

From **ANIME** to **ZETTABYTE**,  
An **A** to **Z** Guide to All Things Geek

# GEEKTIONARY

MORE THAN 1,000 WORDS TO UNDERSTAND **GOOBS**,  
**GAMERS**, **ORKDORKS**, AND **TECHNOFREAKS**



GREGORY BERGMAN AND JOSH LAMBERT

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# CONTENTS

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Chapter 1

**GEEKOLOGY**

Chapter 2

**GEEKS IN SPACE: SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY**

Chapter 3

**GEEKS HELP BATMAN FIGHT THE JOKER: COMIC BOOKS**

Chapter 4

**GEEKS GO TO JAPAN: ANIME AND MANGA**

Chapter 5

**GEEKS IN CYBERSPACE: SCIENCE AND COMPUTERS**

Chapter 6

**GEEKS WATCH ESPN: SPORTS**

Chapter 7

**GEEKED UP ON D&D: GAMING**

Chapter 8

**GEEKOUT AT THE SILVER SCREEN: TELEVISION AND THE MOVIES**

**CONCLUSION**

## GEEKOLOGY

What is a geek? The word “geek” has a long colorful history. It originally referred to a crazy person. More recently, it denoted sideshow performers who would bite off the heads off live chickens — an act few self-respecting geeks today partake in.

It was not until the 1980s that “geek” became slang for a person who was an expert in scientific and technological pursuits but lacked basic social skills. Isolated and shunned by his or her peers, this geek was thought to find solace in science fiction, fantasy, and comic books — perhaps to an unhealthy degree.

And then it happened. The [dot.com](#) boom changed the nature of the economy in the 1990s. Leading this new computer revolution was not the savvy ad man or financial shark of times past. Instead, it was ... the geek. As Alpha-geeks such as Bill Gates, Jeff Bezos, and Steve Jobs became household names, the term “geek” began to take on a more positive connotation. After all, the high school geek of the 1980s now drove a Ferrari and dated supermodels, while the star quarterback who had tormented him was now long unemployed and drove an old pick-up truck to his new school and last hope: ITT Tech.

Is a geek the same as a nerd? No. While a geek may be obsessed with certain esoteric topics, he or she can still have an active social life — though often only with other geeks. The stereotypical “nerd,” however, is more awkward, less confident, and more socially inept than the geek. In other words, a nerd is a geek who can’t get a date. Even a room full of geeks would be able to spot the nerd.

We have written this book with geeks and geek wannabes in mind. If you want to fit in among the geeks, it would behoove you to study these terms and concepts. As we enter the era of the geek, knowing how to navigate geekdom may be your best chance of survival.

May the geek be with you!

### **404** (*noun*)

Named after a standard HTTP error code, 404 has come to mean: 1. To misplace something. 2. Someone who is clueless. 3. An Internet error or missing page.

*My mom’s keys are always 404.*

### **alpha geek** (*noun*)

The geekiest one of the bunch, appearing to be superior.

*Bill Gates is the ultimate ALPHA GEEK.*

### **analog** (*adjective*)

When a person is boring or one-note.

*He was, like, cute and all, but he was just so, like, ANALOG. It totally turned me off.*

### **animatronic** (*adjective*)

Describes mechanical people or animals like those seen at Chuck E. Cheese and Disneyland. Used in films such as *Jurassic Park* to depict dinosaurs.

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*My last girlfriend was ANIMATRONIC.*

**ansatsuken** (noun)

A Japanese assassination martial art that has the goal of killing someone.

*I warn you, before you try to take my lunch money, I am highly trained in the art of ANSATSUKEN.*

**anthropomorphism** (noun)

To give an animal or a nonliving thing human characteristics. Anthro-pomorphism can be seen in Disney movies where the rabbits sing and dance or on *South Park* with a talking piece of poo, Mr. Hankey.

*To say, "The sea was angry that day, my friends," would be to ANTHROPOMORPHIZE the ocean.*

**Betamax** (noun)

When the better technology loses in the market to an inferior technology. Named for the Betamax, which was introduced by Sony in 1975 and replaced two years later by JVC's VHS.

*The 3DO was superior to the Sega Genesis and Super Nintendo but was so expensive it went out like BETAMAX.*

## GEEK FACT

The last Sony Betamax was produced in 2002. Interestingly, it was found hiding out in a remote cave in the jungles of Iwo Jima.

**booth bunny** (noun)

A hot girl at a comic convention paid to hang out at a booth and help sell products using her looks.

*That BOOTH BUNNY totally wanted me, so I bought \$100 worth of Pokemon cards just so she knows I care.*

## GEEK FACT

If you are going to pick up a booth bunny at a comic book convention, be clever and use comic-book related come-on lines:

Examples:

- Faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive.
- Pow! Crash! Boom! that's what I do.
- Ever heard of the Fantastic Four? Well, want to meet the fantastic 8½?

**canon** (noun)

Official elements in a fictional universe. The *Star Wars* movies are canon. But *Star Wars* fan fiction is not canon and, therefore, not an element in the universe.

The appearance of Star Wars characters in Soulcalibur IV is not CANON.

