

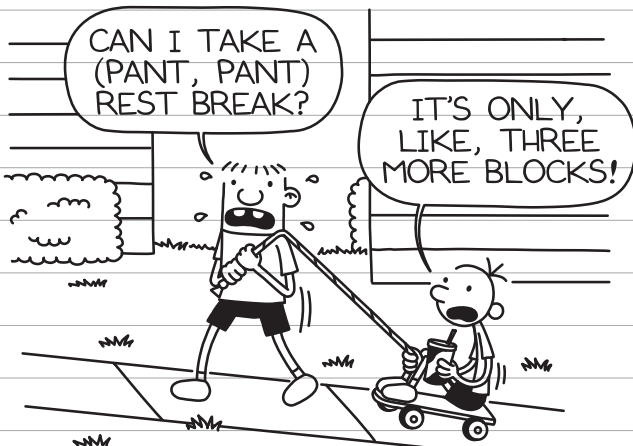


## SEPTEMBER

Thursday

It's been almost two and a half weeks since me and my ex-best friend, Rowley Jefferson, had our big fight. To be honest with you, I thought he would've come crawling back to me by now, but for some reason that hasn't happened.

I'm actually starting to get a little concerned, because school starts back up in a few days and, if we're gonna get this friendship back on track, something needs to happen quick. If me and Rowley really ARE through, that would stink, because the two of us had a pretty good thing going.



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Now that our friendship is history I'm in the market for a new best friend. The problem is I invested all my time in Rowley, and I don't have anyone lined up to take his place.

The two best options I have at this point are Christopher Brownfield and Tyson Sanders. But each of those guys has his own issues.

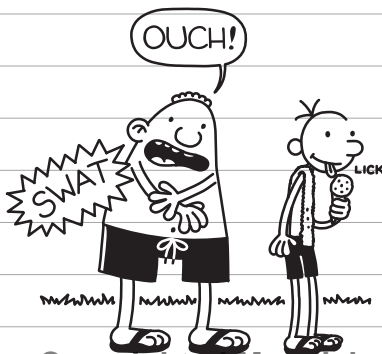


CHRISTOPHER



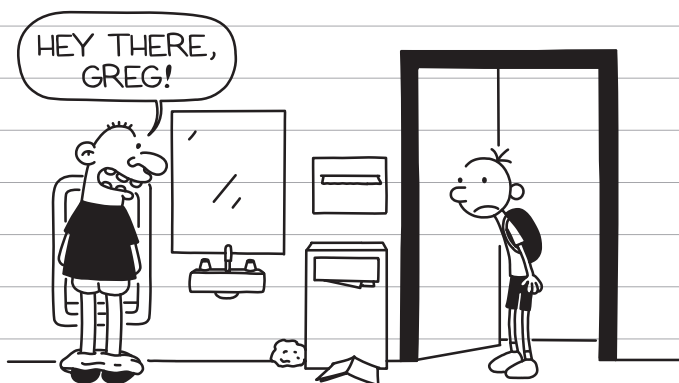
TYSON

I hung out with Christopher for the last few weeks of the summer, mostly because he's a really excellent mosquito magnet. But Christopher is more of a summertime friend than a school-year friend.

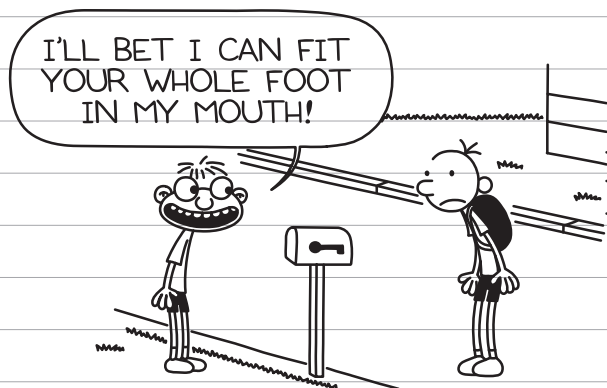


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Tyson is nice enough, and we like the same video games. But he pulls his pants all the way down when he uses the urinal, and I don't know if I can ever get past that.



