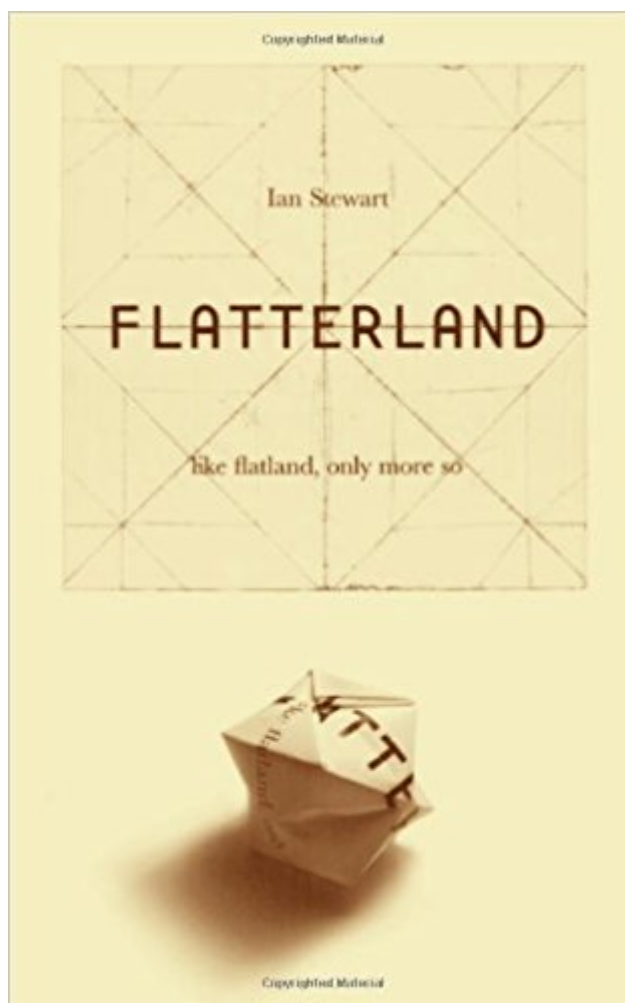


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Flatterland: Like Flatland, Only More So



Synopsis

First there was Edwin A. Abbott's remarkable Flatland, published in 1884, and one of the all-time classics of popular mathematics. Now, from mathematician and accomplished science writer Ian Stewart, comes what Nature calls "a superb sequel." Through larger-than-life characters and an inspired story line, Flatterland explores our present understanding of the shape and origins of the universe, the nature of space, time, and matter, as well as modern geometries and their applications. The journey begins when our heroine, Victoria Line, comes upon her great-great-grandfather A. Square's diary, hidden in the attic. The writings help her to contact the Space Hopper, who tempts her away from her home and family in Flatland and becomes her guide and mentor through ten dimensions. In the tradition of Alice in Wonderland and The Phantom Toll Booth, this magnificent investigation into the nature of reality is destined to become a modern classic.

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Customer Reviews

In 1884, an amiably eccentric clergyman and literary scholar named Edwin Abbott published an odd philosophical novel called Flatland, in which he explored such things as four-dimensional mathematics and gently satirized some of the orthodoxies of his time. The book went on to be a bestseller in Victorian England, and it has remained in print ever since. With Flatterland, Ian Stewart, an amiable professor of mathematics at the University of Warwick, updates the science of

Flatland, adding literally countless dimensions to Abbott's scheme of things ("Your world has not just four dimensions," one of his characters proclaims, "but five, fifty, a million, or even an infinity of them! And none of them need be time. Space of a hundred and one dimensions is just as real as a space of three dimensions"). Along his fictional path, Stewart touches on Feynman diagrams, superstring theory, time travel, quantum mechanics, and black holes, among many other topics. And, in Abbott's spirit, Stewart pokes fun at our own assumptions, including our quest for a Theory of Everything. You can't help but be charmed by a book with characters named Superpaws, the Hawk King, the Projective Lion, and the Space Hopper and dotted with doggerel such as "You ain't nothin' but a hadron / nucleifyin' all the time" and "I can't get no / more momentum." And, best of all, you can learn a thing or two about modern mathematics while being roundly entertained. That's no small accomplishment, and one for which Stewart deserves applause. --Gregory McNamee --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Higher mathematics and low comedy intersect acutely in this fuzzy follow-up to Edwin Abbott's 1884 classic, Flatland. Where Abbott's compact fable about a two-dimensional world discomposed by the discovery of a third dimension was a jeu d'esprit that slyly satirized rigid Victorian society, Stewart's sequel is an episodic ramble through the "flatterland" of modern mathematical theory that begins when teenaged Flatlander Vikki Line, great-great-granddaughter of Abbott's narrator, uses her ancestor's "hysterical document" as a passport to the Mathiverse. Accompanied by a Space Hopper guide, she tours landmarks of the post-Einsteinian universe that include fractal geometry, black holes, cosmic strings and quantum theory. Stewart (The Science of Discworld) keeps the tone light with incessant puns (a one-sided cow named "Moobius") and plays on names ("the Hawk King," who presides over a wormhole-ridden realm in the space-time continuum). The many line drawings that illustrate the text are both amusing and instructive. But the terrain Stewart sets out to explore is vast and abstract, and not all of the subjects he covers find a proper social analogue or cultural referent. The result is that lessons Vikki learns on some of the more abstruse principles still have a textbook stuffiness that even the author's Carrollian wit can't leaven. Though perplexing in spots, the tale is ever enchanting, and its user-friendly blend of fiction and nonfiction proves that the comic and cosmic need not be mutually exclusive. (May 1)Forecast: With advertising in Scientific American and the New Yorker and a 50,000-copy first printing, this should be a hit with the literate elite who also appreciate math and science.Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Sorta like Flatland. If you wish there was sequel to Flatland then this is it. It's way more advanced though. If you don't have a degree in topology then you won't understand it all, but it's simple enough to be fascinating. It goes through a lot of very strange dimensional spaces from an anthropomorphic perspective. It'll make you want to learn more.