### **Cheech Wizard** (*proper noun*)

A character developed by the artist Vaughn Bode that first appeared in the late 1960s. This and other psychedelic Bode creations are seen in graffiti and street art. Vaughn Bode's art and *Cheech Wizard* inspired the style of Ralph Bakshi's animated film, *Wizards*.

*Forget Chong, the CHEECH WIZARD is the bomb!*

### **Club 33** (*proper noun*)

A members-only club in Disneyland. The waiting list for membership is sixteen years.

*CLUB 33 and the Ink and Paint Club from Who Framed Roger Rabbit? are two clubs that I want check out. Minnie Mouse is hot.*

### **comic sans** (*noun*)

One of the most hated fonts in existence, so much so that there is a "ban comic sans" movement.

*Typing an angry note to someone is made even more offensive if done in COMIC SANS.*

### **continuity** (*noun*)

The consistency of characters, plotlines, or details within a story.

*Geeks love pointing out CONTINUITY errors.*

### **cool hunter** (*noun*)

An occupation involving the observation of cultural trends and prediction for the future of what is aesthetically cool.

*Hey, COOL HUNTER, when is the 1970s platform shoe going to come back? Short guys are waiting on it!*

## **GEEK FACT**

### **Cool-Hunting Trend Predictions**

- Ancient Chinese hairstyle with the upper part of the head shaved and the pony tail in the back like in *The Last Emperor*.
- Wearing underwear outside of the pants so that people know you have clean underwear on.
- Necklaces made from the skulls of captured and executed terrorists.

### **cryptography** (*noun*)

The study and practice of hidden and coded language.

*How good are you at CRYPTOGRAPHY? Can you make out this code? One of the best cryptographers in the country took less than ten minutes to decipher it. Swedoeigfnedodla 111119hjeow 8888eorit.*

## **GEEK FACT**

There are many codes that, as of yet, remain undecoded. Examples are Kryptos, a sculpture by Jim



Sanborn located at CIA headquarters; some of the letters from the Zodiac killer; and the Beale Papers, nineteenth century coded messages that supposedly lead to a buried treasure worth \$40 million.

**cryptozoology** (*noun*)

The study and pursuit of animals that are considered mythological.

*Some mythological animals we have been searching for in CRYPTOZOLOGY are the dragon, the Loch Ness monster, and a human female who picks up a check.*

**culture jam** (*noun*)

A tactic used in consumer social movements to disrupt mainstream institutions through subvertising or the interruption of broadcast transmissions. Culture jammers believe that images that produce the emotions of shock, shame, fear, and anger will serve as the catalyst for social change.

*Yo, we need a CULTURE JAM to stop the war in Afghanistan.*

**Dark Side of the Rainbow** (*proper noun*)

The effect produced when *The Wizard of Oz* is played in sync with Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon*. The scenes and movements appear to correspond with the sounds of the album.

*DARK SIDE OF THE RAINBOW makes the movie fun, but the music is still boring.*

**decora** (*noun*)

Layered clothing, colorful dresses, and over-the-top accessories, including toys, bling, and excessive "flair" à la *Office Space*.

*Yo, I gotta get me some DECORA so I can peacock for the ladies tonight, bro.*

**DEVO** (*proper noun*)

The original geek band that scored a huge hit in the eighties with the single "Whip It." Devo's songs often featured science-fiction or surrealist themes tempered by satirical humor. Cofounder Mark Mothersbaugh later went on to compose music for more TV shows than you could crack a whip at.

*The name DEVO is a shortened form of "deevolution."*

**Dunning-Kruger effect** (*noun*)

A phenomenon in which people who are unskilled overrate their competence and those who are skilled and capable underrate their competence. This is why stupid people think they are smart.

*If it weren't for the DUNNING-KRUGER EFFECT, I'd be out of a job.*

**dystopia** (*noun*)

The opposite of a utopia; a society marked by corruption and poverty and usually under a totalitarian state. Dystopian societies are popular in many science-fiction stories, such as *Akira*, *Blade Runner*, and *1984*.

*DYSTOPIAS are popular in Africa. Well, not popular. But numerous.*

**fanboy or fangirl** (*noun*)

A fan whose fanaticism borders on obsession. Usually used in a semiderogatory fashion.

*Joss Whedon is not God, FANBOY. Demigod maybe, but not God.*

**fan fiction** (noun)

Fiction written by fans rather than by the original creator(s) of a setting or characters. Most fan fiction is “published” on the Internet, since publishers don’t like to be sued for copyright infringement.

*Most successful authors do not like FAN FICTION because they think it is an infringement upon their work — and it’s just plain lazy on the part of would-be writers. Write your own story, fanboy!*

**fanthropology** (noun)

The study of fans and what makes them who they are.

*Last year a team of FANTHROPOLOGISTS went missing while exploring the deepest parts of the San Diego Comic-Con and were never heard from again.*

## GEEK QUIZ

What kind of a fan are you?

Have you considered doing any of the following to your favorite star?

- Writing
- Stalking
- Killing ... Why should he get all the fame? Where’s your fifteen minutes, huh?

**fanzine** (noun)

An unofficial small press publication made by fans for a particular interest.

*I wonder why my FANZINE based on my love of Arm Fall-Off Boy never gained much interest.*

**farb** (noun)

People in historical re-enactments who do not care about being historically accurate or use materials that are too modern.

