

# Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions Part I Summary

Edwin A. Abbott, 1884

## Chapter 1:

A. Square, the narrator and protagonist, starts the book by introducing to his readers this world of Flatland, which he compares to a sheet of paper on which straight lines, triangles, squares, pentagons and other figures roam about.

- The narrator immediately starts the book with an analogy to help the reader-like landscape of his world to what will later look a lot like Victorian Britain.
- This very mathematical world, governed by geometrical concepts and theories, shows that reason and logical thinking will be an important theme throughout the work.
- Religion, Divinity, and the Unknown
- Reason vs. Emotion
- Knowledge and Truth vs. Dogma
- Analogy as Satire, which leads to allegories.

A. Square says that Flatlanders, lacking the ability to distinguish each other by sight, only see each other as straight lines, much in the way one sees the side of a penny from the edge of a table. He includes 3 figures that illustrate how a triangle appears from above, close to the level of a table, and at the level.

- Abbott's inclusion of actual images suggests that analogy may be limited if only conducted through words.
- The fact that Flatlanders all see each other as lines will later prove ironic, since they distinguish each other by more absurd means.
- Social hierarchy and Oppression
- Analogy as satire

## Chapter 2

A. Square continues to illustrate his world by describing its physical environment.

Flatland is organized by four cardinal directions (N, S, E, W), and by a "Law of Nature" there is a constant attraction to the South, which functions as a compass to Flatlanders.

A. Square explains that this attraction affects the weak, the elderly, and women more than it affects men.

- The way in which a physical law of nature (a Southern attraction) establishes distinctions of the weak from the strong illustrates how knowledge is manipulated in order to divide society into hierarchies, straying away from truth and becoming dogma.
- Social Hierarchy and Oppression
- Knowledge and Truth vs. Dogma.

Flatland houses do not have windows because light shines on Flatland and equally day and night. From the topic of light, A. Square makes a digression

and begins rambling about how learned men who questioned the origin of light were heavily taxed and put into asylums.

- Light symbolizes knowledge and its regulatable boundaries. While it seems that everything is unquestionable in Flatland (light shines equally), the upper classes brutally punish those who seek after higher truths and the unknown.
- Social hierarchy and Oppression
- Religion, Divinity, and the Unknown
- Knowledge and Truth vs. Dogma

Houses in Flatland, diagrammed by the author, are legally required to be pentagonal to ensure public safety, because the angles of square and triangular houses pose a safety hazard to careless people. These houses have separate entrances for men and women.

- Notice the juxtaposition between how the state seems to prioritize the well being of its people (the law regarding pentagonal houses) and how it exploits the same "humane" law to discriminate between the sexes.
- Social Hierarchy and Oppression

### Chapter 3

A. Square describes the inhabitants of Flatland and how they are organized into social class based on their shape.

Women are straight lines, and isosceles triangles compose the lowest class of workmen and soldiers.

The middle class consists of equilateral triangles, and the professional and gentlemen class are squares and pentagons.

The nobility begins with hexagons and other polygons. When the number of sides become too numerous that they cannot be distinguished from a circle, that figure is accepted into the highest class, the Circular or Priestly order.

- The intricate way in which Abbott describes the organization of Flatland society eerily coincides with the way Victorian Britain was arranged in social classes.
- It is difficult to overlook these similarities, especially since Abbott uses familiar terms, such as workmen, soldiers, and gentlemen, to illustrate Flatland.
- This extended analogy of Flatland as Britain is fundamental to his satirical objective.
- Social Hierarchy and Oppression.
- Religion, Divinity, and the Unknown.
- Analogy as Satire.

Another "Law of Nature" dictates that a male child is born with one more side than his father. However, A. Square says, "this rule does not consistently apply to the lower social classes of the triangles.

Only through difficult demonstrations of greatness or intermarriages between more intellectual members are the isosceles able to give birth to an equilateral triangle.

- Once again, "nature" is used to manipulate the way in which power resides with the upper class.

