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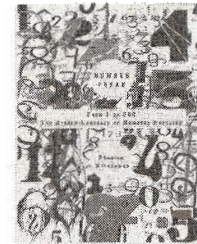
Number Freak: From 1 to 200, the Hidden Language of Numbers Revealed

By Derrick Niederman

Penguin, 291 pages, \$15.00

Did you know that da Vinci once produced a 72-sided sphere? Or that the U.S. Occupation Forces published a volume called "112 Gripes About the French"? Do you know why the year 46 was the absolute longest year in history, or why the Hell's Angels identify with the number 81? These small bits of information might seem entirely useless to some, but after reading *Number Freak* by Derrick Niederman, not only will you know these things, and more useless trivia, but you'll also be a good time at parties and a shoe-in for Jeopardy!

Niederman has produced a fun look at the



numbers 1 to 200, with each integer given its own chapter that explores its mathematical mysteries, pop culture references and just general fun facts. Those that like math will like this book, but those that are in it for the game show fodder will find that the layout allows for easy skimming and skipping. This is necessary, as the author provides for more high-minded readers by concentrating heavily on areas like the history and development of mathematics, geometry, calculus and science, famous math theorems and historically based number puzzles. However, he explains these items with clarity and a friendly, engaging narrative style, meaning that potential readers looking for the "fun" side of math and more general interest references should not be dissuaded.

Reviewed by Allena Tapia