*Lest ye be a FARB, I doth pronounce thus, thou must only speake in ye olde English henceforth.*

**filk** (noun)

A type of folk music, first appearing in the 1950s, that has a science-fiction or fantasy theme, created by fans and sung at conventions and filk gatherings.

*There is a controversy among fans as to whether ‘Weird Al’ Yankovic plays FILK music.*

**flash mob** (noun)

A crowd gathered in one area at a particular time to perform a pointless act such as pillow fighting or disco dancing without music.

*Let’s go to the fight. You won’t be hurt. It’s a FLASH MOB pillow fight!*

**flesh hunt** (noun)

A phenomenon that occurs in China. When an anonymous individual posts something on the Internet that incurs the wrath of the people, everyone works to find the person for punishment.

*Imagine thousands of people trying to track you down in a FLESH HUNT for uploading a cat stomping video.*

**furry** (noun)

Anthropomorphic animal characters. In furry (or furrydom or furdome), the characters are animals, but they speak, walk on two legs, and are generally human in every way except physical form. An oft-cited example of early furry is Disney's animated *Robin Hood* (the one where Rob is a fox), but most furry aspects have since taken on a decidedly adult tone, creepily so, even by geek standards.

*I went to a FURRY convention last year. The nightmares still haven't stopped.*

**furvert** (noun)

A furry, or fan of anthropomorphic characters, who is also a pervert.

*If your dream girl has fox ears and a tail, then you are a FURVERT.*

**ganguro** (noun)

A trend in Japan wherein girls bleach their hair blonde, get orange tans, and wear heavy makeup and bright colors.

*Have you seen the show, The Real GANGUROS of Harajuku?*

**geek chic** (noun)

To purposely embrace geeky fashion and interests, such as wearing black-framed glasses with tape in the middle.

*Some NBA athletes in 2010 wore geeky glasses to be GEEK CHIC.*

**GEEK FACT*****Hip to Be Square***

It is now hip to be a geek. For years, being an underconfident, socially awkward and introverted intellectual was considered a bad thing. Can you imagine? But now everyone wants to be a geek. Girls with blonde roots, fake tans, breast implants, and a third-grade education can be heard giggling and saying, "I like to read. I am such a geek."

No, you are not a geek. Once geeks are trendy, they are not geeks anymore. The new geeks of today are the star quarter-backs of yesteryear.

**gothloli** (noun)

Gothic Lolita. Fashion combining gothic imagery such as crosses, black clothing, and dark makeup with Lolita fashion.

*GOTHLOLI is for the more sensitive and brooding perverts.*

**Hagakure** (proper noun)

*The Book of the Samurai*, written by Yamamoto Tsunetomo in the early eighteenth century, gives views on bushido and the code of the samurai. In Jim Jarmusch's film *Ghost Dog*, Forest Whitaker's hit man character obeys the Hagakure very strictly.

*The HAGAKURE contains vast amounts of important facts, such as: Did you know that the Last Samurai was Tom Cruise?*

**Harajuku** (proper noun)

Distinctive clothing styles such as cosplay or goth Lolita (gothloli) popularized by teenage girls in the

Harajuku district of Tokyo.

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*If you go to HARAJUKU and wear just a tee shirt and jeans you will feel like a loser.*

**hikikomori** (noun)

A class of people who are reclusive and uncomfortable with social interactions and choose to lock themselves away. Currently a huge phenomenon in Japan.

*Come out of your room, John. It's been two days, you are starting to act like a HIKIKOMORI!*

**infinite monkey theorem** (noun)

A theory that if a monkey typed random words for an infinite amount of time it would eventually produce a play by Shakespeare. Featured in *The Simpsons*.

*A real study was conducted based on the INFINITE MONKEY THEOREM by the University Plymouth in 2003, but the monkey only bashed the typewriter and urinated on it. To pee on typewriter or not to pee on the typewriter. That is the question.*

**jeet kune do** (proper noun)

A martial arts system developed by Bruce Lee that combined many martial arts. The primary principle was "be like water."

*JEET KUNE DO is a precursor to MMA because of its integration of many styles according to what is necessary in the situation.*

**kogal** (noun)

Fashion involving wearing a Japanese school uniform.

*I had my girlfriend dress KOGAL, and it was yummy.*

**life hack** (verb)

To use tricks or shortcuts used to make a process easier to understand or complete. Originally coined by computer programmers.

*Trying to LIFE HACK a book called Geektionary would be counterproductive.*

**mashup** (noun)

A combination of different media, such as mixing scenes from a movie with different music or sound.

*The Internet has many fake trailers where a movie can be made to resemble Brokeback Mountain by MASHING the scenes together in a certain way.*

**MC Frontalot** (proper noun)

A hip-hop musician in San Francisco who named the genre known as "nerdcore hip-hop."

*My name is MC FRONTALOT. I'm from the streets. I like D&D and chillin' with my fellow geeks. Love the Mac, but prefer the PC, 'cause I can create mad viruses and destroy the infrastructure of the city. Yea, boy!*

**model robots** (noun)

Construction kits that allow a person to snap together pieces to create a model mecha, such as Gundam, a popular model robot set. The hobby of collecting model robots is sometimes called *gunpla* in Japan, combining the words "Gundam" and "plastic."

