

Three Mathematical Lyrics

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Three Mathematical Lyrics

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The Day Math Teachers Took Over the World

Fields came into focus, horizon aligned,
Decision trees were bloomin' and everyone felt prime,
And chaos led to somethin' well-defined
The day math teachers took over the world!

All the politicians had to clean up their stats
And forgo call-in polls and misleading graphs,
And approval voting kept elections on track
The day math teachers took over the world!

Bridge: Yeah, math teachers fin'ly decided to uprise—
'Cause their functions were underutilized!
They divided-and-conquered, got radical, too:
They brought integration to every school!

No one got lost in Boston again:
The teachers mapped the streets into a nice Cartesian grid,
And the road-coloring-theorem was known by every kid
The day math teachers took over the world!

And that day brought peace – no axes to grind:
Everyone spoke rationally, with a logical mind,
And fair division solved disputes for all time
The day math teachers took over the world! (*Repeat Bridge*)

NUMB3RS was the TV show on top of the list,
And the math that's in music gave everyone bliss
And self-referential songs were sung – *like this* –
The day math teachers took over the world!

Banach-Tarski made food abundant
And taking random walks kept everyone fit,
And consumer scams took quite a hit
When math teachers took over the world!

One!

(may be sung to the tune of “One!” from *A Chorus Line*)

One ... integer sensation!
Thousands claim that 1 is grand.
One ... side is on the surface
Of a Möbius band.

One is an entity
Needed to make base 2.
It's in identities
Of trig and Euler, too!

One ... by the law of Benford,
Happens more than all the rest,
Number one is second best to none, son.
This line takes up one dimension!
Like an MAA convention,
Number 1!

Seventeen

(may be sung to the tune of sections of Janis Ian's Grammy-winning #1 hit “At Seventeen”)

I learned the truth at 17
That math was the true science queen!
In high school math club, I sure grew,
Then ARML and the Putnam, too.

I learned of math I never knew,
Beyond the book, beyond my school,
It all made math more beautiful:
At 17, I learned the truth.

And those of us with slide rule cases, unafraid of abstract spaces,
We could feel right at home, inventing theorems on our own
That called out from infinity
And murmured vague simplicities –
A taste of what it seems at 17.

Seventeen's in many places – like how many different cases
Of repetition I can show in wallpaper in my home,
And Gauss made a heptadecagon
With the tools Greeks had around,
When he was just two years past 17!

Postscript

I've been a songwriter since the year I became a math major and I have enjoyed the humanistic fruits of combining these passions in classrooms and conferences. Some forty of my math lyrics have appeared in venues such as *Journal of Mathematics and the Arts*, *American Mathematical Monthly*, and *MAA Math Horizons*, and my song "The Gambler" yielded a video that won a first-place prize in the national 2011 *Quantitative Literacy in the Media* contest sponsored by the Quantitative Literacy Special Interest Group of the Mathematical Association of America (SIGMAA-QL).

These three lyrics were debuted at opening banquets of MathFest, the summer national meetings of the Mathematical Association of America. I kicked off the 2008 MathFest by performing an hour's worth of my math songs, including the debut of unpublished originals such as "The Day Math Teachers Took Over the World" as well as parodies such as "Seventeen." The 2011 MathFest was launched with the debut of *MAA: The Musical!*, whose closing number (complete with choreography from the stellar cast Annalisa Crannell assembled) was "One!"