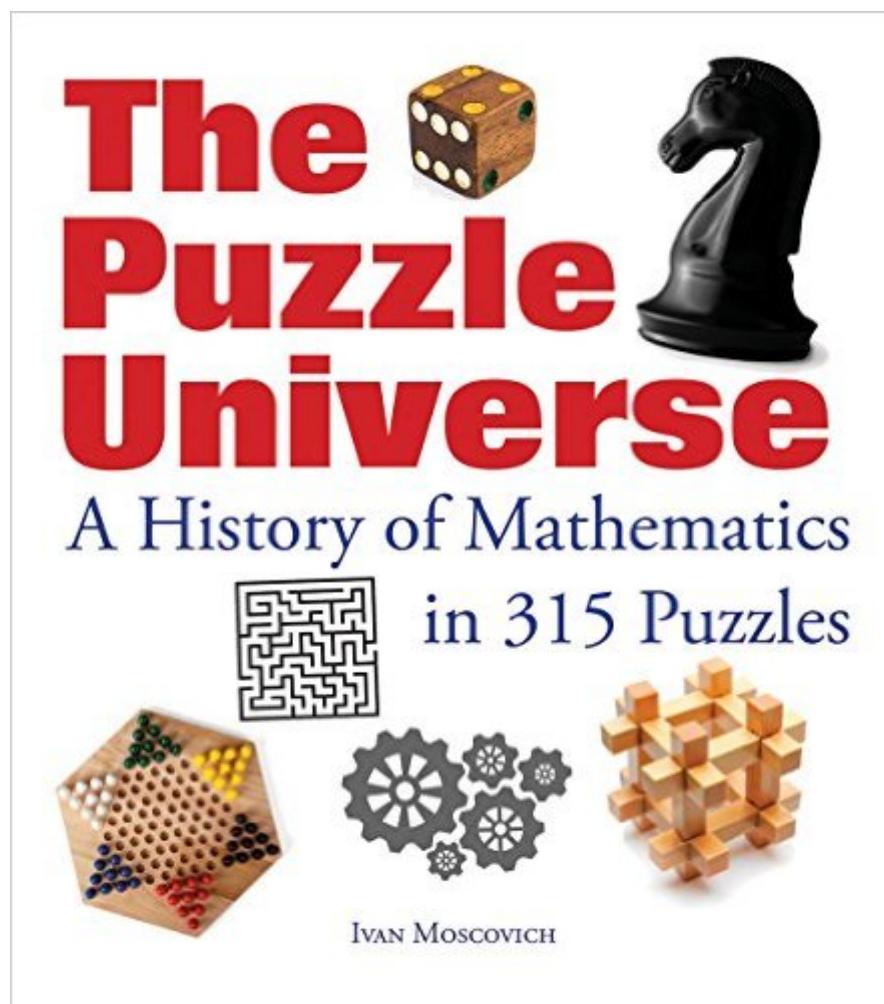


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The Puzzle Universe: A History Of Mathematics In 315 Puzzles



Synopsis

The Puzzle Universe is intended for general readers and devoted puzzlers. It is about the latent beauty of mathematics, its history, and the puzzles that have advanced and emerged from the science of numbers. It is full of challenging historical facts, thinking puzzles, paradoxes, illusions, and problem solving. There are 315 puzzles in this book. Extended captions explain in easy terms the value of the puzzles for mathematical and educational purposes, particularly in light of the findings of recent research. This historical and pedagogical dimension sets The Puzzle Universe apart from similar books. The puzzles appear in a dynamic layout for a visual experience that is Ivan Moscovich's trademark. There are ten chapters complete with answers. Icons show the challenge rating and the tools needed (pencil, scissors, ruler, and of course, brain) to solve the puzzle. The chapters are: Thinking about Playthinks and Your Brain Beginnings, Greek Math, Geometry and The Ahmes' Puzzle Primes, Magic Squares and Queen Dido's Problem Points, Topology and Euler's Seven Bridges Puzzle Knights And Queens, Cutting Cakes and The Mystery of the Pendulum Science, Dimensions, Randomness and The Tower Of Hanoi Puzzle Infinity, Impossible, Mixed Hats and Mixing Tea with Milk Puzzle Paradoxes, Cellular Automata, Hollow Cube and Night Crossing Puzzle Perception, Illusions, Parity and Puzzles about Truth and Lies of Ray Answers. With this book, Ivan Moscovitch invites readers to join him in the puzzle universe, a pleasant environment of creative discovery, problem solving, fun and enjoyment.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

