

Maths - who needs it anyway?

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I cannot speak to you in the language of maths. I tried to learn it once upon a time but it was too hard. It is a foreign language, and besides I'm only a girl, and girls aren't so good at maths - or so I'm told!

Don't ask me about **number sense** because I never could make much sense out of numbers. I invented the term *numerical dyslexia* as an excuse for my number confusion. Anyway, who needs numbers? I'd rather be an environmental scientist and figure things out to help conserve the native forests. Do you know what percentage of New Zealand's native trees are destroyed each year by hungry possums? Maybe I can help you. I have read that every night they consume 21,000 tonnes of vegetation. That's one big 'salad' - it's a container ship full! I wonder if the percentage of manuka honey (my favourite) has decreased because of these imported pests?

A full coat would be good to keep warm in the forest. I wonder how many possum pelts it would take to make one fur coat? Yes, I think I'd make a good environmentalist. Or maybe I could be a fashion designer. Hmmm!

I don't know anything about **measurement** though. How about I read you the story of Noah's Ark (as told very well by Jane Ray) instead. We could bring the story alive as we estimate, and then pace out, the size of the Ark on the playing field. We could go on an ancient 'journey' together and visualise how high and how wide the Ark was, and how big the animal pens would have been, and how big the animal pens would have been, and how many different sizes of pens Noah would have needed for each pair of animals. What is the difference in size between a pen for an elephant and one for a rabbit? How long ago was it, and who invented cubits anyway? Yes, I'd much rather read a story if you don't mind.

I don't know much about **geometry**, except that it's all that boring stuff about triangles and squares and circles. But if you like I can introduce you to some beautiful kowhaiwhai patterns and we can analyse the shapes and discover the meanings of the patterns. If we turn the patterns this way or that we can see that they kind of mirror each other. Is there a word for that? Can you see the symmetries of reflection and rotation among the designs, and can you see how the patterns translate? They are a language unto themselves. Would you like to come with me to the Marae to see the tukutuku panels and what patterns they contain? We could ask the Kaumatua questions about why the kowhaiwhai are there, and why they are the way they are. Oh please Miss, I like making patterns. Can we do art instead of Maths?

Please don't ask me about **algebra**. That's way too scary. And anyway algebra sounds more like a relative of the zebra than maths. Zebra - stripes - linear

things. Lines on a graph - I wonder? Graphs and diagrams are really helpful for comparing relationships in social studies. Yes, let's do social studies instead of maths.

Statistics ... aargh! They're way too difficult. Way a mo! Didn't we recently fill out some forms for the Department of Statistics? Census forms I think they were. Who on earth are the Department of Statistics, and why do they want to know how many people live at my house? Maybe we could phone the 0800 number and see what they do with all the numbers they collect. Maybe we could have a census in our classroom and then play around with the numbers and see what sort of 'story' they tell us. We could discuss the probability of MacDonald's burgers being better than BK burgers. How many burgers would our class eat in a year? That sounds much more fun than statistics.

Like I said at the beginning, I can't talk to you about maths - I just don't know enough about it. Besides, there are so many more interesting things I'd like to do, such as being creative and figuring things out. Maths, who needs it?