

Eliza Rockefeller
Math 5
Professor Kozek
November 6, 2013

Flatland

Topics of Discussion:

- Women:
 - The editors claim “[Flatland] is an illustration of Abbot’s theory that imagination is the basis of all knowledge.” (Flatland, Introduction, 2), The dedication says the book aims to contribute “to the enlargement of the Imagination.” How is this seen in the book?
- Depiction of Women, Sexism, and Parody:
 - Is Abbot sexist, or is this a parody? Are the women of Flatland intelligent? Would the readers of the book take this at face value and accept that the women are inferior? What is the significance of the fact that all women have an identical shape?
 - Concerning the Women” page 34.
 - Discussion on “female” virtues, page 176.
- Education
 - What is the function of education in Flatland? Is it merely a tool of the upper classes to control and suppress women and the lower classes?
- Abbot’s religious beliefs
 - To what extent is Flatland an expression of Abbot’s Christian faith? What is Abbot’s vision of Christianity?
- Stratified Society:
 - Do the structures of oppression harm all members of flatland society? To what extent are they necessary to avoid anarchy and protect civilization?
 - page 110.
- Parallels with Narrative Non-Fiction
 - Abbot uses narrative to explain the concept of the fourth dimensions to his readership; this bears a strong similarity to the contemporary genre of narrative non-fiction, which is frequently utilized to popularize scientific and mathematical concepts. Is Flatland a proto-example of this genre?

Reflection Question:

Is Abbot parodying the rampant sexism of his day, or does the treatment of women in Flatland mirror his own beliefs? Are the women of Flatland truly brainless creatures, as the Square describes?

Bibliography:

Abbott, Edwin A. Ed. Lindgre, William and Banchoff, Thomas. *Flatland*. Cambridge: 2012, new York.

Artmann, Benno. "Euclidian Geometry." Encyclopedia Britannica.
<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/194901/Euclidean-geometry>>. Accessed
November 5, 2013.

Jann, Rosemary. "Abbott's **Flatland**: Scientific Imagination and 'Natural Christianity.'" *Victorian Studies* 28.3 (1985): 473-90. Print

Smith, Jonathan. "Euclid Honourably Shelved': Edwin Abbott's **Flatland** and the Methods of Non-Euclidean Geometry." *Fact and Feeling: Baconian Science and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1994. 180-210. Print.

Mathematical references:

- Euclidian Geometry (Pointland and Flatland.)
- Non-Euclidian geometry (Spaceland and the hypothesized lands beyond of greater than four dimensions.)
- Multiple Dimensions / 4th Dimension
- Squaring the Circle. The polygons of hundreds of sides approaching a circle is an ancient method of calculating pi, and the problem of measuring fractals.
- Arithmetic sequences. Page 162.
- Geometric sequences.