

# The Nature of Mathematics

**Eighth Edition** 

Karl J. Smith



ROOKS/COLE PUBLISHING COMPANY

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BROOKS/COLE PUBLISHING COMPANY

511 Forest Lodge Road Pacific Grove, ČA 93950

International Thomson Publishing Europe

Berkshire House 168-173

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London WCIV 7AA

England

Thomas Nelson Australia

102 Dodds Street

South Melbourne, 3205

Victoria, Australia

Nelson Canada

1120 Birchmount Road

Scarborough, Ontario

Canada M1K 5G4

Interior Illustration: TECH•arts Historical Note Portraits: Steve Nau Cover Design: Vernon T. Boes

Cover Photo: The Stock Connection Photo Researcher: Sue C. Howard

Typesetting: Progressive Information Technologies

Cover Printing: Phoenix Color Corp.

Printing and Binding: World Color/Taunton

International Thomson Editores Seneca 53 Col. Polanco

México, D. F., México C.P. 11560

International Thomson Publishing GmbH Königswinterer Strasse 418

53227 Bonn

Germany

International Thomson Publishing Asia

221 Henderson Road

#05-10 Henderson Building

Singapore 0315

International Thomson Publishing Japan

Hirakawacho Kyowa Building, 3F

2-2-1 Hirakawacho

Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102

Japan

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Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

#### LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

Smith, Karl J.

The nature of mathematics / Karl J. Smith. - 8th ed.

Includes index.

ISBN 0-534-34988-9

1. Mathematics. I. Title.

QA39.2.S599 1998

510 - dc21

97-40528

CIP



I dedicate this book with love to Melissa and Benjamin.

# **Preface**

his book was written for those students who need a mathematics course to satisfy the general university competency requirement in mathematics. Because of the university requirement, many students enrolling in a course that uses my book have postponed taking this course as long as possible, are dreading the experience, and are coming with a great deal of anxiety. I wrote this book with one overriding goal: to create a positive attitude toward mathematics. Rather than simply presenting the technical details needed to proceed to the next course, I have attempted to give insight into what mathematics is, what it accomplishes, and how it is pursued as a human enterprise. However, at the same time, I have included in this eighth edition a great deal of material to help students estimate, calculate, and solve problems outside the classroom or textbook setting.

I frequently encounter people who tell me about their unpleasant experiences with mathematics. I have a true sympathy for those people, and I recall one of my elementary school teachers who assigned additional arithmetic problems as punishment. This can only create negative attitudes toward mathematics, which is indeed unfortunate. If elementary school teachers and parents have positive attitudes toward mathematics, their children cannot help but see some of the beauty of the subject. I want students to come away from this course with the feel-

ing that mathematics can be pleasant, useful, and practical—and enjoyed for its own sake.

The prerequisites for this course vary considerably, as do the backgrounds of students. Some schools have no prerequisites, but other schools have an intermediate algebra prerequisite. The students, as well, have heterogeneous backgrounds. Some have little or no mathematics skills; others have had a great deal of mathematics. Even though the usual prerequisite for using this book is intermediate algebra, a careful selection of topics and chapters would allow a class with a beginning algebra prerequisite to study effectively from this book.

This book was written to meet the needs of all of these students and schools. How did I accomplish that goal? First, the chapters are almost independent of one another, and can be covered in any order appropriate to a particular audience. Second, the problems are designed to be the core of the course. There are problems that every student will find easy and will provide the opportunity for success; there are also problems that are very challenging. Much interesting material appears in the problems, and students should get into the habit of reading (not necessarily working) all the problems whether they are assigned or not.

A Problems: mechanical or drill problems

B Problems: require understanding of the concepts

**Problem Solving Problems:** require problem-solving skills or original thinking

**Individual Research**: requires research or library work

**Group Research**: requires not only research or library work, but also group participation (See the index for a list of group projects.)

The major themes of this book are problem solving and estimation in the context of presenting the great ideas in the history of mathematics. I believe that learning to solve problems is the principal reason for studying mathematics. Problem solving is the process of applying previously acquired knowledge to new and unfamiliar situations. Solving word problems in most textbooks is one form of problem solving, but students also should be faced with non-text-type problems. In the first section of this edition I introduce students to Polya's problem-solving techniques, and these techniques are used throughout the book to solve non-text-type problems. These problem-solving examples are found throughout the book (marked as Polya's Method examples). Also new to this edition are problems in each section that require Polya's method for problem solving.

