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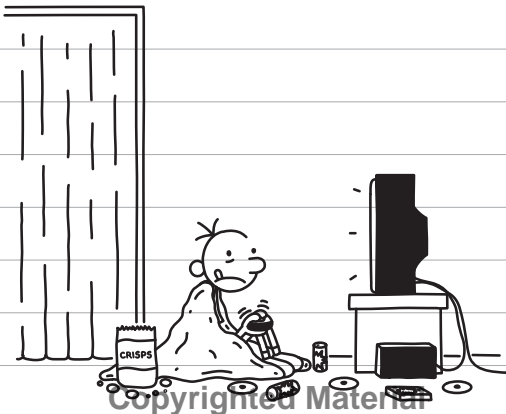
JUNE

Friday

For me, summer break is basically a three-month guilt trip.

Just because the weather's nice, everyone expects you to be outside all day "frolicking" or whatever. And if you don't spend every second outdoors people think there's something wrong with you. But the truth is I've always been more of an indoor person.

The way I like to spend my summer holiday is in front of the TV, playing video games with the curtains closed and the lights turned off.



Unfortunately, Mom's idea of the perfect summer holiday is different from mine.

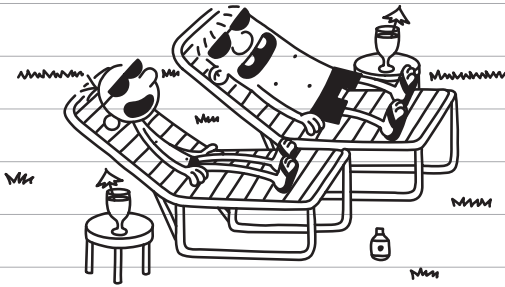


Mom says it's not "natural" for a kid to stay indoors when it's sunny out. I tell her that I'm just trying to protect my skin so I don't look all wrinkly when I'm old like her, but she doesn't want to hear it.

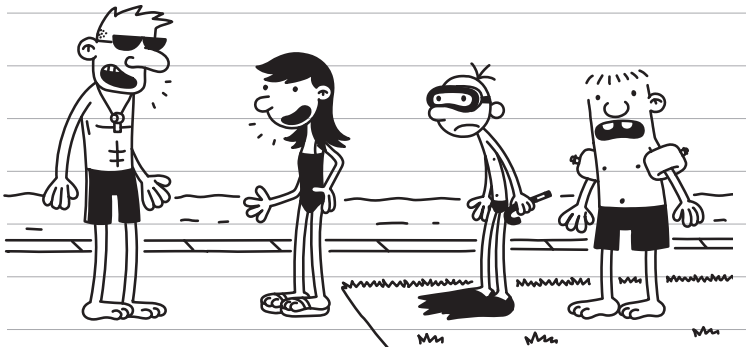
Mom keeps trying to get me to do something outside, like go to the pool. But I spent the first part of the summer at my friend Rowley's pool, and that didn't work out so good.

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Rowley's family belongs to a country club and, when school let out for the summer, we were going there every single day.



Then we made the mistake of inviting this girl named Trista who'd just moved into our neighbourhood. I thought it would be really nice of us to share our country-club lifestyle with her. But five seconds after we got to the pool she met some lifeguard and forgot all about the guys who'd invited her there.



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The lesson I learned is that some people won't think twice about using you, especially when there's a country club involved.

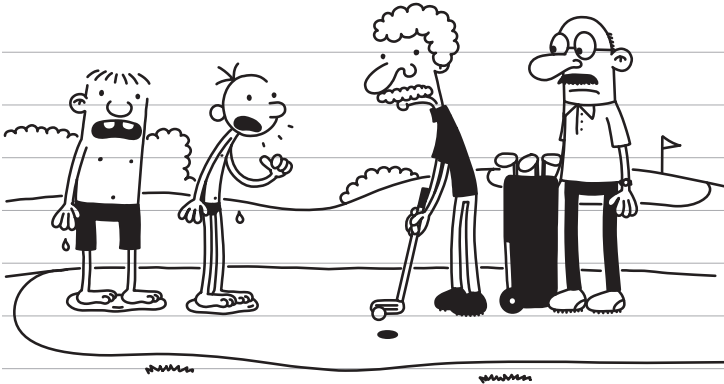
Me and Rowley were better off without a girl hanging around, anyway. We're both bachelors at the moment, and during the summer it's better to be unattached.



