

BOOK REVIEW OF *DIARY OF A WIMPY KID: RODRICK RULES*

WRITTEN BY JEFF KINNEY

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ABSTRAK

Sebagai salah satu karya sastra yang paling banyak digemari pembaca, novel fiksi menyajikan berbagai kisah fiktif yang dapat menghibur penikmatnya. Banyaknya genre novel dengan berbagai gaya tersendiri dari masing-masing penulis dapat memberikan nuansa keberagaman bagi para penikmatnya.

Diary of A Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules, salah satu novel fiktif yang ditulis oleh Jeff Kinney ini diperuntukkan bagi anak-anak. Novel ini menyuguhkan jala ncerita yang jenaka dan menarik. Keunggulan dari novel ini tidak hanya terdapat pada jalan cerita dan format isinya yang disusun seperti diary sungguhan, tetapi juga dari pesan moral, gaya bahasa, humor yang menggelitik, dan sudut pandang yang tidak biasa.

Terlepas dari keunggulan-keunggulan tersebut, Diary of A Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules juga memiliki beberapa kelemahan, antara lain terdapatnya kata-kata dan coretan gambar yang mengandung unsure kekerasan. Dengan adanya keunggulan dan kelemahan tersebut, para pembaca diajak untuk menjadi pembaca yang cerdas dalam menelaah setiap informasi yang tertuang di sepanjang jalan cerita, terutama peran orang tua dalam mendampingi anak-anaknya dalam membaca novel tersebut.

1. Introduction

Diary of A Wimpy Kid : Rodrick Rules is the second of nine book series of *Diary of A Wimpy Kid*. All the books are written by an American author and cartoonist Jeff Kinney. Those books contain of hand written notes and easy drawings of Greg's daily life in which Greg is the first viewpoint. The story is about Greg's problems in his family, friends and school. (www.bestbookawards.org.uk/authors-and-illustrators/jeff-kinney on 23 February 2015)

This second book focuses on Greg's relationship with his older brother Rodrick, the Mom Bucks program, the high school party, the talent show and the troubles faced by Greg because of Rodrick. As the second of three brother who is undergoing puberty, Greg has a lot of mental pressures in dealing with his family consisting of his mother, his father, his older brother (Rodrick) and his young brother (Manny).

As the main character of the book, Greg has a role as a protagonist. "The archetypal protagonist can be considered the chief proponent and principal driver of the effort to achieve the story's goal" (Melanie Anne Phillips & Chris Huntley, 2001: 29). Contrary to Greg Heffley is Rodrick Heffley. He is diametrically opposed to Greg's successful attainment of the goal. Happiness for him is playing tricks to his young brother, Greg. Rodrick represents the negative things in the story. He is an evil character that will cause resentment or antipathy for the reader. The character of Greg's mother can be a supporter or opponent of the central character, but also can be a mediator or intermediary central figure. The writer considers her as the tritagonist. Greg's mother always makes efforts and tricks to make Greg and Rodrick get along. However, instead of making them along, those only make things worse.

After the writer reads the book, the writer considers it as an entertaining book. It provides entertainment to the reader because the stories are full of humor, and there is easy drawing on every page. Those help the reader to imagine how the story goes on. It also uses the words that are easy to understand.

Jeffrey Patrick "Jeff" Kinney, the author of this book, is an American game designer, cartoonist, producer, actor and author of children's books including *Diary of A Wimpy Kid* book series. He was born on February 19, 1971 in Maryland, US. He attended the University of

Maryland in the early 1990s, and he started to write *Diary of A Wimpy Kid* in 1998. However, until 2007, it was not published.

2. Summary

Mom successfully forces Greg again to write his life story on a book written “*Diary*”, although Greg prefers to call it as a journal. Rodrick knows that Greg has another journal. He finds Gregs’s old journal, and it is a big problem for Greg.

In the summer, Greg’s family does not go anywhere, and does not do any fun. Therefore, Greg really hopes to start the school again. Mom and Dad send Greg and Rodrick to a nursing house where their grandfather lives. Rodrick tricks Greg timeless, so Greg gets very embarrassing experiences. When the new school year begins, Greg determines to forget all his embarrassing experiences, including the experience he wants to conceal.

