

# Math Diversion Problem 418

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It's not that I'm so smart; it's just that  
I stay with problems longer.  
— Albert Einstein

The YouTube video is found at:

Source: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_eiiL4r6CHQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_eiiL4r6CHQ)  
Title: Can you Solve Oxford University Admission Test ?  
Presenter: Super Academy

## 1 The Problem

Given the relation

$$x^2 = (5 - \sqrt{24})^x, \quad (1)$$

find the values of  $x$ .

## 2 The Preparation

I intend to use the Lambert  $W$  function, which goes as follows: If

$$ze^z = B, \quad (2)$$

then

$$z = W(B), \quad (3)$$

where there are domain constraints on  $B$  that we won't go into here. Warning: This can be a complicated (multi-valued) function to deal with.

I intend to use the Lambert  $W$  function Lemma, that, for  $a > 0$ , given

$$za^z = B, \quad (4)$$

then

$$z = W_a(B), \quad (5)$$

where

$$W_a(B) \equiv \frac{W(B \ln a)}{\ln a}, \quad (6)$$

which becomes the ordinary Lambert  $W$  function when  $a = e$ .

A lemma I'll need from the theory of the Lambert  $W$  function is the following:

If

$$y \ln y = B, \quad (7)$$

then

$$\ln y = W(y \ln y) = W(B). \quad (8)$$

### 3 The Solution

I'd like to start by taking the square root across (1):

$$x = \pm \left[ (5 - \sqrt{24})^{1/2} \right]^x, \quad (9)$$

and then write that in canonical form as<sup>1</sup>

$$-x \left[ (5 - \sqrt{24})^{1/2} \right]^{-x} = \pm 1. \quad (10)$$

Then

$$-x = W_{(5-\sqrt{24})^{1/2}}(\pm 1) = \frac{W(\pm 1 \cdot \ln (5 - \sqrt{24})^{1/2})}{\ln (5 - \sqrt{24})^{1/2}}. \quad (11)$$

Hence,

$$x = \begin{cases} -2 \frac{W(+\frac{1}{2} \ln (5 - \sqrt{24}))}{\ln (5 - \sqrt{24})}, \\ -2 \frac{W(-\frac{1}{2} \ln (5 - \sqrt{24}))}{\ln (5 - \sqrt{24})}. \end{cases} \quad (12)$$

Now, WolframAlpha claims that (12, bottom line) is the only real-valued solution, and that the solutions I gave should be replaced by the more general solutions:

$$x = \begin{cases} -2 \frac{W_n(+\frac{1}{2} \ln (5 - \sqrt{24}))}{\ln (5 - \sqrt{24})}, \\ -2 \frac{W_n(-\frac{1}{2} \ln (5 - \sqrt{24}))}{\ln (5 - \sqrt{24})}. \end{cases} \quad (13)$$

<sup>1</sup>By 'canonical form' in this context, I mean a form that I can apply either the Lambert definition or one of the Lambert lemmas.