

Break-Ground:

Meaning of multiplication

A dialogue where students discuss multiplication.

Check out this dialogue between two calculus students (based on a true story):

Devyn: Hey Riley, I was reading about the history of mathematics.

Riley: Really? Tell me about it!

Devyn: Apparently, back in the day, mathematicians worried about writing things like:

$$3 \times 4 + 5$$

Riley: Why? What's the matter here?

Devyn: Well, they thought of 3×4 as an **area**. But 5 was thought of as a **length**. Apparently they worried whether it made sense to add “areas” and “lengths.”

Riley: Hmmm. We don't seem to worry about that now. I wonder why?

Problem 1 *What are some ways to interpret 3×4 ?*

Free Response: *Answer will vary.*