Rodrick and his band (Löded Diper) performs in a talent show. He asks Greg to record his performance, especially when Rodrick plays single drum. However, Greg refuses Rodrick flatly. Finally, Mom has to record it to finish. Unfortunately, Mom cannot record it well because she dances during recording. Then Rodrick blames Greg. He said that this all is Greg’s fault. Rodrick threatens Greg that he will dismantle Greg’s secret. When the new school year begins, students at Greg’s school know the Greg’s embarrassing experience. Greg believes Rodrick exaggerates the story to make it worst.

The story is about Greg’s experience when he and Rodrick are in a nurse house. As Greg feels bored, he writes on his journal. Rodrick grabs it quickly, but Greg can retake the journal. Then Greg enters in a rest room. He rips some pages of his journal in a toilet room.

When he will go out from there, he sees an old woman standing in front of a mirror. At first, Greg thinks the old woman gets lost in men's bathroom. Then he realizes that he is in women's bathroom. In Rodrick story version that he spreads to the students, Greg hacks into girls' bathroom in Crossland High School.

3. Strengths and Weaknesses

3.1. The Strengths of The Book

There are several points that the writer found as the strengths of this book. The first point is that this book has interesting cover (see enclosure). The title has a large size, and looks funny with witty font. At the bottom, there is a torn piece of paper illustrated the two main characters (Rodrick pushed Greg) in easy drawing as if it is taped with scotch tapes. This represents the contents of the book. On the back cover (see enclosure), the reader will find a short summary of the book and four praises from some popular mass media such as; People Magazine; Kirkus Reviews; School Library Journal; and Publishers Weekly, Starred Review.

The second point that makes this book interesting is that the content of the book is presented in diary form, because there are lines on every page. It also uses *handwritten* font, so it looks like a real diary (see enclosure).

There is always easy drawing in every page (see appendix). It helps the reader in imagining what really happened in the story. The cartoons are drawn very well and look funny. Besides, the reader will not get bored with the whole writings. Let us just say this is a half comic and a half novel.

In addition, to make the content of the book look like a real diary, this book uses simple words, so the reader will not think too hard to understand. The story revolves around Greg's life in family, school and friendship.

The main point that makes this book interesting is the funny stories. The writer finds that the funny stories in this book are different from the other books that the writer has ever read, for example when Manny, Greg's younger brother gave him a ball of tinfoil with a bunch of toothpicks sticking out of it as an apology. It tells a simple story that is not much different from people's daily life. The diary describes the daily life of Greg as a middle school student.

Every main character has a unique characteristic. Greg Heffley, as the protagonist, is the main character. He is an unpopular middle school aged boy. He is a good kid who genuinely wants to do well. However, he can sometimes be selfish, lazy, rude, arrogant and egotistical. He is a very optimistic person in imagining his future. Some of his teachers hate him because they know about Greg's older brother, Rodrick, so these teachers consider Greg to be as bad as his brother. Rowley's father, his best friend's father also sees Greg as a bad influence. Besides, Greg never feels guilty of what he has done. When he makes a mistake, he assumes that he is the right one. He will assume his fault as a result of the negligence of the other.

“So if you want to point fingers on the Invisible Chirag joke, now you know who's really to blame.” (Kinney, 2008: 58)

Invisible Chirag is a joke played by Greg on Chirag Gupta. In the joke, Chirag has moved to India but when he came back, a bunch of children act as if Chirag is still gone.

“I think he was so relieved to finally have on his classmates talking to him again that he just decided to forgive me for the whole incident. So I guess I forgive him, too.” (Kinney, 2008: 75)

The joke was finally stopped when Greg was forced to apologize to Chriag's dad. He went to Rowley's house and gave him a Twinkie and brought video games with him, when Greg went there he saw Twisted Wizard and he and Rowley were forced to quit this joke.

Greg's older brother, Rodrick Heffley, is an aggressive brother. Rodrick has a group of band named Löded Diper, and he plays drum. His mother really supports him in playing drum, but his father does not really support it. He is an antagonist in the story. He never runs out of ideas to trick Greg.

