

Fermat's Enigma: The Epic Quest to Solve the World's Greatest Mathematical Problem

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$x^n + y^n = z^n$, where n represents 3, 4, 5, ...no solution

"I have discovered a truly marvelous demonstration of this proposition which this margin is too narrow to contain."

With these words, the seventeenth-century French mathematician Pierre de Fermat threw down the gauntlet to future generations. What came to be known as Fermat's Last Theorem looked simple; proving it, however, became the Holy Grail of mathematics, baffling its finest minds for more than 350 years. In *Fermat's Enigma*--based on the author's award-winning documentary film, which aired on PBS's "Nova"--Simon Singh tells the astonishingly entertaining story of the pursuit of that grail, and the lives that were devoted to, sacrificed for, and saved by it. Here is a mesmerizing tale of heartbreak and mastery that will forever change your feelings about mathematics.

When Andrew Wiles of Princeton University announced a solution of Fermat's last theorem in 1993, it electrified the world of mathematics. After a flaw was discovered in the proof, Wiles had to work for another year--he had already labored in solitude for seven years--to establish that he had solved the 350-year-old problem. Simon Singh's book is a lively, comprehensible explanation of Wiles's work and of the star-, trauma-, and wacko-studded history of Fermat's last theorem. *Fermat's Enigma* contains some problems that offer a taste of the math, but it also includes limericks to give a feeling for the goofy side of mathematicians. "An excellent account of one of the most dramatic and moving events of the century."

--Sir Roger Penrose, *New York Times Book Review*

"It is hard to imagine a more gripping account of...this centuries-long drama of ingenious failures, crushed hopes, fatal duels, and suicides."

--Jim Holt, *The Wall Street Journal*

"Though Singh may not ask us to bring too much algebra to the table, he does expect us to appreciate a good detective story."

--Boston Sunday Globe

"The history of mathematics comes alive even for those who dread balancing their checkbooks."

--Publishers Weekly

"Singh captures the joys and frustrations of this quest for an extremely elusive proof...and builds to a truly engrossing climax. It's a mathematical page-turner."

--Library Journal

Other Books

Invitation to the Mathematics of Fermat-Wiles. Assuming only modest knowledge of undergraduate level math, *Invitation to the Mathematics of Fermat-Wiles* presents diverse concepts required to comprehend Wiles' extraordinary proof. Furthermore, it places these concepts in their historical context. This book can be used in introduction to mathematics

theories courses and in special topics courses on Fermat's last theorem. It contains themes suitable for development by students as an introduction to personal research as well as numerous exercises and problems. However, the book will also appeal to the inquiring and mathematically informed reader intrigued by the unraveling of this fascinating puzzle. Rigorously presents the concepts required to understand Wiles' proof, assuming only modest undergraduate level math Sets the math in its historical context Contains several themes that could be further developed by student research and numerous exercises and problems Written by Yves Hellegouarch, who himself made an important contribution to the proof of Fermat's last theorem

Furthermore, it places these concepts in their historical context. This book can be used in introduction to mathematics theories courses and in special topics courses on Fermat's last theorem."