

2021 – 2022

*Diary of a Wimpy Kid the Musical*  
**EDUCATOR GUIDE**

children's  
**theatre**  
company

# DIARY of a Wimpy Kid THE MUSICAL

May 3-June 9, 2022

*A Children's Theatre Company Original Production*

Middle school, ugh. It's the worst. But Greg is determined NOT to be at the bottom of the popularity chart. He'll leave that to his weird neighbor, Fregley. Or maybe Greg's best friend, Rowley Jefferson. But it's not going to be Greg... no way.

See Jeff Kinney's popular character take center stage as Greg's cartoon diary becomes a hilarious and heartfelt musical. Will Greg's plans lead him to sacrifice his one true friend? Can anyone avoid the dreaded Cheese Touch? Grab a hall pass and don't be late for an adventure familiar to anyone who actually survived middle school!

music and lyrics by **MICHAEL MAHLER** and **ALAN SCHMUCKLER**

book by **KEVIN DEL AGUILA**

directed by **JENN THOMPSON**

based on the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* book series by **JEFF KINNEY** and **20th CENTURY STUDIO FILMS**

produced by special arrangement with **BUENA VISTA THEATRICAL** and **KEVIN MCCOLLUM**



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# Springboard

## Ideas of what to talk about, write about, or explore while connecting *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* to your classroom curriculum



Write a review of the performance or a letter to the actors.

Define the word "hero." Do you think Greg is the hero of this story? Why or why not?

Which characters change throughout the story? How do they change and what lessons do they learn?

How do you define friendship? What makes someone a good friend?

Compare and contrast your school with Greg's school.

Greg is described as a "wimpy" kid. How do you define "wimpy?" Find evidence to support or contradict this description.

How would you describe bullying? Are all kinds of bullying the same? Why or why not? Who gets bullied in the show? Who does the bullying?

Create an original story of how the Cheese Touch came to be.

What does it mean to be popular? Why do you think Greg values popularity so highly? Who are the popular students at your school and why are they popular?

Retell the story from Rowley's point of view. How does it change?

Why do you think Greg keeps a journal? How does it help him? Do you keep a journal?

How do you think Rowley feels about his friendship with Greg? If Rowley kept a journal, how would he describe his interactions with Greg?

Ask students to keep a journal throughout their year. What do they notice? How would they feel if their journal was published for the world to see?

Design a new character to add to the series! How do they intersect with Greg and Rowley?

What would you do if you got the Cheese Touch?

What advice would you give Greg on surviving middle school?

The *Wimpy Kid* series has been translated into 45 languages. Why do you think these stories are so popular around the world?

Which of Greg's decisions do you agree with and which do you disagree with? What would you do differently?



# Class Act: Actor's Tools

Actors use many tools to help them tell a story; three we focus on at CTC are body, voice, and imagination.

Explain that projecting means using a loud voice and enunciating means speaking clearly. Have students practice projecting and enunciating by saying "Diary of a Wimpy Kid" as a group, and then individually.

Brainstorm emotions that actors might portray. Try saying "Diary of a Wimpy Kid" using those emotions. Students will naturally begin to use their body to portray the emotion as they say the line. Brainstorm how your body looks or feels different when you are feeling these emotions. Allow a few students to showcase their work as a solo.

List some of the characters in the play along with characteristics of each. How would each of those characters say the title? Say the line as a group, using different characters as inspiration. Then, ask for volunteers to perform the line individually.

# Class Act: Character Interview

**Objective:** In this activity, students will use their imagination to invent backgrounds, justify actions, and answer questions from a character's perspective. Students will generate questions to better understand a variety of characters and build empathy. Students will offer advice and ideas to help the characters.

**Directions:** Place a chair at the front of the room. Ask for a volunteer to come to the front of the class and pretend to be Greg.

The rest of the students will play the role of news reporters who are interviewing Greg for the local newspaper. The teacher can model by asking Greg a few questions, then invite the class of reporters to ask them questions.

