



MATHS FOR THE MASSES

Marcus du Sautoy

University of Oxford

A Mathematician's
Apology
by G.H. Hardy



It is a melancholy experience for a professional mathematician to find himself writing about mathematics. The function of a mathematician is to do something, to prove new theorems, to add to mathematics, and not to talk about what he or other mathematicians have done. Statesmen despise publicists, painters despise art-critics, and physiologists, physicists, or mathematicians have usually similar feelings: there is no scorn more profound, or on the whole more justifiable, than that of the men who make for the men who explain. Exposition, criticism, appreciation, is work for second-rate minds.

A Mathematician's Apology

G.H. Hardy



A mathematical theory
is not to be considered
complete until you
have made it so clear
that you can explain
it to the first man
whom you meet
on the street.

ICM 1900



David Hilbert (1862-1943)

THE TIMES MONDAY DECEMBER 12 1994

Now suppose that all values of $b_{i(1)}U_2(A)U_2(b_{i(1)})$ are sandwiches, but that some values are non-

Why doesn't maths have mass appeal?

Mathematicians should trumpet their successes, says
Marcus du Sautoy, reporting on a recent breakthrough

On the night of May 29, 1832, Evariste Galois sat down at his desk and founded modern group theory. The next morning he fought in a duel for the woman he loved. No one had told him she was a prostitute hired by anti-revolutionaries to lure him into combat against the top marks-

there is an equivalent prize that mathematicians regard as their Nobel prize, the Fields Medal, as it has become known.

This summer at the International Congress of Mathematicians in Zurich, four mathematicians were added to the list of the mere 24 who have been honoured since

New Scientist and *Scientific American* often run a recreational mathematical spot. But what makes them fight shy of giving space to serious advances in mathematics?

Mathematics is as fundamental to the way things are as any science. And science would be nowhere without it. The gravitational pull each



Galois, left, founder of group theory, and

Mathematics is terribly individual. Any mathematical act, whether of creation or apprehension, takes place in the deepest recesses of the individual mind. Mathematical thoughts must nevertheless be communicated to other individuals and assimilated into the body of general knowledge. Otherwise they can hardly be said to exist.

Oswald Veblen, Opening Address
at the ICM 1952.



Oswald Veblen