Diary of a Wimpy Kid

TEACHING AND ACTIVITY GUIDE

Includes:
- Teaching rationale
- Discussion questions and writing prompts
- Reproducible activities
- Project ideas

Aligned with the
Common Core State Standards

... and the
NCTE/IRA
English Language Arts Standards

Created exclusively for you by Scholastic Reading Club
SHARE YOUR WIMPY KID MONTH FUN!

On April 28th at 1 PM ET, author Jeff Kinney will reveal the cover of Wimpy Kid Book 11 during a live global webcast which you can stream right to your classroom! Want this exciting event to be even more memorable? Make copies of the next page, and have your students design their own covers of the new book! Then, after the cover reveal, select the drawing that is most similar to the new cover and reward the student with a prize.

Does your class have questions for Jeff Kinney? You can Tweet questions to @WimpyKid, and Jeff Kinney may answer yours during the webcast.

If you’re hosting a Wimpy Kid party, we want to see your pictures! Email your party pictures to wimpykid@abramsbooks.com, and we may use your picture in a future newsletter!
WHAT DO YOU THINK THE COVER OF WIMPY KID BOOK 11 SHOULD LOOK LIKE? DRAW YOUR BEST SUGGESTION HERE!
WHY WIMPY KID?

Beneath its humor and silliness, the bestselling Diary of a Wimpy Kid series tackles important themes: conformity; bullying; friendship; loyalty; self-esteem; and the challenge of navigating the sometimes conflicting demands of family, school, peers, and one’s own inner voice. Like many classic comic strips, this is a series that hides its lessons well. Making them explicit is an opportunity to validate students’ independent reading choices and to build a community of readers.

In addition, the underlying premise of the series—a fictional first-person account of school life told through text and “cartoons”—can be used to promote self-expression through student writing as well as to engage reflectively and analytically with multi-modal texts.

TEACHING WITH WIMPY KID

Use this guide to:

• Deepen and extend students’ independent reading
• Kick-start reading-circle discussions or thematic units
• Spark critical thinking about how narratives change across media
• Celebrate Wimpy Kid Month in April with specific reading challenges and activities

A Note on Grade Level

Experience shows that most readers for the series are in grades 3–7 (ages 8–12). This guide is aimed very roughly at the midpoint of that range, though the material can be adapted up or down to fit your needs. The writing exercises and projects can be approached from multiple skill levels, as can the discussion questions. The CCSS alignments are drawn from Grade 5.
TEST YOUR
WIMPY KID KNOWLEDGE

Check the box for True or False, following the questions. When you’re done, check the answer key at the end of the packet.

1. All the boys in Greg’s class do their book reports on the Underpants Bandits series. ☐ TRUE ☐ FALSE

2. When Mom was pregnant with Greg, she used to read him David Copperfield. ☐ TRUE ☐ FALSE

3. During Greg’s first year of middle school, an eighth grader tricks him into paying $5 for a bathroom pass. ☐ TRUE ☐ FALSE

4. To stay warm when he skips swim practice, Greg wraps himself in toilet paper. ☐ TRUE ☐ FALSE

5. Rowley thinks he has become a man when he gets a girlfriend. ☐ TRUE ☐ FALSE

6. Rodrick thinks George Washington wrote To Kill a Mockingbird. ☐ TRUE ☐ FALSE

7. One of Uncle Gary’s many temporary jobs is as a test subject for a company that makes pepper spray. ☐ TRUE ☐ FALSE

8. Greg has a pen pal from Germany. ☐ TRUE ☐ FALSE

9. After a police officer comes to speak at school, Rowley and Greg decide to open their own detective agency. ☐ TRUE ☐ FALSE

10. One year for Christmas, Rowley gives Greg a Big Wheel. ☐ TRUE ☐ FALSE
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND WRITING PROMPTS: EXPLORING SERIES FICTION

Use the following questions to aid your students in critically examining Diary of a Wimpy Kid as a series. They can be springboards for whole-class or small-group discussion, or as writing prompts for in-class or take-home assignments.

• How “wimpy” is Greg exactly? Are the reasons he thinks he’s wimpy the same ones that the rest of his world would agree upon?
• How does Greg’s cowardice or anxiety prompt him to take action that is unusually bold or risky? Provide examples.
• Why do you think Greg is so good about keeping his “diary” over time? How does it help him in life?
• Imagine Greg’s writings were public in some way, published in a school journal or on a personal blog. How would they be different?
• If Greg shared some of his thoughts and secrets on social media, what would be the reaction? How might this change if he made posts anonymously?
• How “realistic” are the themes in Greg’s world? What issues are covered (and in which books) that exist in the real world every day?
• What do the efforts of Greg and other characters to be popular or avoid embarrassment say about the price of low self-esteem or the need to be liked? How are “social roles” an important part of the series, both for kids and adults?
• What are the funniest scenes or incidents in the series? What makes them so funny? If you consider your favorite three or four such scenes, what do they have in common?
• How does humor convey more serious themes such as trust, loyalty, and fear? In what ways does using humor make it easier to think about such issues?
• Does the journal/diary structure of each book add to its appeal and readability? Why or why not?
• How do you think Greg would react if he were to look back on his writings as an adult?
• Which characters would be most surprised/flattered/angry if they read the series? Why? In what ways has Greg withheld his true feelings from them?
• How does the art help with the storytelling and make the experience more enjoyable for readers? What would happen if there was much more, or much less, of Greg’s artwork? Would it change how you related to the characters and the situations? Why or why not?
Wimpy Kid
Around the World

The Diary of a Wimpy Kid series has been published in 49 different languages, but it’s not called Wimpy Kid everywhere. Can you guess which country calls Greg a loser? Here are eight titles of Diary of a Wimpy Kid in languages other than English. See if you can correctly draw a line from the language to its Wimpy Kid title.

