Rational Functions

A **rational function** f is a ratio of two polynomials:

$$f(x) = \frac{P(x)}{Q(x)}$$

where P and Q are polynomials. The domain consists of all values of x such that $Q(x) \neq 0$. A simple example of a rational function is the function $f(x) = 1/x$, whose domain is $\{x \mid x \neq 0\}$; this is the reciprocal function graphed in Figure 14. The function

$$f(x) = \frac{2x^4 - x^2 + 1}{x^2 - 4}$$

is a rational function with domain $\{x \mid x \neq \pm 2\}$. Its graph is shown in Figure 16.

Figure 16

$$f(x) = \frac{2x^4 - x^2 + 1}{x^2 - 4}$$