*****I was unexpectedly surprised about many things in The Puzzle Universe! First of all, it is not just a book of puzzles. I thought it might be this, although subtitle of "A History of Mathematics" intrigued me. Instead it is a book that combines fun and visually fascinating puzzles with the history of mathematics and stories about mathematicians, discoveries, applications of ideas, etc. I cannot think of anyone who would not find something to like about this book. The second thing that surprised me is that it is a large gift quality coffee table book with top-of-the-line heavy glossy pages with brilliant colors. I can't think of a mathematics book or a puzzle book I've seen that was so beautiful. Third, the subject of the book is actually more about CREATIVITY than it is about anything else. The reader learns principles of creativity by actually working the games, puzzles, problems, and brain twisters. The author calls it "PlayThink". He writes: "A PlayThink may be a visual challenge, riddle, or puzzle; it may be a toy, game or illusion; it may be an art object, a conversation piece or a three-dimensional structure...a PlayThink will ideal transfer you to a state of mind where thinking, pure play and problem solving coexist for the betterment of your brain." It is truly fun learning that stimulates creativity. So I would buy this book not only for friends who were nerds or math geeks but who were artists and writers and who love creativity. Any who is curious or creative! I don't think that younger children would enjoy this book unless they were quite bright and highly verbal (the writing style is more sophisticated than a children's book)...I would think that the book would be better for teenagers and above.

Former fans of the late Martin Gardner's "Mathematical Games" column in Scientific American, or the many books he compiled from it, will love this book. Not merely a collection of puzzles, it is a handsome coffee-table book of 400 pages, gloriously illustrated (although the drawings are less consistent in quality than the photographs). The puzzles, too, are varied and fun. Any fan of the genre will certainly find several that are familiar, but probably as many that are not. Ivan Moscovich, the author, has a neat way of saying "I know you can do that one, but can you solve THIS?" and coming up with some variation that adds an extra twist to a familiar idea, making you think a little more about the underlying principle as you do so. For that is the point of the book: not the puzzles, but the ideas behind them. Subtitled "A History of Mathematics in 315 Puzzles," it is laid out chronologically from Pythagoras through Pascal to Penrose and beyond. As expected, the subjects run roughly from astronomy and geometry in the earlier periods, through number theory and physics, to topology and combinatorics. But while keeping a chronological flow, Moscovich also manages to organize his work into eight chapters, each focusing on one particular area of interest. All through the book, he will introduce interesting people: Queen Dido of Carthage, the Jewish

historian Josephus, and Leonardo of Pisa (more commonly called Fibonacci), all the way to the mathematical painters Antonio Peticov and Teja Krasek. After so much head-scratching, it is a pleasure to end the book with four pages devoted to their work that are beautiful to look at.[Talking about the ending, though, raises some small quibbles.

This review is written from the perspective of someone who has never purchased a book of this genre before, and who was not familiar with the author before being introduced to this book. The *Puzzle Universe* is a standout book in a number of ways. First, it is an attractive coffee table or display shelf book that looks interesting and fun enough to entice most anyone with a bit of intellectual curiosity to pick it up. Once opened, its contents invite you to browse and explore what is within. Its colorful and intriguing looking graphics, illustrations and interesting tidbits of information are easily consumed in random bite-sized morsels if so chosen. Those inclined to go through this like a text book from beginning to end will find a chronological journey through "A History of Mathematics", with puzzles of various challenges at each stop along the way. This book takes a subject which some (or even many) may consider or think to be boring and dry and presents in one of the most interesting and interactive ways that I can imagine. Anyone who enjoys mental stimulation or a "brain workout" will love this book, however it goes deeper by offering a peek into the subject in which each puzzle's principles lie. These are not meant to be comprehensive studies by any means, just glimpses (hors d'oeuvres, if you will). After introducing us to the importance of creativity as it relates to intelligence and achievement, the first chapter attempts to get the reader into a mode of creative or "outside of the box" thinking. It does this with its first few simple puzzles (one of which will have you on a date with Julia Roberts). This chapter also covers puzzle basics and features a couple dozen classic thinking puzzles.

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