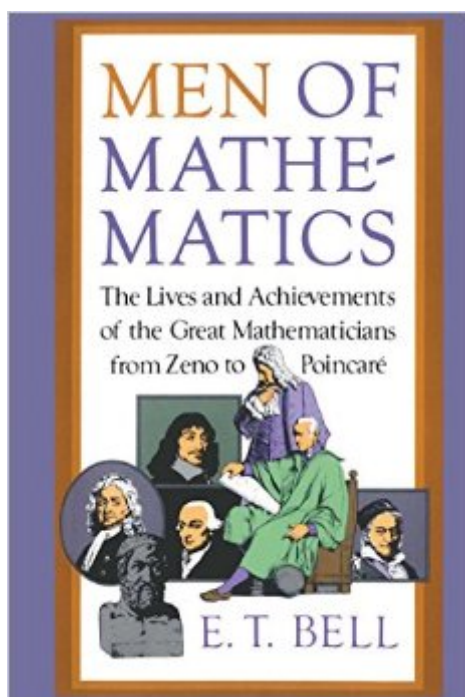


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Men Of Mathematics (Touchstone Book)



Synopsis

From one of the greatest minds in contemporary mathematics, Professor E.T. Bell, comes a witty, accessible, and fascinating look at the beautiful craft and enthralling history of mathematics.> provides a rich account of major mathematical milestones, from the geometry of the Greeks through Newton's calculus, and on to the laws of probability, symbolic logic, and the fourth dimension. Bell breaks down this majestic history of ideas into a series of engrossing biographies of the great mathematicians who made progress possible—and who also led intriguing, complicated, and often surprisingly entertaining lives. Never pedantic or dense, Bell writes with clarity and simplicity to distill great mathematical concepts into their most understandable forms for the curious everyday reader. Anyone with an interest in math may learn from these rich lessons, an advanced degree or extensive research is never necessary.

Book Information

Series: Touchstone Book

Paperback: 608 pages

Publisher: Touchstone; Reissue edition (October 15, 1986)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0671628186

ISBN-13: 978-0671628185

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 1.6 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars— See all reviews— (77 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #49,687 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #12 in— Books > Science & Math > Mathematics > Reference #41 in— Books > Science & Math > Mathematics > History #135 in— Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Scientists

Customer Reviews

This book has entertained, educated and intrigued two generations of young aspiring mathematicians, as well as people who would never grow up to do research mathematics, but who could see the beauty of number. Bell's style is addictive; he makes every personality come to life—from Galois, brilliant, unlucky and doomed, to Gauss, the "Prince of Mathematicians", to Pascal, mystical and tormented. No one who reads this book can forget, for example, the section entitled "Galois' last night", where, the night before Galois knows he will die, he spends "the fleeting hours feverishly dashing off his last will and testament, writing against time to glean a few of the great

things in his teeming mind before the death which he foresaw could overtake him. Time after time he broke off to scribble in the margin 'I have not time; I have not time,' and passed on to the next frantically scrawled outline."Which is sad, in a way, because it is, according to modern accounts of Galois' life, not accurate. The work Bell is describing was written before his last night, in no such hurry. This has been known for some time, and yet few who know, and who perhaps should know better, will relinquish their affection for this marvellous book. It so captures the enthusiasm one can feel for the beauty and poetry that mathematics brings to the mind that errors of fact are minor flaws. And the errors are few enough that they really don't matter. In Galois' case, for example, one takes away a deeply etched portrait of an astonishing mind that descended on revolutionary France like a meteorite, and which had about as much chance of being understood.

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