

The *Freaks and Geeks* Series Bible

Paul Feig's 1999 blueprint for the show.

Excerpted from *Poking a Dead Frog: Conversations With Today's Top Comedy Writers* by Mike Sacks, out June 24 from Penguin Books.

The bible for *Freaks and Geeks* was for the executives, of course, but I mostly wrote it for me. When you're thinking of something for so long and you have a million thoughts in your head and you keep taking notes—and especially when a show is based on truth, something you actually went through—a series bible is almost this stream of consciousness way to dump all that stuff out and then organize it.

— Paul Feig, 2014

General Notes About the Series

This show must be *real*. The teens in this series will talk like real teens. They will never be too clever or grown-up sounding. We don't want a bunch of teenage Neil Simons spouting off wittily. These kids generally engage in teenage put-downs, they overextend their language (“Oh, yeah? Well, you're a ... uh ... big idiot, that's what you are”) and never talk in that writers' “Now that I'm in my 30s, I know what I'd say in that high school situation, so I'll give this kid a snappy comeback” style of writing. These kids have to deal with each other with whatever is in the lexicon of a teenager and nothing more (and despite the fact that most of us think “if I knew then what I know now, I'd really be cool and in control,” the sad truth is that if we knew what we know now when we were in high school, we'd probably get beaten up on a regular basis because teenage bullies don't respond well to clever put-downs at their expense).

What They Listen To

Here are some of the bands that the freaks and geeks would be listening to in the Midwest in 1980 (the great thing is that, even though the groups divide pretty cleanly on what they listen to, there's lots of spillover in what they like, partly because of their siblings and parents and partly just because they're kids who are easily persuaded):

The Cars—geeks
Chicago—geeks
Asia—geeks, some freaks
Bee Gees—geeks
Black Sabbath—freaks
Blue Oyster Cult—freaks



Freaks and Geeks cast members: (l-r) top row – Jason Segel; 2nd row: James Franco, Seth Rogan, Martin Starr; 3rd row: Linda Cardellini, John Francis Daley, Samm Levine

Blood, Sweat & Tears—geeks
Eric Clapton—freaks, some geeks
Alice Cooper—freaks and geeks
Cheap Trick—freaks and geeks
Doobie Brothers—freaks and geeks
John Denver—geeks
Eagles—geeks, some freaks
ELO —geeks
Fleetwood Mac—geeks, freak girls
Foghat—freaks
Peter Frampton—freaks and geeks
Foreigner—freaks and geeks
Genesis—freaks
Jimi Hendrix—freaks
Iron Maiden—freaks
Elton John—geeks
Journey—freaks and geeks
Judas Priest—freaks
Kiss—geeks
John Lennon—freaks and geeks
Lynyrd Skynyrd—freaks and farmers
Marshall Tucker Band—freaks and farmers, some geeks
Meat Loaf—geeks
The Steve Miller Band—freaks and geeks
Van Morrison—nobody
Moody Blues—geeks
Tom Petty—geeks, some freaks
Prince (early)—nobody
Rolling Stones—freaks for early stuff, geeks for Some Girls
Rush—freaks
Roxy Music—nobody who'd admit it



Freddie Mercury of Queen – loved by both freaks and geeks

- Santana—freaks and geeks
- Carly Simon—teachers
- Simon & Garfunkel—teachers
- Patti Smith—Creem-reading freaks
- Bruce Springsteen—not very big in Midwest, some cooler geeks
- The Police—freaks, a few geeks
- Supertramp—geeks, some freaks
- Jethro Tull—freaks and geeks
- Queen—freaks and geeks
- James Taylor—geeks, some freak girls
- Jackson Brown—geeks, freaks who smoke lots of pot
- Van Halen—freaks
- Paul McCartney and Wings—geeks, some freaks
- Yes—freaks, some geeks
- ZZ Top—freaks, some geeks
- Frank Zappa—only the coolest of freaks
- Billy Joel—geeks
- Bob Seger—geeks, some freaks
- J. Geils Band—freaks for early stuff, geeks for “Centerfold” era
- Led Zeppelin—freaks
- April Wine—freaks, some geeks, lots of Canadians
- Jeff Beck—cool freaks
- Robin Trower—freaks
- Three Dog Night—geeks
- B-52s—nobody
- Devo—very cool geeks
- Elvis Costello—moody geeks, some freaks
- Talking Heads—some geeks, some freaks, mostly no one
- The Romantics—geeks, a few freaks
- Sex Pistols—no one knows about them
- The Ramones—them either

What They Wear

Overall note is that all the students will have about four or five outfits they will wear all the time. Pants can stay the same a lot of the time, shirts change daily (except for some poorer kids). Even cool kids and rich kids shouldn't have a lot of different changes. Bottom line, all these kids are blue collar or lower-end white collar.