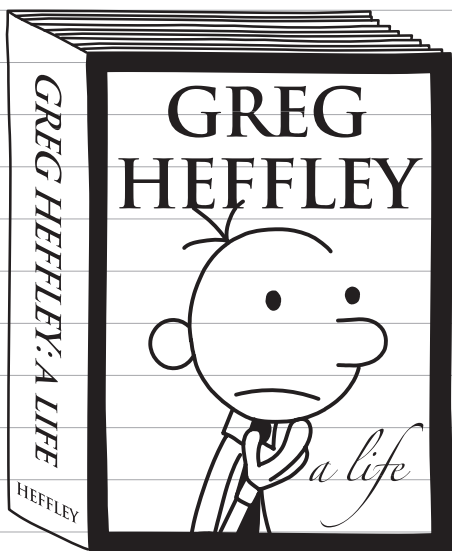
The only other kid my age who's not paired up with someone is Fregley, but I ruled him out as best-friend material a long time ago.



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Anyway, I'm still keeping the door open a crack for Rowley, just in case. But, if he wants to save this friendship, he'd better do something fast.

Because, with the way things stand, he's not gonna come out looking very good in my autobiography.

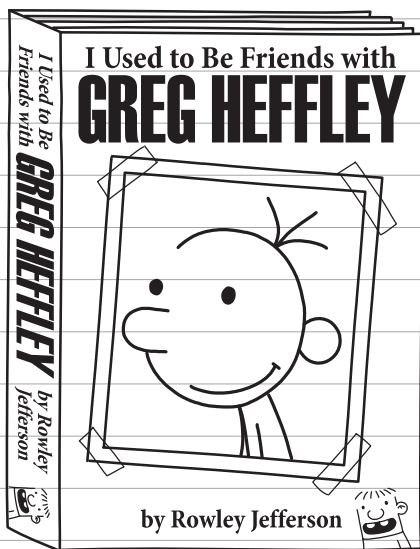


## CHAPTER 8 CHILDHOOD

I used to live near this kid. I think his name was Rupert or Roger or something.

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With my luck, though, I'll go on to be rich and famous and Rowley will STILL find a way to ride my coat-tails.



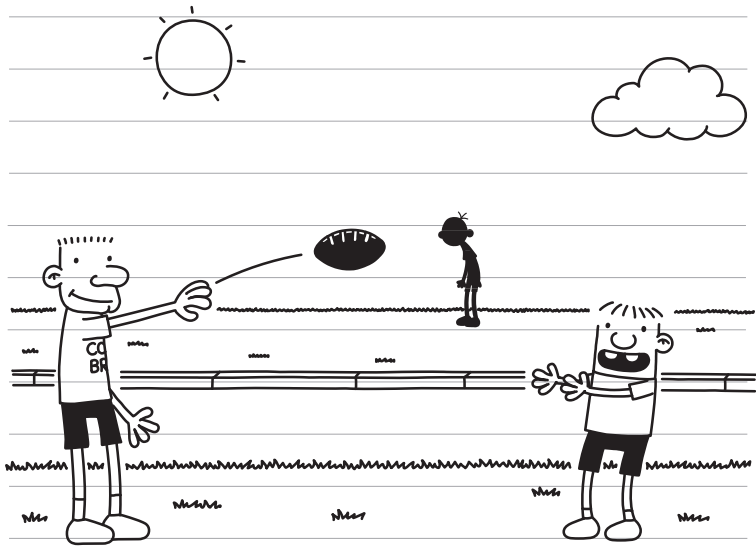
Saturday

The reason I don't see things changing between me and Rowley is because he's already found himself a replacement friend. Or, to be more accurate, his PARENTS did.

For the past few weeks Rowley's been hanging out with this teenager named Brian.

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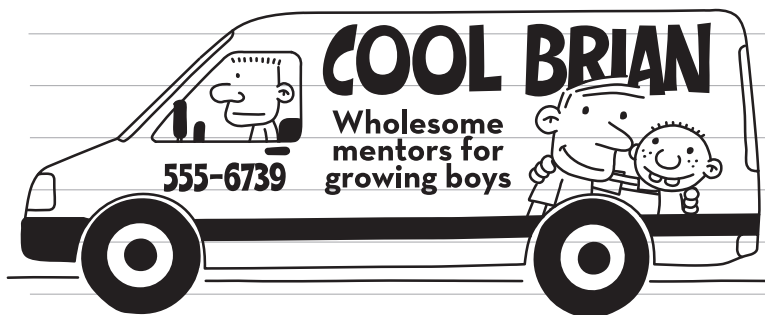
Whenever I go by Rowley's house, he's out in his front yard throwing a football or a Frisbee with a guy who looks like he's in high school or college.



