

Eleven-year-old David Greenberg dreams

of becoming a TV superstar like his idol, Jon Stewart. But in real life, David is just another kid terrified of starting his first year at Harman Middle School. With a wacky sense of humor and hilarious Top 6½ Lists, David spends his free time making *TalkTime* videos, which he posts on YouTube. But before he can get famous, he has to figure out a way to deal with:

1. Middle school (much scarier than it sounds!)
2. His best friend gone girl-crazy
3. A runaway mom who *has no phone!*
4. The threat of a swirlie on his birthday
5. A terrifying cousin
6. His #1 fan, Bubbe (his Jewish grandmother)
- 6½. Did we mention Hammy, the hamster who's determined to break David's heart?

When David and his best friend have a fight, David is lucky enough to make a pretty cool *new* friend, Sophie—who just (gulp) happens to be a girl. Sophie thinks David's videos are hilarious, and she starts sending out the links to everyone she knows. Sophie's friends tell *their* friends, and before David knows it, thousands of people are viewing his videos—including some of the last people he would have expected.

David may still feel like a real-life schmo, but is he ready to become an Internet superstar?

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YEARLING HUMOR

RL: 4.6 • 8–12

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The first day of summer vacation is important, because what you do that day sets the tone for the rest of summer.

That's why my best friend, Elliott Berger, is coming over to watch the *Daily Show* episodes I've recorded. Mom and I used to watch them together. She always said the host, Jon Stewart, stood up for the little guy, which is funny, because Jon Stewart is a little guy—five feet seven inches. According to Wikipedia, the average height for men in the United States is five feet nine and a half inches.

Let's just say I can totally relate to Jon's height issue.

Anyway, I record other shows, like *The Colbert Report* and *Late Show*, too, but mostly Elliott and I watch *The Daily Show*. We both think Jon Stewart is hilarious and a great interviewer. Someday I'm going to be a famous talk show host like Jon.

He and I have a lot in common.

1. We're both Jewish.
2. We both have our own talk shows—but mine's different from his. It's called *TalkTime* and I post the shows on YouTube.
3. We're both vertically challenged (but I still have time to grow).

Since Elliott won't be here for a while, I shoot my first *TalkTime* of the summer without him.

First I set up the studio (aka my bedroom) by taping a poster of New York City's skyline on my wall, kind of like they do on the *Late Show with David Letterman*. That way it looks like I'm shooting in an exciting location instead of boring Bensalem, Pennsylvania, where the biggest news is that they opened a Golden Corral buffet restaurant on Street Road. (Yes, I know that's a weird name for a road, but that's what it's called. It's almost as stupid as parking in a driveway and driving on a parkway.)

Anyway, next I make sure my special guest is ready in the greenroom (aka the bathroom).

He is.

Finally, I set my camera on the tripod in my bedroom, bang two empty paper-towel rolls together and say, "Action!"

Using my best talk show host voice, I begin: "Welcome to *TalkTime* with David Greenberg." I scribble on a piece of paper with a grand flourish, like Jon Stewart does on *The Daily Show*. Then I crumple the paper, toss it into my laundry basket and keep talking. "It's our first show of the summer and it's going to be a hot one. Ha! Ha!"

I hear Hammy's wheel spin like crazy, so I turn the camera toward his cage and give him a close-up. "And now," I say, "your

moment of Hammy.” As though on cue, Hammy hops off his wheel, looks up and twitches his whiskers.

I smile and think about how I’ll edit that later, showing a split screen—Hammy on the right, credits scrolling on the left.

I point the camera back at myself and sit in front of fake New York. “Before we get to today’s special guest, it’s time for Top Six and a Half with David Greenberg.

“Top Six and a Half Things That I, David Todd Greenberg, Will Miss About Longwood Elementary School.

“One: The lunch lady who snuck ice cream onto my tray every Friday. By the way, awesome hairnet, lunch lady.

“Two: Student of the Week, which I won a total of seven times—more than anyone in the history of Longwood El. Wahoo!”

I pace around my room until I come up with number three. “Three: Helping Ms. Florez in the TV studio with morning announcements. She said I was the best news anchor she ever had.”

I pace again and trip on the tripod. The camera topples, but I catch it. I can edit that out later, though it’ll make a weird jump in the action. It would probably be safer if I wrote my Top Six and a Half before I filmed them!

Back in front of fake New York, I take a deep breath and say, “Four: Spanish Club.

“Five: Academic Games.

“Six: Watching Coach Lukasik, who is definitely not vertically challenged—that man could be an NBA superstar—hula hoop during P.E. with the girls.

“And the thing I’ll miss most about Longwood El?

“Six and one-half: *Everything!*”

I turn off the camera and flop onto my bed. I wish Longwood El didn't stop after fifth grade. When my sister, Lindsay, who's fourteen now, went there, it went through sixth. That was before the overcrowding problem.

Now sixth grade is at Harman Middle School. I've heard rumors about Harman—Harm Man!—but they're probably just meant to scare incoming sixth graders. Lindsay graduated from Harman and she's fine. I mean, except for her face, which is almost always covered with zits.

Middle school, I'm sure, will be great.

