



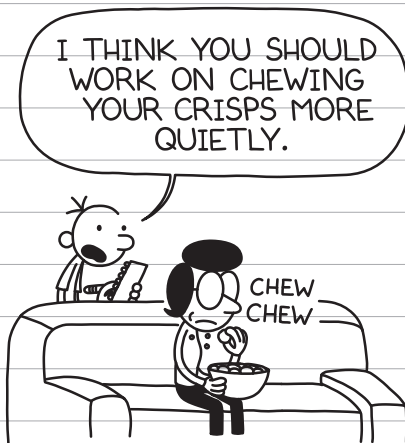
## JANUARY

### New Year's Day

You know how you're supposed to come up with a list of "resolutions" at the beginning of the year to try to make yourself a better person?

Well, the problem is it's not easy for me to think of ways to improve myself, because I'm already pretty much one of the best people I know.

So this year my resolution is to try to help OTHER people improve. But the thing I'm finding out is that some people don't really appreciate it when you're trying to be helpful.

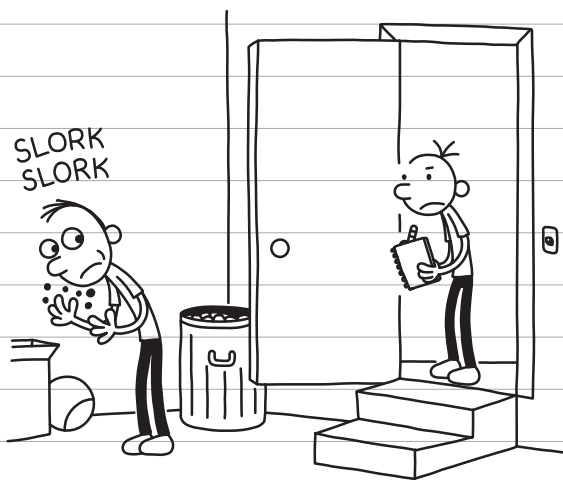


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One thing I noticed right off the bat is that the people in my family are doing a lousy job sticking to THEIR New Year's resolutions.

Mom said she was gonna start going to the gym today, but she spent the whole afternoon watching TV.

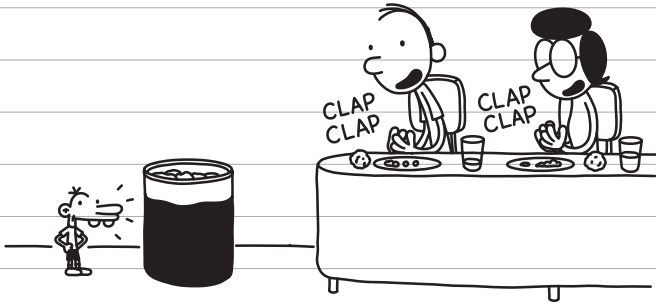
And Dad said he was gonna go on a strict diet, but after dinner I caught him out in the garage, stuffing his face with brownies.



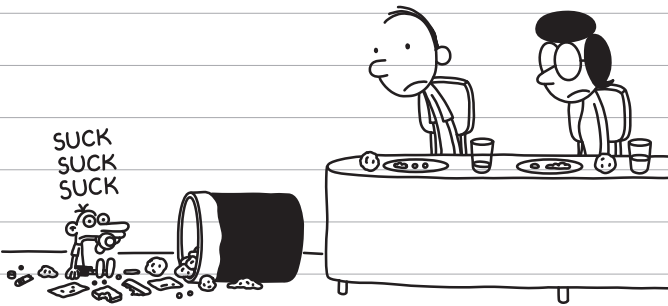
Even my little brother, Manny, couldn't stick with his resolution.

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This morning he told everyone that he's a "big boy" and he's giving up his pacifier for good. Then he threw his favourite binkie in the trash.