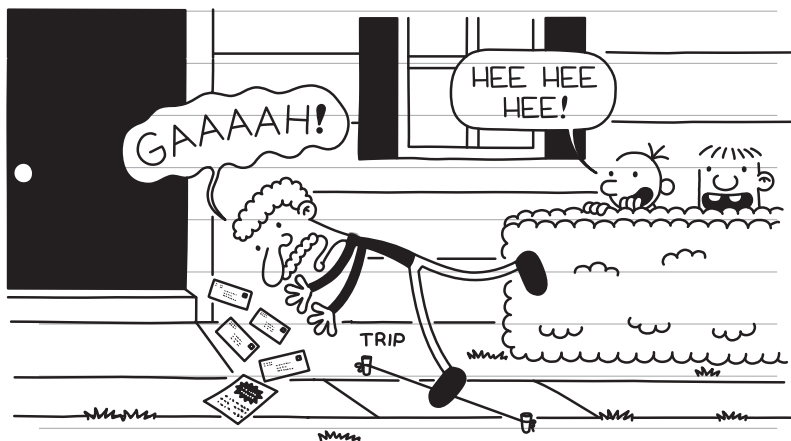
Well, I did some poking around and found out that this Brian guy isn't just some normal kid from the neighbourhood. He's part of a company called "Cool Brian", which is sort of like a big-brother-for-hire kind of thing.

In fact, I'd be willing to bet money this guy's name isn't even really Brian.

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Mom said she thinks the Cool Brian thing is a great idea because it gives kids a "role model" they can look up to. That makes me kind of mad because, the way I see it, I'M Rowley's role model.



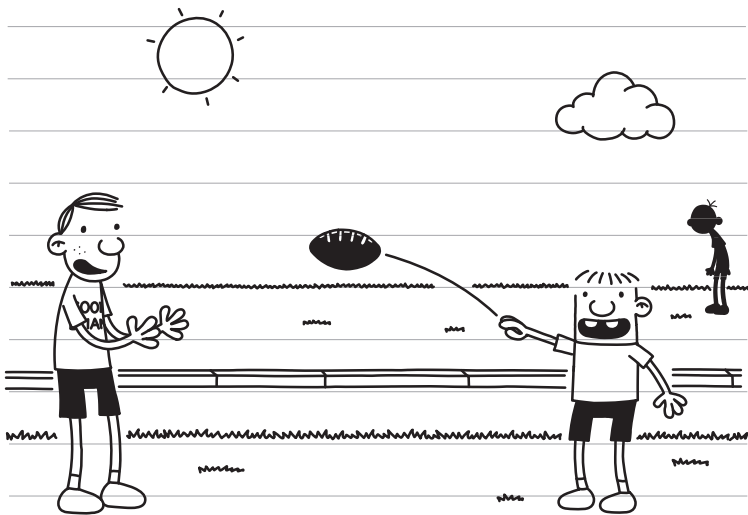
And now Rowley's parents are paying some guy to do what I've been doing all these years for FREE.

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The thing that really burns me is that Rowley probably doesn't even know his parents are paying this guy to spend time with him. And I don't think it would bother Rowley if he DID know the truth.

Today I saw Rowley hanging out with a different Cool Brian, so Rowley's regular guy must've had the day off. But I could tell Rowley didn't even notice.



