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## Books: Why Beauty Is Truth - The History of Symmetry, by Ian Stewart

### Reviews

"Stewart is a highly gifted communicator, able not only to explain the motivation of mathematicians down the centuries but to elucidate the resulting mathematics with both clarity and style. The whole is leavened by his inimitable understated wit...and clarity...as he draws you into the minds of pathfinders...cutting through the clutter of the often slow and painful development of new ideas with a conviction that make this book accessible and motivating to anyone with a serious interest in maths. I resorted to hiding it from other members of the family until I'd finished and am confident that those on the 'waiting list' will not be disappointed. Inspirational." - Times Educational Supplement

"Stewart, long a class act in popular maths, does not shy from presenting equations, illuminating them with imagistic explanations and sympathetic character sketches of heroes past and present." - The Guardian

"Stewart's book is a good humoured, panoramic history of the development of mathematics from Babylonian times to the present... (A) fine contribution to mathematical literature..." - FT

"The study of symmetry has become one of the most potent analytical tools for physicist, and a fundamental pillar of pure mathematics. Maybe this is what Keats was on about when he wrote 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty.' At any rate, there's been a gap in the market for a book to explain all this to a popular audience, and now Ian Stewart has filled it with Why

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Beauty is Truth. In it, he skilfully mixes narrative on the historical development of group theory - the mathematical machinery of symmetry - with effective lay explanations of how it actually works. Some of these may leave your brain gibbering helplessly in a corner - this can be technical. But in general they are staggeringly elegant... Keats would approve." - BBC Focus Magazine

"Impressive... valuable and intelligent... (Ian Stewart is) an excellent professional mathematician" - Daily Telegraph

"Stewart... is renowned for his popular science books, but Why Beauty is Truth is without a doubt the finest. If it were only for its lively informal style, its historical characters, its intrigue... its beautiful prose, it would be praiseworthy. Yet, its real uniqueness - its power - is in what it uncovers. It brings us the heart of why mathematicians pursue mathematics." Nature "Dealing with the concept of symmetry, this book takes you on an easy and thrilling journey through the history of an idea and the men for whom it was an obsession. From the first sentence, that plants the reader in the midst of a duel, you are treated to a tale that is as much a history of individuals as it is of ideas. A surprising topic presented in an astonishingly entertaining manner."- Good Book Guide