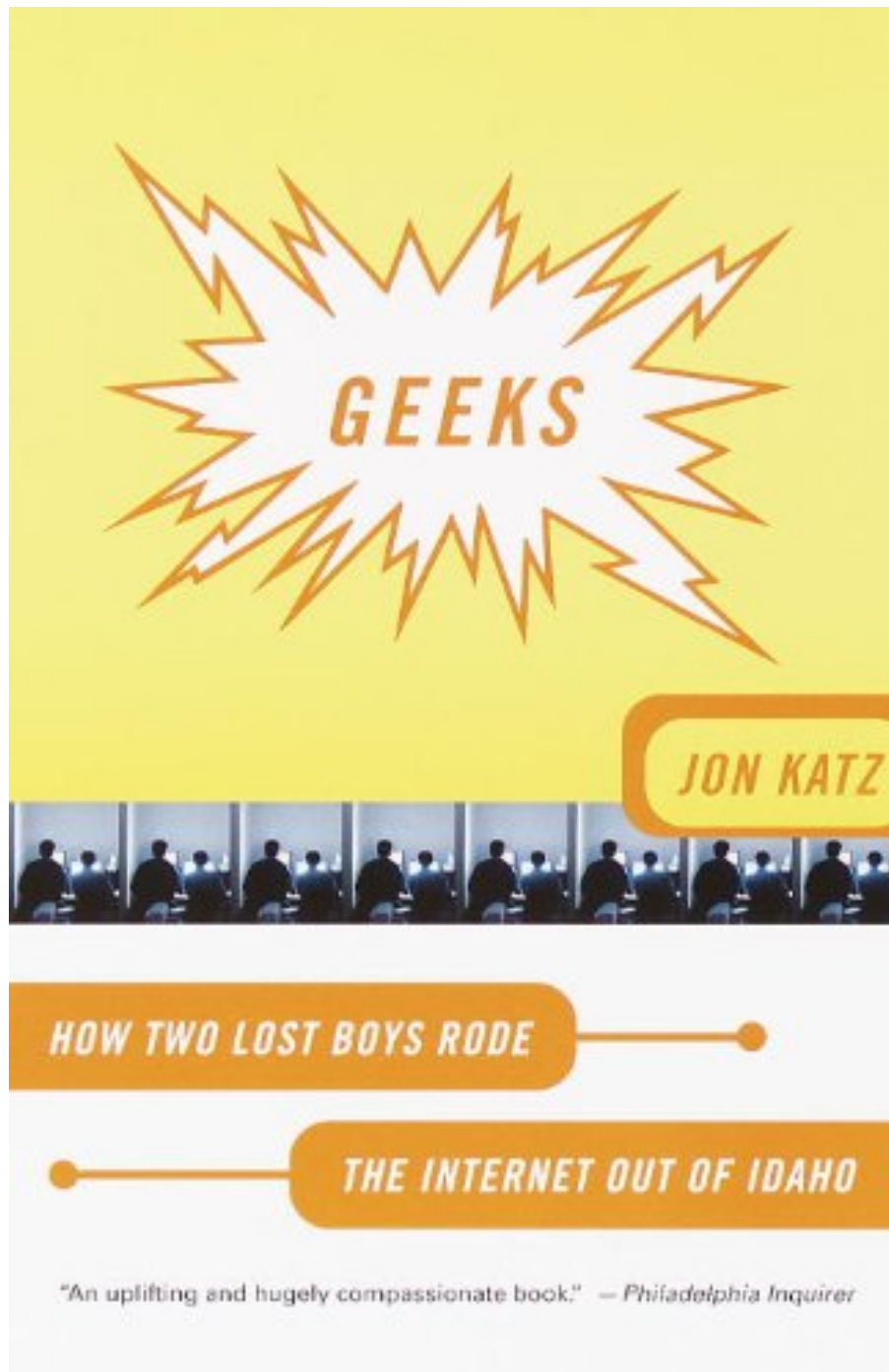# GEEKS: HOW TWO LOST BOYS RODE THE INTERNET OUT OF IDAHO BY JON KATZ

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Amazon.com Review

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Jesse and Eric were geeks: suspicious of authority figures, proud of their status as outsiders, fervent in their belief in the positive power of technology. High school had been an unbearable experience and their small-town Idaho families had been torn apart by hard times. On the fringe of society, they had almost no social lives and little to look forward to. They spent every spare cent on their computers and every spare moment on-line. Nobody ever spoke of them, much less for them.