“Rodrick was always a half hour late picking me up. And he wouldn't let me sit up front. He said the chlorine would ruin his seat, even though the van is something like fifteen years old. Rodrick's van doesn't actually have any seats in the back, so I had to squeeze in with all the band equipment. And every time the van came to a stop, I had to pray I didn't get my head taken off by one of Rodrick's drums.” (Kinney, 2008: 7)

Greg's mother, Susan Heffley, is a mom with full of love, although she sometimes seems childish and embarrassing by dancing around people and overprotective to her children. However, she always has a lot of ideas to make Greg and Rodrick along. One of the ideas is Mom Bucks program.

Greg's father, Frank Heffley, is interested in United State history, especially the American Civil War. He also makes replica of its battlefield, and plays with it. He will be so angry if someone touches his battlefield. This book does not explain what his father's work.

Greg's younger brother, Manny Heffley, is an annoying and obnoxious brother. When he does a bad thing to Greg, his mother assumes it is normal for children to do that. Rowley Jefferson is Greg's best friend. He is a childish, immature and pretty idiotic person. However, he is a loyal friend although Greg always takes advantage and makes fun of him.

The writer finds the most important moral value in this book. People must dream big: "I know EXACTLY where I'll be in fifteen years: in my pool, at my mansion, counting my money..." (Kinney, 2008: 84). In this part, Greg was imagining about how he is as an adult later.

Greg even sees the diary that his mom buys him as an opportunity for personal gain. The only reason he agrees to write on his journal is because he figures later on when he is rich and famous, he will have better things to do than answer people's questions all day. So the journal is going to come in handy.

Then, the writer thinks that all mother in the world who reads this book will learn several tips and tricks from Greg's mother that can be applied in family life. To make Rodrick and Greg spend their time together, she holds Mom Bucks program. If Rodrick and Greg can play together and do good thing per hour, they will get one Mom Bucks which equals to one dollar. Besides, Greg's mother lets Rodrick and Greg alone at the house for a couple of days to make them spend the time together. She also sends them to a nurse house where Greg's grandfather lives.

Then, according to the writer, the book can give influence to the reader, especially for children to make them write a diary like Greg. Writing a diary will make children familiar in writing, so it can increase writing talent for children.

3.1. The Weaknesses of The Book

Although this book has several strengths, there are also weaknesses in it. First, some drawings on the book show violence. For example, when Rodrick kicks Greg (page 41); when Greg shoots a kitten with a water gun (Kinney, 2008: 103); and when Rodrick spouts Greg with a big mouthful of milk (Kinney, 2008: 167). Second, Rodrick really rules. His bad attitudes may function as entertainment because it is funny. However, as a bad and arrogant brother, Rodrick performs a lot of bad attitudes that children should not imitate. Consequently, parents have to teach their children, what actions can be imitated or avoided. Third, there are a lot of impolite variations of words, such as; “jerk”, (page 1, 198, 204, 217); “stupid” (page 50, 107, 115); “heck” (page 137, 149); “dumb” (page 48, 82, 97, 113, 128); “idiot” (page 190) which are used. Children who read them may be influenced and imitate them, and they practice it to make fun with their friends. However, this book may be for all ages including children, but parental control is still needed.

Another example of what attitude that children should not imitate from the story is when Greg tries to read Rowley’s personal diary without permission. Parents should tell children that reading someone’s personal diary without permission is not allowed because it is individual privacy.

“After Phys Ed today, I saw that Rowley accidentally left his diary on the bench. So when the coast was clear, I used my new key on his diary, and sure enough, it worked. I opened it up and started reading.” (Kinney, 2008: 92)

The quotation explains that Greg tried to break into Rowley’s diary, after sports lessons from Mr. Ed. Rowley is his best friend.

Parents also have to explain the best solution to solve the problems in the story because some problems in the story are not solved well. Parents can also discuss to their children how to

face problems well. Then, content of this book is like a real diary, but the appearance is not. It looks like an ordinary novel. The writer supposes it will be better if the the book is binded like a real diary, for example it is binded with binded ring. Finally, because the story is about Greg's daily real life, there is no real climax to the story line. It feels flat when it is compared with other fiction books which sometimes are full of adventures.