Students should learn the language and notation of mathematics. Most students who have trouble with mathematics do not realize that mathematics does require hard work. The usual pattern for most mathematics students is to open the book to the assigned page of problems, and begin working. Only after getting "stuck" is an attempt made to "find it in the book." The final resort is reading the text. In this book the students are asked not only to "do math problems," but also to "experience mathematics." This means it is necessary to become involved with the concepts being presented, not "just get answers." In fact, the slogan "Mathematics Is Not a Spectator Sport" is not just an advertising slogan, but an invitation which suggests that the only way to succeed in mathematics is to become involved with it. Students will learn to receive mathematical ideas through listening, reading, and visualizing. They are expected to present mathematical ideas by speaking, writing, drawing pictures and graphs, and demonstrating with concrete models. The problems in each section that

are designated In Your Own Words provide practice in communication skills.

#### **A Personal Note**

Writing a mathematics textbook is both enjoyable and challenging. To make mathematics come alive, I have included many items not usually found in a textbook. For example, I've included cartoons and quotations, and have used the margins for news clippings and historical notes. The historical notes are not strictly biographical reports, but instead focus on the people to convey some of the humanness of mathematics. Nearly every major mathematician (and many minor ones) has some part of his or her life to tell on the pages of this book. At the end of each chapter there is an interview of a living mathematician. I sat down and made a list of those persons who are the most famous, or those whom I greatly respect. I did not know how my request for an interview would be received, but to my surprise each of these persons was most gracious in providing me not only with biographical information, but with personal details of their lives so that I could share some of their humanness with users of this book. I treasure the correspondence I had with these people.

#### A Note for Instructors

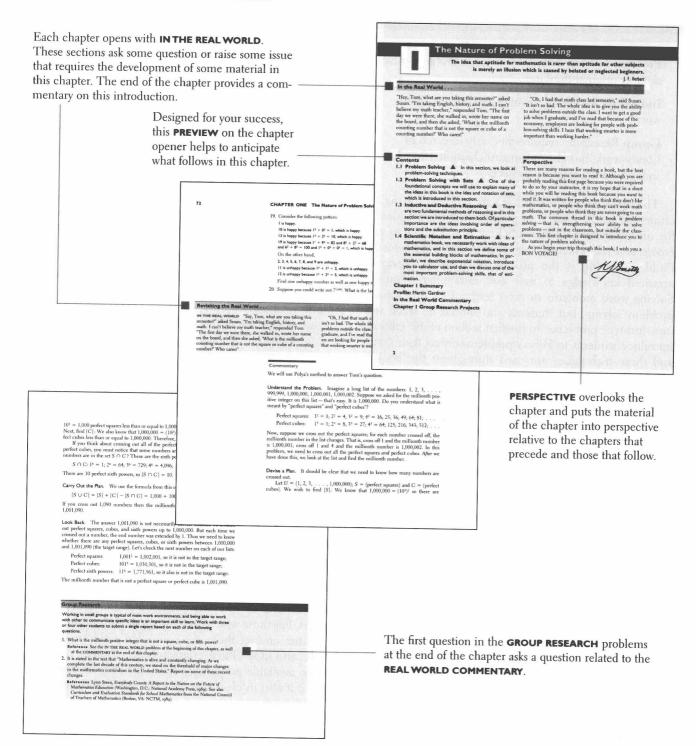
Feel free to arrange the material in a different order from that presented in the text. I have written the chapters to be as independent of one another as possible. There is much more material in this book than could be covered in a single course. This book can be used in classes designed for liberal arts, teacher training, finite mathematics, college algebra, or a combination of these.

I have written an extensive *Instructor's Manual* to accompany this book. It includes the complete solutions to all the problems (including the "Problem Solving" problems) as well as teaching suggestions and transparency masters. For those who wish to integrate the computer into the entire course, there are computer problems in both BASIC and LOGO to accompany each chapter.

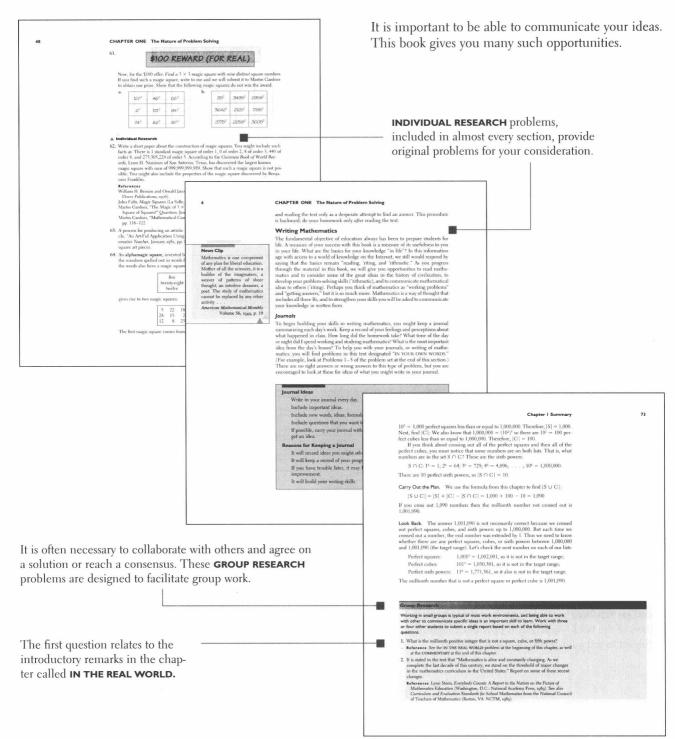
Also available are sample tests, not only in hard copy form, but also in electronic form for both IBM and Macintosh formats.

