

Pi: A Biography of the World's Most Mysterious Number

By Alfred S. Posamentier



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We all learned that the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter is called pi and that the value of this algebraic symbol is roughly 3.14. What we weren't told, though, is that behind this seemingly mundane fact is a world of mystery, which has fascinated mathematicians from ancient times to the present. Simply put, pi is weird. Mathematicians call it a "transcendental number" because its value cannot be calculated by any combination of addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and square root extraction.

In this delightful layperson's introduction to one of math's most interesting phenomena, Drs. Posamentier and Lehmann review pi's history from prebiblical times to the 21st century, the many amusing and mind-boggling ways of estimating pi over the centuries, quirky examples of obsessing about pi (including an attempt to legislate its exact value), and useful applications of pi in everyday life, including statistics.

This enlightening and stimulating approach to mathematics will entertain lay readers while improving their mathematical literacy.



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Review

"There is something for everyone in this book and everyone should read this book because it will be for some, a revelation that mathematics can be fun and beautiful, something they may not have realized during earlier encounters. Math teachers will find a host of ideas to enrich their instruction since Pi, as you know, comes up everywhere. This book is highly recommended and should provide a major step toward increasing the popularity of mathematics."

-Education Update

"A joyful exploration...written in a conversational style reminiscent of children's science books. The writing is clear and crisp and draws the reader into the author's enthusiasm...I highly recommend [this book] to high school and college students and teachers of both. The book captures the excitement and fascination of pi and can serve as a starting point for more detailed discussion."

-Mathematics Teacher

"I enjoyed reading the book...for its many applications, curiosities, and anecdotes."

-Science

"Readers curious about π could start here...Recommended."

-Choice

About the Author

Alfred S. Posamentier is dean of the School of Education and professor of mathematics education at Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, New York. Previously, he had the same positions at the City College of the City University of New York for forty years. He has published over fifty-five books in the area of mathematics and mathematics education, including *The Fabulous Fibonacci Numbers* (with Ingmar Lehmann).

Ingmar Lehmann is retired from the mathematics faculty at Humboldt University in Berlin. For many years he led the Berlin Mathematics Student Society for gifted secondary-school students, with which he is still closely engaged today. He is the coauthor with Alfred S. Posamentier of *The Secrets of Triangles*, *The Glorious Golden Ratio*, and three other books.

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