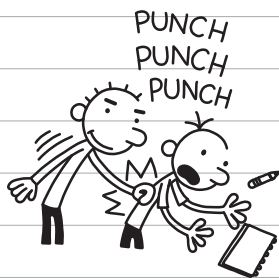
Well, THAT New Year's resolution didn't even last a full MINUTE.



The only person in my family who didn't come up with a resolution is my older brother, Rodrick, and that's a pity because his list should be about a mile and a half long.

So I decided to come up with a programme to help Rodrick be a better person. I called my plan "Three Strikes and You're Out". The basic idea was that every time I saw Rodrick messing up, I'd mark a little "X" on his chart.

Well, Rodrick got all three strikes before I even had a chance to decide what "You're Out" meant.



Anyway, I'm starting to wonder if I should just bag MY resolution, too. It's a lot of work, and so far I haven't really made any progress.

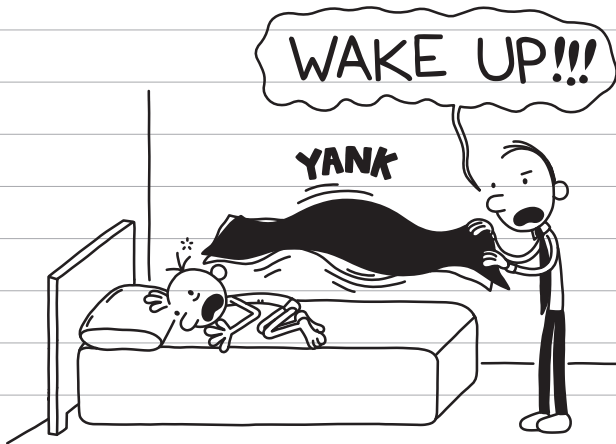
Besides, after I reminded Mom for like the billionth time to stop chewing her crisps so loud, she made a really good point. She said, "Everyone can't be as perfect as YOU, Gregory." And from what I've seen so far I think she's right.

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Thursday

Dad is giving this diet thing another try, and that's bad news for me. He's gone about three days without eating any chocolate, and he's been SUPER cranky.

The other day, after Dad woke me up and told me to get ready for school, I accidentally fell back asleep. Believe me, that's the last time I'll make THAT mistake.

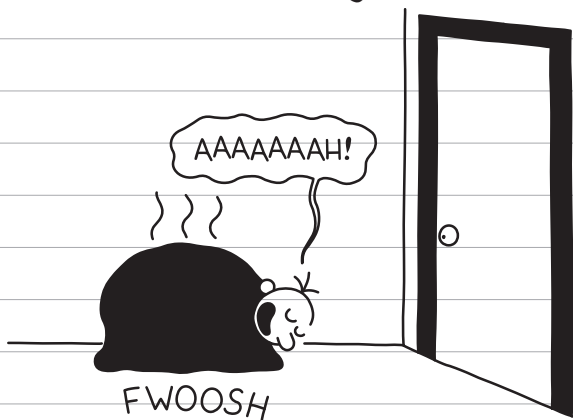


Part of the problem is that Dad always wakes me up before Mom's out of the shower, so I know that I still have like ten more minutes before I need to get out of bed for real.

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Yesterday I came up with a pretty good way to get some extra sleep time without making Dad mad. After he woke me up, I took all of my blankets down the hall with me and waited outside the bathroom for my turn in the shower.

Then I lay down right on top of the heater vent. And when the furnace was blowing, the experience was even BETTER than being in bed.



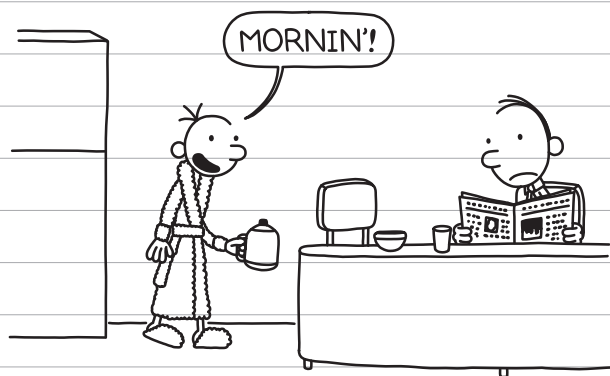
The problem was the heat only stayed on for about five minutes at a time. So when the furnace wasn't running, I was just lying there on this cold piece of metal.