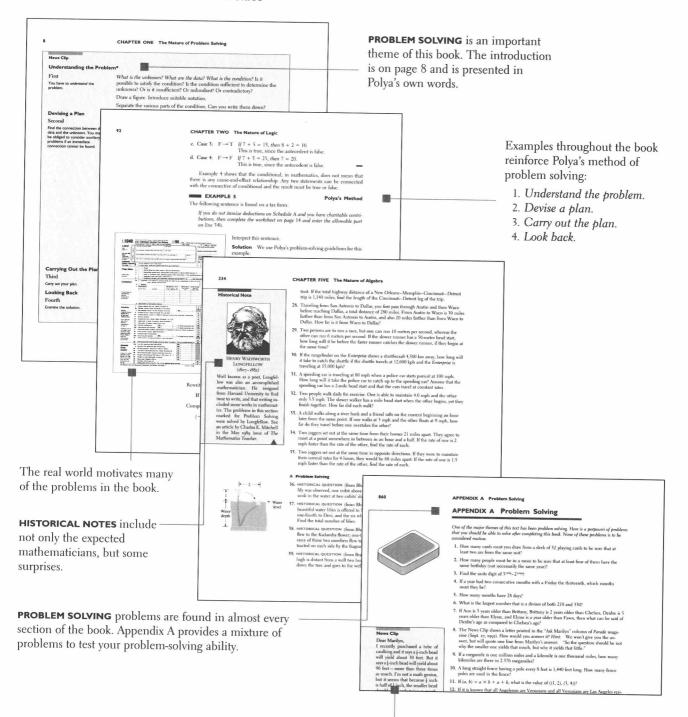
Some of the significant features of the book are shown on the following pages.

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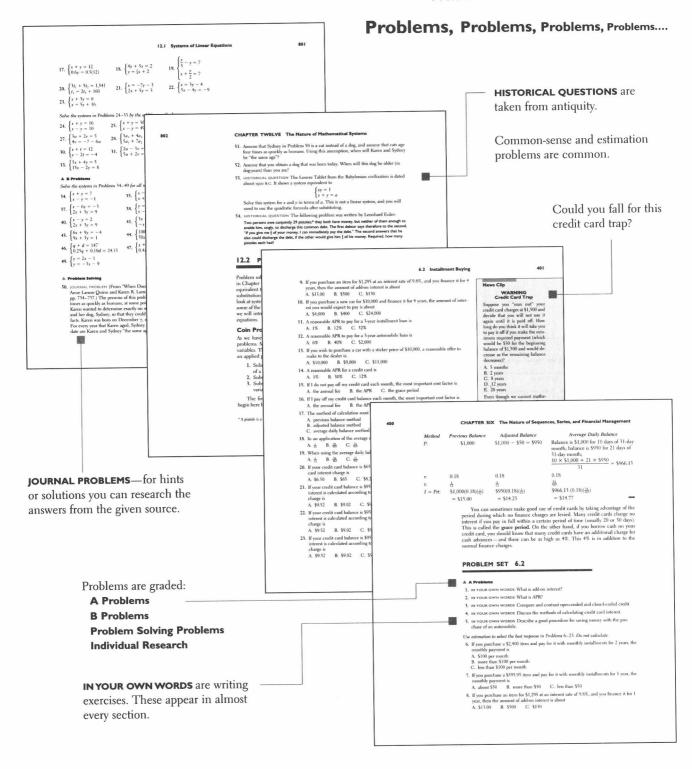