Ian Stewart did a marvelous job with this book. I first read its prequel "Flatland" based on a recommendation from youtuber "Vsauce," and it was thick and Victorian styled (although it helps to read the prequel before the sequel). Flatland breaks away from the complexity of words and adds in complexity in math and visualizations of dimensions, true mathematical meaning, and more. It is written in an easy to read manner that gives you room to think as well as encouragement. The book has a lot of wordplay that satires our world today (hogsburgers and oxburgers) much like Edwin Abbott did when he wrote Flatland. I am going on an Ian Stewart binge after reading this book because he is a mathematical and visionary genius, with many many titles to his name and even more experience as a mathematician.

The book itself is OK. The author covers a lot of different areas that are newish in mathematics--sometimes it seems like too much, but there are lots of connections so I won't gripe too much. The writing is a little too cute with a lot of puns but that is a matter of style. I have to commend the author on the attempt to introduce very difficult material in a simpler way. This book would have gotten another star if the publisher hadn't attempted to save money by not proofreading the Kindle conversion. It is very irritating to be trying to work out the math, and finding that the O's have been converted to o's and 1's to l's, l's to /s, etc. This is just very sloppy work, and it's not the first time that conversions have garbled text in similar ways. When I called to complain I got shuffled around a bit, and told I needed to reboot my Kindle, which of course did no good. I finally got someone to give me a partial refund. Please do the same if you buy this book as a Kindle version so that they get the hint that they are not saving money.

This book is very clever and introduces students to higher mathematical concepts in a fun and often punny way. My 8th grade students loved it as a read-aloud throughout the year.

Superb. The story (which is written like a sequel to Edwin Abbott's 'Flatland' about a 2-D character introduced to a 3-D world) is written with humour and sympathy. He takes the original 19th century story and updates it with ideas from the last few decades. I never thought I'd find a way to grasp

multi-dimensional concepts in topology, but this book at least gives them a handle to be grasped by. I first read Ian Stewart's writing through Terry Pratchett's 'Science of Discord' series. Respect grows!

Love those books written in the flatland philosophy.

For those looking for a continuation of the original, this book may miss the mark on social commentary. I gave it 5 stars on its own merit; rated as a true sequel, it would have to be much lower (maybe 3). Professor Stewart takes the concept of unusual geometry several steps beyond what Abbot did, not just dealing with extra dimensions, but also gets into concepts like projective geometry and graph theory (just to name two). He does this through a narrative that keeps things simple, but not too much so; there are sections that may take a second read for someone with limited background in non-cartesian geometry, but it does not overload the reader and keeps it fun (quite a bit of word play/puns keep it light hearted).

The heroine Vikki Line is a great-great-granddaughter of the narrator A. Square of Edwin Abbott's classic book, "Flatland." The teenaged Flatlander heroine goes to a tour to higher dimensional worlds guided by a Space Hopper. She visits the Fractal Forest, Topologica, Platterland, Cat Country, the Domain of Hawk King, etc., and learns, together with the reader, about many concepts of modern mathematics and physics. The author Ian Stewart, a winner of the Royal Society's Michael Faraday Medal for furthering the public understanding of science, writes the story in the style of "Alice in Wonderland" by using enjoyable wordplay and putting exotic and cute creatures he invented to familiarize the difficult concepts. Some topics are treated in a manner to give the reader good understanding, but others are described only superficially. There are simple errors in giving a number for fractal dimension and describing the behavior of the decoherence time. (I leave it to the reader as exercises to spot them.) The author explains the particle nature of the photon by the uncommon use of the process of electron-impact photon emission, while the orthodox explanation uses the inverse process, i.e., the photoelectric effect. In spite of these minor defects, this is a joyous read for holidays. The heroine is depicted as such a clever, adventurous and charming linear being (near the end of the story she comes to know that she is something superior to a line) that I think how I would have been happy if I had had a girlfriend like her in my youth. Her guide and tutor, the Space Hopper, often shows a big grin, reminding us of the popular physicist and good lecturer Richard Feynman. In the short last chapter, the reader feels it important that more of us,

"Planiturtherthians," become aware of the possible ten-dimensional reality of our physical universe, which Vikki learned at the final stage of her tour. Thus, I would like to recommend this book to every curious mind.

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