



## Murderous Maths

**Author:** Kjartan Poskitt  
**Genre:** STEAM  
**Publisher:** London: Scholastic, 1997  
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*Appealing to the big kid in us all, Kjartan Poskitt's informative take on all things mathematical is the perfect book for those who like a dose of laughter with their learning.*

Stories. They are Poskitt's vehicle in this, the first of a set of books on Mathematics from the people who brought us the *Horrible Histories* franchise. Unsurprisingly, the book is aimed primarily aimed at the younger reader, though those of all ages will almost certainly be more knowledgeable after reading the book than they were when they began it.

Poskitt begins at the beginning, well, almost. *Murderous Maths* actually opens with an introductory story, 'Murderous Maths: Are You Kidding?' about some fictional 1920s gangsters who, conveniently, are presented with a mathematical problem they are incapable of solving. Ultimately, the inability of this dim-witted group (who pop up in the other books in the series) to divide their dinner bill sets out the formula used throughout the book: various characters, each of which the reader soon begins to like (if not love), find themselves with a problem that simple Maths can and does solve. The most prominent of these anecdotes is 'The Long and Short of it', an epistolary story that explains 'powers', a very clever way of keeping the book 'fresh' and maintaining the reader's interest. The tale eventually climaxes, as should any good narrative, at the end of the whole book, a book that has discussed all the great pioneers and their contributions to the science, from Pythagoras and his triangle up to the people who invented (and use) the modern calculator. Practically all subjects in everyday Mathematics are alluded to in *Murderous Maths*, and more importantly, perhaps, they are explained in an enjoyable way easy for practically anyone to understand.

As a life-long and very keen amateur historian, it is no great surprise that I am a great fan of the 'Horrible Histories' series, (I even went to see the West-End version). However, as a person who is taking his Maths GCSE (again) long after leaving school, it is fair to say that this book had to do a lot more work to do to win me over. I must say, surprisingly, that it did; a shame that other Maths books are not as readable as this one. I look forward to fully encountering the other books in the series.

8 sausages out of 10.

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