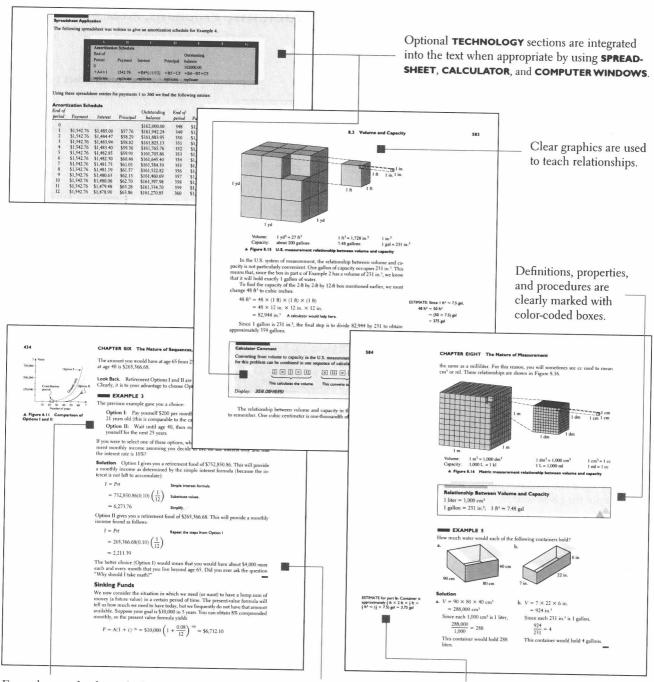
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**NEWS CLIPS** motivate many of the problems. Here is a "Dear Marilyn" problem.



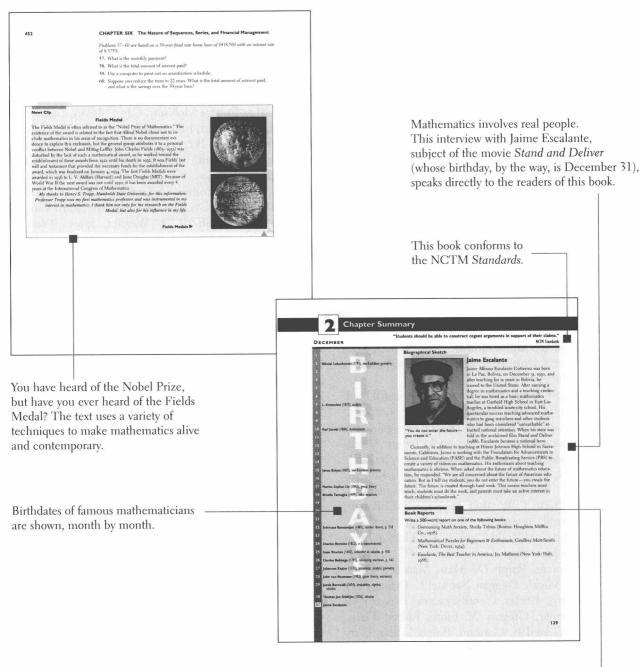


Examples are clearly marked; author's notes are provided to explain steps.

"Why should I take math?" or, in terms of this question, "Would I rather have \$6,273.76/mo or \$2,211.39/mo?" Here is how!

Author's notes are frequent.

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Reading about mathematics is encouraged with suggested book reports at the end of each chapter. xvi Preface

#### Changes from the Previous Edition

You will find this edition substantially unchanged from the seventh edition. I have added group research projects at the end of each chapter, included z-scores in statistics, and you will find many new and interesting problems, as well as a glossary of terms. I have retained all of the familiar features that were in the previous edition.

#### **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank Diana Gerardi for her valuable suggestions in improving my book. I also appreciate the suggestions of the reviewers of this edition: Brenda Allen, Georgia College and State University; Nancy Angle, Cerritos College; V. Sagar Bakhshi, Virginia State University; Daniel C. Biles, Western Kentucky University; Barry Brenin, Hofstra University; Robert Cicenia, Pace University Pleasantville—Briarville Campus; Mickle Duggan, East Central University; King Jamison, Middle Tennessee State University; Valerie Melvin, Cape Fear Community College; Barbara Ostrick, Hofstra University; Mary Anne C. Petruska, Pensacola Junior College; Joan Raines, Middle Tennessee State University; and Jean Woody, Tulsa Community College.

