

KIDS FIRST! Film Critics Discussion Guide for Diary of a Wimpy Kid

Diary of a Wimpy Kid, based on the best-selling illustrated novel by Jeff Kinney, the film chronicles the adventures of wisecracking pre-teen Greg Heffley, who must somehow survive the scariest time of anyone's life... middle school. From director Thor Freudenthal (*Hotel for Dogs*) and producer Nina Jacobson (*The Game Plan*), *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* features rising stars Zachary Gordon (*National Treasure: Book of Secrets*), Robert Capron (*Bride Wars*) and Rachael Harris (*The Hangover*), as well as Steve Zahn ("*Treme*") and Chloe Moretz.

The story offers many talking points that a parent, teacher, or other adult can discuss with their child after viewing that will enhance their film experience. We encourage you to "view and review" the film together with your eight to 12-year-old child – the ideal audience age – and then post your review on your social media site so that you can share it with others during our first annual KIDS FIRST! Film Critics' Campaign.

1. 12-year-old Greg Heffley is anxious to start middle school, confident he will easily become the school's most popular kid. However, Greg worries about how his "uncool" best friend, Rowley Jefferson, will fit in. While Rowley is a good friend who helps Greg escape his terrorizing older brother, Rodrick, Greg worries that Rowley's "dorky" clothes and personality will embarrass both of them.

- *Greg thinks that middle school is the worse idea ever invented. Why? What is he most afraid of? Talk about how the bullies are represented in this film and compare it to your own experience with bullies.*

2. On their first day, Greg and Rowley meet Angie, a seventh grader who works for the school's paper and is wise beyond her years. We first see her under the bleachers reading *Howl* by Allen Ginsberg. Angie tries to teach Greg and Rowley about the workings of middle school, which she believes was created to store kids while they make the awkward transition between children to teenagers. Classmate Chirag Gupta tells the boys the story behind the moldy slice of swiss cheese laying on the school's basketball court.

- *In what ways do Angie and Chirag help Greg and Rowley find their way through the middle school maze? Talk about the myth behind the Cheese Touch and . . .*

3. Many of Greg's ideas seem to backfire on him. He is determined to be voted a "class favorite" but he loses to Patty Farrell, his arch-enemy. He threatens to call the cops on his classmates on Halloween and then joins the geeky Safety Patrol. He breaks Rowley's arm which makes Rowley become very popular, much to Greg's dismay. Rowley's popularity increases when he beats Greg to become the school paper's cartoonist.

- *Have you ever had every good idea you came up with go astray? Talk about how you can relate to Greg's misadventures and what happens when his friend one-ups him.*

4. Greg and Rowley's friendship falls apart after Greg allows Rowley to unwittingly take the blame for a mistake Greg made during Safety Patrol. After Greg tells Rowley the truth and tries to tell it as a joke, Rowley berates him for being a bad friend who cares about nothing but himself. Rowley then leaves him and befriends another kid. He then tries to pursue popularity without Rowley by auditioning for the school play.

- Do you think Greg was justified when he responded to Rowley's anger by looking for new friends. Would you drop a friend just because he was mad at you? Or, would you try to work things out.

5. At the mother-son dance, Greg's mother suggests Greg ask Rowley to go out for ice cream with them. This time, it is Rowley who tells Greg he already has plans. Later, Greg when Rowley comes up to him in school, Greg is disappointed to learn that Rowley only wants a game back. Greg refuses to return the game, causing an argument..

- Sometimes it's difficult to admit you're wrong and even when you do, the person who you've wronged isn't necessarily ready to reconcile. What do you do then?

6. The tag line for this movie is "I'll be famous one day, but for now I'm stuck in middle school with a bunch of morons." Greg considers junior high school a place rigged with hundreds of social landmines, not the least of which are wedgies, swirlies, bullies and lunchtime banishment of the cafeteria floor. His diary - or "journal" - chronicles his thoughts, tales of family trials and tribulations, and (would be) schoolyard triumphs.

- Can you relate to the theme of this movie? If you haven't started middle school yet, what are your thoughts and concerns about it. If you are already in middle school - talk about your most memorable adventure.