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A Sampling of Remarkable Groups

Thompson's, Self-similar, Lamplighter,
and Baumslag-Solitar

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ISSN 2296-4568 ISSN 2296-455X (electronic)
Compact Textbooks in Mathematics
ISBN 978-3-030-01976-1 ISBN 978-3-030-01978-5 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-01978-5>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018958914

Mathematics Subject Classification: 20-01, 20E06, 20E22, 20F10, 20F65, 20E08, 20F50, 20F99, 22F50

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The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

For Gilbert

Preface

Note to Students

If you read this text carefully, working out the examples as you go along before reading their solutions, you will be rewarded with some intriguing ideas while gaining group theoretic knowledge. The groups we have chosen to explore in this work are both interesting and important (we discuss why in the individual chapters). Feel free to jump to whichever chapter captures your attention; the chapters need not be read in order. However, that being said, it may be necessary for you to refer back to the Preliminaries chapter (► Chap. 1) or an outside source for some concepts or definitions (these are indicated by italics at their first mention in a chapter). Several concepts and definitions recur throughout many chapters and are developed carefully. Other interesting ideas are mentioned only briefly as possibilities for outside research and definitions of terms are not always given; feel free to ignore these tangential ideas if you wish. More assistance from the relevant literature can also be found in the Bibliography at the end of the text.

The material in this book is meant to be challenging in that it relies heavily on concepts from earlier mathematical courses you have taken, it uses notation you may not have encountered before (and may see expressed differently elsewhere), and it will introduce you to a wide range of proofs. Do not be deterred! Exercises that may prove particularly challenging are marked with an *.

For researchers and students with a more extensive mathematical background, this book is valuable for its introduction to interesting groups and for its references for further study and open questions in the sections titled “Topics for Further Exploration.”

Note to Instructors

This work is intended to be valuable as a supplement to a first course in Abstract Algebra or as a text or supplement for a higher level course. Its chapters are crafted so that they may be assigned individually (with references to ► Chap. 1) or all together. Through the careful reading and solving of the exercises in this text, students will get a chance to synthesize material learned in earlier mathematical courses and be exposed to a wide range of proofs, from simple to complex. This book is also filled with examples and exercises, which lend themselves well to research/honors projects.

The authors claim full responsibility for any errors appearing in these notes.

Brooklyn, NY, USA
New York, NY, USA
Rochester, NY, USA
August 2018

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Acknowledgments

We thank our families first and foremost; without their support this work would not exist.

We also thank our students, friends, and fellow scholars for their support and their many valuable conversations and feedback related to this work: Charlotte Aten (University of Rochester), Sean Cleary (City College, CUNY), Rafael Ferrer (University of Rochester), Benjamin Fine (Fairfield University), Igor Minevich (Boston College), Gretchen Ostheimer (Hofstra University), Ben Steinberg (City College, CUNY), Jian Sun (City Tech, CUNY), Jen Taback (Bowdoin College). A special thank you to our friend and artist Samar ElHitti for her rendition of our Lamplighter in “Lighting the Lamp” appearing in ► Chap. 4.

Thanks to the CUNY Graduate Center, the New York City College of Technology, the Borough of Manhattan Community College, Monroe Community College, our friends at Trattoria Bianca in NYC, the Metro Diner in NYC, Marty’s Cafe and Witten Pond in West Shokan, NY, Putnam Camp in St Huberts, NY, the Barn on East Hill in Naples, NY, and the many other establishments which provided welcoming spaces to work.

Thank you to Gilbert Baumslag, teacher, mentor, friend, advisor, and source of inspiration for all of our group theoretic explorations. You are sorely missed, dear friend.



The authors at the Joint Mathematics Meeting 2015 in San Antonio, TX

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