*I will conquer the world with my army of MODEL ROBOTS!*

**netizen** (noun)

A person who is hooked into the cyberspace community.

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*Facebook and Myspace are great, but back in the days of AOL chatrooms, every NETIZEN was hooking up.*

**orkdork** (noun)

Also known as orchdork, a derogatory term for someone who plays in the school orchestra or band.

*In American Pie, everyone thought that the redhead flute player was an ORKDORK. That is, um, she said, "One time, at band camp . . ." And you know the rest.*

**pez** (verb)

To raise one's head very quickly, mimicking the Pez candy dispensers.

*I saw this Olivia Munn lookalike and my head was totally like a PEZ, bro.*

**phantasmagoria** (noun)

A horror show popular in Europe in the nineteenth century that used projections of ghosts and demons using a magic lantern.

*Finish this famous Victorian joke: A priest, a rabbi, and a guy selling a PHANTASMAGORIA show walk into a bar . . .*

**photobomb** (verb)

Deliberately appearing in the background of someone else's photo, especially making a funny face, or having someone do the same to yours.

*I have mastered the art of PHOTOBOMBING my friends' pictures.*

**phreak** (noun)

The subculture of people who are interesting in experimenting, learning about, and taking advantage of telecommunications systems.

*You might be a PHREAK if, when you see someone with a better phone, you feel like killing them. Or if you just looked down from this book to check your BlackBerry.*

**points of articulation** (noun)

The rotating joints on an action figure.

*Ever since Jimmy collided with another player in a football game, his POINTS OF ARTICULATION haven't been working right.*

**polyester soldiers** (noun)

People in historical re-enactments who do not take the time to make their outfits or behavior historically accurate.

*I knew he was a POLYESTER SOLDIER when he started talking on his iPhone during the Civil War reenactment.*

**The Puzzle Palace** (proper noun)

National Security Agency headquarters.

*I work at the PUZZLE PALACE. I'd tell you what I do there, but then I would have to kill you.*

**retcon** (noun)

When the history of a fictional universe is changed by its creator(s). A famous retcon is when Arthur Conan Doyle killed off his character Sherlock Holmes and then, responding to popular demand, brought him back to life.

*Wanting to milk the franchise for more cash, the writer called in a RETCON.*

**SCA** (noun)

Short for Society for Creative Anachronism. A group of people interested in recreating and learning the culture of pre-seventeenth-century Europe.

*Methinks that once thou drinketh from the goblet of SCA, thou shalt return from whence ye came.*

**schwag** (noun)

Free promotional items and gifts given out at special events such as comic conventions or awards ceremonies. Schwag at the Academy Awards can be worth thousands of dollars.

*I got some SCHWAG this weekend — some sample comics and posters from the Comic-Con.*

**smoot** (noun)

A nonstandard unit of measurement that began as an MIT fraternity prank. A smoot measures 5'7", which was the height of Oliver Smoot, a fraternity pledge to Lambda Chi Alpha, for which the unit is named. As further proof that geeks are indeed conquering the Earth, one can measure any distance on the planet with Google Earth using miles, kilometers, yards, feet, inches, and smoots.

*Most hobbits are well over a half-SMOOT in height.*

**squidzillionaire** (noun)

A geek who made massive amounts of money through a project, invention, or website.

*Famous SQUIDZILLIONAIRES include Bill Gates, Jeff Bezos, and that guy from Facebook. I hate him!*

**Stargate Project** (noun)

A CIA project started in the 1970s to test the psychic abilities of individuals, particularly “remote viewing.”

*I would love to meet you for a drink, but I really have to finish this STARGATE PROJECT.*

**GEEK FACT****Confessions of a Geek**

According to my father, he is developing a mind-control system based on remote-viewing technology for the STARGATE PROJECT. The system will be able to control the thoughts of all mankind, including world leaders, in order to ensure peace and security throughout the world. Way to go, Pop!

**technofreak** (noun)

A person who is obsessed with technology and must always know everything about and have the latest gadget.

*My mother is not a TECHNOFREAK. I gave her an iPhone for Christmas. She asked me what it was.*

**Thomas Dolby** (*proper noun*)

Pop star of the 1980s who had a huge hit with the ultrageeky “She Blinded Me with Science.” He later founded a company that makes software synthesizers widely used in mobile phones, and he is also a member of the UK Flat Earth Society.

*THOMAS DOLBY, if you really believe the Earth is flat, you may have been blinded, but not by science.*

**Tsunami** (*proper noun*)

Nickname of Takeru Kobayashi, record-setting food-eating champ who can eat more than fifty hot dogs in one sitting.

*TSUNAMI is also a member of the International Federation of Competitive Eating (IFOCE).*

**watermarking** (*noun*)

The process of hiding information in a product, usually used to identify the owner of the product.

*Digital WATERMARKING was used in detecting the person who leaked the movie Wolverine Origins onto the Internet.*

**Weezer** (*proper noun*)

A popular rock band that is proof positive that geek is the new chic. Frontman Rivers Cuomo is a Harvard graduate who maintains contact with his fans online and likes to play elven or half-elven fighter/thieves in D&D.