- The social hierarchy remains rigid because fewer opportunities are given to those with lower status, while the upper classes find it easier to climb even higher up the social ladder.
- Social Hierarchy and Oppression
- Knowledge and Truth vs. Dogma.

The birth of a true equilateral triangle from isosceles parents is strictly regulated by the state. The child must be examined by the Sanitary and Social Board. If he is certified as "Regular", he is ceremonially admitted into the class of Equilaterals. He is also adopted by new Equilateral parents to prevent the child from reverting to his hereditary disposition.

- Even though Flatland is a made-up world of shapes, it also looks like an actual society, with an official state department, such that the reader cannot help but compare Flatland to their own world and the bureaucracies therein.
- That births are so highly regulated illustrates how social hierarchy is strictly maintained, even though cruel and inhumane practices like taking a child from its parents.
- Social Hierarchy and Oppression
- Analogy as Satire.

This tedious method of social mobility offers a glimmer of hope to those of the lower classes and prevents them from staging revolution against the upper echelons of society.

- The way the statesmen of Flatland regulate the lower classes is terrifyingly sophisticated.
- Instead of exerting brute force, they provide small ways of gaining power that keep rebellions at bay.

A. Square adds that the natural "Law of Compensation" also stifles sedition, because as the working class gain intelligence generationally, they wane in the power of penetration (meaning the acuteness of their angles) that could be used to their own advantage. The Circular Party also incites jealousy and suspicion within the working class and pits them against each other through mutual warfare.

- The circles hoard power for themselves by specifically regulating knowledge and defining what "nature" is. The fact that the circles are "priests" is notable as well, since they can define their "laws of nature" as divine laws that also happen to keep the circles themselves in power.
- Abbott also slyly mentions the common truth that the oppressed masses usually have the potential to overthrow their oppressors- they rarely take advantage of this potential because they are distracted by things like "mutual warfare".
- Social Hierarchy and Oppression
- Religion, Divinity, and the Unknown
- Knowledge and Truth vs. Dogma

A. Square begins a discussion of the women of Flatland. He starts by warning his readers of the power of women, whose two pointy extremities (since they are straight lines) are dangerous in any collision.

They also can make themselves invisible by turning a certain way.

- Abbott's emphasis on the potential threat posed by Flatland women (who are clearly analogous to real women) illustrates one of the powerful effects of satire- it's discrete ability to convey a real-life message to readers.
- Analogy as satire

In order to minimize the danger posed by women, there are prescribed laws that restrict them.

First, every house must have an eastern entrance that is designated for women.

Second, they must always emit a "peace-cry" whenever they are in public.

Third, any female who is suffering from a disease that causes involuntary motion will be immediately destroyed.

- Those in power establish barriers (through legislative and punitive means) to keep the powerless eternally weak- and they do this particularly because women are not inherently weak, but in fact, very dangerous.
- Social Hierarchy and Oppression

An additional law requires women to wiggle their backs from left to right as they walk, in order to indicate their presence.

Other states in Flatland ask women to be accompanied by someone when travelling, while others even restrict women from leaving their houses except for religious festivals.

- The laws passed in Flatland are humorously absurd and satirical, even as they also portray a brutally repressive society.
- Abbott is making a point that one should question the way in which society and its laws are organized.
- Social Hierarchy and Oppression
- Analogy as Satire

In light of the social restrictions on women, A. Square explains that the statesmen of Flatland have found that a too prohibitive Code has the tendency to result in backlash from women, which then causes more harm than good to the State.

- Similar to the way the state utilizes the hope of social mobility to prevent rebellion, it also finds an optimal amount of prohibition to preserve the hierarchy.
- Social Hierarchy and Oppression

A Square asserts that Flatland women are prone to affection as a result of their unfortunate configuration. They lack brainpower and the ability to reflect, judge, and remember. Thus, he notes the occasional violent outbursts of women against men who have gotten on their bad sides.

- A Square describes women in a very matter-of-fact tone, as if he is citing facts. However, it must be noted that the supposed "emotional" tendency of women is a constructed piece of knowledge that is taught as true in order to discriminate between the sexes.