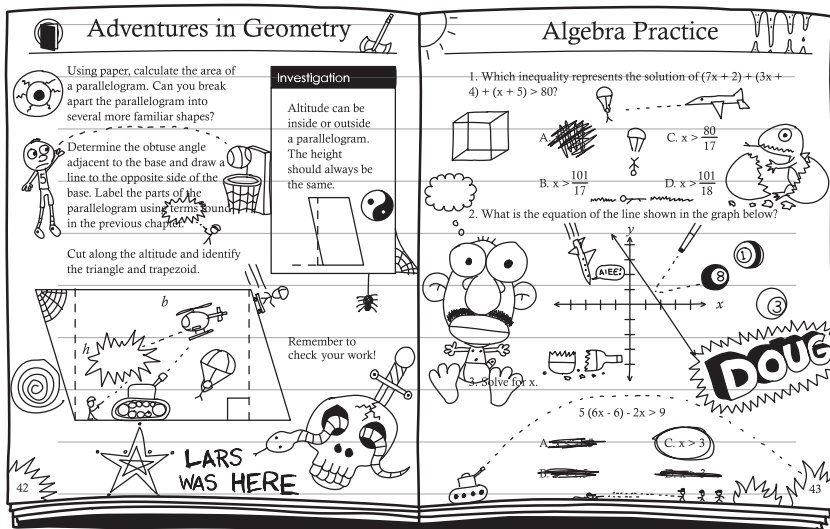
Tuesday

Today was the first day of school. I don't want to jinx things, but it's looking like this could be a great year for me.

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In homeroom we got our textbooks for the semester. My school can't afford to get new books every year, so we usually get hand-me-downs.

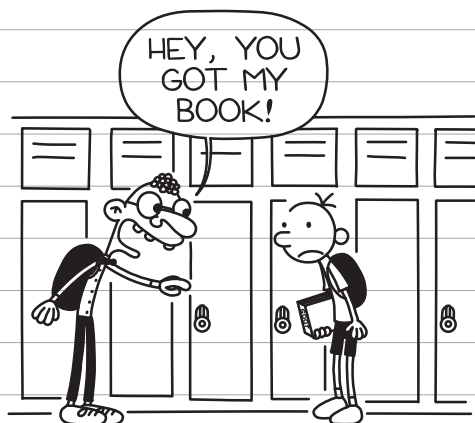
But, when you get a book that ten kids had before you, it makes it kind of hard to do any actual learning.



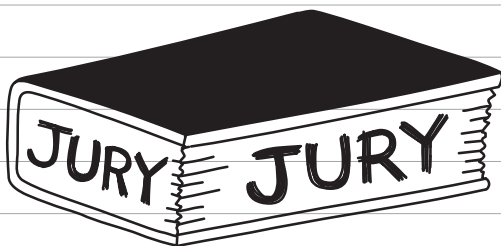
Usually, I have really bad luck when it comes to previous book owners. Last year I got a maths book that had belonged to Bryan Goot.

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And that didn't exactly up my "cool" factor in the hallways.

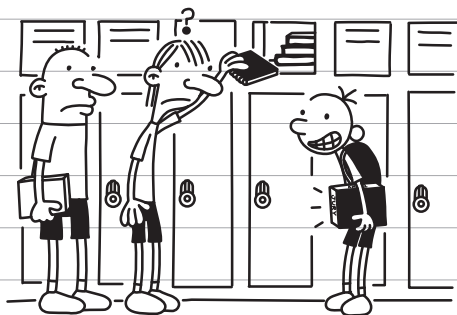


But this year I totally lucked out. When I got my maths book, I found out it used to belong to Jordan Jury. Jordan Jury is the most popular kid in the grade above me, so carrying his textbook around should translate into some MAJOR popularity points.



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One reason Jordan is so popular is because he always has these big blowout parties, and it's really hard to get invited. But I figure this Algebra book could be just the thing I need to get on his radar.



Speaking of popular kids, I sat near Bryce Anderson and his group of friends at lunch today. Bryce is basically the Jordan Jury of my grade, and he's got a bunch of cronies who are always going along with everything he says.



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And those guys are loyal to Bryce no matter how dumb he makes them look.

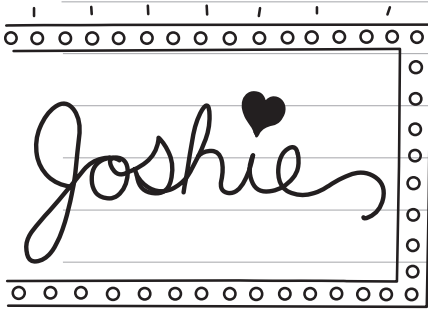


See, Bryce Anderson has the right idea. He doesn't actually NEED a best friend, because he's got a bunch of lackeys who basically worship him. The reason me and Rowley didn't make it is because we were equal partners in our friendship, and I don't think that kind of model has a chance of working out.