4. Conclusion

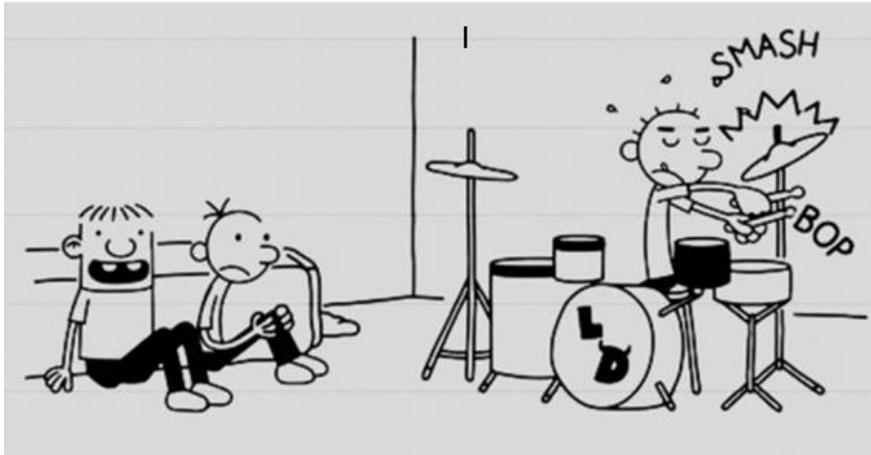
The writer concludes that *Diary of Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules* is an entertaining book for children published in 2008 by Jeff Kinney. This is the second of the nine books which gets the international bestselling series. This serial focuses on the relationship between Rodrick and Greg.

There are several things that the writer considers why this is an interesting book. Besides having good cover, the content looks like a real diary with the lines, handwritten font and also funny easy drawing of the author in every page. This will help the reader to imagine what the story is. The whole story is about Greg's daily life in easy words, so this will not make the reader think too hard to understand. Every main character has a unique characteristic, that makes the story more fun. This book also has a moral value to the reader. The first one is, we must dream big. This book gives several tips and trick to every mother in the world about how to make children spend their time together with brother or sister. The last one is, children who read this book may be influenced to write a diary like Greg. This is good to increase children's skill of writing.

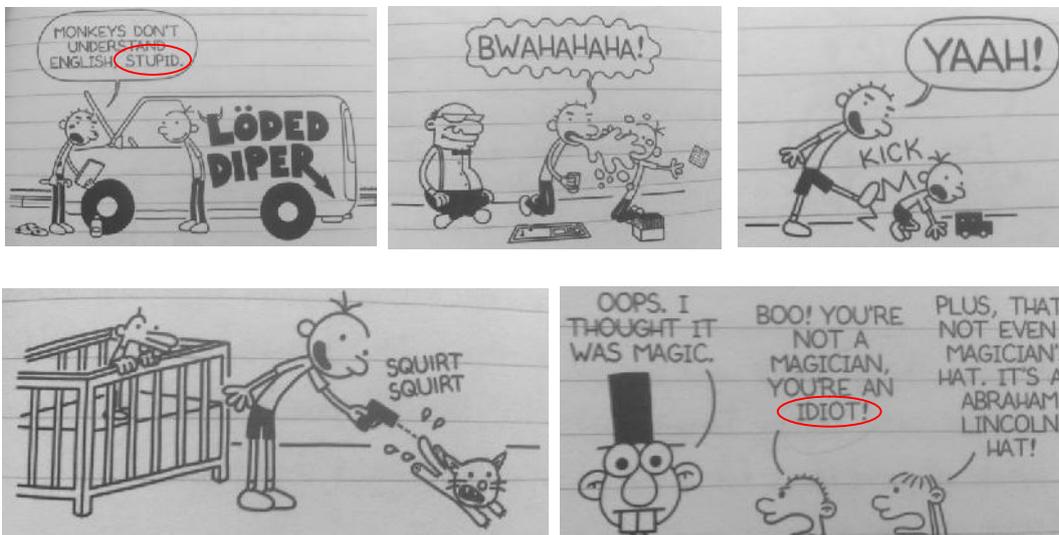
However, the writer finds several weaknesses of this book. There are some drawings that show violences. The writer also find some rude words such as; "jerk"; "dumb"; "stupid" and

“heck”. As a bad brother, Rodrick has bad attitude that children have to avoid. Although this book is reserved for children, parents should explain the contents of the book. Finally, the readers may feel this story is pretty flat. The story is about Greg’s daily life without any great adventure like the other fiction books.