- This gendering of emotion and reason is also another piece of satire that strikes very close to home in the real world.
- Social Hierarchy and Oppression
- Reason vs. Emotion
- Knowledge and Truth vs. Dogma
- Analogy as Satire

A. Square acknowledges how horrifying Flatland's treatment of women would seem to his readers in Spaceland, he explains that nature has established that "once a woman, always a woman".

- A. Square illustrates how declaring something as "nature" renders it as permanent truth, even if it is discriminatory.

## Chapter 5 & 6

Unlike those who are fortunate enough to perceive light and shade in Spaceland, Flatlanders must take other measures to recognize each other's configurations.

A. Square lists 3 methods of recognition:

1. **Hearing** is a basic way of distinguishing each other by voice, but this is not particularly useful because of the potential for trickery and voice assimilation
2. **Feeling**, which is mostly used by women and the lower classes. Introductions occur by touching the angles of the other party and ascertaining his or her configuration.
  - The practice of feeling is taught extensively in school, however, the reliability of this method breaks down with members of the higher classes, since it becomes difficult to distinguish between 20 and 24 sided figures.
  - Introduction by contact can be potentially dangerous, as any sudden, unexpected movement can cause injury.
    - He tells the story that his grandfather had told him of his own great-great-great grandfather, a working man with a brain of 59.5 degrees (intelligence if measured by their angles) who had accidentally killed a polygon while being felt. He was sent to prison and his family was thrown back 1.5 degrees, to 58.
  - Flatlanders cannot see angles, they can infer through touch.
  - A. Square states that the higher classes prohibit the practice of "feeling", and from early on, their children are sent to Seminaries (and not public elementary schools) to learn the art of "sight".
3. **Sight**, which is practiced only by the higher classes and depends on the naturally abundant fog in Flatland. By comparing relative dimness and brightness of the sides of another, Flatlanders can infer the configurations of each other.
  - A. Square explains this with a specific example of discerning between a merchant who is an equal-sided triangle and a pentagonal physician; while the sides of the merchant recede rapidly into the fog, the physician's sides shade away less rapidly to and, thus, are distinguishable from the merchant.

- Sight recognition is considered an artform because of the inherent difficulties involved in the act.
- The fact that one must be approached from another's side (instead of his angle), as is illustrated, and the motion of polygons makes sight recognition even more complex of a method.
  - Because of the inherent complexity involved with sight recognition, the higher classes are able to easily keep the method from the lower classes.
  - Sight is unattainable to the lower classes so the children of the poor learn to feel at an early age.
- There is a final test of sight recognition given to the polygonal class at the University: the statesmen have dictated that those who fail the test be either imprisoned for life or put to death, since it is from these specimens that leaders of past rebellions arose.
- There are three different ways of ascertaining the social status of other beings in Flatland, which exemplifies how much social hierarchism dominates the citizens' lives.
- Flatlanders accept everything they know to be the entirety of knowledge, and distinguish each other by convoluted ways.
- Even the methods of recognition are hierarchized and practiced by specific classes.
- Flatland institutionalizes the education of recognition and, thus, the knowledge that each class is allowed to learn and retain.
- The precise numerical measurement of intelligence through angles (a reference to eugenics; a racist pseudoscience that linked intelligence to skull size and shape) and the harsh punishment of A. Square's ancestor for an accident simply to add to the long list of ways that the circles maintain the social status quo.
- A. Square immediately introduces a weak point in the Flatland system of distinguishing: they do not see, but infer.
- Through analogy, a reader may recognize that each social system has weak spots that can easily be argued against.
- Although light and shade (higher knowledge) do not exist in Flatland, they can compare relative brightness in order to infer another's shape, which speaks to the way in which knowledge always has the potential to seek higher truths.
  - However, the upper classes exclusively keep this knowledge to themselves, again maintaining the social hierarchy.
- Not only are flatlanders socially hierarchized by configuration, but they are also kept in distinct social classes based on what they know (which is taught to them at their configuration).
- Holding official examinations and executing those who fail is another method that the higher classes maintain power, by destroying any potential sources of rebellion.
  - Once again, Flatland is shown to be a rather terrifying place to live, despite A. Square's matter-of-fact tone in describing it.

