

Amy Drummond  
Math 5  
Flatland Outline for 11/6

***Questions for the Class:***

1. Do any of Abbott's criticisms of Victorian society apply today? Do you think his satire is still relevant?
2. Does Abbott believe that other dimensions exist? What is the relationship between higher dimensions and religion?

***Discussion Points:***

**1. How does Flatland relate to other texts and themes in the class?**

- a. The easiest way to relate this text to others we have read is to consider the main character as a mathematician. What is Abbott saying about mathematicians since the Square is chosen by the Sphere to be a prophet?
- b. What themes from class are reproduced in this story? Things are not what they seem to be; pursuit of knowledge; is ignorance bliss? (women don't know what's going on even which square says is good for them; the point)

**2. Consider the story as a commentary on British Royalty**

- a. Ignorance of royalty- Monarch in Lineland and point in Pointland (believes he is a king); Chief Circle in Flatland (called President at the end of the book). What is Abbott saying about the British Monarchy?

**3. Knowledge Production and Teaching**

- a. What does the Square's fate (being in jail without convincing anyone of the existence of a third dimension) tell the reader about Abbott's main message on knowledge production and dissemination?
- b. Abbott's passion was teaching, how might the Square's fate reflect how Abbott felt about his own teaching career?

**4. Divisions between men and women: intelligent vs unintelligent; emotional vs rational**

- a. What is the significance of the Sphere believing that emotional qualities are more important than intelligence? Why would this be different in Spaceland and why does the Sphere never discuss what women in Spaceland are like?

**5. Importance of considering a 4<sup>th</sup> Dimension:**

- a. Does Abbott believe that other dimensions exist? What is the relationship between higher dimensions and religion (transcendentalism 196)? Is Abbott simply commenting on how people are ignorant of things which they have not personally experienced by using the Square's experience of other dimensions?

- b. Why is the Square's disbelief in the 3<sup>rd</sup> dimension especially important after he has felt the frustration of trying to explain another dimension in his dream (when he was in Lineland)?

### **Mathematical References**

1. Limits and characteristics of different dimensions
2. Progression of Point-Line-Square-cube- hypercube
3. Concept of a sphere as many circles in one
4. Geometric progressions and arithmetic progressions
5. Euclidean Geometry
6. Perspective (?)

### **Sources Pertaining to Topics:**

1. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women\\_in\\_the\\_Victorian\\_era](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_the_Victorian_era)
2. "Being Edwin Abbott" Lin, DennisView Profile. The Village Voice [New York] 22 Jan 2002: 74-76
3. Most of my info came from the notes by Lindgren and Banchoff