



Show-Me

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Literacy.....

KISS MY MATH

By Danica McKellar

Reviews and Quotes

The Boston Globe

The funny business of change

By Caroline Leavitt

August 3, 2008

Laughter can defuse tense situations, bring people closer, and yep, here, in three exhilarating books, it can make any kind of serious personal growth a blast.

For many people, algebra equals anxiety. That's a common enough equation, but for girls there's another factor, in that they still don't feel encouraged to excel in math, and many still worry that boys won't like them if they do. Enter Danica McKellar - an actress on "The Wonder Years" and "The West Wing," and a math genius to boot - to deal with this inequality in "**Kiss My Math: Showing Pre-Algebra**

Who's Boss." McKellar's message isn't just to clear up math confusion, but to encourage teenage girls to claim their smarts and their power, and to realize that math is a stepping-stone to any number of incredible careers.

Every page of this winning book is lively and interesting, filled with quotes from teenagers about their successes in math, zippy little drawings, and short-cuts for solving even the thorniest math problems. There are testimonials from "cool nerds" like Stephanie Perry, the financial editor of Essence magazine; sections on how to beat stress; and even pop quizzes on whether your friends are really supportive. And of course, there is the math. To help young mathematicians, McKellar makes math user-friendly, comparing integers to mints and variables to blind dates, and her explanations of difficult algebra equations are clear and to the point.



She even shows girls the best way to study, advising them to save time by focusing only on what they might need a cheat sheet for.

Math may not seem cool in school for girls, but as McKellar shows with profiles of fabulous and successful women, it is smart, exciting, and glamorous. Don't dumb yourself down, McKellar urges. Study now, and later, she promises, any math-addicted girl will want to kiss herself for caring enough to learn - and kiss her math, too.

Let's Play Math!

By Denise

Actress and math maven [Danica McKellar](#) has traveled through the pre-algebra jungle and beyond, up the slopes to [higher math](#). She survived the journey, and now, on the heels of her [bestselling book](#) for math-phobic middle schoolers, she has written [Kiss My Math](#) to guide uncertain students along their way.

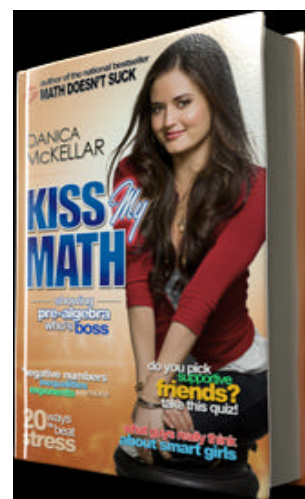
Step by step, she leads pre-algebra students through the basics of working with negative numbers, getting cozy with variables, translating word problems, and solving equations — and even a short introduction to functions and graphing.

Along the way, sidebars offer definitions of math terminology, quick tips, shortcuts, and warnings about common student errors. Each chapter ends with a short list of “Takeaway Tips,” summarizing the main concepts a student needs to master.

Teen-magazine-style personality quizzes, quick quotes, “What Guys *Really* Think...” polls, and testimonials from successful women provide interesting breaks between the math lessons.

At the end of the book is a “Math Test Survival Guide,” which may be worth the price of the book in itself. McKellar offers specific ways to focus your study in the days leading up to a big test:

- Ahead of Time — Everyday Tips to Make Tests Easier
- When a Test is Announced
- 4 to 5 Days Before the Test
- The Evening Before the Test
- The Morning of the Test
- When the Test Is Handed to You



What I liked

All the best features of McKellar's [first book](#) are back: clear explanations written in conversational English, step-by-step example problems, very short exercise sets, and the "Danica's Diary" entries, which showcase math in interesting, real-life stories. The book makes pre-algebra feel comfortable, as if the reader were sitting down to chat with a friendly tutor.

I like that McKellar not only explains the commutative and associative properties, but more important, she explains why students should care about something so basic. I mean, we've been using these rules since first grade. Why pay attention to them now? (Answer: Because they make life easier by letting us "get around the whole PEMDAS thing.")

I love the creative ways McKellar found to explain math operations:

- MINT-egers make working with negative numbers as easy as eating candy.
- The Mirror Rule makes short work of multiplying and dividing integers and helps students remember how to deal with inequality symbols.
- Forget poor, old Aunt Sally! The dining habits of pandas make for the best explanation of PEMDAS I've ever seen.
- If you enjoy doodling, you'll be great at combining like terms.
- Solving an equation is like unwrapping a gift.

I like the "Watch Out!" sections that tell students how to avoid the most common beginner's mistakes in al-

gebra, like trying to cancel out the negative signs in $\frac{-2+y}{-5}$ or distributing the square in $(y+x)^2$.

The teen-magazine-style sidebars were more focused this time, coming back repeatedly to the theme of girls "dumbing themselves down" so guys will like them. I laughed at this comparison to "uglying yourself up":

Most of all, I like the "What's the Deal?" sidebars that explain *why* math works the way it does: Why do you have to work from left to right when following the order of operations? Why can you cancel out pairs of negative signs? Why does the Mirror Rule work? Why is $3(x+y)$ considered a single term? And why does it matter? Why can't we say that $|-x|=x$? etc.

What I didn't like

As a math teacher, I can't find anything not to like about this book.

Okay, maybe one thing: the bubblegum mnemonic image for slope was a bit of a stretch, in more ways than one. Still, I suppose that might help a student remember it all the better.