A few days ago I noticed the quality of service at the country club was starting to go down a little. Like sometimes the temperature in the sauna was a few degrees too hot, and one time the poolside waiter forgot to put one of those little umbrellas in my fruit smoothie.

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I reported all my complaints to Rowley's dad. But for some reason Mr Jefferson never passed them on to the clubhouse manager.

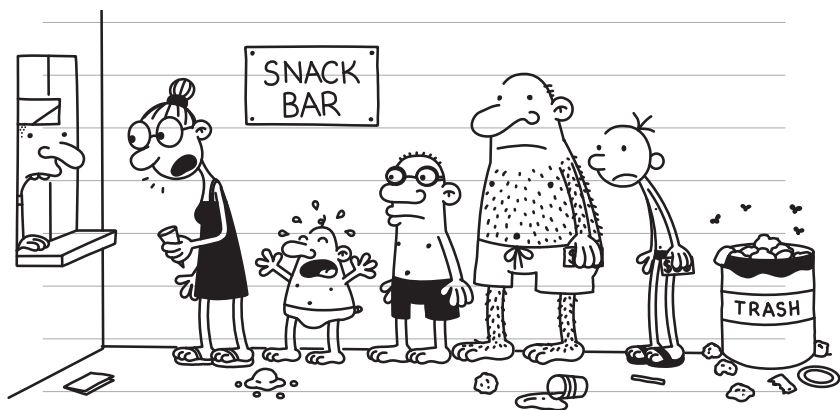


Which is kind of weird. If it was me who was paying for a country-club membership, I'd want to make sure I was getting my money's worth.

Anyway, a little while later Rowley told me he wasn't allowed to invite me to his pool any more, which is fine with ME. I'm much happier inside my air-conditioned house, where I don't have to check my soda can for bees every time I go to take a sip.

Saturday

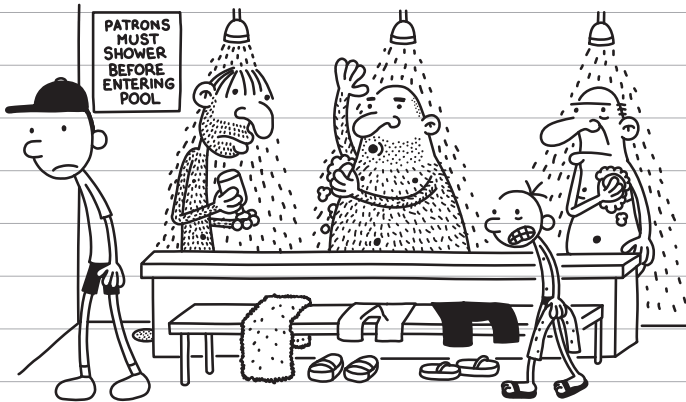
Like I said, Mom keeps trying to get me to go to the pool with her and my little brother, Manny, but the thing is my family belongs to the TOWN pool, not the country club. And, once you've tasted the country-club life, it's hard to go back to being an ordinary Joe at the town pool.



Besides, last year I swore to myself that I would never go back to that place again. At the town pool you have to go through the locker room before you can go swimming, and that means walking through the shower area, where grown men are soaping down right out in the open.

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The first time I walked through the men's locker room at the town pool was one of the most traumatic experiences of my life.



I'm probably lucky I didn't go blind. Seriously, I don't see why Mom and Dad bother to try to protect me from horror movies and stuff like that if they're gonna expose me to something about a thousand times worse.

I really wish Mom would stop asking me to go to the town pool because, every time she does, it puts images in my mind that I've been trying hard to forget.