The Geeks

In general, the geeks try to dress well but just don't quite pull it off. Maybe if they were better looking or cooler guys, their clothes would make them attractive. But on them, no matter what they wear, it somehow doesn't work.

Sam

Overall look: Sam looks like a kid who cares about how he looks but only up to a point. He dresses more for comfort and his fashion sense is limited to knowing what other kids are wearing and then trying to approximate their look. He thinks he looks better than he does in his clothes.



John Francis Daley as Sam

(Everything looks fine to him from head-on in the mirror, but he doesn't see that what he can't see doesn't really hang well.) He's not so much ruffled as the victim of poorly made clothes.

Shirts: Pullover velour V-neck shirts with collar (a little baggy and ill-fitting), short-sleeved knit pullover with zipper V-neck and collar (white stripe on edge of collar and sleeves), terrycloth pullover with two- or three-button V-neck and collar (shoulder pieces are darker color than rest of shirt, with a stripe on each upper arm), not usually tucked in.

Pants: Brown, green, burgundy jeans, never denim blue jeans (until second season), occasionally polyester slacks.

Shoes: Tan suede earth shoe hybrids with rimples soles (remember those things? The soles were shaped like two W's and the whole shoe looked kinda pumped up like a loaf of bread—see Paul Feig for details), dark suede tennis shoes (occasionally).

Coat: Parka, faux—Members Only jacket (maybe), windbreaker with stripe or father's sporting goods store logo embossed on back (cheap, low-end looking).

Accessories: Always a belt, sometimes with a large copper

novelty belt buckle (like a train or Model T car or a tennis racket).

Bill

Overall look: Bill's pretty much a mess. But not a sloppy guy. His family isn't very well off, but his mother tries to dress him nice. The result is a lot of clothes from the irregulars bin. He looks like a guy who leaves the house neat but immediately becomes unkempt. Bill is so unaware of his clothes that you get the feeling he doesn't care what he wears.



Martin Starr as Bill

Shirts: Plaid cowboy shirts, sweater vests (Bill tries to take his fashion cues off of Neal, but it's always off a bit), brightly printed button-up shirts, pullover shirts that no one else would buy (different color swatches sewn together, weird patterns patchworked into solid colors, stuff from the irregular bin).

Pants: Off-brand jeans, rumpled khakis, occasionally vertically striped pants.

Shoes: Orthopedic black dress shoes (not jokey looking—just sensible-looking shoes), suede gym shoes (Tom Wolf brand—see Paul Feig for explanation).

Coat: A beat-up, hand-me-down football/baseball jacket with the name of the school on it.

The Freaks

Lindsay

Overall look: Lindsay is trying very hard to look like a freak. She pulls it off very effectively, but there's always something a little studied about her look. She dresses down, but her clothes are always pretty clean. She tries to be sloppy but can't help primping and neatening herself. A lot of her clothes come from her father's sporting goods



Linda Cardellini as Lindsay

store, so they're rather new looking. You'd have to look close to see that she's not truly a freak, but it shows.

Shirts: T-shirts (flower-embroidered, band logo iron-ons), thermal underwear shirts, solid color sweaters (occasionally cowl neck), button-up plaid shirts (tucked in).

Pants: Bell-bottom jeans, old painter's pants, overalls.

Shoes: Black suede rubber-soled shoes, clogs, old running shoes.

Coat: Old plaid hunting jacket, army field jacket, old worn parka, long wool coat.

Accessories: Worn knapsack for books.

Daniel

Overall look: Daniel has the original grunge look, before it had a corporate name.

Shirts: Plaid flannel shirts with T-shirts underneath (usually black T-shirts).

Pants: Bell-bottom jeans.

Shoes: Work boots, old sneakers, snowmobile boots in the winter.

Coat: An old army field jacket, an old sweatshirt under his coat if it's very cold out.

Accessories: Scarf, snowmobile gloves, never wears a hat (it would mess up his afro), a large afro pick is always in his back pocket (although we never see him use it).



