Correspondence

DEAR EDITOR,

I cannot make sense of Mr Kirby's claim that his pupil's answer is flawed [1]. It seems to me that Mr Kirby is engaged in splitting invisible hairs. What has become of the word 'resolve'? Surely the standard procedure in developing the theory of a particle moving freely under gravity is to resolve the elements of its motion i.e. displacement, velocity, and acceleration, in various directions—horizontal, vertical, parallel and perpendicular to an inclined plane; from the resulting equations one can then deduce whatever one seeks to know about its range, altitude and so on. There is not the slightest need to bring in vector language or notation. This Note seems to be a throwback to the early days of 'modern mathematics', when one of the aims appeared to be, by being pedantic, to make complicated what is essentially simple and straightforward. As an A level examiner, I should have unhesitatingly given full marks to Mr Kirby's first solution!

Reference
1. Richard Kirby, Right answer, wrong reason, *Math. Gaz.* **90** (March 2006) pp. 143-144.

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Royal Institution Christmas Lectures

Mathematics takes centre stage at the Royal Institution Christmas Lectures this year, the third time since they began in 1825. Marcus du Sautoy, professor of mathematics at the University of Oxford, will take us on a journey through 'THE NUM8ER MY5TERIES'. The lectures will be filmed between 15 and 22 December and will be broadcast on channel five from 25th December to 29th December at 7:15pm.

While mathematics has successfully cracked some of the biggest mysteries of all time, it is full of further ones that continue to foil even the cleverest mathematicians. The Christmas Lectures will touch on the curious incident of the never-ending numbers, the story of the elusive shapes, the secret of the winning streak, the case of the uncrackable code, and the quest to predict the future.

Details on each of the five lectures and booking information can be found at www.rigb.org/rimain/events/christmaslectures.jsp

Postscript: In 1978, as a child, Marcus watched the first ever Christmas Lectures on mathematics, 'Mathematics into pictures' by Sir Christopher Zeeman, and these inspired him to become a mathematician!