

A MAGIC NUMBER FROM THE STARS

Math skills: Addition
You will need: Paper and pencil
Difficulty level: 1



Introduction: Write the number 3982 on the board and tell your students that this is a magical number straight from the stars!

What to do:

- ◆ Ask for a volunteer to write the year that he was born on the board.
- ◆ Write the year that you were born next to his. (If you prefer, you can use someone else's birth date, i.e. Microsoft president Bill Gates, who was born in 1955.)
- ◆ Ask your volunteer to write his age in the year 1991.
- ◆ Write your age (or Bill Gates') in the year 1991.
- ◆ Ask your class to add the 4 numbers and they'll be very surprised to see the sum already written on the board!



How it works:

- ◆ Let's say that your volunteer was born in 1987.
- ◆ In 1991 he/she was 4 years old.
- ◆ Bill Gates was born in 1955 and was 36 years old in 1991.
- ◆ Add those numbers (1987+4+1955+36=3982)!

To solve the mystery do the math again, but this time change 1991 to 2000 the sum should then be 4000!

Why it works:

Choose a year (C) which is after the birth year of the students and the teachers (or Bill Gates).

Write the number (2C) on the board.

The volunteer was born in year A.

The teacher (or Bill) was born in year B.

The volunteer's age at year C is: C-A.

The teacher's (or you-know-who's) age at year C is: C-B

Adding the four numbers gives: $A+B+C-A+C-B=2C$