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Algebra, Algebra, You Were So Tough

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wrote innumerable completely honest and lucid essays on mathematicians and the practice of mathematics, many of them collected into the books *Discrete Thoughts* and *Indiscrete Thoughts*. He was working on a book of provocative quotations entitled *Forbidden Thoughts* at the time of his death.

Rota developed *Advances in Mathematics* virtually single-handedly into one of the leading journals of research mathematics, and he was the editor-in-chief of the *Encyclopedia of Mathematics*, a book series that contains definitive expositions of a wide range of mathematical topics. In the course of his career, he held visiting positions at ten universities throughout the world, and, beginning in 1966, he was a consultant at Los Alamos National Laboratory. He received four honorary degrees (and was just about to receive an-

other, from Nankai University); also among his honors are the Steele Prize of the American Mathematical Society (1988) and the Killian Faculty Achievement Award at MIT (1996). He was appointed the Norbert Wiener Professor of Mathematics at MIT for a five-year period beginning in 1998, and he was the Colloquium Lecturer of the American Mathematical Society in 1998.

Gianco had the extraordinary ability to touch deeply the lives of all with whom he associated, whatever their background and experience. Rarely, if ever, has the passing of a professional mathematician left such a large void.

Richard Stanley
Department of Mathematics, MIT



Math applies to everyday life
Whether you are measuring sugar or dealing with
 strife.

Counting calories in a diet
Saving for a car, and it is time to buy it.
Planning ahead for your college years,
Calculating your interest in the bank with tears.
Taking a vacation in a car,
Planning for motels and the distance thus far.
Building a house and measuring the walls,
Driving the distance to the nearest malls.
Filling your car with a tank of gas,
Using a movie coupon as a pass.
Add, subtract, multiply or divide,
The choices are many, and you must decide.
Baking a pie at the right degree,
Means a lot to you and your family.
Geometry helps in the game of pool,
You need to know angles if you want to rule.
Music requires counting the beat,
Rhythm and rhyme and good timing meet.
Understanding math is important, you see,
It is passed through the years throughout history.
Math applies without a doubt to all that you do.
Understanding math can carry you through.

Geoffrey Smith

Algebra algebra,. You were so tough!
Of X's and Y's I'd had quite enough!
Expressions, equations, inequalities too,
As to finding solutions, I hadn't a clue!
Multiplication, addition, division, subtraction,
All your hard work drove me to distraction!
Your secretive variable was always unknown,
Unless you got lucky and found it alone!
But then came a lesson I learned from a friend,
And now I'm no longer at my wit's end.
When faced with a value that seems undefined,
The trick is to relax and open your mind,
So the knowledge that's in there can flow unarrested,
And answers can come easily in class when I'm tested.

Ryan Best

Math is a subject that is the best,
I like it better than all the rest.
It is so complex and so interesting,
I never know how much work it could be.
First with addition, then subtraction,
Then moving on to things like fractions.
Multiplication, division, and more,
Then on to geometry with shapes galore.
As I grew older with more math ahead,
It was so fun, some think I never could dread.
Then on to algebra and the metric system,
Having good attendance, I didn't want to miss 'em.

Alexandra Holliday