

## Popular 'Diary of a Wimpy Kid' Book Comes to Life on the Big Screen

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on March 19, 2010 - 8:30am

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – “Diary of a Wimpy Kid,” and main character Greg Heffley, is familiar to a generation of kid book lovers through the line drawings of creator Jeff Kinney. The film version has child actor Zachary Gordon bringing Greg to life.

Greg Heffley is starting his first day of middle school, and is desperate to fit in on his self-proclaimed popularity index – he is a generously ranked 19th. The problem is he is associated with some less-than-popular fellow travelers. His best friend Rowley Jefferson (Robert Capron), is still stuck in the less cool elementary school mode (he asks Greg to come over and “play” rather than “hang out”) and Greg is also forced to eat in the cafeteria on the floor with the dreaded, weird Fegley (Grayson Russell).

But he does have a mode of survival. It is his diary, in which he chronicles his adventures and tragedies through the school year ordeal, complete with cartoon illustrations. His attempts to raise his popularity index mostly falls flat, as he mistakes wrestling and safety patrol for tickets to the top tier. His home life is no better, as his older brother Rodrick (Devon Bostick) consistently tortures him, and his Mom and Dad are stuck in squaresville.



Banished!: Grayson Russell as Fegley, Zachary Gordon as Greg & Robert Capron as Rowley in 'Diary of a Wimpy Kid'  
Photo Credit: Rob McEwan for © 2010 Twentieth Century Fox Film Corp.

The year also takes a turn for the worst when Rowley breaks his hand while he and Greg are hanging out. This causes him some much



needed attention from their fellow classmates and more jealousy from Greg. With popularity rankings, trouble from a best friend and a rotting piece of cheese on the playground (which renders the student who touches it unpopular forever), how will Greg survive?

The fun of this film is its sense of humor about a very familiar place. The little societies that grow within institutionalized school grades and groups are recognized by virtually everyone, which is why the books are such big best sellers. Greg is an "every-boy," with no particular talents to set him apart. His attempts to gain these talents fuel both the mystery and hilarity of the film.

Zachary Gordon, the talented young actor, has the unenviable task of bringing Kinney's simple line renditions of the Greg character to life. He is more than up for the challenge, giving the Wimpy Kid a determined air, even as he keeps committing social self abuse. He is never cruel, but he's not above selling out a friend or two to score some popularity points. In other words, he is you and me.

The supporting cast also adds zest to Greg's world. Robert Capron is a joy as Rowley, whose clueless nature is most likely the best survival instinct. Devon Bostick, as Greg's tormenting big brother type, has a hilarious grasp on the concept and rightly dominates every scene he's in. And is there any role that Steve Zahn (as Greg's father) doesn't make better? His wiseguy nebbish Dad is both relatable and instinctively humorous.



School Days: Rowley Jefferson and Greg Heffley in 'Diary of a Wimpy Kid'  
Photo Credit: Rob McEwan for © 2010 Twentieth Century Fox Film Corp.

The film is episodic as it rolls through the school year and does get bogged down in some sequences (the Halloween adventure is overlong), but most of it serves as a set-up to the final encounter with the stinky cheese. As in most adaptations, familiar parts can work visually and some parts work better described in the book. The Wimpy Kid production team obviously took care to strike a balancing act between those wildly popular books and the film version, and mostly succeed.

Is there anyone not familiar with the bullies, outsiders, nerds, aggressors and eggheads that inhabit a typical schoolyard? Wimpy Kid creator Jeff Kinney didn't forget, and neither did the screenwriting team and director Thor Freudenthal. Ask not for whom the school bell tolls, it tolls for thee.

*"Diary of a Wimpy Kid" opens everywhere on March 19th. Based on the books by Jeff Kinney. Featuring Zachary Gordon, Robert Capron, Steve Zahn, Rachael Harris and Devon Bostick, directed by Thor Freudenthal. Rated "PG."* [Click here for the HollywoodChicago.com interview of author Jeff Kinney with lead actors Zachary Gordon and Robert Capron.](#) [14]



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