This morning, while I was waiting for Mom to be done with her shower, I remembered someone gave her a bathrobe for Christmas. So I went into her closet and got it.

Let me just say that was one of the smartest moves I've ever made. Wearing that thing was like being wrapped in a big, fluffy towel that just came out of the dryer.

In fact, I liked it so much, I even wore it AFTER my shower. I think Dad might've been jealous HE didn't come up with the robe idea first, because when I came to the kitchen table, he seemed extra grumpy.





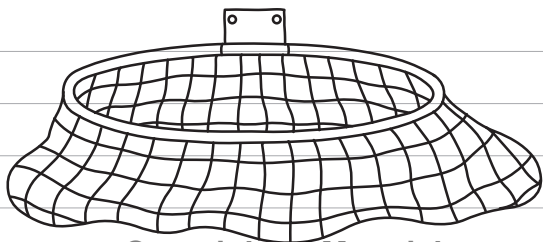


But then they still expect you to be all excited when you open the lame gifts they get you.



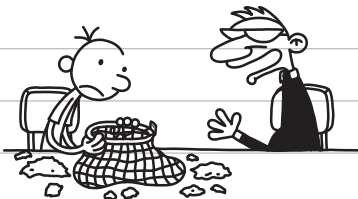
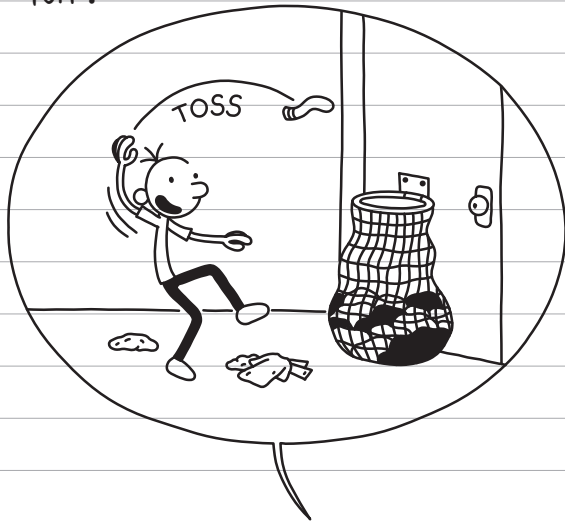
Most of my gifts this year were books or clothes. The closest thing I got to a toy was a present from Uncle Charlie.

When I unwrapped Uncle Charlie's gift, I didn't even know what it was supposed to be. It was this big plastic ring with a net attached to it.



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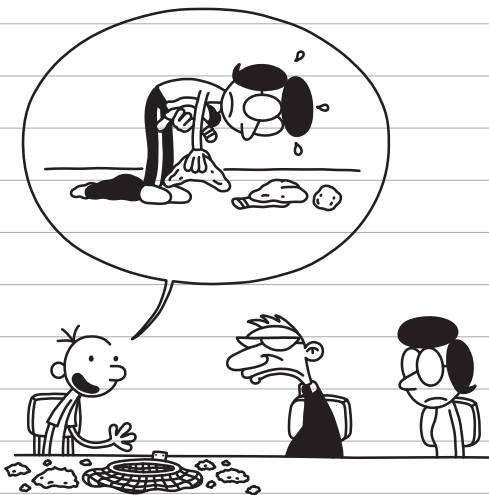
Uncle Charlie explained that it was a "Laundry Hoop" for my bedroom. He said I was supposed to hang the Laundry Hoop on the back of my door and it would make putting away my dirty clothes "fun".