Friday

At school today I heard Rowley tell some kid he was going to a rock concert tonight. I admit I was a little jealous, since I've never been to a real concert myself. But when I found out who was performing I was glad I wasn't invited.

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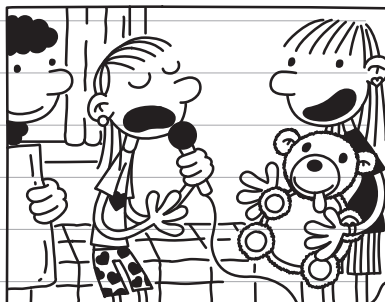
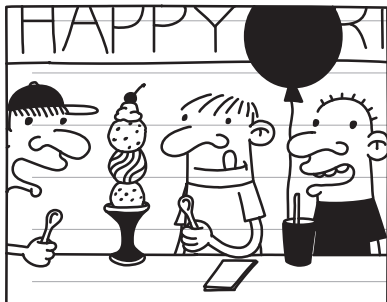
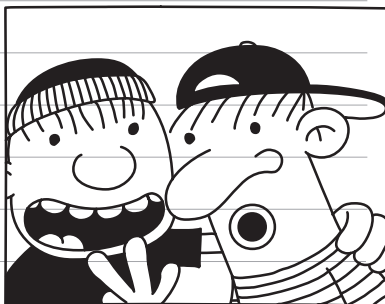
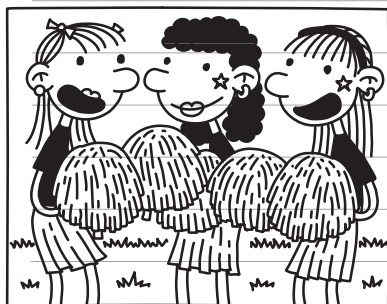


Still, it kind of irks me that Rowley is having more fun than I am. In fact, it seems like EVERYONE is having more fun than me these days.

There are some kids in my grade who post their pictures online.

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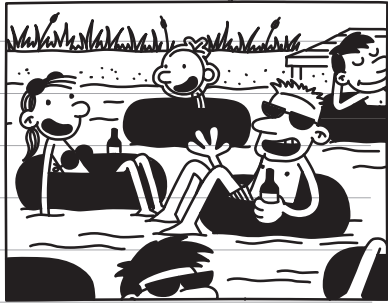
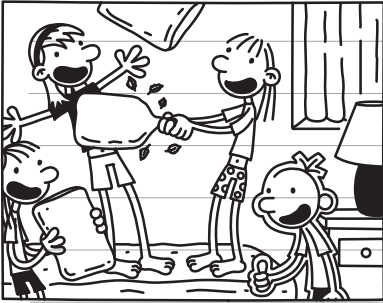
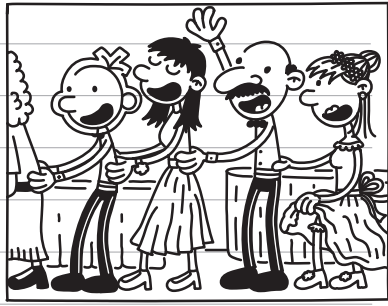
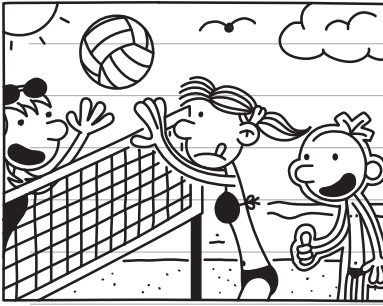
And, from the looks of things, they're all having a WAY better time than I am.



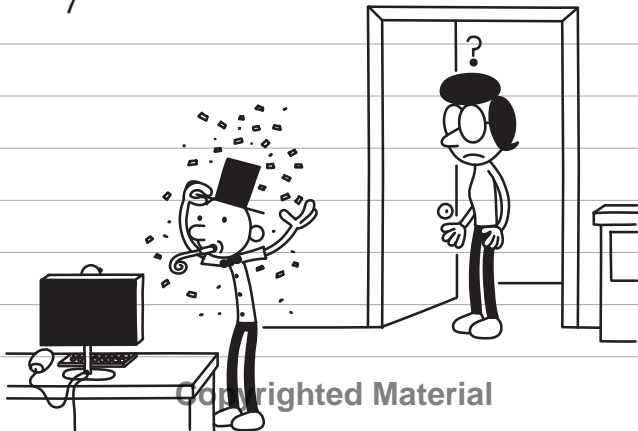
I don't want people thinking MY life is lame, so I decided to take some pictures to show how great things are going for me.

