The Universe and the Teacup: The Mathematics of Truth and Beauty

By K. C. Cole

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Mathematics, that breathtaking invention of ours that reveals the tiniest particles of matter and takes us to the outermost reaches of the cosmos, is found by many people to be intimidating. In The Universe and the Teacup, K. C. Cole demystifies mathematics and shows us-with humor and wonderfully accessible stories-why math need not be frightening. Using the O. J. Simpson trial, the bell curve, and Emmy Noether, the nineteenth-century woman scientist whose work was essential for Einstein's theory of relativity, Cole helps us see that more than just being a tool, math is a key to understanding the beauty of everything from rainbows to relativity.

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The Universe and the Teacup: The Mathematics of Truth and Beauty By K. C. Cole Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
"Pure mathematics," *Albert Einstein* once remarked, "is, in its way, the poetry of logical ideas." In *The Universe and the Teacup*, *Los Angeles Times* science writer K. C. Cole discusses some of the ways this "poetry" can be used to look at science and other realms of experience.

Mathematics, Cole explains, enables us to "translate the complexity of the world into manageable patterns," whether we're trying to comprehend the risks of smoking or the usefulness of DNA matches in criminal investigations. Cole also looks at how mathematical principles apply in unexpected fields. One chapter, for example, vindicates the theories on voting rights that cost Lani Guinier her Justice Department nomination in 1993.

Without relying on a single equation, Cole's gently humorous prose helps make mathematics unthreatening to laypeople, enabling them to better understand the world in which they live.

From Kirkus Reviews
A short paean to mathematics in the vein of Cole's earlier volume, Sympathetic Vibrations (1984), which explored creativity, art, and beauty in relation to physics. Curiously, however, Cole, a science writer for the Los Angeles Times, does not really lead the reader into mathematical waters so much as point to the special features and charms of a mathematical perspective. No need to wrestle with equations here. Instead, Cole surveys mathematical concepts, which she groups into four parts. Part one exposes the unreality of large numbers to most of us and the human propensity to interpret risk in all the wrong ways (e.g., the risk of flying compared to that of one's everyday commute on a beltway). Part two deals with measurement and scale, noting that what we decide to measure can in itself be questionable--like intelligence--and depends on what we know. ``Astronomy is a humbling science in this regard,'' Cole says, because every time a new way to measure the universe is found, astronomers discover new types of objects. Part three covers the social world with replays here of game theory, why altruism can pay off, and how right Lani Guinier was in questioning the ``sacred ideal of majority rule.'' Lastly, she pursues the mathematics of truth as revealed in rules of probability and logic, but especially at the core of our conceptions of the universe. Here she discusses Einstein's special and general theories of relativity, singling out Emmy Noether, the brilliant German mathematician whose proof that the laws of conservation in physics are equivalent to laws of symmetry resolved questions raised about Einstein's four-dimensional space-time. Alas, Cole doesn't tell us how that was done. In sum, lots of good ideas, telling examples, and even amusing trivia that point to the importance of math, yet without revealing how mathematicians work. (line art) -- *Copyright ©1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Review

"Even the most confirmed mathophobe should find it an easy read, and possibly even a fascinating one. . . . Science journalism can be a frustrating craft. . . . K. C. Cole of the Los Angeles Times is one of the best."- The Boston Globe
"A most unusual book, one with no math in it at all . . . Cole's beguiling and lucid book provides fresh insights into the crucial role that mathematics plays in science. . . . With lighthearted wit, she makes clear how numbers alone can explain so much but never all."-San Francisco Chronicle
"Cole helps to teach us that math is more than just a tool to balance our checkbooks. It's the key to

understanding the beauty of a rainbow and to discovering our true place in the universe."-Astronomy

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Glenn Flinchum:

What do you think about book? It is just for students because they're still students or it for all people in the world, what the best subject for that? Only you can be answered for that problem above. Every person has distinct personality and hobby for each and every other. Don't to be forced someone or something that they don't need do that. You must know how great and important the book The Universe and the Teacup: The Mathematics of Truth and Beauty. All type of book could you see on many methods. You can look for the internet options or other social media.

Tawny Morgenstern:

Reading can called imagination hangout, why? Because if you find yourself reading a book specially book entitled The Universe and the Teacup: The Mathematics of Truth and Beauty your head will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in every aspect that maybe mysterious for but surely can become your mind friends. Imaging every word written in a reserve then become one contact form conclusion and explanation this maybe you never get prior to. The The Universe and the Teacup: The Mathematics of Truth and Beauty giving you an additional experience more than blown away your head but also giving you useful details for your better life within this era. So now let us show you the relaxing pattern here is your body and mind will probably be pleased when you are finished examining it, like winning a game. Do you want to try this extraordinary wasting spare time activity?

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