Sample questions:

- "What are you most excited about for middle school?"
- "Why are you concerned with being popular?"
- "What is the hardest thing about being the middle child of the family?"
- "What do you like the most about being friends with Rowley?"

After interviewing Greg, do the same activity for other characters in the story such as Rowley, Patty, Manny, Mom, or Dad.



## Class Act: Narrative Picture

**Objective:** This activity challenges students to compare and contrast characters, infer meaning in a picture, and practice creative problem solving skills. Students will use their imagination to create imagined situations within a sequence of events.

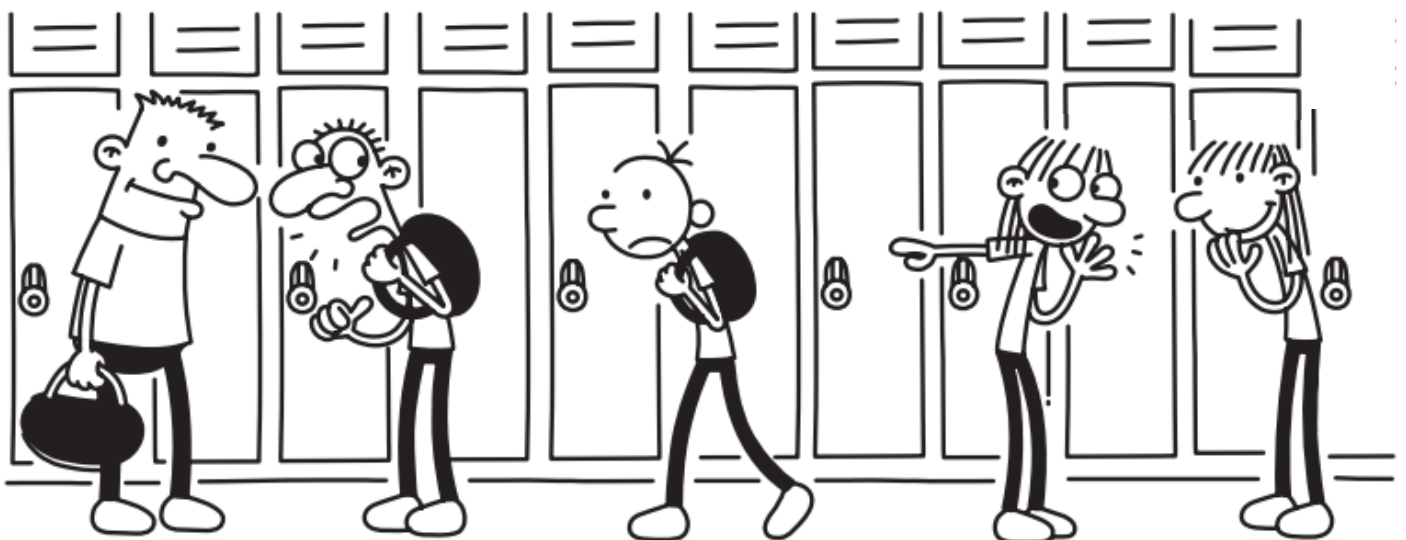
**Directions:** Show the class the illustration by Jeff Kinney below from the novel *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. Give each student an opportunity to share with the class what they observe about this picture.

Divide students into small groups and have them re-create the picture with their bodies. Once all the students are frozen in the scene, allow each to make up a line of dialogue their character/object would say. Allow each student in the scene to say what their character/object is thinking in the scene. Reflect on how what we say and what we think are different. How do you decide what to say out loud and what to keep to yourself?

Dismiss students back to their small groups to brainstorm what might have happened right before this photo was taken. Create a tableau of this situation.

As a large group, analyze the conflict of this scene and brainstorm how this conflict might be solved. Dismiss students back to their small group to create a tableau of a potential solution to the conflict. Allow each group to showcase all three tableaux (beginning, middle and end) in front of the class.

