

"If" (Maths version)

If you can solve a literal equation
 And rationalise denominator surds,
Do grouping factors (with a transformation)
 And state the factor theorem in words;
If you can plot the graph of any function
 And do a long division sum (with gaps),
Or square binomials without compunction,
 Or work cube roots with logs without mishaps.
If you possess a sound and clear-cut notion
 Of interest sums with P and I unknown;
If you can find the speed of trains in motion,
 Given some lengths and "passing times" alone;
If you can play with R (both big and little)
 And feel at home with l (or h) and π ,
And learn by cancellation how to whittle
 Your fractions down till they delight the eye.
If you can recognise the segment angles
 Both at the centre and circumference;
If you can spot equivalent triangles
 And Friend Pythagoras (his power's immense);
If you can see that equiangularity
 And congruence are two things and not one,
You may pick up a mark or two in charity,
And, what is more, you may squeeze through, my son.

The Times Educational Supplement, 19 July 1947,

