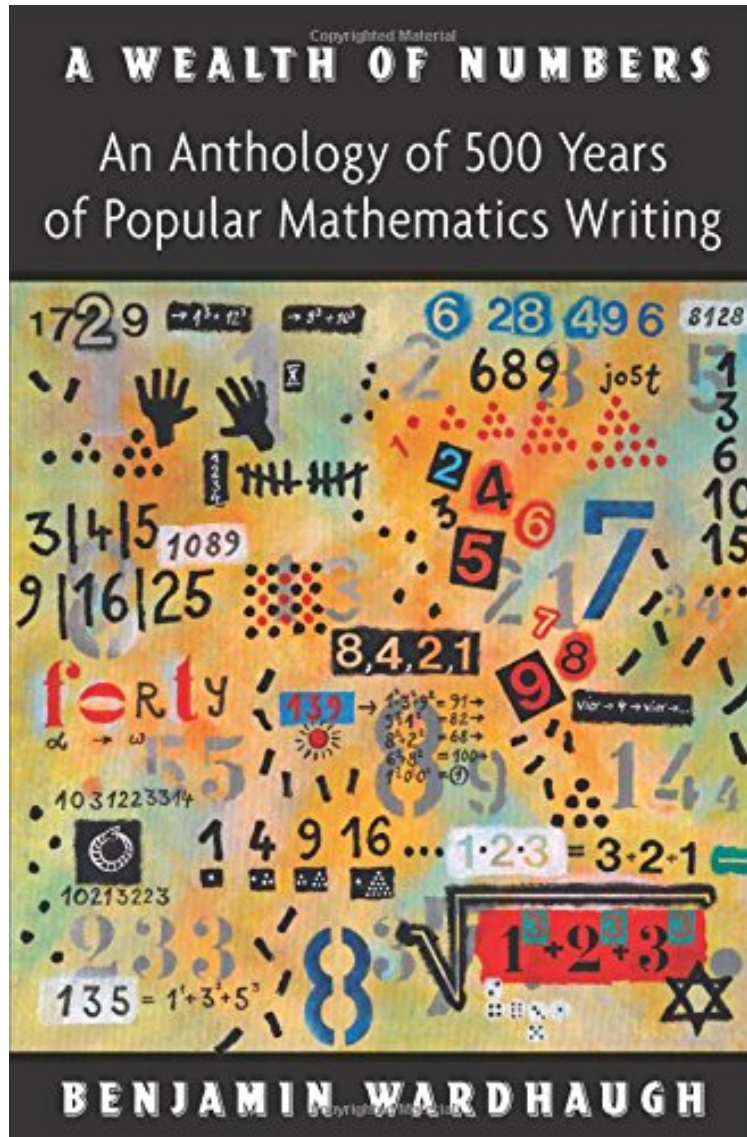


(Mobile pdf) A Wealth of Numbers: An Anthology of 500 Years of Popular Mathematics Writing

# A Wealth of Numbers: An Anthology of 500 Years of Popular Mathematics Writing

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From Brand: Princeton University Press : A Wealth of Numbers: An Anthology of 500 Years of Popular Mathematics Writing before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Wealth of Numbers: An Anthology of 500 Years of Popular Mathematics Writing:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. OK as a referenceBy Arthur A. Most of the articles were dull. OK to

have on the Kindle, but not to share. I read it quickly. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. a wealth (of views on math), indeed! By xi'an This Wealth of Numbers is a compilation of one hundred texts on mathematics for the general audience, la Martin Gardner but starting in 1481! Very few well-known authors in this compilation, apart from Voltaire, Euler, Carroll, Plya, van der Waerden, Shaw, Rademacher, Toeplitz. and Feynman... I must acknowledge I did not read each entry in detail over breakfast, either by laziness about the old English style or because the topic was not of direct interest to me. This leads me to wonder who would appreciate the book. The styles and contents are quite mixed, from puzzles to historical entries, to older and newer ways of introducing basic notions, to science-fiction (for the very last entry) [if not Anathem!]... A linear reader, going from page 1 to page 365, must thus be quite open-minded if this reader does not want to skip anything. The book can however be seen as a terrific source for short illustrations in talks and classes. (The only missing feature is that a critical assessment of the texts, so that readers could be warned about mistakes and misconceptions of the writers.) A few gems I appreciated: the wrong resolution of a probability problem by (the highly obscure) L. Despiou in 1801 (page 19); from a contemporary of Bayes, Banson's 1760 way of extracting square roots (page 46); Wells' 1714 limpid introduction to trigonometry (page 94) that reminded me very much of the way my daughter was taught the same a few weeks ago; Ball's 1892 reproduction of Kempe's false proof of the four-colour theorem (page 118); a 1561 entry on maritime maps by Martin Corts, son of the conquistador Hernn Corts (pages 153-154); Patridge's 1648 description of Napier's "speaking rods" (also known as "Napier's bones", page 157) that reminded me of my slide rule in high school (that I learned to use the year before the pocket calculator was allowed at exams, just like the pinched cards I had to handle the year before terminals got accessible in my statistics graduate school!); Voltaire's amazing 1733 eulogy of Newton, against Leibniz and Bernoulli (page 178); Eicholz' and O'Daffer's 1964 explanation of set theory axioms within the "New Math" pedagogy, just a few years before I learned them in primary school (pages 278-281); LOGO programming on the Spectrum 48K (!) by Gascoigne in 1985 (pages 282-289), quite in tune with the LISP and ADA programming languages my wife was learning at the time, while I stuck to Pascal...; Playfair's 1798 chart of exchange balance between England and Ireland (page 306); Richard Feynman's very honest acknowledgement of the primacy of mathematics, even though he wished it could be different (pages 320-321). I am sure other readers would find at least as much entries, if not necessarily the same ones, to their taste.