Ask the audience to make observations about the created scenes. How was the conflict solved?



# *Team Builder: Popularity Score*

**Objective:** This activity makes us challenges students to think about status and helps them notice how it shows up in the way we move, the way we talk or interact with people, and the way we think about ourselves and others.

**Directions:** Cut out enough slips of paper for each student to get one. Write numbers between 1 and 50 on the slips. Make sure you have a wide range of numbers with some low numbers, some middle numbers, and some high. Mix up these slips and have every student draw a slip WITHOUT looking at the number. Every student holds their number in front of them/against their forehead/anywhere that they can't see it but everyone else can. This number is their popularity score or status. The highest number is the highest status and lowest number is the lowest status.

Have students move around the room and interact with other students based on the number each student was assigned. Encourage them to pay attention to body language, both others' and their own. Note: no student should be saying anything unkind to each other; focus instead on who you try and interact with and who you don't. After students have space to explore this dynamic, challenge them to line up in order of their numbers. Once they are in line, everyone can look at their numbers and see how accurate their line is.

Once students have explored the new prompt, have them take a moment to shake off their number (ex. do 10 jumping jacks, have a quick class dance party). If students are ready for the next challenge, try this activity again without talking to challenge them to communicate via body language.

Have a conversation about the activity. How did they notice or feel status in themselves and in others? What did it feel like in your body? How did you interact/not interact with others? Did you notice anything in the activity that you've noticed in real life?

# *Team Builder: Mom Bucks*

**Objective:** In this activity, students will use their imagination to become Greg and Rowley. This activity requires a large open space such as a gym or playground.

**Directions:** Choose one student to play the role of Mom. This student stands at one end of the open space. Encourage them to use their body to become the character. Sitting next to them is a stool or chair with a stack of "mom bucks" (this can simply be paper).

The rest of the students stand at the opposite end of the space. When "mom" turns her back to the group, the students can sneak to try to steal the mom bucks. When "mom" turns to face them, they need to freeze. If "mom" catches anyone moving, she yells, "to your bedroom," and the student is sent back to the starting line. When a student succeeds in stealing the mom bucks, they become the new "mom."

# Team Builder: Bibbity Bibbity Bop

**Objective:** This activity gives students a kinesthetic anchor to remember characters. Students will listen to prompts and respond accordingly.

**Directions:** Everyone stands in a circle with one player in the middle of the circle. That person points at someone in the circle and says, as quickly and clearly as possible, "Bibbity, Bibbity, Bop!" In the interest of clarity, the person who gets pointed at will be called "Z." Z tries to say "Bop!" before the pointer can finish saying "Bibbity, Bibbity, Bop!"

When students are comfortable, add this twist. If the person in the center says only "Bop!" then Z must remain silent. If Z says "Boo!" then they are out.

Keep adding twists as students are comfortable. If the person in the middle gives a prompt to Z, they respond with the coordinating frozen image or gesture. Suggestions for prompts are below or have the classroom develop their own prompts & gestures.

Prompt	Gesture
Manny	Throw your head back and cry like a baby
Cheese Touch	The rest of the class turns their back to Z as Z looks at their hands in horror
Loded Diper	Z poses as a rockstar with a microphone and the two students on either side become guitar players

# Team Builder: Bully and Protector

**Objective:** In this activity, students will build awareness of others and how relationships to people impact how we behave in a group. This activity works best in an open space like a gym or playground.

**Directions:** Have students start walking around the room or space. As they move, tell them to pick two people in the group in their head. They should not share the two people they picked or point to make those people known to their classmates. Challenge them to walk around the space while keeping the three people (themselves and the two people they choose) in a triangle with them as the group moves. As one person moves, how can you adjust to keep the shape without saying anything?

Once students have practiced making a triangle, challenge them to pick two new people in their head (again, not pointing or telling who they chose). One person will be their 'protector' and one person will be their 'bully'. Students need to move in order to keep their protector in between themselves and their bully. Encourage students to do all of this without letting anyone else know who your chosen people are.