All you really need is a digital camera and a photo-editing program and you can make it look like you're having a total blast.

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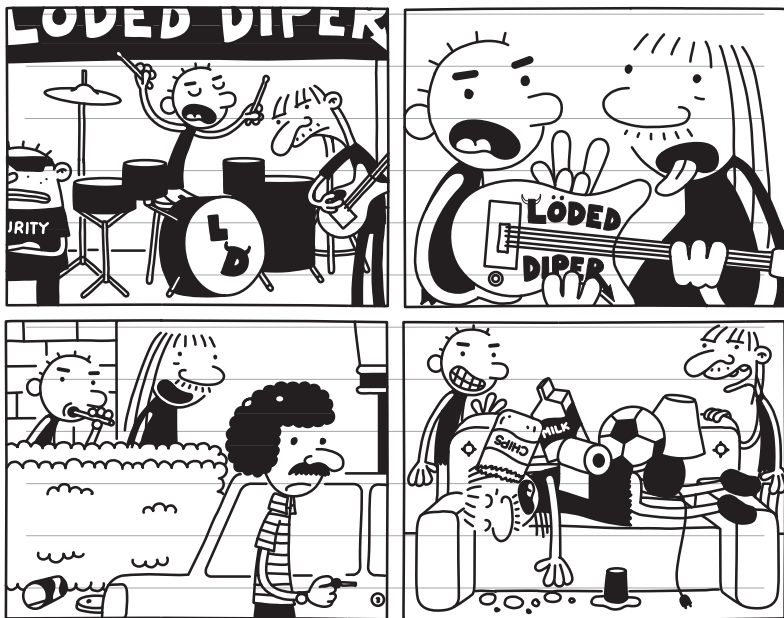
Tonight I was right in the middle of creating a wild New Year's Eve party scene when I got busted by Mom.



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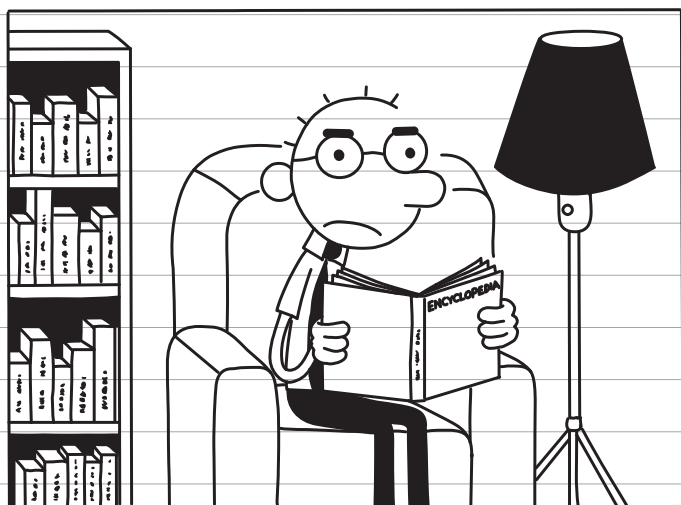
Oh well. Mom won't let me post photos on the computer anyway, because of "privacy" and all that. Or maybe it's because she learned her lesson after letting my older brother, Rodrick, post HIS pictures.



Rodrick's been trying to get a job so he can buy a new drum set, but nobody will hire him. Mom told him that nowadays employers look up the people they're thinking of hiring and that his pictures are probably hurting his chances.

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So Rodrick replaced his band pictures with this one -



Wednesday

This year everyone in my grade has to take Advanced Health, which covers some top-secret stuff that I guess they didn't think we were ready for until now.

In the first few classes the boys and girls were mixed together, but today Nurse Powell said she was gonna split us up. She sent the girls down to Mrs Gordon's room and then she put in a video for us boys to watch.

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