



## Desperate Measures: Length, Area and Volume

**Author:** Kjartan Poskitt  
**Genre:** STEAM  
**Publisher:** London: Scholastic, 2000  
**ISBN:** 0-439-01370-4  
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*Packed with useful facts, elephants, flying saucers and just a little Physics to boot, Desperate Measures will make the reader laugh almost as much as it makes them learn.*

Rarely have I taken such an instant liking to a book as I have to this one written by Kjartan Poskitt. One of the 'Murderous Maths' series, it takes the reader on a humorous and light-hearted voyage into the intimidating world of Mathematics, offering help with the measuring of just about anything, from the working out of angles on a triangle to measuring the strength of curry (literally). Throughout, the ever-present humour works on two levels, with jokes aimed school-going readers - though that said they were making me laugh constantly - and the odd more mature joke also being included to great effect.

Humour aside, though, those people (such as me) who were taught both the Metric and Imperial systems of measurement at school (and now have trouble with both as a result) will find this book of serious use. It offers simple ways of remembering conversions such as grams into pounds and miles into metres (and back again), with the comedy anecdotes illustrated by Philip Reeve neutralising the Maths headache I would normally get before it has a chance to begin. Furthermore, and as one might expect from the makers of the 'Horrible Histories' books, the combination of picture and anecdote serves a dual purpose in that they increase the reader's general knowledge as well as informing on the subject matter itself. The great minds who 'invented' both Maths and Physics are alluded to frequently in comic strip form, and the practical experiments, which virtually anybody can do with almost no equipment, bring the contents of the book to life still further.

I actually read *Desperate Measures* cover to cover without leaving the room, and doing so was one of the most enjoyable afternoons I can remember having whilst being sober. Ultimately, if the more pompous books on this subject I have recently had to read were half as good as this one, the GCSE Mathematics course I am currently taking would be a whole lot easier. The fact that my sides still hurt from laughing whilst reading it remains a price worth paying.

10 sausages out of 10

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