

HW #6: Thomasina et al.

This assignment is about math history (current and past) and about mathematical fiction. Please put together a list of 5-8 female mathematicians, and a list of 5-8 female mathematical characters. Please include a two to three sentence description (in your own words, but also, please cite sources at the end of each entry; the sources need not be academic). Please have a hard copy of your list with you in class, but also, please email me an electronic version – BEFORE class starts.

For the mathematicians, please include: birth/death year, big result(s), university they teach/taught at, field of mathematics or computer science in which she worked, and whether there are works of fiction with characters based on (or inspired by) her. Please find examples of EXEMPLARY contemporary (20th century or more recent) mathematicians, as well as historical mathematicians. Here is a sample entry from a previous version of this course.

Grace Hopper (1906-1992) – Earned a PhD from Yale in mathematics. She taught at Vassar, but joined the NAVY during WWII. She worked on the Mark I, Mark II, and Mark III computers. From there she went to develop computer languages (COBOL) and became important in computer science, winning many medals and honors. She retired from the NAVY as a Rear Admiral, the first woman to reach that rank. (List sources here.)

For the mathematical characters: please identify the piece she is in, the author (screenwriter/director), the year, a brief description of the plot, and if any famous actresses have been associated with this role. Here is an example from a previous version of the course.

Thomasina Coverly – From Tom Stoppard's play *Arcadia* (1993). The daughter of the house, she is a precocious teenager with ideas about mathematics that are well ahead of her time. The play follows the activities of two modern scholars and the house's current residents are juxtaposed with the lives of those who lived there 180 years earlier. (List sources here.)

During class on Wednesday, we will put together a “top 35 list” of female mathematicians and/or a “top 35 list” of female mathematical characters. I will expect every student to contribute two mathematicians/characters to the list (and you will need to do this for full credit on HW #6). The (student) order will be determined at random and will use the snake method: if you go first in the first round, you will go last in the second round. So when you are putting together your list of 5-8 mathematicians, you do not want to pick the 5 most famous female mathematicians, as these will likely get “used up” quickly. So put some thought in making your lists.

Reminder: please have a hard copy of your lists with you in class, but also, please email me an electronic version, also – BEFORE class starts.