyone at Disney, especially Roland Poindexter, Kathryn Jones, Vanessa Morrison, and Paul Ohrt. Thanks to Matt Danner for being such a wonderful collaborator.

Thanks to Jess Brallier for being such a great role model for so many people over the years, including me!

Thanks to the Nicodemus family—Aaron, Marthali, Robert, and Emma—for sharing your hilarious karate stories. Thanks also to Sarah Puleo, Willa and Finn O'Connell, and Ella Fontaine.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeff Kinney is a #1 *New York Times* bestselling author, a six-time Nickelodeon Kids' Choice Award winner for Favorite Book, and one of *Time* magazine's 100 Most Influential People in the World. He lives in Massachusetts, where he and his family own a bookstore called An Unlikely Story.



Nobody knows how to survive the rough and tumble halls of middle school better than Greg Heffley. In fact, he's got a three-ring binder chock-full of notes on his school's biggest bullies—along with his hard-earned strategies for how to outsmart them.

But when Greg's binder falls into the wrong hands, his world starts to unravel. Now it's a race against time before the bullies discover the identity of the person behind it.

Greg has learned to roll with the punches, but now he's backed into a corner with no good options. Will he throw in the towel, or go down swinging?



Amulet Books
An imprint of ABRAMS
abramsbooks.com
@abramskids
Printed in U.S.A.

wimpykid.com
@wimpykid

U.S. $15.99 Can. $19.99
ISBN 978-1-4197-8270-1