Archimedes

(c. 287–212 B.C.)
Archimedes made many contributions to the field of mathematics. He calculated a good approximation for pi, the constant used to find the area of a circle. He calculated the volume of a sphere, found approximate values of square roots, and invented a system for expressing large numbers. He also invented many different types of machines. He is regarded by many as the greatest mathematician and scientist of antiquity.

Find out more on
Infinite Secrets
On PBS September 30, 2003 at 8:00 p.m.

Check your local listings as dates and times may vary.
www.pbs.org/nova/archimedes

What do modern-day mathematicians study?

David Harold Blackwell

(1919–)
Game theory is a type of math used to study how groups of people interact. It can be applied to games, economics, or military decisions. American mathematician David Harold Blackwell developed a proof in game theory that connected the mathematical fields of game theory and topology.

Cathleen Synge Morawetz

(1923–)
Mathematics is often called the language of science. Canadian mathematician Cathleen Synge Morawetz used math to study the flow of air over an airplane wing. Later in her career, she studied sound waves and shock waves, again using math to describe scientific phenomena.

Andrew Wiles

(1953–)
Mathematicians sometimes work to solve long-standing math problems. British mathematician Andrew Wiles worked for seven years to solve Fermat's Last Theorem, which had eluded mathematicians for more than three centuries. Wiles doesn't believe that Fermat himself ever had a proof for the theorem.