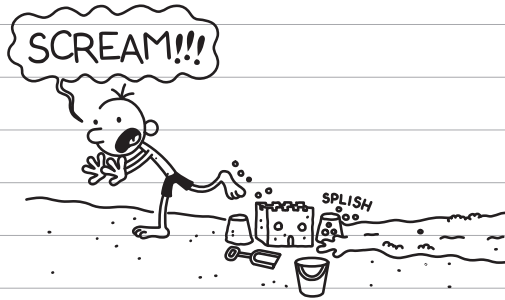
Sunday

Well, now I'm DEFINITELY staying indoors for the rest of the summer. Mom had a "house meeting" last night and said money is tight this year and we can't afford to go to the beach, which means no family holiday.

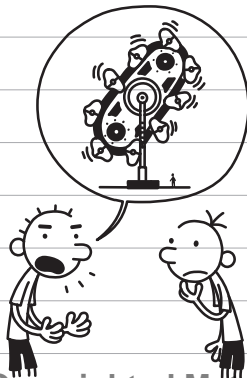
THAT really stinks. I was actually looking FORWARD to going to the beach this summer. Not because I like the ocean and the sand and all of that, because I don't. I realized a long time ago that all the world's fish and turtles and whales go to the bathroom right there in the ocean. And I seem to be the only person who's bothered by this.



My brother Rodrick likes to tease me because he thinks I'm afraid of the waves. But I'm telling you that's not it at all.



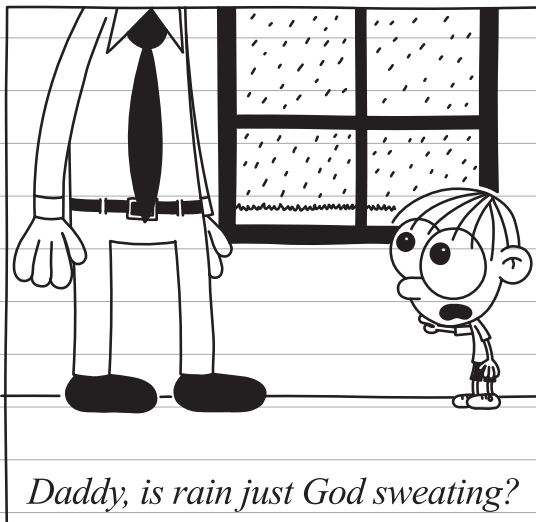
Anyway, I was looking forward to going to the beach because I'm finally tall enough to go on the Cranium Shaker, which is this really awesome ride that's on the boardwalk. Rodrick's been on the Cranium Shaker at least a hundred times, and he says you can't call yourself a man until you ride it.



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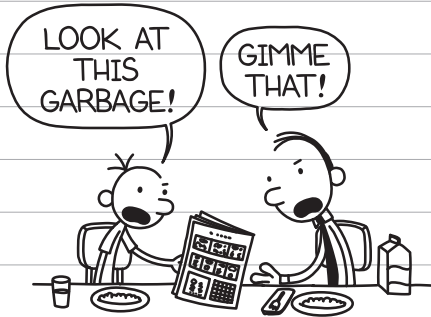
Mom said maybe if we "save our pennies" we can go back to the beach next year. Then she said we'd still do a lot of fun stuff as a family and one day we'll look back on this as the "best summer ever".

Well, now I only have two things to look forward to this summer. One is my birthday, and the other is when the last "Li'l Cutie" comic runs in the paper. I don't know if I ever mentioned this before, but "Li'l Cutie" is the worst comic ever. To give you an idea of what I'm talking about, here's what ran in the paper today -



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But here's the thing: even though I hate "Li'l Cutie", I can't stop myself from reading it, and Dad can't, either. I guess we just like seeing how bad it is.

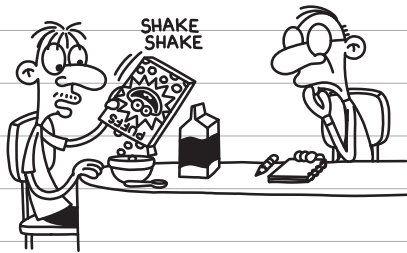


"Li'l Cutie" has been around for at least thirty years, and it's written by this guy named Bob Post. I've heard Li'l Cutie is based on Bob's son when he was a little kid.

