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THE FIRST RESOURCE FOR MATHEMATICS

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Mathematical conundrums. (English) Zbl 07734066

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Barry R. Clarke is a polymath that has published many puzzles and enigmas in several journals and magazines and is active as a guitarist, film maker, and works in quantum physics. In this book he presents over 120 conundrums, grouped in 8 chapters with solutions given at the end of each chapter. The target readership are smart high school students looking for some challenges for example when they are preparing for some math competition. But more generally any puzzle addict who likes to be challenged will love it.

In an introductory chapter, Clarke tells us how, at young age, he became inspired by Martin Gardner's puzzles and he gives several short examples of his conundrums as appetizers for what is to be expected in the sequel of the book. The second chapter contains miscellaneous mind sharpeners to warm up. The remaining chapters cover respectively geometry, calculus, algebra, programmable puzzles, logic, and finally visual puzzles. From chapter 3 on, every problem is formulated on a separate page. The problem formulations as well as the solutions are very concise but finding the solutions are true brain teasers, and often they are not solvable by using standard mathematical techniques or by writing a set of equations and solving them.

A remarkable gimmick is that the problems are almost all "personalized" to make it sound less abstract, in the sense that it is some Professor Neuron, or Farmer Jim, or Toddler Toby etc. that have a problem or it is situated at a particular place like the Mindless Metal Factory, or during particular event like the Battle or Bosworth.

There are only a little more than 120 puzzles but solving them will probably keep you fascinated for many hours.

Reviewer: Adhemar Bultheel (Leuven)

MSC:

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00A09 Popularization of mathematics

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