Another law of Nature in Flatland dictates that the brain of the Isosceles class begins at 30 minutes, or half a degree, and increases by half a degree generationally until it reaches 60 degrees (angle of an equilateral) and may enter the class of the Regulars.

- One should recognize how absurd this "law" is.
- Although it is considered natural, whether the isosceles "brain" begins at 30 minutes or 29 makes no difference—instead, this "law" is about creating clear boundaries between the lower and upper classes.

A Square then digresses into a topic of school board politics. Due to the abundance of individuals with angles ranging between 0.5 and 10 degrees (called Specimens), Flatland accords them no civic rights, and utilizes them to educate the children of the middle class.

- By now, it should be obvious that the highest class of circles have complete control over the lower classes, using them to support the education of their own children.
- These "Specimens" are essentially living persons used as science experiments for the powerful.

## Chapter 7

A Square begins by explicitly laying down a fundamental social rule, which has been only assumed thus far. He states that "every human being in Flatland is a Regular Figure" and that the equality of sides is a fact of Nature.

- Notice how Flatlanders are referred to analogously as "human beings." Furthermore, the idea of "regularity" in math may allow the circles to promote it as an essential quality. However, in real life, there is no such quality, which makes it even more absurd that British society is dictated by similarly arbitrary social criteria.

A Square posits that if Flatlanders were irregular, then civilization would "relapse into barbarism" because most, if not all, of the time would be devoted to feeling all the angles of another person. Thus, "irregularity" in Flatland is considered equivalent to moral depravity and criminality.

- The absurd way in which irregularity is equated with moral function illustrates how those in power establish arbitrary definitions that are advantageous to themselves.

A Square defends the way in which the ancestors of Flatland have secured the safety of the state by purging Irregulars. Although A Square finds the strict program of executing infants whose angles deviate even by half a degree extreme, he still advocates for the execution of Irregular Offspring who cannot even be medically repaired.

- As much as A Square is a revolutionist for writing *Flatland*, he still cannot escape from thinking in the way that the circles have taught him, that is, to consider irregulars undesirable in society (and even deserving of death). Thus, knowledge and control of a society's worldview is an essential aspect to maintaining power.

## Chapter 8

A Square proclaims that life is artistically dull in Flatland, since all they perceive are straight lines. However, he states that life was not always like this. In the far-off past, a Pentagon (who is unnamed) discovered color, began painting houses and eventually other figures, and started the Color Revolt.

- A Square looks back onto better times when color not only added beauty to life, but also introduced the prospect of equality.
- That this has happened in the past suggests that equality is possible again.

The act of painting gained popularity throughout society and began a "Chromatistic" movement. Coloring figures was desirable since Flatlanders no longer had to "feel" to distinguish each other and movements could now be all accounted for.

- The way in which color becomes a device that equalizes society is new knowledge that was not familiar in the past, but promises a brighter future.

Within two generations, everyone was painted, except for the women and circles. The adage of the time was that the "distinction of sides is intended by Nature to imply distinction of colors," but this did not apply to women, who had only one side, and the circles, who lack sides altogether. Due to the beauty of color, that ancient era also ushered in a period of eloquence and poetic language.

- The new practice of color is interpreted as a product of natural law, suggesting that "Nature" is not fixed, but can shift according to the times and those in power.
- The way that color inspires poetry demonstrates that knowledge and creativity are self-proliferating.

## Chapter 9

At the same time, A Square continues, the intellectual arts were dying. The arts of sight recognition and feeling were no longer practiced, and other academic subjects, such as Geometry or the Physics of motion, were soon neglected. Then the Isosceles classes grew in size, since Specimens were no longer needed in the service of education.

- What is striking is how subjects so familiar to Abbott's readers (i.e. physics and geometry) start to lose favor as painting is practiced.
- It suggests that knowledge is never entirely objective, but can be manipulated by those in power.

As time passed, the lower classes began to advocate for equality and asserted that there was no difference between them and the highest class of Polygons. They demanded that the aristocratic Arts be prohibited and that the funding of the studies of Sight Recognition, Mathematics, and Feeling be ceased. Eventually, they argued that all individuals and classes should be recognized as equal.

- Consider the fact that the knowledge of something new, in this case, color, literally inspires Flatlanders to desire something better, equality among all the figures.

- Yet at the same time the rise of a new power leads to new corruption, as the "Chromatistes" then try to suppress the teaching of older forms of knowledge.

Finding the higher classes indecisive, the leaders of the Revolution finally demanded that women and priests be painted as well. Against the objection that women and circles had no sides, they presented the Universal Color Bill to the General Assembly, proposing that both women and priests be painted half red and half green.

- The way in which color schemes are proposed onto the women and priests illustrates how arbitrary social distinctions are, whether they be the number of sides or colors.

A Square asserts that the bill was devised in such a way that would gather the women's support for Chromatic Innovation. Surely the prospect of being treated like a Priest—since they were assigned the same two colors—was attractive to the women. A diagram is included illustrating how a woman could be confused for a priest.

- That color can easily be used to trick one's social status again speaks to how meaningless class distinctions can be.
- As the Color Revolution progresses, it does not promote equality, but it instead just shifts the power to the revolutionists.

Secondly, the bill sought to disempower the Circles, who had still held onto their social status by refusing to give into the fashion of painting. Once painted, the circles would demoralize each other and, eventually, the aristocracy would be overthrown.

- It is not difficult to notice that the Chromatistes are acting in the same way the circles, who have also pitted the isosceles against each other to keep them contained and powerless.

## Chapter 10

The revolution continued for three years, A Square says, during which violence ensued between the army of Isosceles triangles and that of Polygons. Many Circles were killed by their wives, who were furious at their opposition to the Bill.

- As a satire that depends on analogy to make a point about British society, it would seem that the Colour Revolt is alluding to Britain's past, but in some ways this section seems more applicable to other European countries, like France with its violent Revolution.

It seemed that the Priests would soon have to give in to anarchy or face death, when the course of events changed in their favor due to the fraudulent act of one Isosceles triangle. This triangle had painted himself with the 12 colors of a dodecagon and tricked the daughter of a noble Polygon into marrying him. When the daughter discovered the truth, she committed suicide.

- Despite the Chromatistes' efforts to effect social change, it is evident from the triangle's attempt to impersonate a higher polygon that it is difficult to overturn existing social attitudes on class and status.

- Deeply ingrained conventions are difficult to change.

In response to the news of this tragic event, women across Flatland began to see the Bill in a new light and were opposed to its passing. The Circles quickly jumped on this opportunity and organized an Assembly of the States.

- The Circles, who still possess some social superiority, immediately find a way to regain power by exaggerating the potential consequences of passing the Bill.

Pantocyclus, the Chief Circle during those days, declared publicly that the Priests would concede and accept the Bill. He then delivered a speech that lasted an entire day. He warned the lower classes that if they were to accept the Bill, they would have to sacrifice the potential opportunity of their children to enter the class of the Regulars. Power would belong in the hands of the majority (which would be the largest Criminal class). He also appealed to the Women by arguing that color would increase fraud.

- The speech given by Pantocyclus illustrates how social hierarchy is maintained.
- While the Circles certainly use direct oppression to maintain power, the social system is also preserved by those in the lower classes who seek to someday climb up the social ladder and enjoy the perks of the higher classes.

When Pantocyclus cried "Sooner than this, come death," the Isosceles triangles and Women took that as a signal to begin attacking the Chromatistes. The battle did not last long. In the heat of the violent chaos, the Isosceles convicts began attacking each other and within half an hour, everyone was killed.

- It is ironic that the people from the two lowest classes are fighting on the side of the Priests.
- Once again social hierarchy is maintained in many ways besides oppressive measures.

The Circles, then, sealed their hard-earned power by reducing the Working class to a tenth of its size, destroying any triangle suspected to be irregular, and conducting home visitations to purge any excess soldiers and tradesmen. Color and painting were, thus, permanently banned.

- Power is restored to the Circles because their social ideology (a systematic body of concepts accepted by a certain group) is so embedded within the minds of the Flatlanders that it is difficult for them to conceive of a society organized by something other than the number of sides.
- Tragically, the end of this rebellion also means an end to the richer world of color and poetry in Flatland.

## Chapter 11

A Square states that all the previous chapters have been introductory notes, and he says that Part II will begin discussing the central topic of his book: the mysteries of Space. He proceeds to painstakingly list all the details about

Flatland—their method of motion, infrastructure, their alphabet, etc.—that he must omit describing due to limited time.

- Abbott does not sacrifice any space to describing Flatlanders' daily life—instead, he chooses to use the entire first part of the book to explain how this fictional society is organized.
- Now, the second part is devoted to satirizing another aspect of Victorian Britain: the Church and its control over religious dogma.

Before A Square attends to the main subject of his book, he makes a few remarks on the Priest class of Flatland, the Circles. In Flatland, they are the ultimate decision-makers of all aspects of life, such as business, art and science, and theology.

However, A Square reveals that no Circle truly is a circle, but rather a polygon with numerous small sides. Furthermore, he mentions that feeling a circle is socially unacceptable in Flatland, so this allows the Priests to remain mysterious. By convention, it is assumed that the Chief Circle has 10,000 sides.

- Note the specific decisions made by the author, such as Abbott's choice to focus on describing the amount of influence held by the Circles, who he deliberately names as "priests."
- Surely, he is alluding to the priests that have a similar stronghold in Victorian England.
- Abbott immediately challenges religious authority by asserting that no priest is truly a real circle, but instead, they claim prestige by setting conventions (i.e. claiming to have 10,000 sides while also making it socially unacceptable to actually count a Circle's sides).

A Square continues by explaining the unique way circles are born. By "natural law," as circles ascend the social ladder, their development accelerates, while at the same time, the race becomes less fertile. Therefore, the rare son of a 500-sided polygon may have a son with 550 sides.

- Similar to other laws, this law of nature also perpetuates social stratification by giving more power to those in higher classes and also limiting the size of the upper classes in order to enjoy a larger share of the benefits.
- Once again, notice that they claim that the law is of divine design—that it is decided by God.

A Square also describes how Art can intervene in the process of "evolution." Flatland physicians have discovered a way of adding more sides to infant circles whose frames have not completely set. Although rarely one out of ten survive, many Circular parents send their children to the Neo-Therapeutic Gymnasium.

- The cruel measures that are taken by Circular parents to elevate their own statuses through their children illustrate how power-hungry one can become.
- They are so greedy for power that they seek artificial (and potentially deadly) ways to increase the number of sides of their sons.

## Chapter 12

A Square discusses the doctrine of the Circles, which is concisely expressed by the axiom "Attend to your Configuration." Their teaching strives for individual and collective improvement towards the most desired configuration, that is, of the Circles.

They reject the values of will, effort, and praise, and contend that configuration dictates how a figure behaves. Thus, irregularity is considered a disease that must be cured lest one be imprisoned or executed.

- The way the Circles preach against personal improvement and hard work allegorizes the Anglican Church's teachings of respecting ecclesiastical authority over individual spirituality.
- Thus, they limit the self-expression and exploration that is potentially threatening to their hold on power.

Pantocyclus attributed any faults or deviations from normal social conduct to irregularity. Thus, he concluded that praise and blame are meaningless gestures. However, A Square points out the downsides to the indisputable doctrine. In the case of an Isosceles triangle guilty of stealing, the penalty of death is easily sentenced, since he could not help but steal because of his natural lowliness.

On the other hand, in minor domestic cases where execution is unnecessary, such as with the disobedience of A Square's grandsons, blame is evaded and instead put on configuration.

- Abbott illustrates that there are unexpected consequences that arise when those in power try to enforce absurd rules in order to preserve their authority.
- Because irregularity was dictated as a natural product, it allowed blame to be put on Nature, instead of the criminals and their own lack of a moral conscience.
- This is the beauty of a satire, which strives to point out the horrifying effects of whatever it chooses to criticize.
- For Abbott, this is the Victorian social hierarchy and the often absurd ideas underpinning it.

Despite the doctrine's teaching, A Square confesses that he sees the value of scolding and disciplining on his Grandson's configuration, although he cannot explain why he thinks that it is so. A Square mentions that he is not the only one who believes in discipline, and says that even Circles use praise and blame towards other figures and even their own children.

- Despite the Circles' insistence on irregularity as being an inevitable determinant on behavior, they still use praise and blame, highlighting how arbitrary and absurd their teachings are.
- This shows that one must question why certain social mores and values are established, since some are clearly in place simply in the interests of the ruling class.

A Square describes how the Circles' emphasis on configuration has reversed the relational arrangement between parents and children. In contrast to Spaceland, where children are taught to respect their parents, Flatland parents must honor

their sons and grandsons. Therefore, a man must prioritize the interests of posterity above his own.

- Notice the humorously ridiculous effect the Circles' emphasis on configuration has on the relations between parents and children.
- Clearly, this doctrine has been established solely to conserve the power of the Circles.

After humbling himself and his square status, A Square indicates what he believes is the weak point of the Circles' system: their relations with women. Following the doctrine of regular configuration, irregular births are highly discouraged. In a similar manner, women who have any ancestral history of irregularity are unfit for marriage.

- The way in which women in Flatland are treated is appalling.
- They have little to no social agency and are considered the most irrational beings. And in the scheme of marriage, they must be carefully checked for irregularities in their ancestry.

Since women are only straight lines, their irregularities are instead documented by detailed pedigrees that are recorded by the State. Only women with certified pedigrees are allowed to marry.

Thus, A Square entertains the fact that it might be supposed that Circles would be careful in choosing a wife. On the contrary, the Circles do not stress the regularity of their wives. Instead, those of the lower classes who are desperate to climb the social ladder through their sons take more care into taking Regular wives.

- The fact that the Circles do not put much care in choosing wives shows how much they enjoy the fruits of being associated with the highest class of Flatland society.
- On the other hand, figures from the lower classes can only rise in social status through their children, so they cannot afford to ignore the ancestral histories of their potential wives.

Despite the fact that such careless marriages of Circles can result in a decrease in the number of sides or even be simply barren, the Circles do not give much thought to this, since the loss of a few sides is not very noticeable and can be compensated at the Neo-Therapeutic Gymnasium. Yet A Square warns that if this does not stop, the circular race may cease, and Flatland will no longer exist.

- Note the sarcastic tone of A Square when he expresses concern for the future of the Priest class.
- While the lower classes stick strictly to system's rules, the Circles are free to marry women with a history of irregularity, since they already possess so much power.

A Square offers an additional warning, one relating to the relations between men and women. Three hundred years ago, the Chief Circle declared that women should not be treated as rational, since they lack Reason and are more emotional. From then on, women were no longer provided education.

- It is obvious to see what Flatland esteems between reason and emotion.

- Women are considered to lean 100% towards emotion, entirely gendering this crucial aspect of human experience.
- However, Abbott suggests that the blind valuing of reason over emotion is also dangerous.

A Square fears that this program of educational negligence of females is harmful to the Male Sex, since men must live bi-lingual lives and use a different vocabulary in the presence of women. He thus makes an appeal to the statesmen of Flatland to reconsider female education in order to lessen the burden on the young, who have to unlearn the language of their mothers and learn the male language of science.

- Again, Abbott's biting humor is evident.
- A Square is not concerned about the well being of women, but instead argues for their education in the interests of the *male* sex.
- The regulation of knowledge is intricately manipulated here in order to keep the women ignorant and submissive to men.

