

## Stamps with a Mathematical Theme.

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The stamp summarises the nine-year efforts of the English mathematician Andrew Wiles, who in 1995 succeeded in proving the assertion of the French mathematician and lawyer Pierre de Fermat that the equation  $x^n + y^n = z^n$  has no solutions among the natural numbers for  $n \geq 3$ .



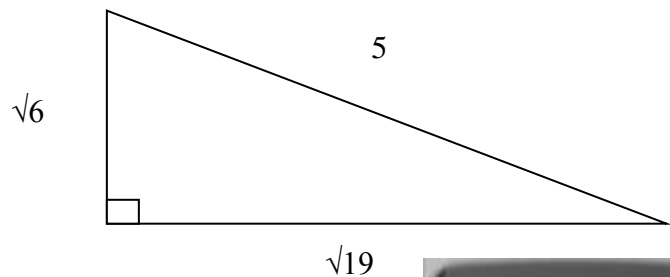
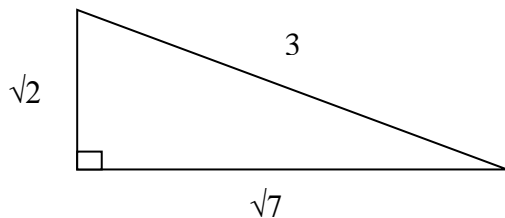
Can you think of some examples with numbers for  $x$ ,  $y$  and  $z$  for  $x^1 + y^1 = z^1$ ?

What about values for  $x$ ,  $y$  and  $z$  in  $x^2 + y^2 = z^2$ ?

Below are other stamps from around the world which have celebrated PYTHAGORAS.



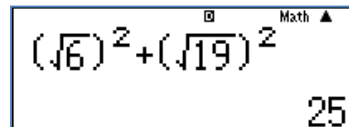
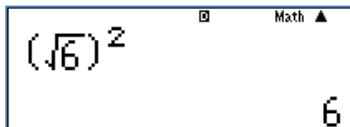
All numbers can be expressed using 'The Theorem of Pythagoras', here are some examples:



Here  $(\sqrt{2})^2 + (\sqrt{7})^2 = 3^2 (= 9)$ , as  $(\sqrt{2})^2 = 2$  and  $(\sqrt{7})^2 = 7$

and  $(\sqrt{6})^2 + (\sqrt{19})^2 = 5^2 (= 25)$ , as  $(\sqrt{6})^2 = 6$  and  $(\sqrt{19})^2 = 19$ .

Using the calculator, check that  $(\sqrt{6})^2 = 6$  and  $(\sqrt{6})^2 + (\sqrt{19})^2 = 25 (= 5^2)$ .



Can you use 'The Theorem of Pythagoras' to find other values for  $a$  and  $b$  such that:  $a^2 + b^2 = 9$  or  $a^2 + b^2 = 14$ ? Can you illustrate these as the sides of a right-angled triangle?

What about all the whole numbers between 1 and 20, where  $a^2 + b^2 = 1 (=2, =3, \dots, =20)$ ?

**Source:** Images of Mathematicians on Postage Stamps <http://jeff560.tripod.com/stamps.html>.