After the activity, discuss what the students' experienced. What was hard about the activity? How does this activity relate to situations students might encounter in real life?





## Team Builder: Stand Up If...

**Objective:** This exercise activates prior knowledge around concepts or topics in life, reading, and writing. The exercise also builds community as participants share and observe common experiences and celebrate differences.

**Directions:** Ask students to stay seated at their desks. Tell students they will hear a series of prompts starting with “Stand up if...” If the statement applies to them, they should stand. Choose a couple of students to ask follow-up questions related to the statement. All students sit again before being prompted with another “stand up if” statement.

Begin with non-content related prompts to establish the pattern and get everyone moving and listening. Then move to content related statements that will gradually get more sensitive and/or detailed as the exercise progresses.

Sample Dialogue:

“Stand up if...”:

General Statements:

- You like pizza
- You like to read
- You play an instrument
- You have seen a play before
- You have been in a play before

Statements related to *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*:

- You like to write in a journal or diary
- You have met a new friend
- You have started a new school
- You have played a prank on someone
- You have witnessed bullying

# Team Builder: Late for Class

**Objective:** This activity challenges students to create a story that justifies why Greg is late for class including a beginning, middle, and end. Students will use their bodies to physically communicate the story.

**Directions:** Choose one student to play Greg. This student will leave the classroom for a moment. Once Greg is out of the room, work as a class to decide the story of why Greg is late for class. Include a beginning, middle, and end (example: First, Greg's alarm clock didn't go off, then his bus got a flat tire, finally he got to school on a pogo stick). NOTE: first time around, choose a simple story that is easily acted out. Give students an opportunity to think about how they will act each part of the story out.

Bring Greg back into the classroom and let him know he is late! He must come to the front of the class and tell you (the teacher) exactly why he is late. You (the teacher) will stand with your back to the rest of the students. Students can physically communicate to Greg the reasons he was late. However, if you turn around and look at the class, they must appear as though they were sitting still, not telling him anything. If you hear them, you can eliminate certain players as speaking is not part of the game. Once Greg has listed the beginning, middle, and end of his story correctly, he (and the class) have won! If he cannot correctly tell his story, the teacher wins!

You can coach your students along by reminding them to slow down, repeat information, clarify the movement, etc. Once class has the hang of it, you can challenge them with more specificity or more relation to the book (Greg was late because Roderick's band played all night and he couldn't sleep, then Manny ate his alarm clock, and finally Rowley picked him up on his pogo stick and took him to school).

## Write It Out: Role on the Wall

**Objective:** This activity allows students to brainstorm external and internal factors for characters and create deeper, more empathetic understanding of character motivations.

**Directions:** Draw an outline of a person on the board. Choose a character from the play such as Greg, Patty, or Rowley for your shape to represent. Brainstorm all the external things that impact the character (other characters, incidents we see and those we hear about, societal pressures, etc.) and write those around the outside of the figure. Next, fill the inside of the character with ideas of how the character feels about all the things on the outside.

Dismiss students to work individually on the activity focusing on a different character. Retell or rewrite the story of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* from the perspective of that character. How does that change the story? Did this activity change your opinion of that character? Have you ever experienced similar feelings or events?

# Write it Out: Classroom Comics

**Objective:** This activity challenges students to create an original comic book with unconventional characters. This activity also encourages students to challenge perspective. This activity works well when paired with the comic book template on page 15.

**Directions:** Select a few existing comic strips such as Calvin & Hobbs, or Garfield and show them to the class. Brainstorm as a group the similarities and differences between each. What are the common characteristics of comic stories?

Collect two paper bags and assign a prompt from the table below for each bag. For example, you might choose to have a “common objects” bag and a “settings” bag. Write examples of these things on slips of paper and place them in the matching bag. Write enough slips to have one for each student in each bag.

