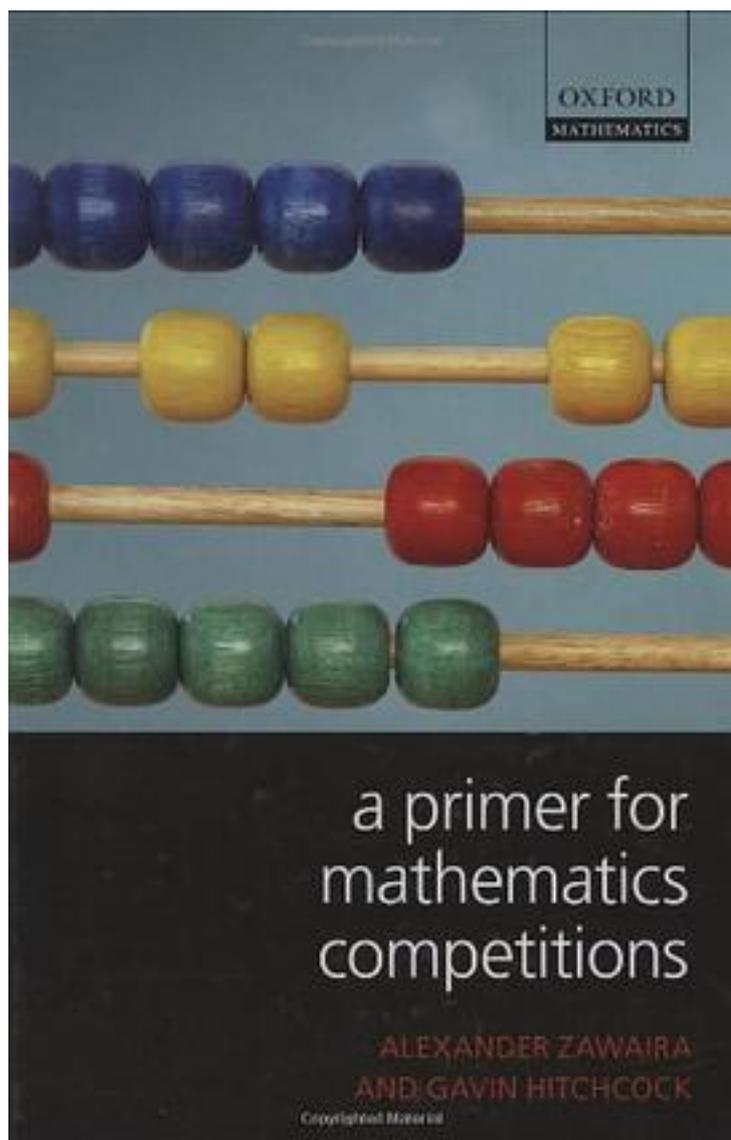


A Primer for Mathematics Competitions



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出版者:

出版时间:2008-12

装帧:

isbn:9780199539871

The importance of mathematics competitions has been widely recognised for three reasons: they help to develop imaginative capacity and thinking skills whose value far transcends mathematics; they constitute the most effective way of discovering and nurturing mathematical talent; and they provide a means to combat the prevalent false image of mathematics held by high school students, as either a fearsomely difficult or a dull and uncreative subject. This book provides a comprehensive training resource for competitions from local and provincial to national Olympiad level, containing hundreds of diagrams, and graced by many light-hearted cartoons. It features a large collection of what mathematicians call "beautiful" problems - non-routine, provocative, fascinating, and challenging problems, often with elegant solutions. It features careful, systematic exposition of a selection of the most important topics encountered in mathematics competitions, assuming little prior knowledge. Geometry, trigonometry, mathematical induction, inequalities, Diophantine equations, number theory, sequences and series, the binomial theorem, and combinatorics - are all developed in a gentle but lively manner, liberally illustrated with examples, and consistently motivated by attractive "appetiser" problems, whose solution appears after the relevant theory has been expounded. Each chapter is presented as a "toolchest" of instruments designed for cracking the problems collected at the end of the chapter. Other topics, such as algebra, co-ordinate geometry, functional equations and probability, are introduced and elucidated in the posing and solving of the large collection of miscellaneous problems in the final toolchest. An unusual feature of this book is the attention paid throughout to the history of mathematics - the origins of the ideas, the terminology and some of the problems, and the celebration of mathematics as a multicultural, cooperative human achievement. As a bonus the aspiring "mathlete" may encounter, in the most enjoyable way possible, many of the topics that form the core of the standard school curriculum.

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