



0. A Beautiful Mind - Story Preface

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Photograph of Professor John Nash, Jr. at the 1st Meeting of Laureates in Economic Sciences in Lindau, Germany, September 1-4, 2004. Image online, courtesy Nobelprize.org.

He is a mathematical genius.

Professor R.J. Duffin

Carnegie Tech 1948 Letter of Recommendation
for John Nash to Princeton University

John Forbes Nash, Jr. was a child prodigy.

While other boys his age were playing childhood games in their hometown of Bluefield, West Virginia, John was reading E.T. Bell's *Men of Mathematics*. Learning more at home than he did at school, the young lad (who was encouraged by his educated parents) was able to solve some of math's most difficult problems.

Accepting a full-ride fellowship to Princeton University, John Nash was surrounded by some of the best and brightest people working in mathematics and science at the time. Undaunted by the brilliance of people like Albert Einstein, the blossoming genius followed his own path. When he was 21, Nash wrote a doctoral thesis that eventually made him a Nobel Laureate.

But that Nobel Prize came decades after most people had either written off John Nash or thought he was dead. What caused people to think such a thing? The words of Nash himself best describe the unraveling of his brilliant mind:

...the staff at my university, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology [where he was teaching], and later all of Boston were behaving strangely towards me...I started to see crypto-communists everywhere...I started to think I was a man of great religious importance, and to hear voices all the time.

I began to hear something like telephone calls in my head, from people opposed to my ideas...The delirium was like a dream, from which I seemed never to awake.

At 30 years of age, John Nash had schizophrenia - a condition from which most afflicted people never recover.

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John Nash Letter of Recommendation

When John Nash was only 19 years old, his Professor at Carnegie Institute of Technology recommended him to the Math Department at Princeton by calling him "a mathematical genius."

This image depicts the letter which Professor Richard J. Duffin signed on February 11, 1948. It says:

Dear Professor Lefschetz:

This is to recommend Mr. John F. Nash, Jr. who has applied for entrance to the graduate college at Princeton.

Mr. Nash is nineteen years old and is graduating from Carnegie Tech in June. He is a mathematical genius.

Yours sincerely,

Richard J. Duffin

The professor at Princeton, to whom Duffin wrote, was Solomon Lefschetz. Among many things, he was famous—according to his students—for something unusual in a math prof:

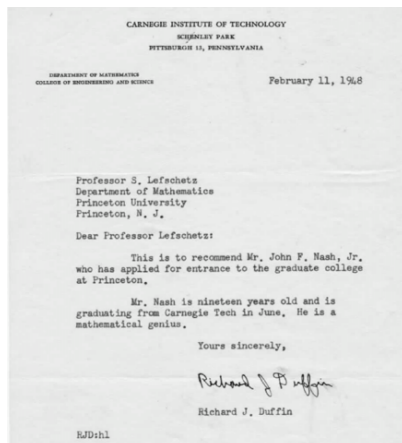
He never gave an incorrect result or a correct proof.

Click on the image for a better view.

Image of letter, described above, online via Princeton University.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/John-Nash-Letter-of-Recommendation>

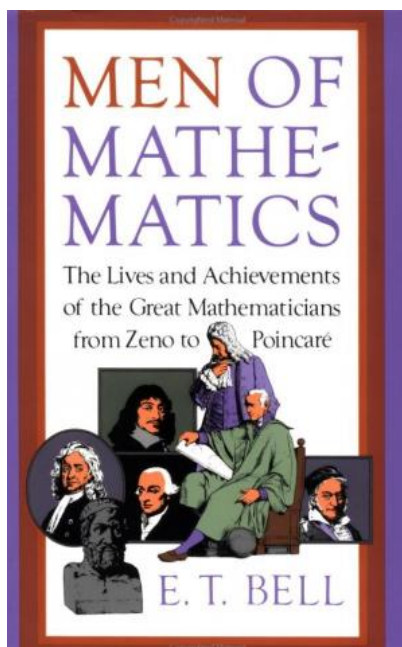


Bluefield, West Virginia - Map Locator

Image online, courtesy [Released Time Education](#) website.

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Men of Mathematics

Image online, courtesy [amazon.com](#) website.

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John Nash

Image online, courtesy princeton.edu website.

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A Beautiful Mind

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