Despite what we may sometimes imagine, popular mathematics writing didn't begin with Martin Gardner. In fact, it has a rich tradition stretching back hundreds of years. This entertaining and enlightening anthology--the first of its kind--gathers nearly one hundred fascinating selections from the past 500 years of popular math writing, bringing to life a little-known side of math history. Ranging from the late fifteenth to the late twentieth century, and drawing from books, newspapers, magazines, and websites, A Wealth of Numbers includes recreational, classroom, and work mathematics; mathematical histories and biographies; accounts of higher mathematics; explanations of mathematical instruments; discussions of how math should be taught and learned; reflections on the place of math in the world; and math in fiction and humor. Featuring many tricks, games, problems, and puzzles, as well as much history and trivia, the selections include a sixteenth-century guide to making a horizontal sundial; "Newton for the Ladies" (1739); Leonhard Euler on the idea of velocity (1760); "Mathematical Toys" (1785); a poetic version of the rule of three (1792); "Lotteries and Mountebanks" (1801); Lewis Carroll on the game of logic (1887); "Maps and Mazes" (1892); "Einstein's Real Achievement" (1921); "Riddles in Mathematics" (1945); "New Math for Parents" (1966); and "PC Astronomy" (1997). Organized by thematic chapters, each selection is placed in context by a brief introduction. A unique window into the hidden history of popular mathematics, A Wealth of Numbers will provide many hours of fun and learning to anyone who loves popular mathematics and science.

"One of the pleasures of this book is reading the texts in the language of the day. . . . The collection as a whole provides the general reader with a history of mathematics, biographical and otherwise, through popular writing. Because the writing was aimed at general readers of its time, it is usually accessible to the average mathematical reader of our time. The book would be an excellent reference for teachers of mathematics and for those researching the history of the dissemination of mathematical ideas."--Carol Dorf, American Scientist "[F]or the enthusiast for the history of popular maths writing this is a must-have book."--Brian Clegg, Popular Science "In A Wealth of Numbers, we have the end product of what must have been a lot of challenging research. . . . This book works well for random browsing as well as for sustained reading; purely recreational essays and puzzle problems are well-mixed with more serious topics such as an article explaining Cantor's diagonalization proof and 'Cubic equations for the practical man.' There's something in here for everyone, and it's a great contribution to the mathematics literature to have it all in one place."--Mark Bollman, MAA s "Wardhaugh provides an exciting addition to mathematics anthologies. . . . The physical format is very reader-friendly, with especially good line spacing and margins. The book is valuable for all libraries supporting undergraduate and graduate study, as well as many public libraries. Faculty should consider this as a source of comprehensible readings for aspiring mathematics majors. Individuals interested in math history will want a copy for their personal libraries."--Choice "The Wardhaugh book is a welcome addition to anthologies that have

preceded it. . . . Although written for the general reader who is interested in mathematics, the collection is apropos for those who are more mathematically oriented as well. . . . [T]his well-thought-out, eclectic collection will provide hours of enjoyable reading."--Jim Tattersall, CSHPM "Fascinating to browse, a delight to read, and informative. . . . Get this book! It is as much fun to read as it is to share with others, especially students who can gain from doses of past mathematical realities."--Jerry Johnson, Mathematics Teacher "This book permits the reader to pick it up whenever he or she has a few minutes (or longer) to spare, and find a section to fit the available free time and mood. It will provide the reader, novice and expert alike, many hours of learning filled with surprise, pleasure, amazement, and sometimes laughter."--Godfried Toussaint, Zentralblatt MATH "A Wealth of Numbers explores the often overlooked history of popular mathematics in an easy to read and captivating manner. I recommend the book, not only as an excellent research text in this area of mathematics, but as an interesting and entertaining read."--Steve Humble, Mathematics Today Magazine From the Back Cover "This accessible and inviting anthology shows how entertaining it can be to think about mathematics. The selection, organization, and commentaries result in a unique book that is equal to far more than the sum of its parts."--Paul C. Pasles, author of Benjamin Franklin's Numbers About the Author Benjamin Wardhaugh is a postdoctoral research fellow at All Souls College, University of Oxford, where he studies and teaches the history of mathematics. He is the author of How to Read Historical Mathematics (Princeton).