James Franco as Daniel

Things in the Background

In all the hallway scenes, there will be things happening in the background that typify high school. (However, we won't have too much stuff going on in the hallway—we don't want it to look like all those period movies that take place in medieval England where every street in town is filled with people doing activities typical of the era—you know, how every street in *Moll Flanders* and *Shakespeare in Love* looked like a Renaissance Faire was taking place—do we really think that every street in merry olde England had jugglers performing and bear-baiting contests? But I digress).

Here's some of the stuff we'll see in the background:

- Two guys having a punching contest (punching each other on the arm seeing who'll get hurt first)
- Band kids selling candy bars

- Drama kids selling suckers
- Drama kids walking around in costume to promote the play they're currently putting up
- Freak couples making out
- Kids harassing the janitors
- Janitors sweeping the halls with red sawdust
- Kids trying to step on other kids' new shoes to get them dirty
- Students carrying wooden planters and cutting boards they made in woodshop
- Students trying to navigate the hallway carrying large sheets of poster board
- Student government kids hanging long painted paper signs advertising dances and school activities
- Freaks tearing the signs down
- Other freaks writing on the signs
- Students making fun of the pictures of former graduating classes hanging on the hallway walls
- Band kids carrying tubas and large cumbersome cases down the hall
- Hearing the school band rehearsing with the door open
- Freaks with large radios (but not boomboxes—just big cassette players or large transistor radios—all low quality)
- Hall monitors (usually women in their 50s who are constantly knitting)
- Science students carrying large science fair exhibitions to and from class
- Kids getting clean-outs from other kids (when you run up behind somebody and knock their books and papers out from under their arm and all over the floor)
- Jocks taking up too much of the hallway and kids trying to get by, not daring to ask them to move
- Guys checking out girls
- Girls checking out guys
- Kids getting wedgies (when you grab the waistband of someone's underwear and pull it up as hard as you can, aka "snuggies")
- Tough freak girls harassing younger kids
- Girls laughing at anybody and everybody
- Teachers yelling at students in front of their lockers
- Freaks flipping teachers off behind their backs
- Kids tapping their friends on the opposite shoulder behind their backs to get them to turn around the wrong way
- Students in band uniforms
- Farmer kids tripping smaller kids
- Guys high-fiving each other
- A/V guys pushing projector carts down the hall
- Yearbook kids taking pictures of other students (the students pose by doing kick-lines, putting their arms around each other, standing and smiling stiffly, putting up

- finger horns behind their friends' heads, punching each other, or simply looking like they really don't want their pictures taken)
- Groups of freaks breaking up when a teacher approaches
- Guys delivering love notes to girls for their friends
- Girls coming up to a group of guys and telling one of the guys that some girl likes them
- Students imitating teachers after they've passed by
- Students giving other students "flat tires" (when you walk up behind someone and catch the back of their shoe with your foot, making their heel pop out of their shoe)
- Geeks carrying huge piles of books
- Students rushing to the nurse's office with a cut or a bloody nose
- Students from Commercial Foods class walking around wearing industrial aprons and paper food service hats
- Auto shop students wearing dirty coveralls
- Greasy-haired, dirty "stinky" guys (usually some form of geek—although often a farmer or a freak or just some kid who's a real outsider)
- Scary crazy kids that no one talks to
- Quiet mousy girls with no friends walking quickly down the hallway, clutching their books
- Drafting students carrying blueprint rolls down the hall
- Fights, fights, fights!
- Students on payphones
- Students who are dressed very nice (disco-style clothes)
- Students who are dressed terrible (ratty T-shirts, knit watch caps, old worn parkas, dirty jeans)
- Jocks wearing their school jerseys (usually on game day)
- Girls wearing rabbit-skin jackets (short jackets with a patchwork of different colored squares of rabbit pelts)
- Students eating junk food (Hostess fruit pies, Nutty Buddy pre packaged ice cream cones, Twinkies, cans of soda pop)
- Other students knocking the food out of the other kids' hands
- Kids burning other kids with the "If your hand is bigger than your face, you'll die when you're 30" gag (the other kid puts his hand up to his face to check and you hit the back of his hand, causing him to get a bloody nose—funny!!!)

[Note: Original version contains nearly 21,000 additional words.]

Paul Feig is the creator of Freaks and Geeks and the director of Bridesmaids and The Heat.