

12 CORRELATION STREET

What's in a name?

I am marking a set of papers in my study when my eight-year-old son Luke comes in to have a chat.

“Dad, can you read me a story?” he asks plaintively.

“I will read you a story, Luke, but I must just finish this first. Give me five minutes.”

He seems happy with this, and decides to look around. He finds a book called *Proof at A Level*, an ATM publication, and he looks intently at the cover.

“Dad, is this book any good?”

I look up briefly, catching sight of the title page. “Yes, it is.”

“So why doesn't it have a name on the front?”

“It does, look, the Association of Teachers of Mathematics.”

“But wasn't it written by a person?”

I flick to the inside cover. “There. Paul Atkins.”

“So why isn't his name on the cover?”

“It is just not the way the ATM do things.”

Luke still seems unhappy. He wanders round my study some more, making a pile of books that have the author's name on the cover and a pile of those that don't.

"Daddy, I've looked at twenty-four books, and they all have the name of the writer on the front except for this one."

I gauge how much more marking I have left to do, and I sigh.

"Look, Luke, the Association of Teachers of Mathematics has been going for years. It is bigger than any one person. The ATM will be going long after Paul Atkins has retired from teaching."

"Is Paul Atkins ashamed of his book then? Is the ATM ashamed of him?"

"Tell you what, Luke, why don't you try reading this book you are so interested in, and give me some peace and quiet. Please."

Luke agrees, but things don't work out as I hope.

"Pythagoras' Theorem, Lagrange's Theorem, Fermat's Last Theorem – who are these people, Dad? Why doesn't the ATM rub their names out too?"

Leaving my pile of marking, I reach for a recent copy of MT. It's time to give my son some real attention.

"Luke, it says here that the ATM believes that teaching and learning are cooperative activities, that what matters is students, and that teachers serve their students best by building helpful networks of contacts in professional circles. We cooperate, Luke, we don't shout out our own

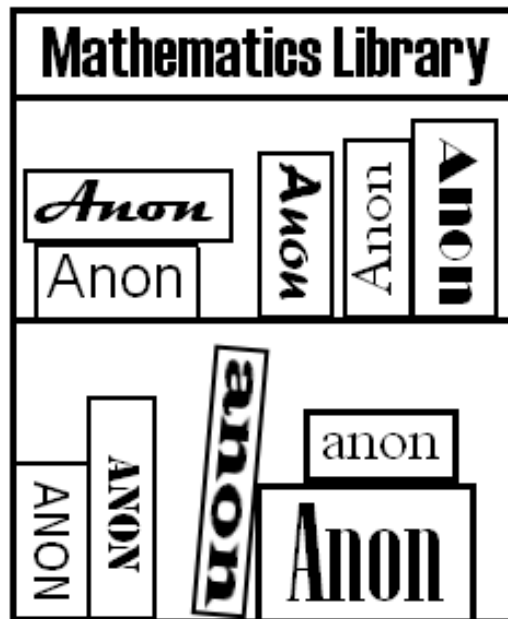
names all the time. It doesn't matter who wrote the book, as long as students learn better as a result. This is not about being a celebrity."

"Yeah, but I like books by Jacqueline Wilson. I would like to read more by her. So I need to see her name on the front. It does matter who wrote it," he says loudly.

"Luke..." I say, surprised by the passion in my young son's voice.

"It's rude!" says Luke, upset now. "It's rude to someone who might want to read the book, and it is rude to Paul Atkins," he adds firmly.

The thought crosses my mind: "What do I say when I meet my students for the first time? *I'm in the ATM, and that's all you need to know?*"



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