Paper Bag Prompts	
Common Objects	Emotions
Animals	Physical Actions
Settings	Characters

Allow each student to choose one prompt from each bag and challenge them to write an original comic story about those things using the template on page 15.

# Write it Out: Presidential Campaign

**Objective:** This activity challenges students to write and perform persuasive speeches and think about ways to improve your school community.

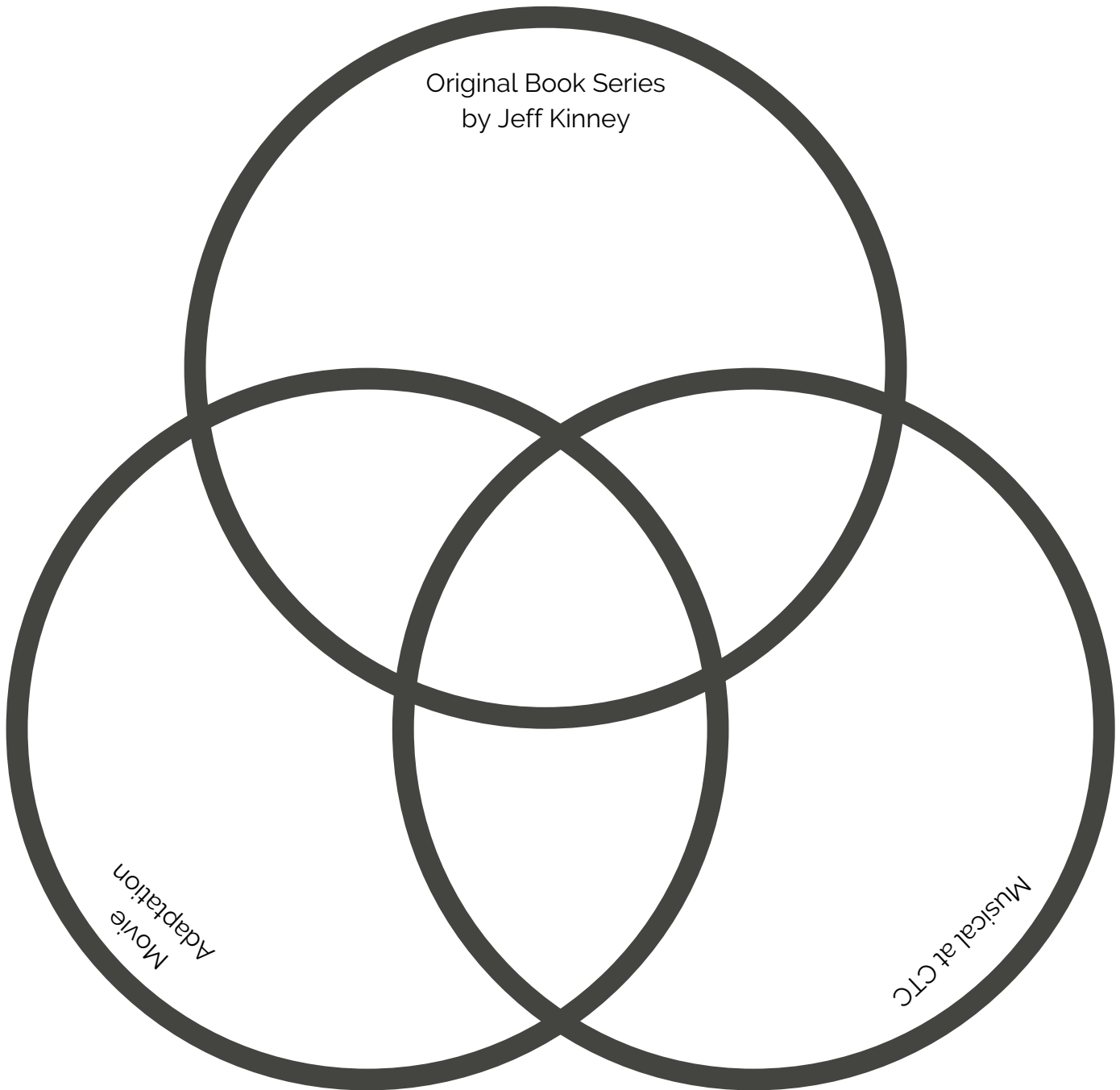
**Directions:** Start by talking about the duties of a class president then discuss what qualities in a person makes a good class president. Brainstorm things that can be improved about your school and community. What are things you would want to change? What school activities do you want more or less of? What things are important to you when it comes to making your school a better place?