*Playing D&D while listening to WEEZER ... is that geek or cool?*

**World Superhero Registry** (*proper noun*)

A community of real-life superheroes with costumes and call signs who engage in vigilantism.

*Quick, somebody call the WORLD SUPERHERO REGISTRY!*

**GEEK FACT****Geekin' Out**

If you could be a superhero, who would you be?

**Spider-Man**

Pro: Get to stick to walls

Con: Have to be played by Tobey Maguire

**Batman**

Pro: Get to have a kick-ass ride

Con: Bruce Wayne already has a kick-ass ride

## Chapter 2

### GEEKS IN SPACE: SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY

All geeks are intimately familiar with many of these terms — or better be. Geeks have been looking at the heavens for a long time, dreaming of creating new worlds for humankind to explore. Science fiction and fantasy are the perfect expressions of the geek's exploratory mind. If Christopher Columbus were a geek, he would only have written about another world populated with "Indians," not sailed in the wrong direction to kill them. Thus the geek is humankind's most mild-mannered, yet most adventurous explorer. The following terms are taken from geek contributions to sci-fi and fantasy across a variety of media.

#### **42** (*noun*)

The answer to the ultimate question of life, the universe, and everything, as given by the supercomputer Deep Thought in the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams. Deep Thought took 7 million years to come up with that answer.

*42 is the Ultimate Answer, but the Ultimate Question is unknown.*

### GEEK FACT

#### **Possible Ultimate Questions**

43-1= ?

What do you get when you reverse the digits of the number 24? What number do you get when you take the oldest age a woman can still be physically attractive and multiply it by 2?

#### **Alderson Disk** (*proper noun*)

A fictional artificial space ring, several thousand miles thick, that has a hole at the center where the sun will be located.

*This frosted donut causes my mind to contemplate the vastness and structural beauty of the ALDERSON DISK.*

#### **alien space bats** (*noun*)

A term used to make fun of plot devices in alternate history stories that create implausible scenarios to make their universe unique.

*In Harry Turtledove's World War novels, aliens invade Earth in the middle of World War II. That's why we have so ALIEN SPACE BATS.*

#### **alternate history** (*noun*)

A genre of science fiction premised upon the concept that historical events might have turned out differently, such as the South winning the Civil War or the Axis Powers winning World War II. Harry Turtledove is a very popular author of alternate history fiction.

*Great ALTERNATIVE HISTORY books: How the West (of Europe) was Won by Adolf Hitler*



*bestselling author of Mein Kampf; The Rise and Fall of Capitalism by Karl Marx Jr.; How Rome Never Fell by current Roman Emperor, Guido Caesar.*

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**amontillado** (noun)

A rare and valuable Italian wine used by Edgar Allan Poe in his short story, *The Cask of Amontillado*.

*In The Cask of AMONTILLADO, another light-hearted, hysterical tale of whimsy by Poe, a aggrieved nobleman avenges himself against an enemy by sealing him up brick by brick in the catacombs.*

**atompunk** (noun)

Derivative of cyberpunk, this term deals with the period after World War II concerning the space and arms races and communist paranoia.

*The top three consequences of ATOMPUNK are bomb shelters, McCarthyism, and nuclear weapons that kick ass!*

**Avalon** (proper noun)

A mythical island in Arthurian legend where Excalibur was created and where King Arthur goes to heal after the Battle of Camlann, and from which he will supposedly return.

*AVALON is beautiful this time of year. But housing prices are still through the roof...*

**Azathoth** (proper noun)

A fictional god in H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos, also known as the Blind Idiot God.

*I do not worship AZATHOTH. He's just a friend.*

**balrog** (noun)

Large monstrous creatures who were servants of Morgoth. One appears in the movie *The Fellowship of the Ring* as a horned beast on fire with a whip that pulls Gandalf down into the chasm.

*We have to be quiet when we sneak back into the house or else the BALROG may awaken and try ground us.*

**Battle School** (proper noun)

A military school in *Ender's Game*, a classic science-fiction novel by Orson Scott Card, at which children are taught military strategies and tactics in simulated battles.

*My high school is so rough I feel like I'm in BATTLE SCHOOL.*

**Battletech** (proper noun)

A science-fiction franchise based on large fighting robots piloted by Mechwarriors. Battletech includes RPGs, video games, and gaming centers where players enter cockpits and pilot robots in multiplayer battles.

*I often went to BATTLETECH centers as a kid and became a jaded veteran of the mech wars.*

**BDO** (noun)

A big dumb object, as coined by science-fiction writer Larry Niven. It is a giant construction such as Ringworld or the Halo structure in the game *Halo*.

*My stepfather was a BDO. Now, he's a BDOF — big dumb object with a felony.*

**beta reader** (noun)

A person who reads fan fiction before it is released to gauge its quality and provide feedback.

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*My story of Batman as a crime-fighting tax accountant did not go over well with my BETA READER.*

**biopunk** (noun)

Derivative of cyberpunk but focusing on biotechnology. Also used to describe a biohacker who experiments with DNA.

