



# Mathematics: From the Birth of Numbers

By Jan Gullberg

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**Mathematics: From the Birth of Numbers** By Jan Gullberg

**A gently guided, profusely illustrated Grand Tour of the world of mathematics.**

This extraordinary work takes the reader on a long and fascinating journey--from the dual invention of numbers and language, through the major realms of arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, and calculus, to the final destination of differential equations, with excursions into mathematical logic, set theory, topology, fractals, probability, and assorted other mathematical byways. The book is unique among popular books on mathematics in combining an engaging, easy-to-read history of the subject with a comprehensive mathematical survey text. Intended, in the author's words, "for the benefit of those who never studied the subject, those who think they have forgotten what they once learned, or those with a sincere desire for more knowledge," it links mathematics to the humanities, linguistics, the natural sciences, and technology.

Contains more than 1000 original technical illustrations, a multitude of reproductions from mathematical classics and other relevant works, and a generous sprinkling of humorous asides, ranging from limericks and tall stories to cartoons and decorative drawings. Over 1000 technical illustrations and cartoons and drawings

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## **Mathematics: From the Birth of Numbers** By Jan Gullberg Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #52013 in Books
- Brand: Unknown
- Published on: 1997
- Ingredients: Example Ingredients
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 10.30" h x 2.20" w x 7.50" l, 4.67 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 1128 pages

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

What does *mathematics* mean? Is it numbers or arithmetic, proofs or equations? Jan Gullberg starts his massive historical overview with some insight into why human beings find it necessary to "reckon," or count, and what math means to us. From there to the last chapter, on differential equations, is a very long, but surprisingly engrossing journey. *Mathematics* covers how symbolic logic fits into cultures around the world, and gives fascinating biographical tidbits on mathematicians from Archimedes to Wiles. It's a *big* book, copiously illustrated with goofy little line drawings and cartoon reprints. But the real appeal (at least for math buffs) lies in the scads of problems--with solutions--illustrating the concepts. It really invites readers to sit down with a cup of tea, pencil and paper, and (ahem) a calculator and start solving. Remember the first time you "got it" in math class? With *Mathematics* you can recapture that bliss, and maybe learn something new, too. Everyone from schoolkids to professors (and maybe even die-hard mathphobes) can find something useful, informative, or entertaining here. --*Therese Littleton*

#### From Scientific American

The book is an enthusiastic and utterly amazing popularization that promises to be in print for decades.... It is an important reference and a book that is plain fun to dip into. If a family is to have only one mathematics book on the reference shelf, then this is the one.

#### From [Booklist](#)

A long book on mathematics? No need to brace yourself for tedium. Whether counting on an abacus or solving triple integrals, Gullberg explains his subject with an infectious zeal--and an unpredictable sense of humor. The basic formulas are all here, making this an ideal reference for readers who cannot quite remember what they once learned about trigonometric functions or vector algebra. But beware! Those looking for quick help with a problem may find themselves diverted for many hours by the wealth of historical anecdotes, literary quotations, artwork, light verse, and even cartoons sprinkled liberally through the pages. Perhaps because he is himself a well-practiced amateur in the field rather than a professional, Gullberg anticipates perfectly the perplexities of the average reader. Simplified derivations and numerous examples will clear up most of the hard points. But the point Gullberg makes clearest of all is that mathematics can be very exciting and thoroughly enjoyable. *Bryce Christensen*

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