Then, ask each student to write a speech about why they would be a good class president for your school: why would YOU be a great representative as Class President? If needed, give students a time limit or minimum number of sentences based on how much time you have to present speeches.

Give each student the opportunity to perform their speech in front of the class. After everyone has presented, talk about similarities or differences students noticed or hold a class vote for president!

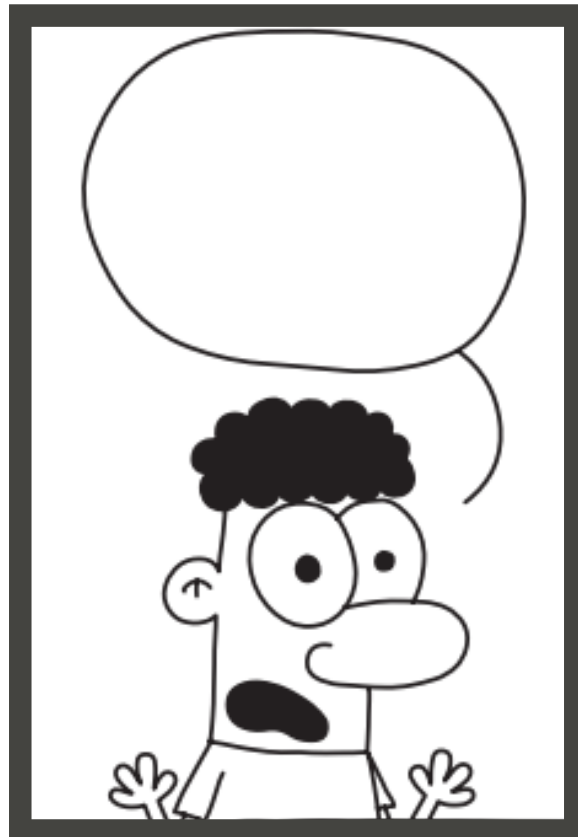
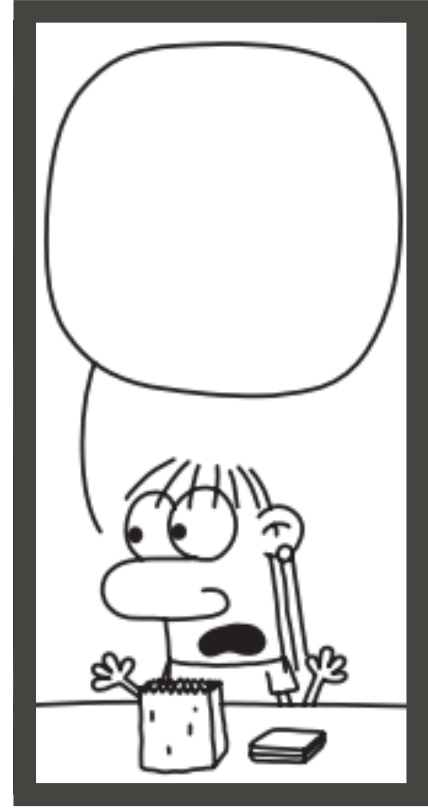
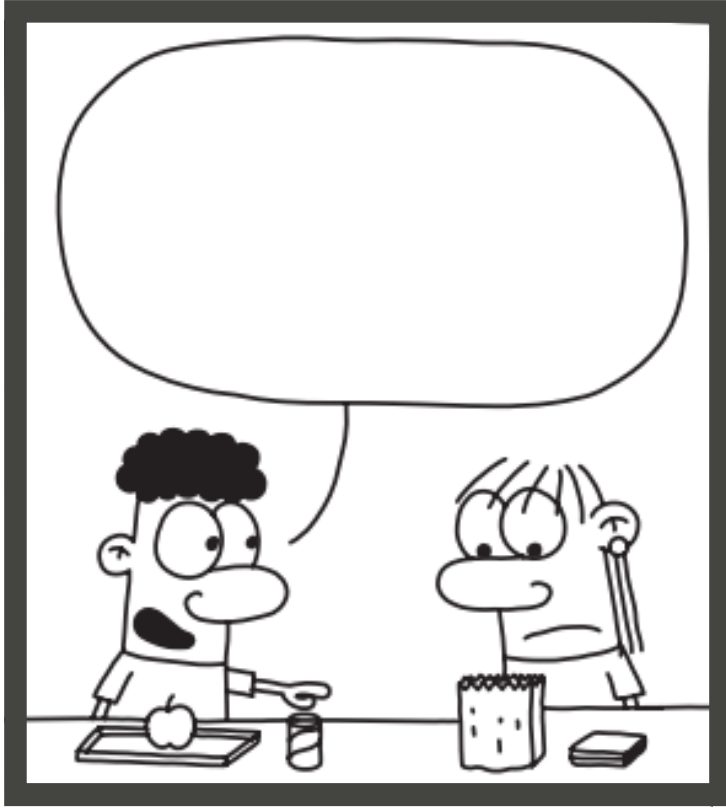
# Wimpy Kid Venn Diagram

