

Diary of a Wimpy Kid - The Last Straw -



By

Jeff Kinney

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

Diary of a Wimpy Kid

The Last Straw

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About the author: Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, visit novelstudies.org.

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Diary of a Wimpy Kid

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Suggestions and Expectations

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on a part of a chapter (Month) of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Last Straw* and is comprised of four different activities:

1. Before You Read
2. Vocabulary Building
3. Comprehension Questions
4. Language and Extension Activities

A **portfolio cover** (p.7) as well as a **Checklist** (p.6) are included so that students may track of their completed work.

Every activity need not be completed by all students.

Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to

- a) determining the meaning of words and phrases... including figurative language;
- b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
- c) compare and contrast two characters;
- d) determine how characters ... respond to challenges;
- e) drawing inferences from the text;
- f) determining a theme of a story ... **and many others.**

Themes which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include humor, growing up, family (living up to the expectations of one's parents), making difficult choices, friendship and loyalty, peer pressure and conformity

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words / phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying / creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *foreshadowing*.
7. Use of expressions
8. Identify *onomatopoeia*
9. Use of singular / plural nouns
10. Listing compound words
11. Identifying parts of speech
12. Determining alphabetical order
13. Identification of root words
14. Identify/create *similes*
15. Identify *sarcasm*
16. Identify *analogies*.

Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

Plot Activities

1. Complete a *sequence chart*
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Predict upcoming events
4. Complete a *5 W's Chart*
5. Identify the climax of the novel.
6. Create a synopsis

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Relating personal experiences

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Write a letter to a friend
4. Complete an Observation Chart
5. Conduct an interview
6. Write about personal feelings
7. Write a book review

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Design a poster / pamphlet

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Synopsis

The third book in this genre-busting series is certain to enlarge Kinney's presence on the bestseller lists, where the previous titles have taken up residence for the past two years. Kinney's spot-on humor and winning formula of deadpan text set against cartoons are back in full force. This time, Greg starts off on New Year's Day (he resolves to "help *other* people improve," telling his mother, "I think you should work on chewing your potato chips more quietly") and ends with summer vacation. As he fends off his father's attempts to make him more of a man (the threat of military school looms), Greg's hapless adventures include handing out anonymous valentines expressing his true feelings ("Dear James, You smell"), attempting to impress his classmate Holly and single-handedly wrecking his soccer team's perfect season. Kinney allows himself some insider humor as well, with Greg noting the "racket" children's book authors have going. "All you have to do is make up a character with a snappy name, and then make sure the character learns a lesson at the end of the book." Greg, self-centered as ever, may be the exception proving that rule. Ages 8–12.

Author Biography

Jeff Kinney

Jeffrey Patrick Kinney was born in College Park, Maryland in 1971. Jeff Kinney is a full-time online game designer, as well as the author of the immensely popular **Wimpy Kid** books. Jeff also developed the **Poptropica** website for kids (<http://www.poptropica.com/>)

Jeff Kinney attended the University of Maryland at College Park in the early 1990s. It was here that he developed the comic strip **Igdoof** for the college newspaper. Although he was unsuccessful in getting his comic strip syndicated, his writing career got off to a tremendous start with the publication of **Diary of a Wimpy Kid** in 2007. Since then he has had three additional novels in the series published as well as a do-it-yourself book. In 2009 Kinney was named one of *Time* magazine's 100 "Most Influential People".



Diary of a Wimpy Kid

- The Last Straw -



By Jeff Kinney

Name: _____

Diary of a Wimpy Kid

The Last Straw

January - Part I

(To Sunday - p.33)



Before you read the chapter:

In the opening pages Greg complains about the lousy gifts he gets now that he's in middle school because adults have decided that he's too old for toys or anything that's actually fun. How does your experience in this regard compare to Greg's?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

resolution	pacify	progress	jealous	guarantee
laundry	responsible	effective	archenemy	juvenile

1. The governor thought he could _____ the rioters by offering them free passage.
2. When I got a kitten for my birthday my dog, Herman, became very _____.
3. Please put the soiled _____ into the wicker hamper by the stairs.
4. Our family made a firm _____ to be more kind to one another this year.
5. "Don't act so _____!" my sister said in a condescending tone.
6. We will be _____ for making our beds and doing the dishes each and every day.
7. "I _____ that you will be satisfied with that product," the salesman boasted.
8. No one expected us to make such outstanding _____ on so difficult a project.
9. I think you would be more _____ at cutting the grass if you formulated a plan before starting.
10. I knew he didn't like me a whole lot, but never suspected that he regarded me as his _____.