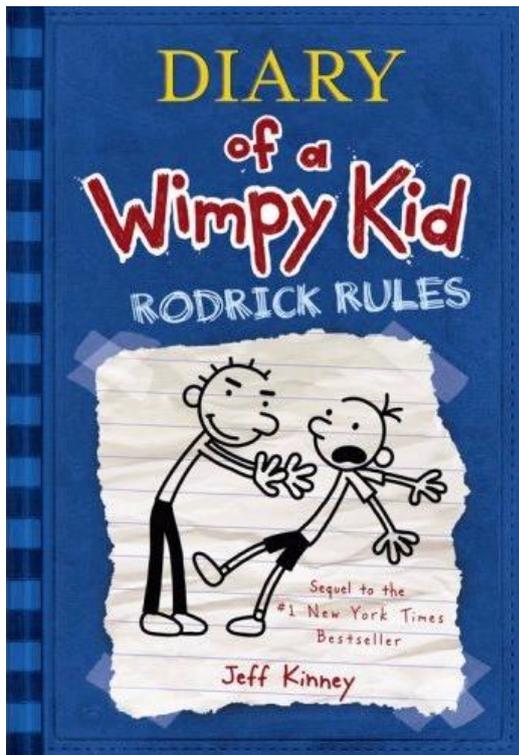
ENCLOSURE



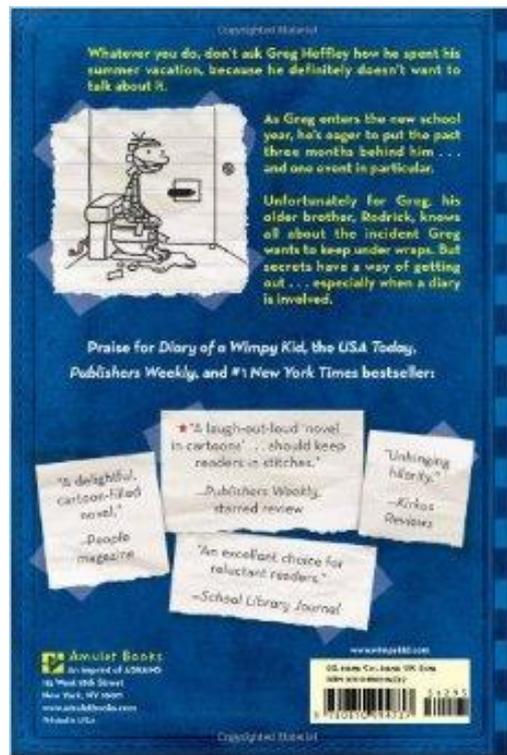
This is an example of the easy drawings in the book



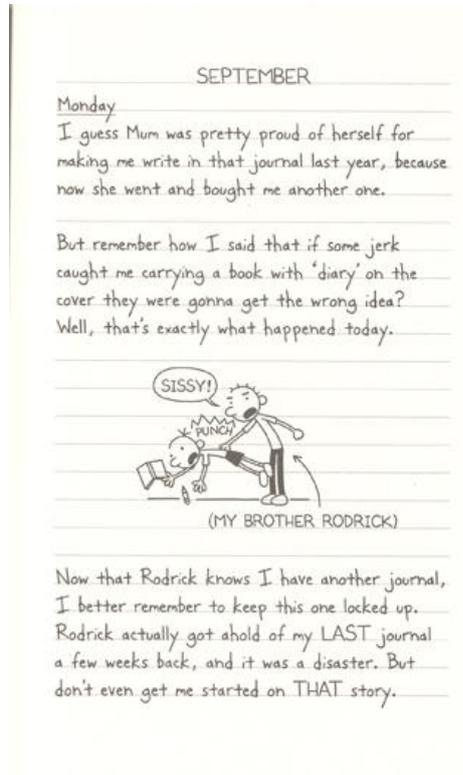
These are the examples of the easy drawings that show violence.



This is the front cover of the book.



This is the back cover of the book.



This is an example of pages in the book.