

e MODULE 12

Reading Electronic Texts

Excerpted from Paul Feig's *Kick Me: Adventures in Adolescence*
Three Rivers Press, 2002.

WE STOOD IN LINE AT ELLIS ISLAND FOR THIS?

There is no God. . . I mean, there can't be. Think about it. . . If there were, then things in life would have to be fair. There would be no suffering, there would be no war, there would be no poverty . . .

. . . and none of us would be born with last names that could make us the brunt of adolescent jokes for the entirety of our school careers.

In a truly just universe, no child's last name would be Cox, Butz, or Seaman. No teenager would come from a family named the Hardins or the Balls. A young Richard Shaft wouldn't have to come home from school crying each day. An underendowed Lisa Titwell wouldn't beg her parents to let her finish her education at an all-girls' school. And an adolescent Paul Feig wouldn't have had to endure hearing the letters e and i constantly taken out of his last name and replaced with the letter a.

But, alas, I did.

It didn't start out that way. Fortunately, or unfortunately, when I was in grade school, there was a TV commercial for Fig Newton cookies that featured a man dressed up in a giant fig costume who performed a jingle called "The Big Fig Newton." He would dance and sing the words "Chewy, chewy, rich, and gooey in- side . . . Golden, flaky, tender, cakey outside." At the same time, he performed a goofy, vaguely Egyptian-type dance, and then, after a few more product-endorsing verses, would wrap up his corporate caperings by saying "Here comes the tricky part," whereupon he would stand on one leg and grandly sing, "The Big . . . Fig . . . Newtonnnnnn!"

The commercial was very popular and something every kid in my school district strove to memorize in the hopes that he or she could then perform it in front of his or her peers and obtain big laughs. Because of this, and thanks to the free association of youth, I, Paul Feig, became known as "Fig Newton."

At first, I hated it. I mean, who among us really is happy when we're assigned a nickname? It's never a situation where we get some cool handle like "The Big Hurt" or "The Yankee Clipper" or "Stud." It's always some lame, obvious play on our names, turning the once proud crest of our ancestors into something that either has to do with a body part, a reproductive organ, a mental shortcoming, or an insensitive...

COMMENTS

Has a sarcastic tone—and Ellis Island is connected to immigration. What does this have to do with the essay? The tone seems to indicate this essay will have an, in part, an entertainment purpose.

COMMENTS

This is the literary technique of exaggeration—symbolic of how the writer feels hopeless, isolated, and alone.

COMMENTS

This is an essay about names—and how people get made fun of because of it.

COMMENTS

"Feig" gets changed to the a derogative term used for homosexuality

COMMENTS

He is speaking from personal experience.

COMMENTS

His classmates are connecting his last name "Feig" with this commercial.

COMMENTS

This is how most nicknames come about—random and connected to one moment in time.

COMMENTS

I see the connection with the title now—much like Feig has his named changed with nicknames, immigrants had theirs changed when they arrived in America