



The Boy Who Loved Math: The Improbable Life of Paul Erdos

By Deborah Heiligman

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Most people think of mathematicians as solitary, working away in isolation. And, it's true, many of them do. But Paul Erdos never followed the usual path. At the age of four, he could ask you when you were born and then calculate the number of seconds you had been alive in his head. But he didn't learn to butter his own bread until he turned twenty. Instead, he traveled around the world, from one mathematician to the next, collaborating on an astonishing number of publications. With a simple, lyrical text and richly layered illustrations, this is a beautiful introduction to the world of math and a fascinating look at the unique character traits that made "Uncle Paul" a great man.

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Though eccentric mathematician Paul Erdos might seem an unusual subject for a picture book, his story makes for a memorable biography. Growing up in Hungary during WWI, Erdos tried school but chafed at the rules and convinced his mother that he should study at home. He was fascinated by numbers from an early age, and by the time he was 20, he was known as The Magician from Budapest. Unable to do common tasks such as cooking, laundry, or driving, he spent his adult life flying around the world, staying with other mathematicians, and working collaboratively on challenging math problems. Math is woven into the lively writing (Mama loved Paul to infinity. Paul loved Mama to 8, too!). The wonderfully vivid artwork, where ideas from the text are clarified, also uses decorative elements to support the idea that Erdos saw the world differently—numerically. Heiligman appends a lengthy note about writing the book, while Pham offers a more extensive note on creating the illustrations, in which she comments on the mathematical ideas and mathematicians depicted in the art. This excellent picture-book biography celebrates a man little known outside his field, but one well worth knowing. Grades K-3. --Carolyn Phelan

Review

“Erdos's unconventional brilliance shines through on every page, and extensive author and illustrator notes (including Pham's explanations of the mathematical concepts she works into each illustration) will delight readers with even a fraction of Erdos's interest in math.” *?Publishers Weekly, starred review*

“*An exuberant and admiring portrait introduces the odd, marvelously nerdy, way cool Hungarian-born itinerant mathematical genius.” *?Kirkus Reviews, starred review*

“An infinitely creative and entertaining book.” *?The Horn Book*

“Pair this with Don Brown's *Odd Boy Out* (BCCB 10/04) to compare genius eccentricities, or hand it to middle-grade lovers of math puzzles--opened to the notes.” *?BCCB*

About the Author

Deborah Heiligman has written numerous books for young readers, including *Charles and Emma: The Darwins' Leap of Faith*, a National Book Award finalist. She lives in New York City.

LeUyen Pham has illustrated dozens of books for kids, including *God's Dream* by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, *Freckleface Strawberry* by Julianne Moore, and her own *Big Sister, Little Sister*.

Users Review

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Andy McNeil:

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