

## Note to Nerds March 29<sup>th</sup> 2019

### The Drive

Driving to work mornings, I am extremely blessed to travel through our rural Chattahoochee Valley. I've watched this past year as the thick greens of summer gave way to the browns, reds and yellows of fall, then the stark leaflessness that is winter. In its nakedness, houses on hills, small brooks and lakes, and impressive sharp contours - most of the year obscured by thick greenery - stand visible from the thin line of asphalt I speed along each morning.

As I drive now, the daffodil blooms have faded and yellow Carolina Jessamine flowers dot the tree lines like springtime Christmas lights, crowning the bare tips of trees where the sun first greets the day. The cherry trees and redbuds are just past full bloom, losing their petals snow-like to the ground just below.

I anticipate that a zillion shades of green will soon explode. This thick exhibition of photosynthesis fueled by an overabundance of southern rain and sticky sunshine. An unruly rarely broken hedge closing in on the road soon to hide the world beyond.

As the landscape passes by I think about a lesson I will present in a week or so. It's on congruent triangles. The teacher has asked me to focus on helping students to recognize corresponding parts. He told me he's ready to move on. The curriculum dictates that he speed to the inevitable that is the end-of-course test. I think they call it the Milestones now. As I ponder the name Milestones, the word millstone comes to mind ... an object often used to drown witches in times past. Obviously I digress?

I have to say that I am more than a little bit excited about the prospect for a lesson that could be rather mundane. The challenge for this itinerant teacher is to give the student space to explore the **why** of the math—the importance of laying

bare the math with the simple question of why?—not to be feared for lack of time but embraced for the power and freedom it will unleash in the student and classroom.

The **math** so often obscured. Hidden by a trick, shortcut or, *goodness help us*, a memory technique. Useful in the moment but doomed to fall from memory, leaf-like, as the season or topic changes. The awesome greenness of the thick summer foliage preventing us from seeing the contours of the land and understanding the world around us.

There is such beauty in mathematics. But like a fall walk taking in the colors of a changing season or laying in a springtime field of daisies, we must give it time and not be so rushed by the constraints imposed from those so eager to rush us to a test ... that ultimately measures what?

Wow ... all of this from a little old drive to work? Maybe I need to get a good podcast.

Happy spring!

*Peter*