But then they met Jon Katz, a roving journalist who suggested that, in the age of geek impresario Bill Gates, Jesse and Eric had marketable skills that could get them out of Idaho and pave the way to a better life. So they bravely set out to conquer Chicago—geek style. Told with Katz's trademark charm and sparkle, Geeks is a humorous, moving tale of triumph over adversity and self-acceptance that delivers two irresistible heroes for the digital age and reveals the very human face of technology.

- Sales Rank: #232848 in Books
- Brand: Katz, Jon
- Published on: 2001-02-20
- Released on: 2001-02-20
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .66" w x 5.17" l, .49 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 256 pages

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Most helpful customer reviews

31 of 32 people found the following review helpful.
Read This Book
By Michael B. de Leeuw
Some Amazon reviewers have argued that "Geeks" is simply about two disenfranchised kids and that their geek-ness is only incidental to the story. I couldn't disagree more. The story of Jesse and Eric, while profoundly moving, is only illustrative of the larger movement about which Katz is writing. Geeks are in the ascendance in our culture -- despite the fact that that culture looks down upon them and makes many of their

lives nearly unbearable. That is the interesting central theme of the book. Their exile from the mainstream world has helped spur their technological savvy, which the rest of the world now needs to survive. It is the ultimate revenge of the nerds. "Geeks" describes the nascent changing of the guard that can be seen everywhere (with differing results): in the bellies of American corporations; in American high schools; in the Dow Jones; at the University of Chicago; and in journalism. Usually, one can only write intelligently about such an event after it has long past; Katz is writing about it now. Thanks.

24 of 24 people found the following review helpful.
A compelling and compassionate look at Geekdom
By A Customer
Mr. Katz is a generation removed from most of contemporary Geekdom, but his perspicacious comments and critical observations on our society show that his distance only makes his view clearer. I would count him as one of the best commentators of our time on pop culture.
This book is supposedly about two young men from Idaho who, by their intelligence and pluck, as well as their Geekhood, make their way out of a bad situation to one where a good future is possible. It is about them, and their story is important. It is also about Geekdom in general and our society's reaction to it. It is about being an outcast in a world with some stupid values. It is about the power of ideas. It is about the importance of individuality. It is about the positive and negative sides of such intelligence.
Many of us had read Katz's articles on Slashdot, particularly those concerning the aftermath of the Columbine shootings. Months later, those articles are still important, and the snippets of them contained in this book are entirely relevant to the story of Jesse and Eric. They are concurrent phenomena, and the book is stronger for including them.
I would highly recommend this book if you are interested in Geekdom, pop culture, outcasts in high school, and understanding 20-somethings (and teenagers) in general. Katz is a solid, compelling writer, and this book is fantastic.
And I'm not even a Geek!

19 of 21 people found the following review helpful.
A must-read for all Geeks and their parents
By Vercingetorix
The book "Geeks" arrived in the mail at 2:30 this afternoon. It is now 5:45. The last page has been turned, and I'm sitting here trying to get a grip on my emotions. The story of Jesse and Eric is resonating within me like no other ever has. I confess that I pretty much broke down when I turned to page 184 (I won't spoil what happens). In many ways my life has been an almost exact parallel with Jesse's and Eric's, and it was a powerfully moving and personal experience to read their story. I strongly recommend this book to other Geeks, and also their parents.
I'm an older geek (32) who came to terms with the alienation and isolation common to our ilk many years ago. I think the thing that helped me hang on during the darkest days of my childhood was a letter I received from Carl Sagan when I was about 12 or 13. A family friend had written to him with a description of me and my plight. The letter of encouragment and understanding I received from him showed me that I was not alone.
The tragedy at Columbine hit especially close to home for me, since Columbine is literally a couple of miles from where I live. While what they did was horrific and tragic I can understand in some way what those two had gone through. This book has given me the urge to reach out to young geeks in an effort to show them that there are others who understand. I'm not quite sure how to go about this yet, but I have some ideas.

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