What is a Nerd?

A historical and journalistic examination of the cultural psychology of outcast groups in contemporary North America by literary analysis and comparative case study.
AMERICAN NERD

The Story of My People

Benjamin Nugent

Author of Good Kids
Definition 1: Nerd

http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/nerd
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nerd

“Nerd (adjective: nerdy) is a descriptive term, often used pejoratively, indicating that a person is overly intellectual, obsessive, or socially impaired.” —Wikipedia
Definition 2: Geek

http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/geek
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geek

Originally used to describe eccentric or non-mainstream people ... Connotes an expert or enthusiast or a person obsessed with a hobby or intellectual pursuit ... pejorative"
Example 1
Example 2: White & Nerdy

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9qYF9DZPdw
Postulation: Type I Nerd

* Machine-like
* Intellectual
  * ...in ways that are machine-like
* Socially awkward
  * ...in ways that are machine-like
Postulation: Type II Nerd

* Socially excluded
* Considered by the popular kids as “uncool”
* Bound up with the Type I Nerd
Early Depictions of Nerds

- Mary in "Pride and Prejudice" (1813)
- Gussie Fink-Nottle in "Right Ho, Jeeves" (1934)
- Victor Frankenstein (1816)
Jocks

* 1892—First physical education requirements in schools

* ↓ farming  ↑ sports
CRUDE GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF COMPLEX CHANGES

New capabilities of modern science and machinery

Romantic reaction against science/machinery, perceived split between sensuality and reason . . . Rise of British Empire

American embrace of football heroes + threat of greater urbanization, more Jews

Muscular Christianity catches on in England and then America

Protestant establishment’s new emphasis on “character,” rejection of studiousness

Concept of greasy grind

Nerd
the 1980s

Nerds
Jocks and preppies
Japan
America
Technology
Physical strength
Reason and organization
Intuition and animal instinct
Stiff
Cool
Might dominate in the future
Dominant now
Not sexy
Sexy
Straightforward communication
Barely speaks, uses innuendo,

irony

The most cathartic event in Rambo: First Blood Part II is the “ar-
Science Fiction

April, 1926

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Nerd is the Word

* “If I Ran the Zoo” — Dr. Seuss, 1950
* drip, square — Newsweek, 1951
* Stereotype fully formed, 1960
* Nerds on SNL, 1978?
* Revenge of the Nerds, 1984
* Freaks and Geeks, 1999
Race and Nerdiness

the racism chart

This is my theory about contemporary Western racism and how it relates to the concepts of the jock and the nerd:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REALLY SENSUAL</th>
<th>HUMAN</th>
<th>NOT SENSUAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animals</td>
<td>Africans</td>
<td>Europeans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jocks</td>
<td>nerds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this model, nerds are people who have been sucked into the orbit of the machine and sapped of human emotion. Asians are more machinelike (industrious, asexual) than whites by cultural in-
Semantic Analysis