I turn the camera on again and sit tall. "Now it's time for our special guest. And he happens to be none other than the ultra-famous . . . Oh, wait a second, he's still in the greenroom. Let's surprise him."

I grab my camera from the tripod and walk along the hallway, then I kick open the bathroom door. Inside, I zoom in on the cover of the *Entertainment Weekly* lying on the toilet lid and say, "Our guest today is the veeery famous talk show host Jon Stewart." I remind myself to add applause later when I edit the show on my computer. I hold the magazine to get a good shot of Jon's photo, his trademark goofy grin beaming up from the cover.

I imagine my picture on the cover of *Entertainment Weekly* . . . someday. If Mom ever saw me on a magazine cover in a store, she'd probably borrow a stranger's cell phone right then and there and call me, screaming with excitement. I grin, just like Jon Stewart.

Someday.

But for now, I put the camera on the bathroom counter, point it toward myself and kneel so I'm lined up with it. This isn't easy. I should probably wait until Elliott's here to shoot this part so he

can hold the camera, or I should at least get my tripod, but I'm on a roll, so I keep going.

"Is it true you played the French horn in the school band?" I ask Magazine Cover Jon. I know it's true, because I looked it up, and I think it's interesting because my mom plays the tuba. *Played* the tuba. Now her tuba still sits in our living room, even though nobody's touched it for two years.

I hold Magazine Cover Jon in front of the camera and speak as though I'm him. This is tough, because though I'm a guy, my voice hasn't quite caught on yet. "That's right, David," Magazine Cover Jon says. "For your viewers who don't know what the French horn is, it's a large, shiny girl repellent."

I laugh, even though I made up the joke. "I know what you mean," I say, but somewhere between "what" and "you" my voice squeaks. Dad says my vocal cords are lengthening and I'm transitioning from boy to man. I say that if my body were a door, my voice would be its rusty hinge. I wonder if Elliott's voice still cracks. Probably not. His vocal cords must be done lengthening, just like the rest of him; he's at least three inches taller than me.

I rerecord that part, then say to Magazine Cover Jon, "I'm going to be a famous talk show host one day."

Magazine Cover Jon is ultraexcited by this news. "Is that so?" he asks, "his" voice cracking on the last word. I keep going.

"Yes," I tell him. "When I go to middle school, I hope they have a TV studio so I can—"

Behind me, I hear the bathroom door open and hit the wall. I whirl around and train the camera on Lindsay's scrunched-up, squinty-eyed face.

“What the heck are you doing, David? Don’t you know what time it is?” Lindsay’s got gunk plastered in spots all over her skin—zit-be-gone stuff that will probably work as well as all the other zit-be-gone stuff she’s used, meaning not at all.

Zits are a part of puberty I’m not looking forward to. That and hair sprouting in weird places and stinky armpits (which are starting already). According to *Ripley’s Believe It or Not*, there are 516,000 smelly bacteria per square inch in an armpit.

Lindsay puts her hands on her hips. “Do you realize it’s seven o’clock in the morning?”

I check my watch. “Seven-oh-five, actually.”

“Whatever!” she says as a crusty piece of gunk falls from her face and lands on the bathroom floor. “It’s the first day of summer, David, in case you didn’t notice. And I’d like to sleep, oh, later than seven-oh-five.”

I check my watch again. “Seven-oh-six.”

Even with gunk on them, Lindsay’s cheeks redden. This is not a good sign. Sometimes when her cheeks get red, she throws things. At me!

“David,” Lindsay says, “just go back to your room and be quiet.”

My sister taps the cover of *Entertainment Weekly* with her pink-polished fingernail, inadvertently poking my special guest in the eye. “What the heck are you doing in here, anyway?”

I pull my scrawny shoulders back and tell her the first thing that pops into my mind: “I’m going to be a famous talk show host. See?” I shove the magazine’s cover in her face.

Lindsay squints at the magazine, then at me. “Jon Stewart. Hmmm. Jewish. Short. Yeah, I can see it.”

I remember one of my favorite segments from my *TalkTime* show. “Hey, Lindsay?”

When she focuses on me, I turn on the camera and get a close-up of her zit-cream-covered face.

“David!” She hides her face with her hands, pivots and storms down the hall. Her door slams loudly enough that I hope it doesn’t wake Dad. The last thing I need is another uninvited guest barging into the greenroom.

I close the bathroom door and think of the words I’ll print under Lindsay’s face when I edit the video: *Today’s acne forecast: cloudy with a chance of blackheads.*

The moment I finish my interview, there’s pounding on the door. “Come on, David,” Dad says. “Hurry it up.”

We live in an old house with only one bathroom for the entire upstairs. Sharing it becomes a pain, especially when Lindsay does her zits-be-gone routine. I’m grateful Bubbe has her own apartment downstairs with its own bathroom or she’d probably barge in on me, too.

“Coming!” I turn off the camera and flush. No need to let Dad know I was making a video in our bathroom.

When I open the door, Dad runs a hand through his scary morning hair and belches. “ ‘Scuse me.”

“Sure,” I say, a little grossed out, and walk past him with the magazine and the camera behind my back.

In my room, I put the camera on my desk, plop onto my bed, stare at Hammy running like a maniac on his wheel and think, *Jon Stewart, I’ll bet you didn’t start out this way!*