

When I was a child, I was called a nerd and pushed off of a slide. The bruise I received from the encounter, however, was nothing compared to the mark left on my heart. In "America Needs Its Nerds," Leonid Fridman discusses the plight of the intellectuals in America today, which, according to Fridman, is very dire indeed. Fridman says that nerds are devalued within our society, that this system of bullying and ostracizing follows nerds from grade school ^{through} the rest of their life, and that the cycle must end if America wishes to compete with other nations.

First, Fridman laments (Paragraph 1-3) exactly how little modern society respects intellectuals. Fridman begins by giving the dictionary definition of geek: "a freak biting the head off a live chicken," using shocking imagery to attract the reader's attention and examine just how little "geeks" are valued; even the term reserved for them ~~is~~ is not properly defined. Geeks are compared to bizarre street performers. Fridman also mentions that there is "a minority of [Harvard] undergraduates for whom pursuing knowledge is [their] top priority," attempting to highlight the absurdity of such a concept; even though everyone thinks of Harvard as a place for serious learning, this is not the case, and those who do attend to

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learn all facts with many difficulties.
Fridman also excellently uses the construction of parallel phrasing to highlight one of his main points: "Nerds are ostracized while athletes are idolized," ~~and~~ placing this statement directly after his discussion of a "minority" of nerds at Harvard, serving not only to emphasize the rarity of intellectuals but how this rarity is scorned and cast aside. ^{great!}

Next, Fridman condemns (Paragraphs 3-6) the trend towards bullying intellectuals that begins in school and lasts a lifetime. Fridman uses balanced phrases " [children who] prefer to build model airplanes rather than get wasted at parties... become social outcasts," highlighting the distinction between the behaviors of "nerds" and "jocks" and how both are treated: jocks are rewarded for making poor life decisions, while nerds are condemned for being hardworking. Fridman also says that these "persecutors... haunt the bright kid with the thick glasses from kindergarten to the grave," making the audience feel almost guilty at the mention of such a sweet child. The use of "haunts" really drives home the author's point that although many people think bullying stops in school, no victim ever really recovers, and there are still plenty of hecklers in the real world. "Ostracized for their intelligence" are nerds, and

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this point is counter to what an audience may usually think; we may, as a culture, believe that we promote learning, but under the surfaces of our best intentions, we make it clear that the only type of behavior celebrated is in line with jockdom.

Last, Friedman warns (paragraphs 7-9) of the dangers inherent in our anti-intellectual culture. Friedman says that in other nations, "a kid who studies hard is lauded," and, though Americans may think that of their own culture, it really isn't true. Friedman also mentions "our economic rivals in East Asia" to strike fear into those reading; if we do not begin to prize and prioritize intellectualism as a culture, we will be left in the dust economically. Friedman also uses examples that illustrate his point: "professional ball players are more respected and better paid than faculty members of the best universities," saying that those scholars who teach the most fundamental knowledge are not valued as much as people who hit balls with sticks. Friedman leaves off in his piece with a question: "How long can America remain a world class power if we constantly emphasize social studies over academics?" and herein comes

to the truth; if we do not change something soon, then our society will inevitably be led to disaster, both economically and socially.

There is a very important ^{takeaway} from this piece; it is important to not mock people with interests different from yours. That nerd you just made fun of may one day be your boss. Nerds, if we let them, can make society run and make the world a better place.

This is a great essay!

May I get a copy
of it?
