

## Learning Mathematics: Like Proposing to a Girl

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### ABSTRACT

This poem likens learning mathematics to a boy who proposes love to a girl. In the African culture, there are certain qualities of a girl that are considered when she is ripe for being proposed to: outside physical appearance, hardworking capability and beauty as well as inner qualities such as intelligence, good morals, faithfulness, loving and feeling for others. However, there are challenges and obstacles encountered when the boy proposes love. In this poem, the 'learner' of mathematics is the 'boy' whereas the 'girl' is mathematics itself. Suggestions for dealing with the challenges and obstacles are hereby given. This poem can be dramatized or acted by teachers and their learners in the mathematics classroom situation, or can be used as a motivational teaching strategy by mathematics teachers or college lecturers.

**Keywords:** learning mathematics, proposing love, humor, symbolism, learning obstacles, coping with challenges, motivational teaching strategies

### Contribution of this paper to the literature

- Since mathematics, by its very nature, is deemed to be a difficult subject by the majority of people, the author has designed a poem that can be recited, dramatized or acted (with some suitable adaptations) by learners or teachers of mathematics in order to remove or reduce fear, anxiety and negative attitude of the subject. The poem is in humorous 'art form' which likens or symbolizes mathematics to a 'difficult' or 'attitudinal' girl who does not easily fall in love with a boy (the proposer or the learner of mathematics). Like in most African cultures, the girl who is being proposed to does not easily give in; so it takes determination, perseverance, witty, humor, etc., for the boy to win her heart.
- The paper contributes to strategies of learning and teaching mathematics in motivational and humorous ways. It also contributes to ways of reducing anxiety and fear of mathematics and building positive attitudes and beliefs. It can be recited as it is just for fun or may be used by mathematics teachers who normally find it difficult to convince their students to like mathematics. The paper contributes to knowledge by giving suggestions of steps to follow if a learner initially finds learning mathematics difficult. Mathematics learners and their teachers can also transform the poem into a video which can be presented or shown at the schools' mathematics math clubs.

## THE POEM

*Learning Mathematics is like proposing love to a girl  
When you first meet her  
You look at her face and her physical appearance  
You also try to investigate her 'inner' qualities  
You see that she is truly a beautiful and admirable girl  
You then decide to like her  
But you are not courageous enough to tell her  
So you start by asking her some silly questions  
She either replies in one-word answers or keeps 'mum'*

*Learning Mathematics is like proposing love to a girl  
When you first meet the girl Mathematics  
Look at her broad outside appearance  
Study her life history  
Learn why and how she developed  
You will be motivated to like her*

*When the girl you like best keeps 'mum'  
You try to please her in various ways  
You may play some interesting games during her presence  
Or sing some nice songs in her presence  
You might engage a third party to talk to her  
If you fail, don't give up  
Just give it a short rest and try again later  
One day she will begin to talk some sense with you  
And you will begin to like each other  
And that liking will develop into love  
Deep love and true love  
Love of such kind as  
"Where you go, I will go  
What you eat, I will eat  
Where you sleep, I will sleep  
And when you die, I will also long to die"*

*Learning Mathematics is like that  
When you have looked at her appearance  
And have studied her history  
And have begun to like her  
You should now engage her  
By thinking Mathematics each day  
Talking Mathematics each day  
Practicing Mathematics each day*

*But if you fail, don't give up  
Just give it a short rest  
And do something else  
Like playing some math games  
Or singing some math songs  
Or revisiting math content or literature  
Or engaging a third party or a tutor*

*One day you will succeed  
And that liking of 'her' will develop into love  
You will begin to love Mathematics  
And Mathematics will also love you  
You will be known as a mathematician  
Or a mathematics specialist  
Or a mathematics educator  
Or whatever name they shall label you with  
But you know that you and 'her' are lovers until death  
But when you die Mathematics will remain,  
For others to like 'her' or love 'her'.*

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