

Foreword Review

The Math Kids: A Knotty Problem

David Cole Shannon O'Toole, Illustrator Common Deer Press (Oct 1, 2022) Softcover \$12.95 (206pp) 978-1-988761-73-2

The Math Kids, an intrepid problem-solving quartet, have cracked mysteries both large and small. In their latest adventure, *A Knotty Problem*, they come up against their steepest challenge yet: the possibility that they could break up.

When Stephanie's state soccer tournament is scheduled on the same day as the all-important district math competition, an argument with Justin over priorities results in Stephanie and Catherine quitting the Math Kids in a huff. While Jordan tries to patch things up, Justin learns his family is planning to relocate across the country, a move that might splinter the group forever. For once, the Kids must use their skills not to foil criminals, but to find a way to stick together.

A Knotty Problem features all of the scintillating brain-twisters that one associates with the series, while its more personal stakes have a grounding effect. The Kids' abilities may be extraordinary, but the challenges they face are much the same as those that average fifth-graders face, whether over maintaining the bonds of friendship in difficult times, or learning the value of teamwork on a soccer field or during a high-pressure quiz.

As always, the book supplies plenty of useful math knowledge, ranging from the concept of the Gordian Knot, which plays a key role in the resolution of Justin's dilemma, to a biography of George Polya, the "father of problem-solving." And its characterizations are deft, so that the Kids' squabbles and efforts to do what's right are heartwarming. Charming illustrations complement the book's friendly tone.

Capped off with a tense final math showdown (the full solutions for which are included in the book's informative appendix), *A Knotty Problem* continues the Math Kids series' streak of providing entertainment and enlightenment.

HO LIN (September / October 2022)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.