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Quotes about Mathematics

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How happy the lot of the mathematician! He is judged solely by his peers, and the standard is so high that no colleague or rival can ever win a reputation he does not deserve. No cashier writes a letter to the press complaining about the incomprehensibility of Modern Mathematics and comparing it unfavorably with the good old days when mathematicians were content to paper irregularly shaped rooms and fill bathtubs without closing the waste pipe.

- Auden, W. H.

All science requires mathematics. The knowledge of mathematical things is almost innate in us. This is the easiest of sciences, a fact which is obvious in that no one's brain rejects it; for laymen and people who are utterly illiterate know how to count and reckon.

- Bacon, Roger

In studying mathematics or simply using a mathematical principle, if we get the wrong answer in sort of algebraic equation, we do not suddenly feel that there is an anti-mathematical principle that is luring us into the wrong answers.

- Butterworth, Eric

I know that two and two make four -- and should be glad to prove it too if I could -- though I must say if by any sort of process I could convert 2 and 2 into five it would give me much greater pleasure.

- Byron, Lord

Yet what are all such gaities to me whose thoughts are full of indices and surds?

- Carroll, Lewis

Math is like love -- a simple idea but it can get complicated.

- Drabek, R.

As far as the laws of mathematics refer to reality, they are not certain, and as far as they are certain, they do not refer to reality.

- Einstein, Albert

Mathematics may be compared to a mill of exquisite workmanship, which grinds your stuff to any degree of fineness; but, nevertheless, what you get out depends on what you put in; and as the grandest mill in the world will not extract wheat flour from peas cods, so pages of formulae will not get a definite result out of loose data.

- Huxley, Thomas H.

I would advise you Sir, to study algebra, if you are not already an adept in it: your head would be less muddy, and you will leave off tormenting your neighbors about paper and packthread, while we all live together in a world that is bursting with sin and sorrow.

- Johnson, Samuel

Nobody before the Pythagorean had thought that mathematical relations held the secret of the universe. Twenty-five centuries later, Europe is still blessed and cursed with their heritage. To non-European civilizations, the idea that numbers are the key to both wisdom and power, seems never to have occurred.

- Koestler, Arthur

It is amusing to discover, in the twentieth century, that the quarrels between two lovers, two mathematicians, two nations, two economic systems, usually assumed insoluble in a finite period should exhibit one mechanism, the semantic mechanism of identification -- the discovery of which makes universal agreement possible, in mathematics and in life.

- Korzybski, Alfred

Stand firm in your refusal to remain conscious during algebra. In real life, I assure you, there is no such thing as algebra.

- Lebowitz, Fran

So-called professional mathematicians have, in their reliance on the relative incapacity of the rest of mankind, acquired for themselves a reputation for profundity very similar to the reputation for sanctity possessed by theologians.

- Lichtenberg, Georg C.

Mathematics would certainly have not come into existence if one had known from the beginning that there was in nature no exactly straight line, no actual circle, no absolute magnitude.

- Nietzsche, Friedrich

Mathematics, rightly viewed, possesses not only truth, but supreme beauty a beauty cold and austere, like that of sculpture.

- Russell, Bertrand

Mathematics may be defined as the subject in which we never know what we are talking about, nor whether what we are saying is true.

- Russell, Bertrand

What would life be without arithmetic, but a scene of horrors?

- Smith, Sydney

Mathematics is not a book confined within a cover and bound between brazen clasps, whose contents it needs only patience to ransack; it is not a mine, whose treasures may take long to reduce into possession, but which fill only a limited number of veins and lodes; it is not a soil, whose fertility can be exhausted by the yield of successive harvests; it is not a continent or an ocean, whose area can be mapped out and its contour defined: it is limitless as that space which it finds too narrow for its aspirations; its possibilities are as infinite as the worlds which are forever crowding in and multiplying upon the astronomer's gaze.

- Sylvester, James Joseph

In the midst of this chopping sea of civilized life, such are the clouds and storms and

quicksands and thousand-and-one items to be allowed for, that a man has to live, if he would not founder and go to the bottom and not make his port at all, by dead reckoning, and he must be a great calculator indeed who succeeds.

- Thoreau, Henry David

Mathematicians are like Frenchman: whatever you say to them they translate into their own language, and forthwith it is something entirely different.

- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang Von

Mathematics alone make us feel the limits of our intelligence. For we can always suppose in the case of an experiment that it is inexplicable because we don't happen to have all the data. In mathematics we have all the data and yet we don't understand. We always come back to the contemplation of our human wretchedness. What force is in relation to our will, the impenetrable opacity of mathematics is in relation to our intelligence.

- Weil, Simone



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