Spanish
Slovakian
Dutch
Latvian
Polish
Arabic
Estonian
Finnish

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First of all, let me get something straight:  
This is a JOURNAL, not a diary.

THE JOY OF JOURNALING

The Diary of a Wimpy Kid books are fictional, but they can still be used as mentor texts for personal nonfiction writing. Have your students start a journal in which they record interesting incidents in their everyday lives, just as Greg Heffley does. Draw their attention to the concision, sequencing, coherence, and clarity present in the Wimpy Kid books.

Tips and Tricks:

- Set a duration and minimum number of entries for the journal project.
- Explain that journals should not be an exhaustive account of everything that happens in our lives, but can focus on specific incidents that can be recounted in 1-2 pages.
- Develop and share rubric for evaluating student work. Include criteria such as organization (main idea and supporting details), voice, consideration of audience and purpose, and so on. Set milestones to evaluate student work throughout the project.
- Welcome students to incorporate art, doodles, and photos into their writing.
- The entire journal can take the form of a blog or digital storytelling text; that way, drawings, photographs, videos, and sound recordings can all be included.

A Note on Privacy

Make sure students understand that revealing sensitive details about their private lives is not the purpose of this assignment. Reinforce that they should only record events and feelings they are comfortable sharing with their classmates. Take care that you do not require students to share their journals without their consent, be it through the peer-editing process, read-alouds, or postings of the finished work.
PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

Research
Have students research and write a brief biography of Jeff Kinney, perhaps in digital form. Challenge students to uncover how Jeff has drawn upon his own memories in writing the Wimpy Kid series. Another central question might be how Jeff’s background, education, and career are similar to or different from those of other authors.

Which is #1?
Spark instant engagement by asking students to identify their choice for the best book in the series to date. Coach students to support their opinions with evidence by citing specifics based upon story elements such as plot, theme, and character.

Critical Thinking/Persuasive Writing
Extend the activity above by holding a Wimpy Kid Battle of the Books. Help students craft verbal or written position statements to advocate for their particular favorites. Then, have individual titles square off against each other in head-to-head competition via student voting.

Book Trailers
Show your class the official trailers for each book in the Wimpy Kid series at wimpykid.com/videos. Then, have students work in small teams to create their own alternate trailers. They can take simple digital photos or videos of classmates dressed and posed as Wimpy Kid characters, and then use recorded voice-over, digital transitions, and their own persuasive writing to create multimedia trailers. You could also ask students to simply write scripts for their trailers—supplemented by hand-drawn storyboards.

Fan Fiction
Introduce students to the concept of fan fiction—the repurposing of story elements and characters for noncommercial creative purposes. Assign a brief writing exercise in which students either write or propose their own Wimpy Kid fan fiction: a spinoff, prequel, or alternate-reality version inspired by their knowledge of the series.

Making Text-to-Text Connections
Invite students to link—in discussion, prose, or comics—the Diary of a Wimpy Kid series to other works with similar settings, characters, or themes. Challenge them to speculate on how characters from other worlds would behave if suddenly transplanted into the world of Greg Heffley. Would they be friends? Foes? How might the appearance of such a character alter the plot of one of Jeff Kinney’s novels?
You will be rich and famous one day, but you'll still be surrounded by morons.

You will have your own awesome band, but your world tour will include the bowling alley.

You will get a date to the big dance, but that morning you'll wake up with a huge zit.

Out of all your friends, you will have the most impressive belly button chewing skills.

You will bump into your crush when you least expect it. Make sure you don't have chocolate on your butt!
STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

NCTE/IRA Standards

All of the ELA Standards jointly developed by the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association are consistently met both by this guide [partly keyed with page numbers below] or by simply reading the Diary of a Wimpy Kid series itself [keyed with and “R” below]. Note in these excerpts from the standards the use of terms such as visual, graphics, and non-print throughout—in the twenty-first century, literacy in these “languages” is considered essential, not just a tool for struggling or reluctant readers. In any case, these standards specify that “students:

1. read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States...Among these texts are...contemporary works.” [R]

2. read a wide range of literature.” [R]

3. draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers...and their understanding of textual features (e.g.,...graphics).” [R] [throughout packet/guide]

4. adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.” [throughout packet/guide]

5. employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.” [7-8, 14]

6. apply knowledge of...media techniques...and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.” [5-10, 14]

7. conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions” [8]

8. use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g.,...computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.” [8]

9. develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in...social roles.” [5-6]

10. whose first language is not English make use of their first language to develop competency in the English language arts.” [14]

11. participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.” [throughout packet/guide]

12. use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).” [throughout packet/guide]
COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

While the actual unfolding or execution of the various assignments and discussions in this guide correlate to a range of CCSS items, here are the pertinent standards that are explicitly built into the content. Again, grade 5 is used as a handy midpoint.

Reading/Literature

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.2** Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.5** Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fit together to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama, or poem.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.6** Describe how a narrator’s or speaker’s point of view influences how events are described.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.7** Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (e.g., graphic novel, multimedia presentation of fiction, folktale, myth, poem).

Writing

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.1** Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.3** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.4** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.7** Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through the investigation of different aspects of a topic.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.8** Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.9** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.10** Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision).
TEST YOUR WIMPY KID KNOWLEDGE
1. True
2. False
3. False
4. True
5. False
6. False
7. True
8. False
9. True
10. True

WIMPY KID AROUND THE WORLD

Spanish
Slovakian
Dutch
Latvian
Polish
Arabic
Estonian
Finnish

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