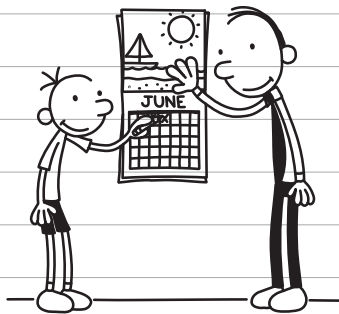


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But I guess now that the real Li'l Cutie is all grown up, his dad's having trouble coming up with new material.



A couple of weeks ago the newspaper announced that Bob Post is retiring and the final "Li'l Cutie" is gonna be printed in August. Ever since then me and Dad have been counting down the days until the last comic runs.

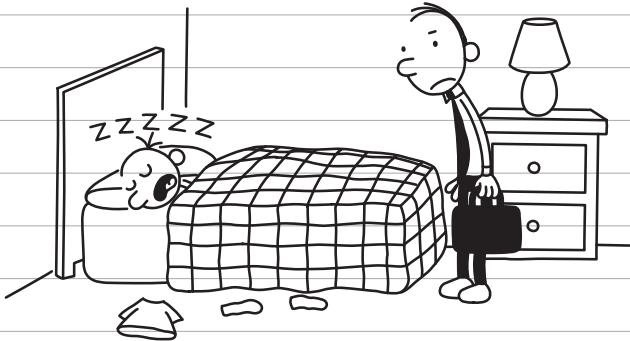


When the last "Li'l Cutie" comes out, me and Dad will have to throw a party, because something like that deserves a serious celebration.

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Monday

Even though me and Dad see eye to eye on "Li'l Cutie", there are still a lot of things we butt heads over. The big issue between us right now is my sleep schedule. During the summer I like to stay up all night watching TV or playing video games and then sleep through the morning. But Dad gets kind of crabby if I'm still in bed when he gets home from work.



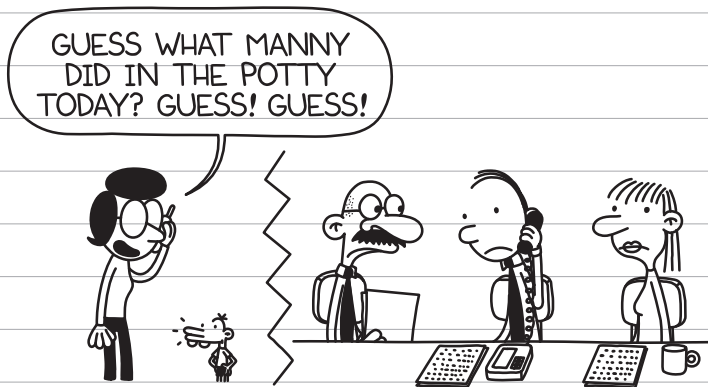
Lately, Dad's been calling me at noon to make sure I'm not still asleep. So I keep a phone by my bed and use my best wide-awake voice when he calls.

I think Dad's jealous because he has to go to work while the rest of us get to kick back and take it easy every day.

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But if he's gonna be all grumpy about it, he should just become a teacher or a snowplough driver or have one of those jobs where you get to take summers off.

Mom's not really helping improve Dad's mood, either. She calls him at work about five times a day with updates on everything that's going on around the house.

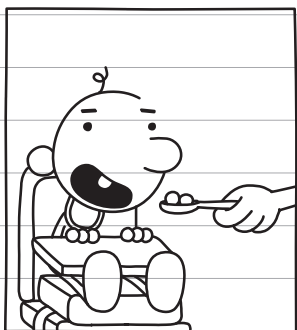


Tuesday

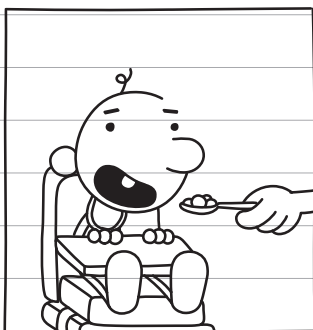
Dad got Mom a new camera for Mother's Day, and lately she's been taking lots of pictures. I think it's because she feels guilty about not keeping up on the family photo albums.

