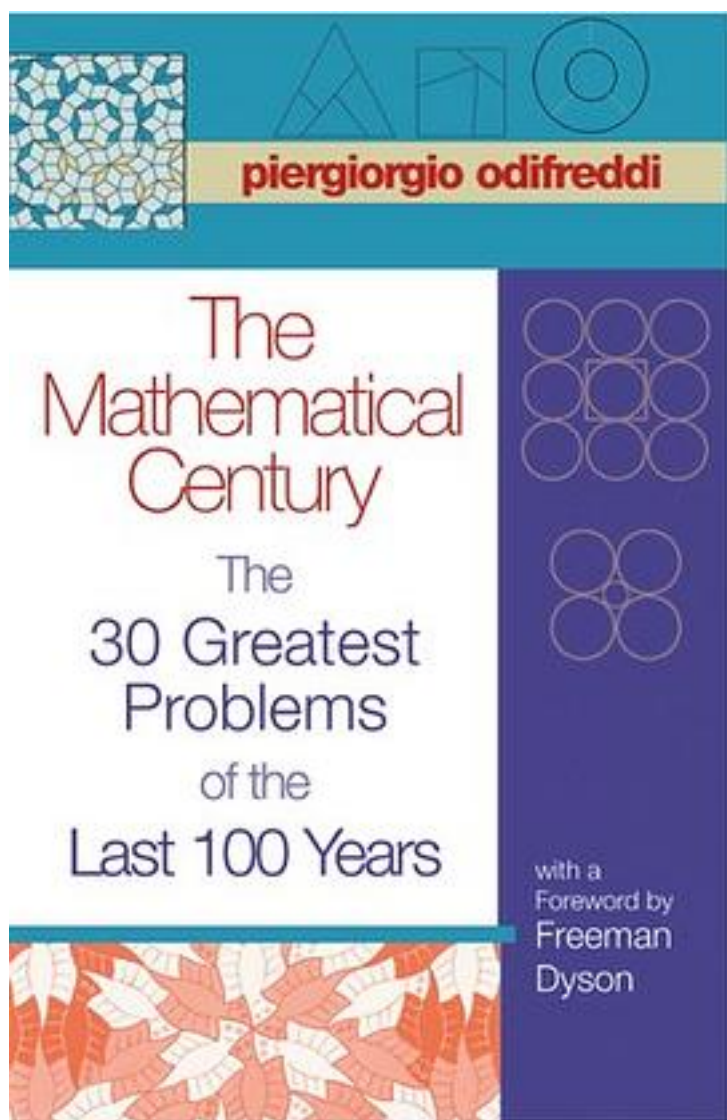


The Mathematical Century



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The twentieth century was a time of unprecedented development in mathematics, as well as in all sciences: more theorems were proved and results found in a hundred years than in all of previous history. In "The Mathematical Century", Piergiorgio Odifreddi distills this unwieldy mass of knowledge into a fascinating and authoritative overview of the subject. He concentrates on thirty highlights of pure and applied mathematics. Each tells the story of an exciting problem, from its historical origins to its modern solution, in lively prose free of technical details. Odifreddi opens by discussing the four main philosophical foundations of mathematics of the nineteenth century and ends by describing the four most important open mathematical problems of the twenty-first century. In presenting the thirty problems at the heart of the book he devotes equal attention to pure and applied mathematics, with applications ranging from physics and computer science to biology and economics. Special attention is dedicated to the famous '23 problems' outlined by David Hilbert in his address to the International Congress of Mathematicians in 1900 as a research program for the new century, and to the work of the winners of the Fields Medal, the equivalent of a Nobel prize in mathematics. This eminently readable book will be treasured not only by students and their teachers but also by all those who seek to make sense of the elusive macrocosm of twentieth-century mathematics.

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