As a parent, I appreciate the emphasis on being smart and savvy, on paying attention in class, studying, and asking for help when needed. But I found myself cringing occasionally at the unquestioned acceptance of a TV/teen-magazine culture. I never had much patience with boy-crazy girls when I was in junior high, and I certainly don't want my daughters to be obsessed with dating. I think the "humorous" aside about kissing (in the MINT-eger chapter) is particularly out of place in a book aimed at junior-high girls.



Worksheets

Do You Sudoku?

I was first introduced to Sudoku on the set of *How I Met Your Mother*. (See pp. 190–1 for a testimonial from executive producer/Director Pam Fryman!) During the taping of my first episode of the series, Alyson Hannigan (character: Lily) taught me how to play. I quickly discovered that the whole set was obsessed with it—actors, crew members, you name it! Whenever they're not taping, out come the Sudoku puzzles.

Here are the basic rules: The goal is to fill in each square with a number 1 through 9, so that every column has exactly one of each digit (no repeats), every row has exactly one of each digit, and every bolded 3×3 box has exactly one of each digit. The challenge is that every row, column, and 3×3 box must have *one and only one* of each digit.

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 3 | | 5 | | | | | |
| | | 8 | 7 | | 9 | 6 | | |
| | 7 | | | 6 | | 3 | | 2 |
| | | | 5 | 3 | | 2 | 4 | |
| 6 | | 4 | 9 | | 7 | 8 | | 5 |
| 2 | 5 | | 1 | 4 | | | | |
| 7 | | 9 | | 1 | | | 4 | |
| | | 2 | 8 | | 4 | 7 | | |
| 3 | | | | | 6 | | 9 | |

Wanna try? Let's look at the middle horizontal row—the one that starts with a 6 and ends with a 5. It only has three open spots, and if you look at the digits already in that row, you'll see that the only digits "needed" in the row are 1, 2, and 3. Looking at the first empty spot (the one shaded gray), let's see if we can figure out what goes there. Checking its column, there's already a 3 (up top). We can't have another 3 in the column, so that's out. Also, within its 3×3 box, we can see that there's already a 2, and since we can't repeat the same digit within a bolded 3×3 box, the spot can only be filled in with a 1! Go ahead, write it in. Tip: Never write in a number unless you know it *has* to be true. Also, be sure you've finished your homework before you do these; they can be addicting! For more puzzles and strategies, do an Internet search for "easy Sudoku," and for the solution to this one, see kissmymath.com. Good luck!

Sudoku

from p.264 in *Kiss My Math*

Here's a larger one for you to print!
Remember, start by figuring out what number the shaded box
has to be; It'll be an easier way to start.

Good luck!

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 3 | | 5 | | | | | |
| | | 8 | 7 | | 9 | 6 | | |
| | 7 | | | 6 | | 3 | | 2 |
| | | | | 5 | 3 | | 2 | 4 |
| 6 | | 4 | 9 | | 7 | 8 | | 5 |
| 2 | 5 | | 1 | 4 | | | | |
| 7 | | 9 | | 1 | | | 4 | |
| | | 2 | 8 | | 4 | 7 | | |
| 3 | | | | | 6 | | 9 | |

Here's the solution!

How did you do?

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 8 | 2 | 4 | 7 | 9 |
| 4 | 2 | 8 | 7 | 3 | 9 | 6 | 5 | 1 |
| 9 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 3 | 8 | 2 |
| 8 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| 6 | 1 | 4 | 9 | 2 | 7 | 8 | 3 | 5 |
| 2 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 8 | 9 | 6 | 7 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 6 |
| 5 | 6 | 2 | 8 | 9 | 4 | 7 | 1 | 3 |
| 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 9 | 8 |

You can find many more sudoku puzzles online; just do an internet search for "easy sudoku".

Just like math, this kind of puzzle is great for building the brain!

MACCE 2010

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It will be a *mystery* what MAACCE 2010 is all about!

MAACCE may be a *mystery* to you. **MAACCE is....**The Missouri Association for Adult Continuing and Community Education (MAACCE) which focuses on lifelong learning by enhancing the growth and development of professionals with diverse roles as they address the changing needs of their communities.

It is a wonderful organization for professionals in the Adult Education & Literacy field.

Come join the fun at MAACCE 2010. MAACCE 2010 will be June 23-25, 2010, at Tan-Tar-A. The Mystery Theatre theme will be imbedded throughout the conference. Check out the MAACCE website for the latest news and updates on the upcoming event www.maacce.org.

The conference will start off with a mysteries and intriguing Leadership Academy pre-conference. The conference will also have a keynote speaker and several more mysteries speakers so please come join the fun! The presentations break-out sessions, and much more will be a mystery. Some mysteries information will be shared for the classroom by giving a presentation all types of teachers. All presentation proposals can be emailed to tliston@mail.ncmissouri.edu

If shopping is more your thing, don't miss the silent auction at the conference. If you would like to donate a mystery item or two or a door prize representing the school you work for please do not hesitate to contact Rhonda Jones at 314-367-5000 or email her with questions at rhonda.jones@slps.org or Jana Groner SKopec at 636-358-4084 or email her at jskopec@mail.ncmissouri.edu

Don't forget to bring your golf clubs, tennis shoes, swimming suits and lots of energy! The conference location has great golf course, nature trails for walk/runs, indoor water park, several outdoor pools and so much more! Plus the outlet malls are not too far from the resort too! So much to do and so little time!

We look forward to the get-together at Tan-Tar-A at the annual conference!

Don't miss out on a great opportunity to take part in networking with teachers throughout the state of Missouri at Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri and solve some of your classroom mysteries! Again, see you at MAACCE 2010, June 22-5, 2010!