*I could never be a BIOPUNK because I wasn't the biggest fan of biology. What the heck is mitochondria again?*

**C. Auguste Dupin** (proper noun)

Fiction's first detective, who solves the murders of two women by an orangutan in Paris in Edgar Allan Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*.

*C. AUGUSTE DUPIN established the typical detective trope of the eccentric and brilliant detective surrounded by fools.*

**Clarke's Three Laws** (proper noun)

Arthur C. Clarke developed three laws of prediction:

1. If an older scientist says that something is possible, he is right; when he says it is impossible, he is probably wrong.
2. The only way to discover the limits of the possible is to venture farther into the impossible.
3. Any "sufficiently advanced technology" cannot be distinguished from magic.

*After CLARKE'S THREE LAWS, I realized that an iPhone was pagan magic.*

**cloaking** (noun)

Technology-based invisibility. Used in fiction, such as Harry Potter, *Star Trek*, and the movie *Predator*, but has a basis in reality called metamaterial cloaking, which uses metal to bend light around an object.

*For Halloween I am CLOAKING just my body so that I'll look like a floating head.*

**clockpunk** (noun)

Derivative of cyberpunk but focusing on the technology of clocks.

*Riveting. After CLOCKPUNK, what's next, cardboardpunk?*

**codex** (noun)

The modern stitched format of books, a replacement of scrolls, developed by the Romans; also the name given to manuscripts from antiquity through the Middle Ages.

*The CODEX Gigas was created in the thirteenth century by a monk who was said to have sold his soul to the devil so that the devil could finish the manuscript. It is also referred to as the Devil Bible because it contains a version of the Bible and has a picture of the devil on one of the pages.*

**Conan** (proper noun)

There are two great Conans in geekdom:

1. A fictional character created by Texan Robert E. Howard. Conan the Barbarian is the primary hero of the sword and sorcery genre and star of many short stories, novels, comic books, movies, and

video games.

2. Conan O'Brien, one of the most successful geeks in the entertainment industry, rose to fame as a writer on *Saturday Night Live* and *The Simpsons*, then went on to host his own late-night TV talk show before being PWNed by Jay Leno.

*CONAN, what is best in life?*

## GEEK FACT

What is best in life? At least according to Ahnuld in the movie *Conan the Barbarian*: “Cwush yoah enemies, see them dwiven befoah you, and to hear the wamentation of their women.”

### **conlanger** (*noun*)

Someone who creates a new “constructed language” (or “conlang”), usually for use in fantasy or science fiction settings. J. R. R. Tolkien is the patron saint of conlangers for his work in creating many languages in *The Lord of the Rings*. Other famous constructed languages are Klingon, Vulcan, and Na’vi.

*Once derided by even science-fiction writers, CONLANGERS are now being hired (and paid!) to construct languages for such movies as Avatar and Disney’s Atlantis.*

### **cosmic horror** (*noun*)

A two-part principle devised by H. P. Lovecraft that states:

1. Humans are incapable of understanding life.
2. The universe is alien.

*Oh, Horror of horrors, what is this indescribable COSMIC HORROR creature before me that driving me insane!*

## GEEK QUOTE

**“Grant me one request. Grant me revenge! And if you do not listen, then to hell with you!”**

— CONAN PRAYING TO CROM IN THE JOHN MILIUS FILM CONAN THE BARBARIAN

### **Crom** (*proper noun*)

A god worshipped by Conan the Barbarian and his Cimmerian people.

*By CROM, the one who stole my pudding shall taste my steel!*

## GEEK FACT

Conan author Robert E. Howard probably got the name from the ancient Celtic god Crom Cruach.

### **Cthulhu** (*proper noun*)

A cosmic being in the H. P. Lovecraft mythos that is terrifying in nature and appearance and is worshipped by a doomsday cult.

*CTHULHU is a creature of cosmic horror that is indescribable in terrifying appearance. Think the body of Rosie O'Donnell with the head of ... well, Rosie O'Donnell.*

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**cyberpunk** (noun)

A genre of science fiction focused on technologies such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and hacking, usually taking place in a dystopian society. William Gibson's *Neuromancer* is considered the ultimate work of cyberpunk, but cyberpunk has gained more mainstream awareness through movies such as *Blade Runner* and *Johnny Mnemonic*.

*A true CYBERPUNK lover rollerblades and wears neon colors.*

**dark lord** (noun)

One of the great tropes of fantasy stories. Very often a sorcerer or some sort of evil creature, dark lords are usually bent on world domination or destruction.

*Famous DARK LORDS include Morgoth, Sauron, Darth Vader, Dick Cheney, and Doctor Doom.*

**Death Dealer** (proper noun)

A shadowy armored character created by Frank Frazetta in an iconic 1973 painting.

*While most of Frazetta's paintings took him only one night to complete, DEATH DEALER took three days.*

**death ray** (noun)

A weapon that could cause instantaneous death through a particle beam.

*Nikola Tesla stated that he had invented a DEATH RAY, called teleforce, but it turned out to be vaporware.*

**demons** (noun)

Supernatural beings who tempt and torment humans. In 1589, Peter Binsfeld classified them according to the Seven Deadly Sins: Lucifer: pride; Mammon: greed; Asmodeus: lust; Leviathan: envy; Beelzebub: gluttony; Satan/Amon: wrath; Belphegor: sloth.

