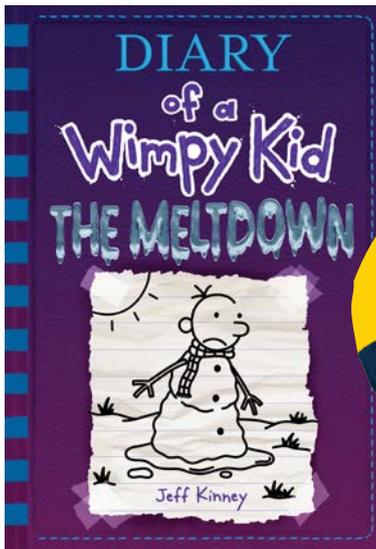


# AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR MASTERCLASSES

## NOTES FOR TEACHERS & LIBRARIANS

## JEFF KINNEY: TELLING FUNNY STORIES



### BEFORE WATCHING THE VIDEO AND READING THE EXTRACT:

#### GET IN THE ZONE!

The *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series by Jeff Kinney is well-known for its humour and ability to make people laugh.

A good way to get students in the right frame of mind for telling funny stories is to get them thinking about laughter. Ask them to consider the following questions in pairs: What is laughter? When do we laugh? Why is it important? When was the last time you really laughed?

Then, ask students to list as many types of laughs as they can. For example, can they explain the differences between a belly laugh, a snigger, a giggle or a snort? To really get students in the mood for humour, encourage them to draw each

type of laugh that they list – or, better still, they might act them out, or even create scenarios for the different types of laughter.

Ask students to share their different types of laughter with their classmates. Are they ready to snigger, giggle or snort when they watch Jeff's video?

### AFTER WATCHING THE VIDEO AND READING THE EXTRACT:

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you think the series title *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* is a funny title? Why?
2. What is effective about using the form of a **diary** to document Greg's adventures? Do you like this format? Why? How does it change the experience of reading?
3. Jeff Kinney often uses words made up of capital letters in his writing. Can you find any examples of this in the extract? What is the effect of using capital letters? What do they show?
4. Can you find an example of **onomatopoeia** in the extract? Why is this an effective technique for creating comedy?
5. How does Jeff Kinney present the relationship between Greg and his parents in the extract from *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Meltdown*? Why is this funny?
6. How do the illustrations complement the text? For example, in the extract from *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Meltdown*, why is it funny when Greg says: 'Manny was already in the front yard making snowmen, or WHATEVER you'd call those things'?

## FUN ACTIVITIES

### ACTIVITY 1: GETTING TO GRIPS WITH GREG

The Diary of a Wimpy Kid series invites readers into a world that is full of humour. It is so popular amongst children because Greg Heffley, the main character, makes us all laugh!

- In pairs, re-read the extract from *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Meltdown*. Find examples in the extract that show that Greg is: YOUNG, FUNNY, FRUSTRATED (with his parents!), and CHEEKY! Can you think of any more words to describe Greg?
- If Greg Heffley was interviewed on the television, what do you think he'd be like in real-life? Jot down your ideas using the following headings: voice, body language and facial expressions.
- Carry out interviews with Greg, asking him all about his experiences outside in the snow, and why he'd rather be inside, playing video games! Remember: try to make it as funny as you can!

### ACTIVITY 2: COMIC DEVICES

Jeff Kinney is inspired by things in everyday life that make him laugh. He loves listening to and telling jokes. In fact, his ideas for *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* often start with a list of jokes... it's how you tell 'em!

- In pairs, consider how Jeff Kinney makes jokes funny in his stories. How does he tell them?
- Jeff Kinney uses lots of comic devices in his writing to make it funny. Looking back at the extract from *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Meltdown*, find examples in the extract of the following comic devices: USE OF CAPITAL LETTERS, INFORMAL WORDS, ONOMATOPOEIA, USE OF CARTOON, REPETITION, FUNNY SCENARIOS.
- For each comic device listed, think about how it helps to make the story funny. Can you use one of these devices in your own writing to tell a funny story?

### ACTIVITY 3: COMIC BOOK CLUB

Jeff explains that he always wanted to be a comic book writer. As inspiration for *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, he came up with the idea that he would write as a kid writing his diary – and that way he could sneak his hilarious cartoons in too!

- Using some of the comic devices from Activity 2, create a six-panel comic book of your own.
- Your comic book story should be based on a something funny that has happened to you recently in your everyday life – either at home, or at school. Remember to write a list of jokes or funny things before you begin. Share your comics with your classmates in Comic Book Club!

### SHARE A STORY

Think of a story you read recently that tickled your funny bone. It doesn't have to be a whole book; it might just have been just one particular passage, or section of dialogue, or even a character description! Find an example that you can show to someone else to spread the laughter. Spend ten minutes sharing it with your friends, family and classmates. Can you make them laugh when you read it out loud? Remember, it's how you tell 'em!

### SPARK YOUR IMAGINATION...

#### AN INSPIRING SHARE A STORY CHALLENGE FOR YOU:

Including a quick recap of the expert advice from Jeff:

**Write your own diary entry, making it as funny as you can. Start by thinking about things that have happened recently that made you laugh – have you had a funny moment at school, at home or on holiday that you remember?**

#### DID YOU KNOW?

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