

READING REACTION GUIDELINES

Brian Munson, Math 115

I have given you some literature to read, and asked you to write a reaction of at least one page. Part of the goal of all of this is to get you to step back from what we have been doing in class and appreciate it from a different point of view. I think that it is useful, however cliché or corny it may sound, to understand that this “mathematical experience” is not so far removed from your other intellectual pursuits, and even your daily life. Cultural and intellectual zeitgeists are often expressed in a myriad of ways, and it is important for us to understand not only that we are a part of a bigger picture, but also to be critical of our own thinking so that we may discover new and original ideas. Oh yeah, you might just find a new author you’d like to read.

So what should you write? Naturally, anything that comes to mind is fine, but the following are some things to think about. However, let me emphasize that anything you think about them is worth exploring, so long as you do so in a coherent manner. After all, these responses will be the basis for our discussion.

1. These stories have been chosen because I think they reflect something mathematical or some mathematical way of thinking. What strikes you as “mathematical” about these stories?
2. Some stories involve clever twists of logic, and just as we appreciate stories for their logical (and often surprising) developments, so can we appreciate mathematical proofs for the same qualities. Try to see if you can identify these twists and the devices used by the author to achieve them. Do some of these stories possess similar twists, and are they possibly related to mathematical ideas with a similar effect?
3. What do you find most interesting about these stories? Which lines were particularly effective and why? What was your initial reaction?