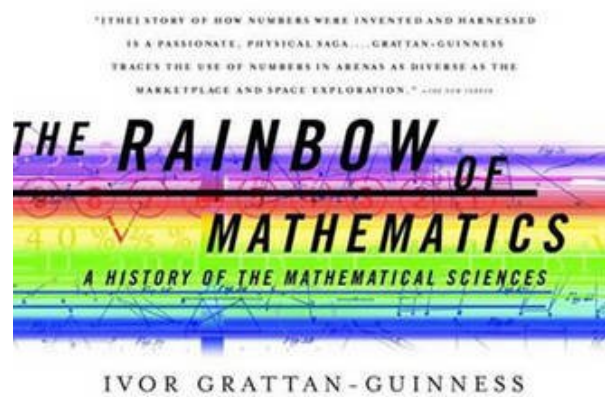


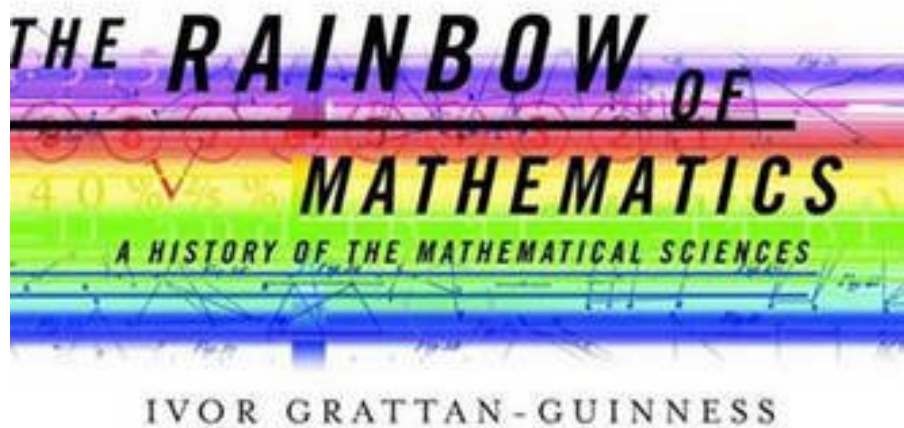
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Review

"Grattan-Guinness differs from other comprehensive historians of math by spending more time on the 19th century..." -- Publishers Weekly, 19 October 1998

Brilliant: a most impressive scientific work. . . . Stylistically it combines the content of an encyclopedia with the chronology of narrative. -- Professor Hans Wussig, University of Leipzig

Grattan-Guinness has achieved a synthesis here of remarkable historical and mathematical scope and sensitivity. His book is a 'must read' for historians of science and mathematics, as well as mathematicians. -- Professor Karen Hunger Parshall, editor of *Historia Mathematica*

Several features make this history unique: its lengthy discussion of the 19th century; its heavy emphasis on the importance of applications as a source of mathematical progress; the author's distinction between ways that theories are discovered; discussion of probability and statistics; inclusion of important lesser figures; and consideration of national differences in the study of mathematics. -- Book News, Inc

About the Author

Ivor Grattan-Guinness is professor of the history of mathematics and logic at Middlesex University, England.

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Beginning with the Babylonian and Egyptian mathematicians of antiquity, Ivor Grattan-Guinness "succeeds masterfully in viewing the history of mathematics from a new perspective" (Professor Karen Hunger Parshall, editor of *Historia Mathematica*).

He charts the growth of mathematics through its refinement by ancient Greeks and then medieval Arabs, to its systematic development by Europeans from the Middle Ages to the early twentieth century. This book describes the evolution of arithmetic and geometry, trigonometry and algebra; the interplay between mathematics, physics, and mathematical astronomy; and "new" branches such as probability and statistics. Authoritative and comprehensive, *The Rainbow of Mathematics* is a unique account of the development of the science that is at the heart of so many other sciences. Originally published under the title *The Norton History of the Mathematical Sciences*.

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Ivor Grattan-Guinness is professor of the history of mathematics and logic at Middlesex University, England.

Most helpful customer reviews

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Great general reference for history of math (physical science emphasis)

By John Wright

I bought the book to improve my knowledge of the history of mathematics. I'm a High School math teacher, although I never took a history of math course (lots of history which I generally enjoy). Although a significant portion of the math is beyond the High School curriculum, with the density of over 750 pages there are plenty of anecdotes that can be incorporated and interesting to share.

A dense book which covers numerous topics. I've successfully used parts of the book as a personal reference when studying other topics in detail in other books. Referencing this history's summaries on occasion has helped me see the forest through the trees, so to speak. Sometimes this book's summaries of a topic help place a field of mathematics (or a problem within mathematics) in the right context. That said, despite the smallish print and length of the text, the coverage is so wide it's not really going to teach topics in depth as some sort of replacement textbook.

Like any good history, there are many fascinating personalities or shall I say "characters" present in the history of math. Pettiness can be found in any field and some of the mathematician's stories and personal conflicts can be pretty silly in retrospect.

Final observation - while of course one does not need to be a physicist or mathematician to enjoy large parts of the book, one should at least have some calculus. For those looking for a more basic history of the development of algebra and geometry only, look elsewhere. As others noted there's a strong emphasis with physical science mathematics here which can be either fascinating or overwhelming.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

A Must-Read for Mathematicians, Scientists, and Engineers

By pamt

This magnificent work covers mathematics from its recorded beginnings to the end of World War I. It provides remarkable insight into the development of the various branches of mathematics, and into the connections between mathematical and scientific ideas. Readers will find a wealth of interesting and useful information, including a superb bibliography. Highly recommended!

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

An up-to-date, bring-your-own-math history of mathematics

By Viktor Blasjo

In his introduction, Grattan-Guinness makes several good points about what a history of mathematics should contain. In particular he emphasises "the importance of applications to the physical world", setting his book apart from many other histories that follow the "unfortunate attitude" of "snobbery with regard to pure as opposed to applied mathematics". Partly but not entirely as a result of this approach, Grattan-Guinness covers an enormous amount of material. You are likely to find one or two pages of nontechnical, to-the-point discussion on almost any topic you can think of. This is of course valuable, but it also means that nothing is explained in detail and the book is too fragmented to be very enjoyable as a narrative. As a reference, it complements a history such as Kline's *Mathematical Thought* in that Grattan-Guinness doesn't bother giving detailed references to very many original works, but instead is strong on modern scholarly interpretations of history and provides lots of references to historical research.

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