*I definitely have the DEMON Belphegore in me.*

**diesel punk** (noun)

Derivative of cyberpunk but focusing on the technology of the time period just before and around World War II.

*DIESEL PUNK has been made obsolete by "Unleaded with Techron Punk."*

**Discworld** (proper noun)

The setting of Terry Pratchett's novels about a flat world that is in fact a parody of fantasy tropes.

*Thirty-seven DISCWORLD novels have been published.*

**djinni** (noun)

Another word for genie, which is a spirit that possesses magical powers and can be either a good or evil influence on humans.

*A dinjiinyeh is a female DJINNI.*

**Eä** (proper noun)

In J. R. R. Tolkien's mythologies (especially in *The Silmarillion*), Eä is a Quenya (the "High Tongue")

of the elves) word for the universe and everything within the universe.

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*Arda, or Middle-earth, lies within EÄ.*

**Elric of Melniboné** (*proper noun*)

An albino antihero featured in the novels of Michael Moorcock, who is the emperor of Melniboné and wields the sword, Stormbringer, which gives him unique powers but also curses his soul. Elric first appeared in the 1961 novellette “The Dreaming City” and has since been featured in numerous novels, comics, and role-playing games, including Advanced Dungeons & Dragons.

*ELRIC OF MELNIBONÉ has been referenced or has appeared in the Conan the Barbarian comic Fullmetal Alchemist, and Babylon 5.*

**Elvish** (*noun*)

J. R. R. Tolkien actually created multiple languages spoken by elves and the other residents of Middle-earth. Elvish was spoken in the movie by Liv Tyler and the guy who played Mr. Anderson in *The Matrix*, Hugo Weaving. If you really want to display your geek knowledge, you should know that the two primary types of Elvish in use in the Third Age of Middle-earth are Quenya (inspired by Finnish) and Sindarin (inspired by Welsh).

*With the departure of the last ship from the Grey Havens, ELVISH has left the building.*

**Exegesis** (*proper noun*)

A journal by Phillip K. Dick about his hallucinations and theories that the world is a simulated reality.

*Many crazy people keep their own version of the EXEGESIS, but I don't because the men in the black helicopters might try to steal it and read my mind.*

**fafia** (*noun*)

“Forced away from it all.” The implication is that one would really rather still be involved in fandom but circumstances make it impossible.

*Being gainfully employed and having an active social life are major producers of FAFIA.*

**fanspeak** (*noun*)

The slang and lingo used by fans of sci-fi and fantasy.

*FANSPEAK crosses all geographical and linguistic boundaries. Geeks of the world, unite!*

**fantasy metal** (*noun*)

Heavy metal music with lyrics that reference fantasy elements such as *The Lord of the Rings*. Example: Dragonland.

*FANTASY METAL rocks when you are fighting a LARP battle.*

**Finagle's Law** (*proper noun*)

A corollary of Murphy's Law used often in science fiction: “Anything that can go wrong, will — at the worst possible moment.”

*Captain Kirk once told Spock, “As one of FINAGLE'S LAWS puts it: ‘Any home port the ship makes will be somebody else's, not mine.’”*

**Flatland** (*proper noun*)

A romance of many dimensions. An 1884 novel by Edwin Abbott about a two-dimensional world and

the shapes that inhabit the world, including squares and polygons.

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*South Dakota is also FLATLAND.*

**Foundation** (*proper noun*)

In the science-fiction series by Isaac Asimov, it is an organization founded by scientists that hopes to preserve civilization during a predicted period of dystopian barbarity. The group uses the science of psychohistory, which allows scientists to predict and affect the future on a long-term, macro level using statistics, computers, and sociology.

*A reimagining of FOUNDATION will surely appear in a 3D movie starring Will Smith and directed by Michael Bay.*

**Fox-Maiden** (*noun*)

In ancient Japan, a supernatural female seductress that can change her shape at will.

*Medieval Japanese horror stories were fixated upon female ghosts (or obake), female monsters, and FOX-MAIDENS. Another sign that women were revered and respected throughout the ages.*

**Frank Frazetta** (*proper noun*)

An American fantasy and science-fiction artist famed for his paintings of Conan the Barbarian and John Carter of Mars. Considered by many geeks to be the greatest fantasy artist of all time.

*FRANK FRAZETTA is to geeks as Monet is to snobs.*

**Frodo** (*proper noun*)

A hobbit and the hero of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*.

*FRODO lives. (Reportedly a popular graffiti slogan during the height of the Tolkien craze of the late '60s.)*

**Futurians** (*proper noun*)

A group of science-fiction fans in New York from 1939 to 1945, several of whom became writers, including Isaac Asimov and Fredrik Pohl.

*The FUTURIANS were formed with political intentions and some of the members supported communism.*

**gafia** (*noun*)

"To get away from it all." A term for when a fan leaves fandom intentionally for personal reasons.

*GAFIA was first used by Futurian Dick Wilson in the forties.*

**Gandalf** (*proper noun*)

A wizard in Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. The Five Wizards were each known by color, and through most of the books, he is Gandalf the Grey, a wandering meddler with a fondness for the hob-bits' pipeweed.

