



planetmath.org

Math for the people, by the people.

quotations about mathematics

Canonical name	QuotationsAboutMathematics
Date of creation	2013-03-22 18:11:25
Last modified on	2013-03-22 18:11:25
Owner	PrimeFan (13766)
Last modified by	PrimeFan (13766)
Numerical id	7
Author	PrimeFan (13766)
Entry type	Feature
Classification	msc 00A20

There are many memorable quotations pertaining to mathematics, from mathematicians, scientists, artists, etc. The following small sampling is organized by what kind of person said the given quote, with first priority given to mathematicians.

1 Mathematicians

“God made the integers, and all the rest is the work of man.”

— Leopold Kronecker

“A mathematician is a device for turning coffee into theorems.”

— Pal Erdős

2 Philosophers

“Mathematics possesses not only truth, but supreme beauty — a beauty cold and austere, like that of sculpture.”

— Bertrand Russell

“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.”

— Bertrand Russell

3 Physicists

“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.”

— Albert Einstein

4 Politicians

“I had a feeling once about Mathematics, that I saw it all — Depth beyond depth was revealed to me — the Byss and Abyss. I saw, as one might see the transit of Venus or even the Lord Mayor’s Show, a quantity passing through infinity and changing its sign from plus to minus. I saw exactly why it happened and why the tergiversation was inevitable: and how the one step involved all the others. It was like politics. But it was after dinner and I let

it go!”

— Winston Churchill

5 Fictional characters

“Math, my dear boy, is nothing more than the lesbian sister of biology.”

— Peter Griffin, *Family Guy*, “When You Wish Upon A Weinstein”

“How about we fire up the old Segway and find a nice quiet field to do long division in? I mean, a nice quiet field *in which to* do long division. Sorry, sorry, everybody.”

— Neil Goldman, *Family Guy*, “8 Simple Rules for Buying My Teenage Daughter”

References

- [1] J. M. Cohen & J. C. Cohen, *Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Quotations*. London: Penguin Books (1995): 115, 328
- [2] Paul J. Nahin, *Dr. Euler’s Fabulous Formula: Cures Many Mathematical Ills*. Princeton: Princeton University Press (2006): xiv
- [3] Tom Stafford & Matt Webb, *Mind Hacks: Tips and Tools for Using Your Brain*. New York: O’Reilly (2004): 312