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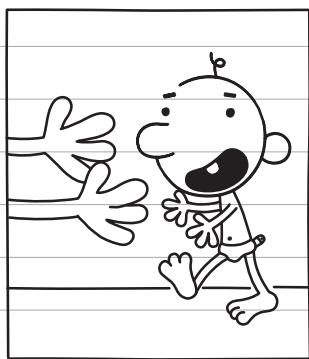
When my older brother, Rodrick, was a baby, Mom was totally on top of things.



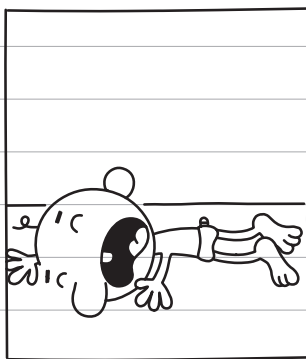
Rodrick's first time trying peas



Rodrick's second time trying peas



Rodrick's first steps



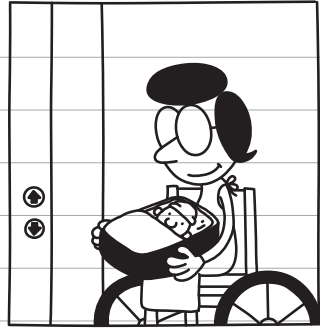
Kaboom!

Once I came along I guess Mom got busy, so from that point on there are a lot of gaps in our official family history.

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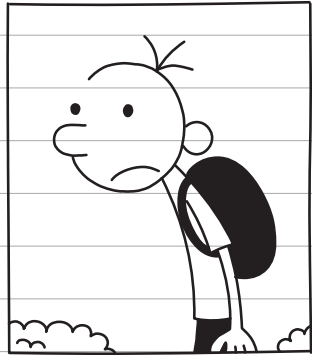
Welcome Gregory
to the world



Taking Gregory home
from the hospital



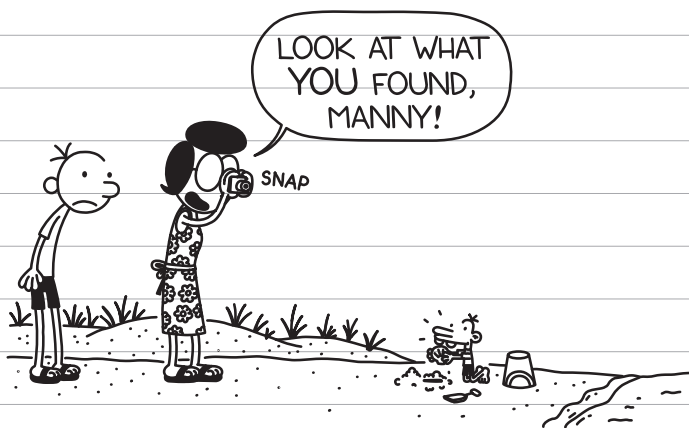
Gregory's 6th
birthday party



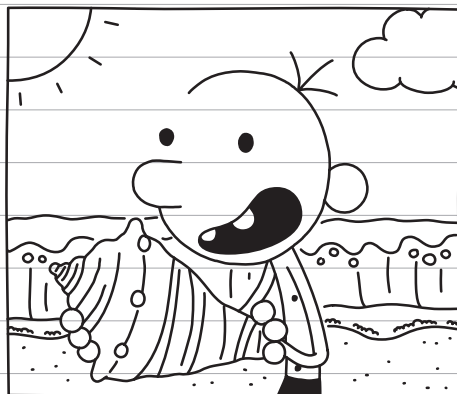
Gregory's first
day of middle school

I've learned that photo albums aren't an accurate record of what happened in your life, anyway. Last year, when we were at the beach, Mom bought a bunch of fancy seashells at a gift shop, and later on I saw her bury them in the sand for Manny to "discover".

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Well, I wish I hadn't seen that, because it made me re-evaluate my whole childhood.



Gregory really "digs" seashells!

Today Mom said I was looking "shaggy", so she told me she was taking me to get a haircut.

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