*"GANDALF? Yes, that's what they used to call me. GANDALF the Grey. That was my name."*

## GEEK FACT

All true Tolkien geeks should be able to tell you that the wizards were not magicians or conjurers but were in fact Maiar, sent to Middle-earth by the Valar to aid in the fight against Sauron. To nongeeks

Valar = the archangels; Maiar = lesser angels.

Although only three wizards appear in *The Lord of the Rings*, there were actually five. The three who appear in the novel are Gandalf the Grey, Saruman the White, and Radagast the Brown. There were also the two Blue Wizards, Alatar and Pallando.

**garn!** (*phrase*)

Cockney term used by less-educated characters including the orc Shagrat and Ted Sandyman from the scouring of the Shire in *Lord of the Rings*. Anyone who doesn't know about the scouring of the Shire has not read the book, only seen the movie.

*GARN! You maggot! It is obvious from Tolkien's writings that he meant for the Balrog to have wings!*

**glossopoeia** (*noun*)

A word made up by J. R. R. Tolkien that means the construction of languages for artistic purposes. See also *conlanger*.

*A Princess of Mars is the first fiction in the twentieth century that used GLOSSOPOEIA.*

**The Golden Bough** (*proper noun*)

Anthropological study of ancient European religions written in the nineteenth century. Its primary argument was that pre-Christian religions revolved around the worship and sacrifice of a sacred king who dies at harvest and is reincarnated in spring. Supposedly this explains why ancient Europeans were receptive to Christian gospel.

*THE GOLDEN BOUGH was a major influence on literature, including fantasy literature, and inspired the Led Zeppelin classic "Stairway to Heaven."*

**Gondor** (*proper noun*)

In the world of J. R. R. Tolkien, a kingdom ruled by men and founded by Isildur and Anarion. In the Third Age, Sauron weakened Gondor, but he was defeated and Aragorn took his rightful place as king.

*"If the beacons of GONDOR are lit, Rohan must be ready for war."*

— The Lord of the Rings

## GEEK QUOTE

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*"I am Aragorn, son of Arathorn; and if by life or death I can save you, I will." (Best said while holding your sword aloft.)*

— ARAGORN, LATER KING ELESSAR THE ELFSTONE

**Grand Grimoire** (*proper noun*)

A mystical book, also known as *Le Dragon Rouge*, probably published in France in the eighteenth century but variously ascribed to Solomon or a sixteenth-century Egyptian named Alibeck.

*GRAND GRIMOIRE details the different hosts of hell and their powers, describing how to enter a pact with them to attain the magician's goals.*

**griffin** (*noun*)

Legendary beast, half lion and half eagle. Taken originally from Greek myths, it appears in the Harry

Potter series and also shows up among the gargoyles festooned upon medieval European churches. Also spelled *griffon* and *gryphon*.

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*Academics believe that the GRIFFIN is based upon dinosaur fossils discovered by the ancient Greeks.*

**Hanlon's razor** (*proper noun*)

A maxim popularized by science-fiction writer Robert A. Heinlein that states: "Never attribute to malice that which is adequately explained by stupidity."

*Do you hear that, 9/11 conspiracy theorists? The Bush years can be summed up in two words: "HANLON'S RAZOR."*

**hard sci-fi** (*noun*)

A genre of science fiction where the science is superficially realistic or attempts to be as accurate as possible. Examples include works by Greg Egan and Arthur C. Clarke.

*HARD SCI-FI is rare these days as fantasy and soft science fiction are becoming more popular.*

**hobbit** (*noun*)

The "little people" of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Hobbits are typified by their small stature, thick-soled and hairy feet, fondness for meals, and shunning of adventures.

*"For a guy who's read THE HOBBIT fourteen times, you're not so dumb." — Dana Whitaker [Jeremy] on the TV show Sports Night*

**holistic detection** (*noun*)

A type of detection used by Dirk Gently in *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency* by Douglas Adams, where to solve the case one must understand the society, as everything is connected.

*If real police officers had to use HOLISTIC DETECTION, nothing would ever be solved.*

**hyperdrive** (*noun*)

In Larry Niven's science-fiction world, a faster-than-light drive that allows humans to travel around the galaxy at approximately one light year every three days. As a hard science fiction writer, Niven provided all of his premises, such as a faster-than-light-drive, with a plausible though unrealistic scientific basis. Parodied as ludicrous speed (see Chapter 8: Geekout at the Silver Screen: Television and the Movies) in the movie *Spaceballs*.

*Toyota recently discovered HYPERDRIVE technology. Unfortunately, it kicks in unexpectedly causing many drivers to crash.*

**Hypnerotomachia Poliphili** (*proper noun*)

Published in 1499, supposedly by Francesco Colonna, this book details a dream of the main character Poliphilo, who wanders through a surreal landscape. It contains seemingly unending descriptions without story, and the character seems to have almost a sexual attraction to architecture. It has some early examples of sequential art, which is used in comic books.

*After reading the HYPNEROTOMACHIA POLIPHILI, I fell asleep on my sofa. That night, I had a erotic dream about my sofa.*

**hysterical realism** (*noun*)

A literary genre known for being incredibly detailed and absurd.



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