



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on August 3, 2012

Movie Review: “Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days”

As a former middle school English teacher, I found my worst nightmare to be the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* books (labeled “graphic novels” in the sense that they are fictional stories presented in comic-strip format and published as books). Students would often beg for permission to read and report on these books for school assignments, despite the fact that they are less novels and more graphics. Still, the books, as well as the films, have proven to be entertaining for younger audiences. The latest movie installment of this popular series, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days*, is no exception.

Dog Days is set at the start of summer vacation for Greg Heffley (Zachary Gordon), who has high expectations for his summer and big plans, mostly consisting of “vegging” in front of the television from morning until night playing video games.

But what good parent would sit idly by and witness his or her child’s slow transition into a classic couch potato? Certainly not Greg’s father Frank (Steve Zahn), who decides to sign up his son for the Wilderness Scouts. Even better, Greg’s dad will participate with him. He even has a Civil War reenactment planned for the two of them to do together.

Every kid’s dream vacation — right? Not so much.

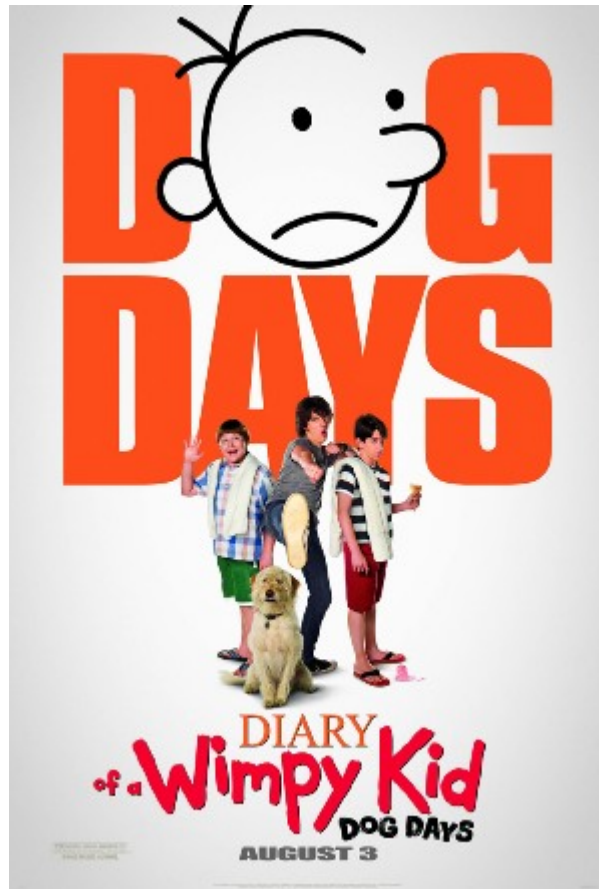
To make matters worse for Greg, his mother (Rachael Harris) has concocted some summer plans of her own for him. She has signed him up for a young readers’ book club, whose members read and write reports on such books as *Little Women*.

And to boot, Greg’s dad has enlisted Greg to do an unpaid internship at his office!

It’s enough to make Greg wonder whether school has really ended for him during the summer.

Just when Greg thinks his summer vacation is doomed, he comes up with a devious but masterful plan. He will lie to his parents. He tells them that he has managed to find a job at the local country club, where in reality he intends to spend his days with his best friend Rowley (Robert Capron) just enjoying the scene, swimming, and lounging in pure decadence. It also doesn’t hurt that his crush Holly (Peyton List) is known to take a dip in the club’s swimming pool every now and then.

Besides, this would not be the first time Greg has lied to his parents. On his first day of summer





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vacation, he attempted to fool his father into thinking he had been playing outside all day, though his lie is easily discovered.

Greg thinks his summer job plan is virtually foolproof, but his trouble-making brother Rodrick (Devon Bostick) threatens to reveal Greg's plan to their parents unless Greg agrees to sneak his brother into the country club.

Of course, nothing can possibly go wrong — right? Isn't that the allure of the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series — that even though everything seems neat, clean, and simple, plans are always interrupted?

Predictably, Greg's lie is found out, but in the process he learns rather unexpectedly that he and his father have the ability to bond far more than he thought possible.

The heart-warming close to this story highlights the depth of father/son relationships, embodying a valuable lesson for young audiences: their parents are not so out of reach.

The film also advocates the necessity of doing what is right and confessing wrongdoings and asking for forgiveness.

And it's worth mentioning that it is not only Greg who must learn to make personal changes in this film, but also his parents. They come to realize that their efforts to give their son a memorable summer may not have had the effect they intended. They learn that in order to bond with their son, they have to consider his needs as well.

Therefore, the film's major theme is to learn from one's mistakes.

As is typical with the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* films, those who do wrong are not able to get away with it, and they end up facing some sort of consequence as a result. The only person who does not face repercussions for his actions in this film is Rodrick; however, his being the exception to the rule gives his character a certain appeal.

Dog Days features much of the same humor to which we've grown accustomed in the books as well as the films — the unfortunate potty humor and grotesque jokes that may make some adults squirm in their seats. There is also some slap-stick comedy that will certainly provoke laughs from the younger crowds, and might draw some chuckles from the older ones.

As in the previous films, the actors' portrayals of their characters is quite likeable and realistic to the depictions of the characters presented in the books.

Overall, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days* will likely please avid readers of the graphic novels, and may even prove to be entertaining for those who are unfamiliar with the books. Adults may not be easily entertained by the film's humor and plot, but will likely be pleased with the outcome and moral.



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