



Introducing Mathematics

Ziauddin Sardar , Borin Van Loon , Jerome Ravetz

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Introducing Mathematics traces the story of mathematics from the ancient world to modern times, describing the great discoveries and providing an accessible introduction to such topics as number-systems, geometry and algebra, calculus, the theory of the infinite, statistical reasoning and chaos theory.

Introducing Mathematics Details

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Author : Ziauddin Sardar , Borin Van Loon , Jerome Ravetz

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Susan says

lotta great pictures but overall dull. if you don't know math you won't learn it and if you know it who cares? go to the dummies book previously mention for basic math instead.

Camélia says

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Alberto says

I think graphic guides are a thing that needs to get used to. sparse mathematical definitions here, good for a revision of concepts I guess

Rick Sam says

Well, this book will give you a tiny glimpse on the history of Mathematics. If you are interested to learn about it, do buy it.

Mikael Lind says

Just not good enough as an introduction. The visual part is nicely done, but doesn't add enough to the material of the book. The history of mathematics as presented in the book is interesting, but the mathematical examples are simply not fitting for an introduction to a topic. I got this book to refresh my diminishing knowledge of mathematics (I used to be good at it once, in primary school), but instead I got equations thrown at me without sufficient explanation. I tried a bit, managed to solve some equations with the help of my past knowledge, but after a while I gave up. Mario Livio's The Golden Ratio is a much better introduction to mathematics in many ways, even though it's only about one single number.

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Ben G says

Having previously read 'Introducing Logic' another book in this 'Introducing...' series I was compelled to purchase this from 'Great Reads and Little Readers' in Whitby (another independent - got to keep the small business in business!).

The accessibility of these books lies in their brief but concise text and the plethora of illustrations which really take the strain out of reading introductions to academic subjects. Having studied some Mathematics at University level in the last decade, not being a mathematician and still being mystified as to where all the sub-branches of (this sometimes) obscure subject fit and meld into one another - this book provides some answer's.

The book spends at least it's first-half covering the historical legacy of greek, chinese and islamic mathematical scholars and their contribution to 'modern' mathematics, which starts in earnest with the 'emergence of european mathematics' and the contributions of Descartes, Leibniz and indeed Newton. Arguably, the book was of greatest interest to me after Descartes (pg. 91) - in respect of outlining the major branches of mathematics and their applications. I realise in saying that, I am negating geometry, trigonometry and algebra legacies of chinese, greek, indian and islamic mathematicians.

I would suggest reading these introductions is time well invested, before taking on larger tome's on academic subjects to give the interested reader an overview. If not pursued further, a robust overview (largely historical in this instance) of the subject is provided.

Motlib says

Nice overview of the evolution of Mathematics. Not all concepts are easy to follow, as the explanations are very brief. More of a fun history with graphical illustration rather than one focusing on the actual concepts. Enjoyable read.

Sally Sugarman says

This won't make me a mathematician, but it provides a useful history of how mathematics developed and what are some of its limitations. In telling the story, the authors go from county to country, showing how math developed in Europe, China, India, and Islamic countries and among Indigenous people. They show the tasks that math was to solve and the different symbols that arose as a way of keeping a record. There was a need to count but there was also a need to calculate. The development of prime numbers and the decimal system arising from our ten fingers. There are informative sections on probability and statistics. There is also a problem of the infinite which seems to be a mathematical paradox. This seems to be an unresolved problem for future mathematicians. The many aspects of mathematics are challenging. The end of the book talks about the ethnocentrism of European math where they ignore the contributions of other countries or adopt them as their own. There is also the question of gender and the exclusion of women from the field. However, many women have shown their skills at math in some of the code breakers both in World War II and in the space programs. As always, there is an annotated bibliography that makes you want to read further. The images of the authors were useful guides throughout the books.

Simon Pressinger says

I am genuinely astonished at how quickly my brain shuts down or wanders off when I'm looking at even the simplest of equations. The book started well, but after the 20th page or so, concepts like powers, special numbers, linear and quadratic equations lost me quickly. Some of it could have been made a lot clearer, I think -- at least from a writer's viewpoint. Or maybe they need to assume their reader knows jackshit about maths. Or maybe this reader just can't wrap his head around something as perfectly straight forward as, "Linear equations only have variables to the power of one -- such as the equation $5x + 8 = 23$." Even with the context explained, I think it's the sheer abstraction of this type of thing that loses me. I'll stick to my universal truths being acknowledged for now, thanks very much. ... I mean ... dammit man, I tried. I really did try! And there are some fantastic facts to illustrate the general historical development of mathematics (along with the very real illustrations themselves). But the nitty gritty, hedgy, sloppy quagmire stuff that is the maths itself is simply beyond me.