One of the nicest things about writing a successful book is all of the letters and suggestions I've received. I would like to thank the following people who gave suggestions for previous editions of this book: Jeffrey Allbritten, Peter R. Atwood, John August, Charles Baker, Jerald T. Ball, Carol Bauer, George Berzsenyi, Jan Boal, Kolman Brand, Chris C. Braunschweiger, T. A. Bronikowski, Charles M. Bundrick, T. W. Buquoi, Eugene Callahan, Michael W. Carroll, Joseph M. Cavanaugh, James R. Choike, Mark Christie, Gerald Church, Wil Clarke, Lynn Cleaveland, Penelope Ann Coe, Thomas C. Craven, Gladys C. Cummings, Ralph De Marr, Maureen Dion, Charles Downey, Mickle Duggan, Samuel L. Dunn, Beva Eastman, William J. Eccles, Gentil Estevez, Ernest Fandreyer, Loyal Farmer, Gregory N. Fiore, Robert Fleiss, Richard Freitag, Gerald E. Gannon, Ralph Gellar, Gary Gislason, Mark Greenhalgh, Martin Haines, Abdul Rahim Halabieh, John J. Hanevy, Michael Helinger, Robert L. Hoburg, Caroline Hollingsworth, Scott Holm, Libby W.

Holt, Peter Hovanec, M. Kay Hudspeth, Carol M. Hurwitz, James J. Jackson, Vernon H. Jantz, Charles E. Johnson, Nancy J. Johnson, Michael Jones, Martha C. Jordan, Judy D. Kennedy, Linda H. Kodama, Daniel Koral, Helen Kriegsman, C. Deborah Laughton, William Leahey, John LeDuc, William A. Leonard, Adolf Mader, John Martin, Cherry F. May, George McNulty, Carol McVey, Charles C. Miles, Allen D. Miller, John Mullen, Charles W. Nelson, John Palumbo, Gary Peterson, Michael Petricig, Michael Pinter, James V. Rauff, Richard Rempel, Paul M. Riggs, Jane Rood, Peter Ross, O. Sassian, Mickey G. Settle, James R. Smart, Andrew Simoson, Glen T. Smith, Donald G. Spencer, Gustavo Valadez-Ortiz, John Vangor, Arnold Villone, Clifford H. Wagner, James Walters, Barbara Williams, Stephen S. Willoughby, and Bruce Yoshiwara.

Nancy Angle and Jean Woody did a superb job of checking all of the examples and checking the accuracy of the answers. I would especially like to thank Robert J. Wisner of New Mexico State for his countless suggestions and ideas over the many editions of this book; Tessa McGlasson, Craig Barth, Jeremy Hayhurst, Paula Heighton, Gary Ostedt, and Bob Pirtle of Brooks/Cole; as well as Jack Thornton, for the sterling leadership and inspiration he has been to me from the inception of this book to the present.

The production of this book was a true team effort, and I especially appreciate Susan Reiland for her help in countless ways, including editing, accuracy checking, and giving me tireless support and help (she is a real miracle worker). I would also like to thank the photo researcher, Sue C. Howard; the permissions researcher, Lillian Campobasso; and Kathi Townes, Brian Betsill, and Stephanie Kuhns at TECH•arts for the long hours, superb work, and for "going the extra mile" for me in putting this book together.

Finally, my thanks go to my wife, Linda, who has always been there for me. Without her, this book would exist only in my dreams, and I would have never embarked as an author.

Karl J. Smith Sebastopol, CA email: smithkjs@wco.com

### To the Student

#### A Fable

Once upon a time, two young ladies, Shelley and Cindy, came to a town called Mathematics. People had warned them that this is a particularly confusing town. Many people who arrived in Mathematics were very enthusiastic, but could not find their way around, became frustrated, gave up, and left town.

Shelley was strongly determined to succeed. She was going to learn her way through the town. For example, to learn how to go from her dorm to class, she concentrated on memorizing this clearly essential information: she had to walk 325 steps south, then 253 steps west, then 129 steps in a diagonal (southwest), and finally 86 steps north. It was not easy to remember all of that, but fortunately she had a very good instructor who helped her to walk this same path 50 times. To stick to the strictly necessary information, she ignored much of the beauty along the route, such as the color of the adjacent buildings or the existence of trees, bushes, and nearby flowers. She always walked blindfolded. After repeated exercising, she succeeded in learning her way to class and also to the cafeteria. But she could not learn the way to the grocery store, the bus station, or a nice restaurant; there were just too many routes to memorize. It was so overwhelming! Finally she gave up and left town; Mathematics was too complicated for her.

Cindy, on the other hand, was of a much less serious nature. To the dismay of her instructor, she did not even intend to memorize the number of steps of her walks. Neither did she use the standard blindfold that students need for learning. She was always curious, looking at the different buildings, trees, bushes, and nearby flowers or anything else not necessarily related to her walk. Sometimes she walked down dead-end alleys to find out where they were leading, even if this was obviously superfluous. Curiously, Cindy succeeded in learning how to walk from one place to another. She even found it easy and enjoyed the scenery. She eventually built a building on a vacant lot in the city of Mathematics.

<sup>\*</sup>My thanks to Emilio Roxin of the University of Rhode Island for the idea for this fable.

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