At first I thought it was a joke, but then I realized Uncle Charlie was serious. So I had to explain to him that I don't actually DO my own laundry.

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I told him I just throw my dirty clothes on the floor, and Mom picks them up and takes them downstairs to the laundry room.



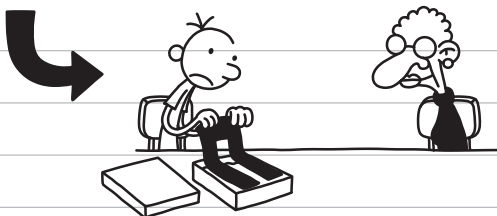
Then, a few days later, everything comes back to me in nice, folded piles.

I told Uncle Charlie he should just return the Laundry Hoop and give me cash so I could buy something I'd actually USE.

That's when Mom spoke up. She told Uncle Charlie she thought the Laundry Hoop was a GREAT idea.

Then she said that from now on I'd be doing my OWN laundry. So, basically, it ends up that Uncle Charlie got me a chore for Christmas.

It really stinks that I got such crummy gifts this year. I put in a lot of effort buttering people up for the past few months, and I thought it would pay off on Christmas.

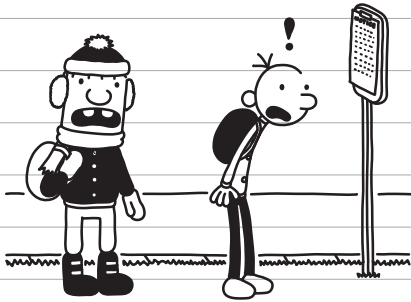


Now that I'm responsible for my own laundry, I guess I'm kind of GLAD I got a bunch of clothes. I might actually make it through the whole school year before I run out of clean stuff to wear.

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Monday

When me and Rowley got to our bus stop today, we found a nasty surprise. There was a piece of paper taped to our street sign, and it said that, effective today, our bus route was "rezoned". And what that means is now we have to WALK to school.

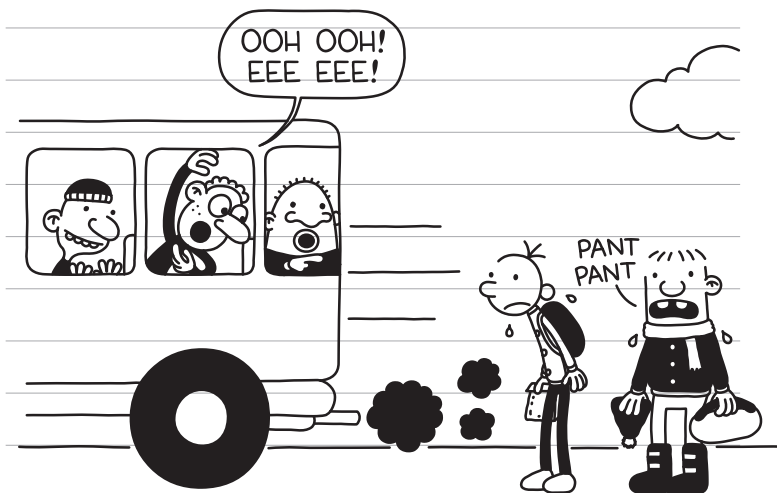


Well, I'd like to talk to the genius who came up with THAT idea, because our street is almost a quarter of a mile from the school.

Me and Rowley had to run to make it to school on time today. And what REALLY stunk was when our regular bus passed us by and it was full of kids from Whirley Street, the neighbourhood right next to ours.

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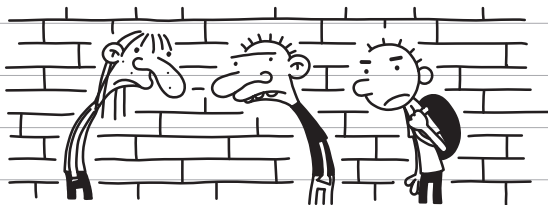
The Whirley Street kids made monkey noises when they passed us, which was really annoying because that's exactly what WE used to do when we passed THEM.