Use the Venn Diagram below to compare the original book, a movie adaptation, and the musical of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* at Children's Theatre Company.



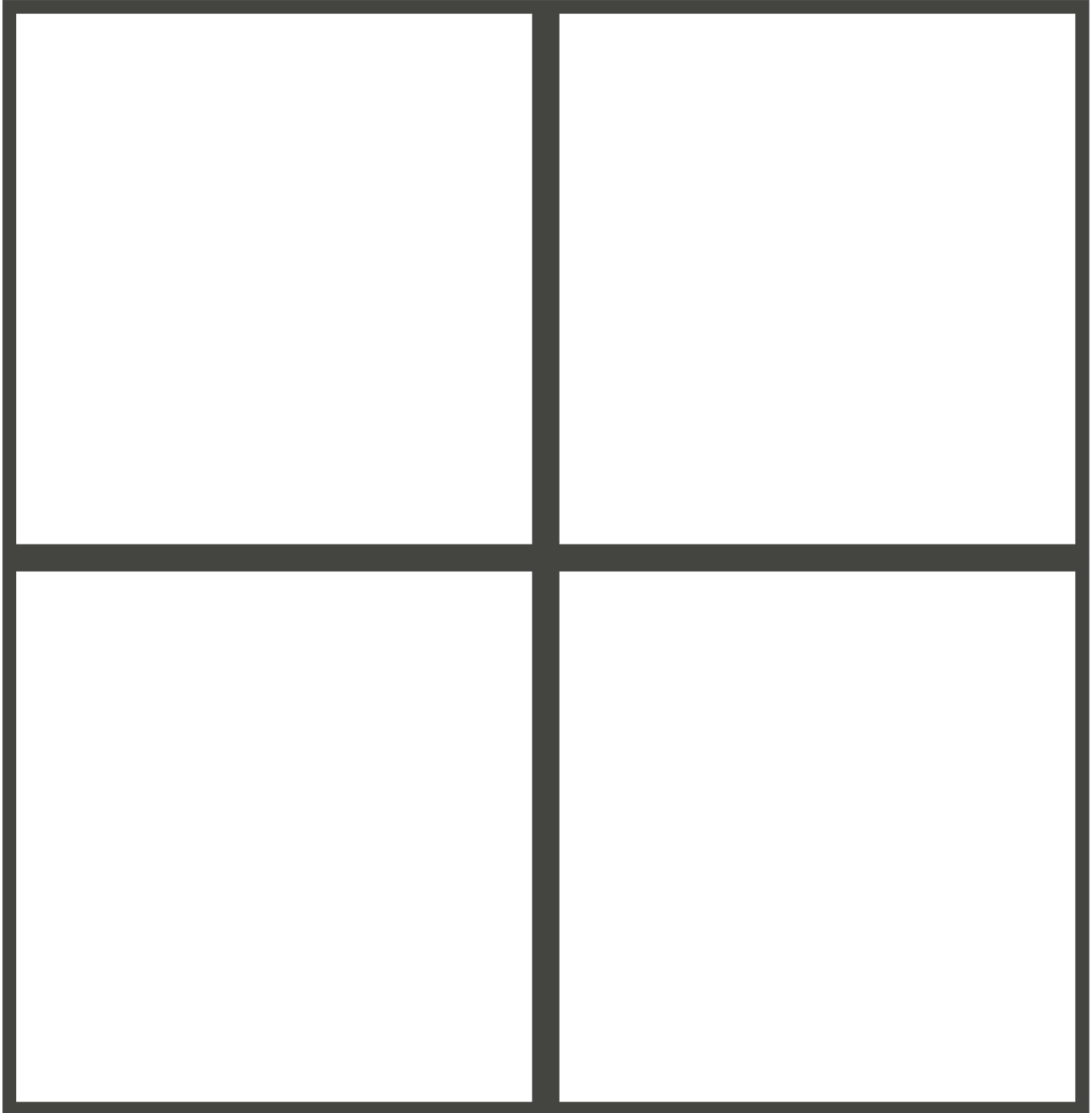
# Finish the Comic

What do you think is happening in the comic below? Who are the characters? Fill in the speech bubbles with lines for each character to say.



# *Create Your Own Comic*

Try your hand at cartooning, just like Greg! Experiment with communicating a story or idea through pictures and words at the same time, while working within the frames of a comic strip.



# School Survival Kit

Brainstorm your own school survival kit! What makes you feel confident, organized, and prepared for school? Write your answers in the sections of the backpack below. These can be physical things, actions from others, or routines you have put in place to help you succeed. When you are finished, share your ideas with the rest of the class!



# Corkboard Conversations

Use the sticky notes below to think critically about *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*.

Three adjectives that describe this play are...

- 1
- 2
- 3

This play made me feel...

This play made me think about...

A status I would post on my social media after seeing this show is...

A question I still have is...

This play taught me...



My Rating of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* at Children's Theatre Company



# FURTHER RESOURCES

## More About *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*

"Diary of a Wimpy Kid:  
Downloadables

[Resources](#)

Reading is  
Fundamental  
Literacy Center

[Resources](#)

Abrams Books Activities  
& Downloads

[Activities](#)

Puffin School  
Resource Pack

[Resources](#)

Teaching Books  
Resources

[Resources](#)

Teacher Vision  
Resources

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Behind the Scenes  
with Jeff Kinney

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All About  
Jeff Kinney

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## More Fun!

Poptropica games created  
by Jeff Kinney

[Play](#)

Drawing Tips from  
Jeff Kinney

[Learn More](#)

Wimpy Kid  
YouTube Channel

[Watch](#)

Sneak Peek at a  
New Song!

[Watch](#)

Mail Letters to:

**Children's Theatre Company**  
2400 Third Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55404

Submit Student Questions at:

[www.childrenstheatre.org/offbookquestions](http://www.childrenstheatre.org/offbookquestions)

Check out more activities on:



Flipgrid

Questions? Email:

[schools@childrenstheatre.org](mailto:schools@childrenstheatre.org)

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