



A Decade of the Berkeley Math Circle: The American Experience (MSRI Mathematical Circles Library) (v. 1)

By Zvezdelina Stankova

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Many mathematicians have been drawn to mathematics through their experience with math circles: extracurricular programs exposing teenage students to advanced mathematical topics and a myriad of problem-solving techniques and inspiring in them a lifelong love for mathematics. Founded in 1998, the Berkeley Math Circle (BMC) is a pioneering model of a U.S. math circle, aspiring to prepare our best young minds for their future roles as mathematics leaders. Over the last decade, 50 instructors - from university professors to high school teachers to business tycoons - have shared their passion for mathematics by delivering more than 320 BMC sessions full of mathematical challenges and wonders. Based on a dozen of these sessions, this book encompasses a wide variety of enticing mathematical topics: from inversion in the plane to circle geometry; from combinatorics to Rubik's cube and abstract algebra; from number theory to mass point theory; from complex numbers to game theory via invariants and monovariants. The treatments of these subjects encompass every significant method of proof and emphasize ways of thinking and reasoning via 100 problem-solving techniques. Also featured are 300 problems, ranging from beginner to intermediate level, with occasional peaks of advanced problems and even some open questions. The book presents possible paths to studying mathematics and inevitably falling in love with it, via teaching two important skills: thinking creatively while still "obeying the rules," and making connections between problems, ideas, and theories. The book encourages you to apply the newly acquired knowledge to problems and guides you along the way, but rarely gives you ready answers. "Learning from our own mistakes" often occurs through discussions of non-proofs and common problem-solving pitfalls. The reader has to commit to mastering the new theories and techniques by "getting your hands dirty" with the problems, going back and reviewing necessary problem-solving techniques and theory, and persistently moving forward in the book. The mathematical world is huge: you'll never know everything, but you'll learn where to find things, how to connect and use them. The rewards will be substantial.

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