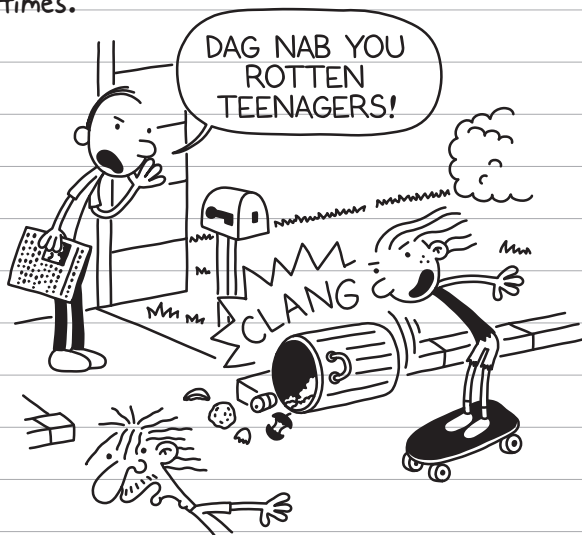
I'll tell you one reason it's a bad idea to make kids walk to school. These days, teachers give you so much homework that, with all the books and papers you have to carry home, your backpack ends up weighing like a hundred pounds.

And, if you want to see what kind of an effect that has on kids over time, all you have to do is look at Rodrick and some of his friends.

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Speaking of teenagers, Dad scored a pretty big victory today. The baddest teenager in our neighbourhood is this kid named Lenwood Heath, and he's kind of like Dad's arch-enemy. Dad has probably called the cops on Lenwood Heath about fifty times.



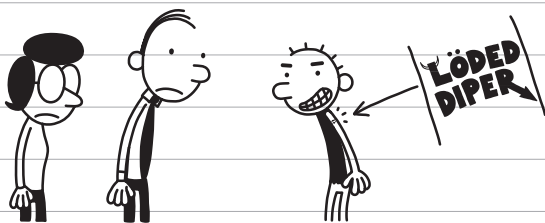
I guess Lenwood's parents got sick of his act, because they sent him off to military academy.

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You'd think that would've made Dad pretty happy, but I don't think he'll be satisfied until every teenager on the planet gets sent off to juvenile hall or Alcatraz or something. And that includes Rodrick.

Yesterday Mom and Dad gave Rodrick some money to buy books so he could study for the SATs, but Rodrick spent the money on a tattoo instead.

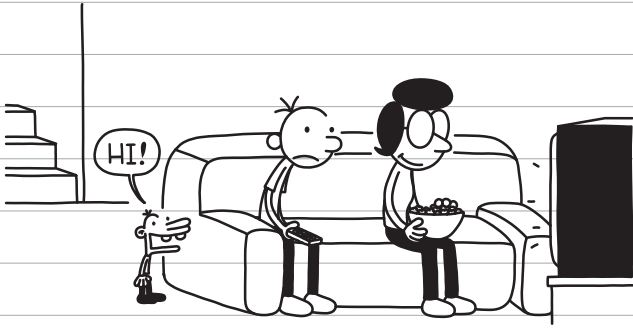


I've still got a little time before I turn into a teenager. But the minute I do I guarantee you Dad will be looking for the first chance to ship me out.

Monday

For the past week or so, Manny has been getting out of bed every night and coming downstairs.

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Instead of putting him right back to bed, Mom lets Manny sit with us and watch TV.

It's really not fair, because when Manny is with us I'm not allowed to watch any of the shows I like.

All I can say is when I was a kid there wasn't any of this "getting out of bed" stuff. I did it once or twice, but Dad put a stop to it real quick.

There was this book Dad used to read to me every night called "The Giving Tree". It was a really good book, but the back of it had a picture of the author, this guy named Shel Silverstein.

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