Nerd Look Encyclopedia Article

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The nerd, a distillation of awkward male characteristics of the 1950s, was a social victim and outcast, if probably brainy. In 1985, *Life* magazine listed nerd traits as including adhesive-tape repaired glasses, high-waisted and high-water "geezer" pants, goofy smile, nerdpak (plastic pocket protector with pencils, pens, slide rule or calculator, etc.). Well equipped, but vulnerable, the nerd manifested physical awkwardness and adolescence. The hapless figure is portrayed by Jerry Lewis in *The Patsy* (1964). By the 1980s, the nerd has turned into an unlikely hero. *Revenge of the Nerds* (1984) and sequels and the Broadway play *The Nerd* (1987), as well as Woody Allen films, and perhaps even the triumph and acceptance of the computer and its young entrepreneurs, valorized the nerd. He was the hero in Italian menswear magazines and assumed television *persona* in Urkel on the long-running *Family Matters.* The nerd's triumph is an endearing brain-over-brawn tortoise-over-hare victory.

Further Reading:

Martin, Richard, and Harold Koda, *Jocks and Nerds: Men's Style in the Twentieth Century,* New York, Rizzoli, 1989.