Questions



1. According to Greg, what was the purpose of making resolutions at the beginning of the year?

2. What is the **setting** for much of what happens on New Year's Day?

3. What *glitch* do you see in Greg's resolution?

4. The family's resolutions:

Greg's Dad	
Greg's Mom	
Manny	
Rodrick	

5. What were the two reasons Greg gave for *bagging his resolutions*?

6. **Sarcasm** is defined as *a cutting, often ironic remark intended to wound*. Give an example of sarcasm from this section.

7. Describe the flaw in Greg's plan involving the heating vent.

8. Greg says that "Uncle Charlie got me a chore for Christmas". Describe how this came about.

9. Check the meaning of **irony** and/or **ironic**. How might the attitude of the Whirley Street kids be regarded as ironic to Greg and Rowley?

10. Rodrick used the money his parents gave him for books to buy a _____.

11. What were the only two things that Greg thought were necessary to include in a Successful book?

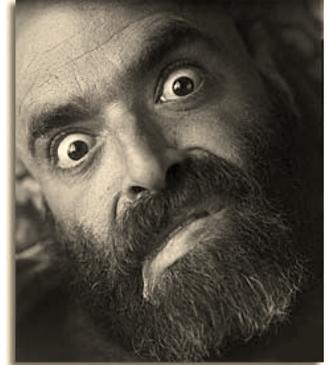
12. What encouraged Greg's dad into insisting that Greg get more exercise?

Language Activities



A. Shel Silverstein

Despite the fact that Greg think Shel Silverstein's picture makes him look like a burglar or pirate, he was a tremendously gifted poet - loved by children and adults around the world. Using resources in your school or public library or on the Internet, investigate the life and career of this renowned poet. Find five interesting facts about him to share with your colleagues.



Bonus: find a copy of your favorite Silverstein poem to share. [My favorite is called **Boa Constrictor**.]

*Oh, I'm being eaten
By a boa constrictor,
A boa constrictor,
A boa constrictor,
I'm being eaten by a boa constrictor,
And I don't like it--one bit.
Well, what do you know?
It's nibblin' my toe.
Oh, gee,
It's up to my knee.
Oh my,
It's up to my thigh.
Oh, fiddle,
It's up to my middle.
Oh, heck,
It's up to my neck.
Oh, dread,
It's upmmmmmmmmmmffffffffff...*

B. Choose eight words from this section with two or more **syllables**. Indicate the syllables by drawing a line between each syllable. **Example:** use / less.

C. Alcatraz

Greg thinks that his dad won't be satisfied until every teenager on the planet is sent off to juvenile hall or Alcatraz. Alcatraz was a famous prison which was located on an island off the coast of California. Check it out in your school library or on the Internet. You will note that Alcatraz has not operated as a prison since 1963 and is now actually a tourist attraction to those visiting San Francisco.



Your task is to design a **poster** or **pamphlet** advertising it as a hot tourist spot. Be sure to include an appropriate and attractive picture and some important facts about "The Rock" which will entice tourists to get on a boat and spend some time (and money) there. [What can they expect to see; historical facts that might interest them - i.e. famous prisoners.] Your information should also include facts regarding costs for the visit.

D. Caviar Words

The author of this novel is noted for his use of elegant, tasteful words. Someone once stated that some words have the sound of **caviar** (rich and elegant) and others are more are common (**peanut butter** words). With a colleague come up with 5 examples of each type of word. You may use any chapter of the novel to find these words.



Caviar Words	Peanut Butter Words

E. 5 Ws and an H.

Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



WHO?



WHAT?



WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



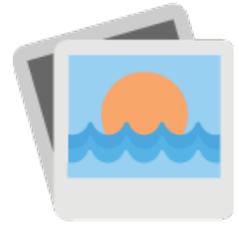
HOW?

Extension Activity



A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words

Use the three boxes to describe and illustrate the beginning, middle and conclusion of this section.



Beginning Picture:	Beginning:
Middle Picture:	Middle:
Concluding Picture:	Concluding: