

# Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions Part II Summary

Edwin A. Abbott, 1884

## Chapter 13

On the last day of the 1999th year, he dreams of visiting Lineland, a one-dimensional, linear world populated by small straight lines and points. An illustration of A Square's view of Lineland is included. In the dream, A Square assumes that the strange chirping creatures he sees must be women. He approaches one of the largest, which happens to be the Monarch of Lineland, and places his mouth right in front of the creature.

- Part II marks the section where Abbott more directly deals with knowledge and ignorance.
- Lineland represents a world that is devoid of higher truths, such as the second dimension that Flatlanders enjoy.
- It then demonstrates the consequences of remaining ignorant, as made evident in the way the Monarch of Lineland is portrayed.

A Square apologizes for possibly startling the Monarch of Lineland, and proceeds to ask him questions about Lineland, despite the king's arrogance in responding. A Square finds out that the ignorant king believes the Straight Line (on which they live) is the entirety of his kingdom, world, and universe. The Monarch is incapable of conceiving of anything outside the line that he inhabits. Therefore, he did not acknowledge A Square at all until he positioned his mouth along the line, in the king's world.

- The Monarch is a good example of what a person can become if they refuse to think beyond what they already know.
- He is arrogant and does not offer a listening ear to A Square at all. In some way, the Monarch is an analogical representation of the Circles in Flatland, content with the power they hold and refusing to accept any new knowledge that threatens the status quo.

The inhabitants of Lineland are male lines and female points who are stuck in motion and in vision to the straight line that consists of their whole world. All Linelanders can see are points, and they distinguish another's sex and age through voice. Since no one can move left or right, no Linelander can pass each other, and thus they have the same neighbors for life. A Square notes that the limited lives of the Linelanders seem dismal, and he is surprised that the Monarch of Lineland is so cheerful and lively.

- Lineland offers a bleak view of what it is like to be willfully ignorant.
- Physically stuck on a line, the people of Lineland are doomed for life, in both literal and religious senses.
- Thus, Abbott suggests how important it is to seek knowledge and religious truths.
- At the time Abbott firmly opposed the Tractarians, whose influence was growing in England, and who strongly emphasized the authority of the Church and scripture, much in the same way that the Linelanders take for granted their world as the entirety of existence.

A Square then asks the Monarch of Lineland how his people marry and produce offspring when they are confined to a line. The Monarch answers impatiently that proximity is not necessary for the generation of children, and that it instead occurs through sound and the sense of hearing.

- Since the Linelanders are limited to one dimension, they depend solely on their sense of hearing.
- However, take note of the fact that they still have the means to perceive new ideas if ever presented them.
- Thus, Abbott argues that wisdom depends on the will to receive new knowledge and the humility to accept one's ignorance.

The Monarch of Lineland continues by explaining that every man has two mouths and two voices, a bass and a tenor one. He admits that he assumed A Square to be a feminine monster with a bass voice. The king then states that Nature has dictated that every man should wed two wives to harmoniously meld the bass and tenor of the man to the soprano and contralto voices of two women. Once a week, every man sends out their most beautiful sound, marriages are consummated, and two girls and one boy are born from each union.

- Lineland is similar to Flatland in the way it is governed by certain "laws of nature," and the way that those laws uphold the social hierarchy—allowing for those who don't fit in to be considered "monsters," while others can be considered the head of the state.

## Chapter 14

Tired of the Monarch of Lineland's narrow-mindedness and ignorance, A Square decides to teach him of the nature of the second dimension and Flatland. He begins by asking the king how he ascertains the shapes and positions of his people. The Monarch replies that it is impossible to do so with the sense of sight. Instead, the length of a person is measured by hearing and comparing the time difference in the arrival of a man's two voices.

- Although A Square is unaware of it, he is trying to reveal the mysteries and knowledge of the second dimension to the Monarch in the same way that a religious leader spreads doctrine to non-believers in the hopes of converting them.
- The truth of the second dimension is thus an allegory of the mysteries of God.

In defiance, A Square asks then how fraud (that is, disguising one's voice) is detected and checked for. He asks if feeling is a possible method. The Monarch of Lineland is appalled at A Square's suggestion, because feeling is an offense punishable by death, to protect the frailty of women. He continues by saying that touching is unnecessary, since hearing is an efficient and unalterable process.

- Ignorance is truly self-defeating and limiting.
  - This is shown through the Monarch, who is so content with the way his life is organized (predominantly through hearing) that he sees no need to consider any other methods.
  - Hearing is apparently efficient *enough*.

A Square points out to the Monarch of Lineland that life in Lineland must be very boring since all they can see is a point. A Square explains that as he entered their world, he saw the Monarch moving left and right, having 7 men and 1 woman to his left and 8 men and 2 women on his right. Yet the Monarch does not understand A Square's use of the words "left" and "right," and confuses them for "northward" and "southward."

- Abbott introduces an aspect of knowledge that we must keep in mind: there is a limit to what we can understand.
- God cannot be fully comprehended by human faculties, and we must respect divine mystery.
- So "left" and "right" represent higher knowledge that is difficult to grasp when one is limited to one's dimension.
- However, the potential to understand that knowledge is not non-existent, as exemplified by A Square.

The Monarch of Lineland asks A Square to demonstrate "left" and "right." But A Square feels limited when he tries to explain them only with words, so he decides to literally move in and out of Lineland. A diagram illustrates his position relative to Lineland. But the Monarch still is not able to grasp left and right motion and instead attributes A Square's movement to magic. A Square scolds him for his refusal to think beyond his own world. In response, the Monarch and his army threaten to attack A Square, who wakes up from his dream.

- New knowledge can sometimes be viewed as threatening.
- The Monarch dismisses A Square's demonstration as magic, or something absurd or even dangerous.
- Thus, Abbott claims that one must be humble and trusting in order to be receptive to new ideas.
- Eventually, the Monarch responds to A Square's efforts with violence, since he is not willing to learn and rejects any threat to his worldview.

## Chapter 15

Still on the last day of 1999, A Square is sitting with his Wife and recalling an earlier incident with his Grandson. A Square had been teaching him that 3 to the second power can be represented by the construction of a large square with sides 3 units long with 9 smaller ones, when his Grandson asked if 3 to the third power has any geometrical meaning. Although A Square replied that it did not, his Grandson insisted that it must, in the same way that 3 to the second power is a square. Annoyed by his Grandson's nonsense, A Square sent him to bed.

- In the way that Abbott relies on analogy to satirize British society, A Square relies on analogy to teach his Grandson the meaning of exponents with geometry.
- Yet he reacts to his Grandson's extrapolating with annoyance (an emotion), much in the same way that the Monarch of Lineland did to him.
- Thus, Abbott challenges the idea that reason trumps emotion, or that emotion is solely the realm of women.

A Square exclaims out loud that his Grandson is a fool, and immediately he feels a presence in the room. When A Square further states that 33 is

meaningless, a voice replies, "The boy is not a fool; and 3 to the third power has an obvious geometrical meaning." A Square and his Wife suddenly see a figure before their eyes. A Square's Wife asks to feel the Stranger, and believes him to be a perfect Circle. The Stranger then asks for A Square's Wife to allow him and A Square to have a word alone, and she leaves the room.

- A Square is no different from the Monarch of Lineland regarding new knowledge.
- He dismisses his Grandson's enlightened insight, offering an additional example of how potentially dangerous ignorance can be.
- Thus, the Stranger appears in response to A Square's display of self-contentment and willful ignorance.

## Chapter 16

Unable to clearly see his unexpected visitor, A Square feels the Stranger and believes him to be a perfect Circle. The Stranger announces that he has come from Space, a land of three dimensions. He speaks of height, breadth, and length, but A Square does not understand these words. The Stranger tries to prove the third dimension by stating that he has seen the entirety of A Square's family and household from above. However, A Square is not convinced, and argues that any Circle would have the power to obtain that kind of personal information.

- The Stranger appears to A Square as a kind of revelator to enlighten his pupil.
- The resemblance of this situation to A Square's vision of Lineland is clear, and is another analogy that demonstrates the difficulty of spreading new knowledge.
- A Square is unwilling to accept any of the Stranger's claims, and stubbornly tries to explain away the third dimension with what he is already familiar with.

The Stranger then attempts to convince A Square with a different argument concerning A Square's Wife. The Stranger argues that, although, theoretically, the Wife is a one-dimensional line, in actuality, she is really a very thin parallelogram with an additional dimension, that is, breadth. In the same line of reasoning, then, the Wife must also have a "height." But A Square confuses "height" with "brightness" and does not grasp the Stranger's meaning.

- The Stranger utilizes analogy to the fullest. He uses A Square's Wife to argue that although lines are one-dimensional, they still have a second-dimension, which is breadth.
- Thus, she must also have a third-dimension, if she can indeed possess a second.
- In a way, dimensionality represents the capacity for knowledge, since it is latent in everyone. What A Square believes is "brightness" represents deeper truth.

Since dimension has a direction and is something that can be measured, A Square asks the Stranger to measure his "height." The Stranger decides to use plain words and a visual example to convince his pupil. He argues that Flatland is a plane and that he is not a figure, but a *solid* that is made up of an infinite

number of circles that vary in size from a point to a circle of 13 inches in diameter. He proclaims that he is called a sphere.

- What is interesting is that the characters in Flatland are constantly asking for proof.
- There is a consistent need for logic to be the arbiter in each situation.
  - So Abbott's message is even more striking, since he is suggesting that religious revelation and knowledge (symbolized by higher dimensions) should depend on rational thinking, not only "leaps of faith."

The Sphere makes an analogy between the way A Square appears as a line to the Monarch of Lineland and the way he himself looks like a circle in Flatland, since each lower realm (that is, Lineland and Flatland) is but a slice representing the whole (that is, the Sphere's Land of Three Dimensions). When A Square still expresses doubt, the Sphere physically demonstrates the third dimension by rising in Space and showing that his sections become smaller. A diagram is included.

- Notice that the Sphere is making the same demonstration that A Square made in Lineland.
- They both physically move in and out of the lower world in order to make their point about higher knowledge.
- Pay attention to the difference in responses between the Monarch of Lineland and A Square, though.

Although A Square indeed sees that the Sphere decreases in size as he "rose," he still does not understand the nature of the third dimension, and instead begins believing the Stranger to be a mystical sorcerer. After a moment of silence, the Sphere decides to use analogy as the last resort before convincing A Square through action.

- A Square's initial reaction to the Sphere's movement is the same as the Monarch of Lineland, who associates A Square's motion with magic.
- However, Abbott's deliberate analogy is not just to repeat the same scene, but to convey a more refined idea about the reception of knowledge, which will become more obvious later.

The Sphere begins by asking A Square what a point moving northward creates with its path of motion. A Square answers "a straight line." He then continues and asks what a straight line moving parallel to itself and leaving a wake of lines creates. A Square answers "a square." Then, the Sphere requests that A Square consider what a square moving upward parallel to itself. A Square, frustrated, becomes impatient, because he does not understand the word "upward."

- Note the emotional response of A Square, who feels angry at the Sphere's incomprehensible lessons.
- Although throughout *Flatland* A Square favors reason over emotion, and associates the former with men and their supposed superiority, he clearly demonstrates that reason isn't inherently masculine, and isn't inherently superior to emotion.
- In fact, A Square's response is very natural. Of course one would feel frustrated when he cannot understand something.

The Sphere claims that he can describe the word "upward" with Flatland language, and proceeds to present another analogy. He begins with a single point, which produces a line with two endpoints. A line creates a square, which has four terminal points. Thus, he demonstrates the geometrical series of 1, 2, and 4, and he asks A Square for the next number, which is 8. The Sphere says that the object with 8 points is called a cube.

- The various methods that the Sphere uses to prove the existence of three dimensions truly illustrate that knowledge can be achieved through many pathways.
- There is no one right way.
- This also could apply to faith and understanding.
- While the Anglican church exerted its authority as the sole path to salvation, Abbott seemed to believe that individual spirituality was more important.

A Square asks if this resulting creature has sides. The Sphere answers that what Flatlanders call "sides" are actually called "solids" in his own world. He states that a point has 0 sides, a line 2, and a square 4. This is an arithmetical progression, so A Square answers that the next number is 6. The Sphere states that A Square is correct, and says that a cube is bounded by six sides. However, A Square is enraged by this, and hurls himself at the Sphere.

- "Sides" mean different things in Flatland and Spaceland, which are lines and figures, respectively.
- Thus, Abbott affirms the importance of language in determining thought.
- Without the appropriate words and meanings, such as "upwards" or "sides," thinking about the third dimension is almost impossible.
- While A Square was more patient than the Monarch of Lineland, in the end he acts the same way—giving in to his frustration and attacking the person trying to enlighten him.

## Chapter 17

A Square violently tries to rush his strongest right angle into the Sphere, but the Sphere raises himself out of Flatland. Intent on making A Square an apostle that will spread the Gospel of the Three Dimensions, the Sphere decides to use deeds instead of words to make his point. He tells A Square that he will descend into a cupboard and empty a box full of money that A Square had locked away half an hour ago. A Square then discovers that the box is indeed gone, while the Sphere continues to explain that Flatland is simply a plane and A Square can see all that the Sphere sees if he has the determination to.

- The portrayal of A Square as an apostle spreading the gospel makes the religious overtones of Abbott's allegory very clear.
- Although A Square resorts to violence, the Sphere is not harmed in any way.
- The knowledge that he possesses affords him an elevated status (literally), such that he cannot be hurt by A Square's attempt to lash out.
- Once again words are shown to be insufficient in communicating certain kinds of knowledge.

The Sphere describes how his aerial view of Flatland broadens as he rises, while the objects become smaller. He then declares that he will touch the inside of A Square to prove that he comes from the third dimension. A Square feels pain from the Sphere's touch and decides to rush at his visitor again. He alerts the entire household for help. The Sphere tries to calm the square down, since no other figure must know what he has taught A Square. To no avail, the Sphere eventually takes A Square physically out of the plane.

- The Sphere's reaching "into" A Square resembles the biblical story of the doubtful apostle Thomas who only accepts Christ's resurrection after he literally feels Christ's wounds.
- But this Flatland rendition has the apostle (that is, A Square) bear the touch, and yet A Square still doubts the Sphere.
- The only way left for the Sphere, then, is to take A Square into the "miracle" itself.

## Chapter 18

The terrified A Square first perceives darkness and is initially confused at seeing everything in three dimensions. The Sphere calms him by telling him that what he sees is "knowledge." A Square then realizes that he is in a new world (called Spaceland), and begins to comprehend its beauty. He starts to worship the Sphere as his divine teacher.

- Light commonly represents knowledge and darkness ignorance, but in this case, A Square's ascent into Spaceland begins with a veil of darkness.
- Here, darkness represents the mysteries of higher dimensions, which are at first inscrutable.
- Note how A Square immediately conflates new knowledge with the divine.

The Sphere shows A Square the whole layout of Flatland and the inside of his house, where his grandsons are sleeping and his Wife is pacing the room in worry (illustration included). After they explore Flatland some more, A Square then expresses that he feels like he has "become as a God" because omnividence (the ability to see all things) is an attribute of God alone.

- Recall that in Flatland, no one can "see" anything except lines, but the higher classes infer shape through sight recognition.
- Thus, sight and, by extensive, omnividence are faculties exclusive to god-like figures.
- This is how the Circles/Priests claim power, by restricting education and knowledge.

The Sphere scorns A Square for his shortsightedness, and argues that if omnividence is really a quality of the divine, then the pick-pockets and murderers of his country should be worshipped as gods by Flatlanders since they see everything, too. He asserts that omnividence does not make one more just, merciful, selfless, or loving. Thus, it does not make one divine.

- The Sphere claims that the attributes of God include justice, mercy, and love—attributes that seem more "emotional" than "rational."
- In fact, the reason-obsessed Flatlanders would be more likely to worship the criminals of Spaceland.

- Thus, Abbott critiques the sexism of Flatland (and England) while also asserting that knowledge alone does not bring true enlightenment—that requires wisdom and virtue as well.

A Square is confused by his teacher's words, because he believes that being more merciful and more loving are the qualities of women. On the contrary, the wise men of Flatland regard knowledge and reason with more esteem than affection. The Sphere retorts by saying that the wisest in Spaceland are more in touch with emotion than reason, unlike the Flatlanders. But he cuts off this discussion, and points to the General Assembly Hall of the States of Flatland.

- Although Abbott speaks through A Square throughout *Flatland*, in this case, he also speaks through the Sphere, who values emotions as much as reason, if not more.
- Not only does he claim that some of the wiser men in Spaceland are very much emotional beings, but he also points out the importance of emotion in religion.

A Square and the Sphere descend into the building. It is the first hour of the first day of the year 2000, and the Circles are gathered for a meeting. A Square recognizes his Brother at the meeting, which is held every millennium to conduct trials on misguided persons who claim to have received revelations of other worlds. Any figure found guilty is to be arrested for eternity or put to death.

- The Circles are afraid of any figures who claim to enlighten other Flatlanders with revelations from other worlds, particularly because this would threaten their hold on power by presenting a force (higher dimensions, for example) that is greater than they are.

A Square declares that he is confident that he can enlighten the Circles. However, the Sphere stops him and descends himself into the meeting room, proclaiming the existence of a land of Three Dimensions. The Sphere leaves the room before he is arrested, and instead A Square's Brother is condemned to eternal imprisonment for having witnessed the Sphere's revelation.

- While A Square's enthusiasm is commendable, Abbott warns against rash action.
- The Circles' stronghold on power should not be taken lightly.
- Their crackdown on anything that threatens their authority is evident from the imprisonment of A Square's brother, who only *witnessed* the Sphere's revelation.

## Chapter 19

The two return to space and the Sphere introduces A Square to the concept of solids. He stacks many square cards on top of each other to demonstrate how two-dimensional figures can be built into a three-dimensional solid (and an illustration is attached). A Square says that the demonstration is painful to see, since it looks like an Irregular figure to him.

The Sphere explains that A Square is not used to seeing light and shade and perspective, so he introduces A Square to the cube, a living being. After



detailed explanation and tactile demonstrations, the concept is clear to A Square.

- The Sphere again teaches A Square using analogies, and this scene itself is an allegory of the process of teaching and learning.
- The new knowledge initially is painful to A Square, since it is so unfamiliar to him.
- Yet this knowledge is crucial for him to learn in order to enlighten other Flatlanders who live under the Circles' oppression.
- This is where light and shade, a symbol for knowledge in general, appears.

A Square states that this is the climax of the story. He then proceeds to recount his fall. Although it is painful for him to recall, he hopes it will arouse a spirit of rebellion in his readers, who may be stuck in their own dimensions. While the Sphere is teaching him the conformations of other regular solids, A Square interrupts him, asking if he could expose his intestines. A Square argues that since the Sphere had revealed the insides of all things in Flatland, there must be a similar way of seeing into the insides of solids.

- One main purpose of *Flatland* is clearly stated here: A Square hopes to enlighten his readers on the knowledge of higher dimensions in order to incite them to fight against oppression, such as the Circles' dominance over Flatland or the aristocracy's rule of Victorian England.
- Note how A Square thinks in analogy, and now starts to grow curious about ideas even beyond the Sphere's teachings.

A Square posits the existence of a land of Four Dimensions. However, the Sphere denies its existence, and argues that it is simply impossible to think about such a world. In response, A Square further probes his teacher by arguing that just as the Sphere had proved to him the existence of a higher world, and as A Square had attempted to teach the Monarch of Lineland of two dimensions, there must be other even higher worlds. He theorizes a structure with 16 terminal points and 8 bounding cubes, following the Sphere's previous logic.

- What makes A Square different from the Monarch of Lineland, who refused to think beyond his linear world, is that he is humble enough to accept what is proven to him, and then has the curiosity to actually seek out more forms of higher knowledge.
- However, when he asks the Sphere about this knowledge, his teacher acts no differently from the Monarch, and assumes that his three-dimensional world is all there is to the universe.

A Square asks the Sphere to confirm or deny his hypothesis. The Sphere admits that some of his countrymen have considered a fourth dimension, but have not adopted an official theory. Therefore, he ends the discussion. But A Square continues to theorize higher worlds, even those of five, six, seven, and eight dimensions. Angered at A Square's unending questioning, the Sphere pushes A Square back to his Flatland home.

- A Square shows the liberating and elevating effects of knowledge.
- After learning about the third dimension, A Square is eager to seek for higher knowledge of even more mysterious ideas and worlds.

- In fact, knowledge is also salvation, since it promises a better future in higher worlds.
- Despite being a figure of wisdom, even the Sphere reacts emotionally to A Square's eagerness. Notably, Abbott was theorizing about multiple dimensions (including time) long before Einstein published his theory of relativity.

## Chapter 20

Back in his Flatland home, A Square decides to hide his experiences from his Wife, so he reassures her with a fake story. Once alone in his room, he broods over everything he has learned from the Sphere and recites the phrase "Upward, yet not Northward" repeatedly until he falls asleep.

During his sleep, he has another dream of visiting another foreign world. The Sphere takes him to Pointland, the Abyss of No dimensions, which is inhabited by the lone Monarch of Pointland.

- In simple terms, the axiom "Upward, yet not Northward" describes the essence of the third dimension.
- But a deeper look reveals that it also speaks of the exalting effects of knowledge—which literally lifts those who have been enlightened upwards into better worlds with higher dimensions.
- The "yet" is particularly hopeful, since it suggests that knowledge can be eventually achieved, as long as one is humble and curious enough like A Square.

The Monarch of Pointland believes himself to be the entirety of his universe. He is incapable of conceiving of anything other than himself, since he does not know what length, breadth, and height are. A Square is stunned by the complacency of the Point and tries to make him realize his insignificance in the world. But the Point takes A Square's words to be his own, and is awed at his "own" thinking.

- The Monarch of Pointland offers a humorous caricature of the ignorant.
- Completely engrossed in his own wisdom and intelligence, the Monarch is literally unable to think of anything beyond himself.
- It is truly a bitter image of what it is like to live without the ability to empathize with others and seek knowledge outside one's self.

A Square and the Sphere return to Flatland, and the Sphere inspires A Square to teach others of higher dimensions. He apologizes for his previous bout of anger at A Square's request for knowledge of higher mysteries, and then teaches A Square how to construct extra-solids and double extra-solids, according to analogy.

- Throughout the book, analogy is used as a teaching technique.
- Here it is used explicitly by the Sphere once more, to help A Square seek higher knowledge (i.e. of extra dimensions), which is liberating.

## Chapter 21

A Square wakes up from his dream and decides to start his mission of enlightenment with his Wife. At that moment, however, he hears a proclamation

from the Council declaring the arrest, imprisonment, or execution of anyone who attempts to enlighten others of revelations from another World.

- It has been evident throughout the whole book that the Circles maintain their social power by cracking down on anyone who poses a threat to their authority, here silencing anyone who might contradict their "natural laws."

Threatened by the Council's proclamation, A Square decides to keep his own revelation secret and to demonstrate what he has learned instead. He forgoes his plan to begin with his Wife and considers starting with his hexagonal Grandson. His Grandson had already shown his cognitive potential by meditating on 3 to the third power, and is young enough to not understand the Proclamation. On the other hand, A Square's pentagonal sons are already too loyal to the Circles to take A Square's words seriously without handing him over to the Circles.

- The fact that A Square cannot even teach his own sons the Gospel of Three Dimensions because they have been brainwashed by the doctrines of the Circles demonstrates another aspect of how the social hierarchy is maintained and truly how ingrained it is in the mind of a society.
- The Grandson, on the other hand, is still young enough to not have been indoctrinated.

First, A Square relieves his Wife's questions about the other night's encounter with the Sphere. Then he immediately seeks out his Grandson, since he feels that all his experiences and the knowledge he has learned are slowly fading away. A Square sits down with his Grandson and resumes the previous day's lesson of a point creating a line and a line creating a square, when he hears the proclamation being announced outside again.

- A Square's determination to spread the idea of the third dimension is truly praiseworthy.
- However, the very abstract nature of the third dimensional concept makes it hard for him to retain that knowledge, suggesting that some higher mysteries are simply difficult to understand with human faculties, like the mysteries of God.

A Square's Grandson hears the Proclamation and begins to cry at his grandfather's request to repeat what he had been thinking the other day concerning three-to-the-third. The Grandson does not take A Square's words seriously, assumes A Square is joking, and runs out of the room.

- A Square fails to convert his Grandson because, unfortunately, the little hexagon is already very much aware of the Circles' power and their intolerance for outspoken Flatlanders.

## Chapter 22

After failing to enlighten his Grandson, A Square decides to write a treatise on the mysteries of Three Dimensions, which he believes will be more effective in teaching others. To avoid breaking the law, he writes for several months about a hypothetical "Thoughtland" that resembles the third dimension. However,

he finds it difficult to draw helpful diagrams and to compose a clear enough treatise that would help others understand his meaning.

- A Square's struggles in writing "Thoughtland" seem to be Abbott expressing his own troubles in composing *Flatland*.
- These struggles also closely resemble the troubles the Sphere had in explaining the third dimension to A Square, and A Square had with the Monarch of Lineland.

One day, 11 months after his return from Spaceland, A Square attempts to envision a cube, but fails at his first try. Although he eventually succeeds, he is not sure if he is actually correct, so he begins to feel sad. A Square is still confident and determined to devote his life to spreading the Gospel of the Third Dimension, however. Thus, many times A Square becomes so passionate about teaching others that he expresses dangerous thoughts about Spaceland.

- A Square's resolve can be seen as dangerous, particularly in a society as highly regulated Flatland. This could be a warning from Abbott about hastily attempting to overturn the existing social hierarchy without a strong plan.

After occasionally mentioning ideas of seeing the "interiors of things" and of the Third and Fourth Dimensions, A Square gives an entire account of his experiences in Spaceland at a meeting of his Local Speculative Society, in response to the Prefect's assertion that God had limited the world to two dimensions. A Square is then arrested and taken to the Council for trial.

- Because of A Square's inability to control his passion for preaching the Gospel of Three Dimensions, he is, of course, immediately arrested by the Circles.
- This recalls stories of early Christians, and even Jesus himself, who were persecuted for preaching their beliefs.

The next morning, A Square offers his defense to the President of the Council, but he is sentenced to eternal imprisonment. A Square writes that it has been seven years since he was imprisoned. He occasionally sees his Brother (who was imprisoned earlier) and laments that his brother does not understand the concept of the third dimension, despite having witnessed the Sphere's revelation.

- A Square has been writing *Flatland* from prison.
- Despite the inspiring messages he has conveyed throughout the book, the stark reality of having been defeated and trapped by those in power is very bleak.
- However, this depressing ending may actually be more effective in inciting his readers to action in real life.

A Square expresses regret because he does not have any converts. Yet he writes this memoir-like story in the hopes that it may incite a group of rebels who seek higher dimensions. A Square ends the story on a defeated note, questioning whether the mysteries of the Third Dimension are simply the products of a wild imagination or dream.

- This ending is unsettling, and has generated much speculation on the meaning of A Square's self-doubt and grim conclusion.
- Although he claims that he writes this treatise in order to inspire his readers to fight against oppression, in the end, he wonders himself if all his experiences with the Sphere and Spaceland were simply a dream.