



The Six-Cornered Snowflake

By Johannes Kepler

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"In 1611, Kepler wrote an essay wondering why snowflakes always had perfect, sixfold symmetry. It's a simple enough question, but one that no one had ever asked before and one that couldn't actually be answered for another three centuries. Still, in trying to work out an answer, Kepler raised some fascinating questions about physics, math, and biology, and now you can watch in wonder as a great scientific genius unleashes the full force of his intellect on a seemingly trivial question, complete with new illustrations and essays to put it all in perspective."—io9, from their list "10 Amazing Science Books That Reveal The Wonders Of The Universe"

When snow began to fall while he was walking across the Charles Bridge in Prague late in 1610, the eminent astronomer Johannes Kepler asked himself the following question: Why do snowflakes, when they first fall, and before they are entangled into larger clumps, always come down with six corners and with six radii tufted like feathers?

In his effort to answer this charming and never-before-asked question about snowflakes, Kepler delves into the nature of beehives, peapods, pomegranates, five-petaled flowers, the spiral shape of the snail's shell, and the formative power of nature itself. While he did not answer his original question—it remained a mystery for another three hundred years—he did find an occasion for deep and playful thought.

"A most suitable book for any and all during the winter and holiday seasons is a reissue of a holiday present by the great mathematician and astronomer Johannes Kepler...Even the endnotes in this wonderful little book are interesting and educationally fun to read."—Jay Pasachoff, *The Key Reporter*

New English translation by Jacques Bromberg

Latin text on facing pages

An essay, "The Delights of a Roving Mind" by Owen Gingerich

An essay, "On *The Six-Cornered Snowflake*" by Guillermo Bleichmar

Snowflake illustrations by Capi Corrales Rodriganez

John Frederick Nims' poem "The Six-Cornered Snowflake"

Notes by Jacques Bromberg and Guillermo Bleichmar

Johannes Kepler (1571-1631) was an important figure in the seventeenth century astronomical revolution. He is best known for his eponymous laws of planetary motion. Kepler wrote: "If there is anything that can bind the heavenly mind of man to this dusty exile of our earthly home...then it is verily the enjoyment of the mathematical sciences and astronomy."

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The Six-Cornered Snowflake By Johannes Kepler Bibliography

- Rank: #762102 in Books
- Brand: Kepler/ Bromberg (TRN)
- Published on: 2010-03-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 6.75" h x 5.50" w x .50" l, .30 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 115 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"In 1611, Kepler wrote an essay wondering why snowflakes always had perfect, sixfold symmetry. It's a simple enough question, but one that no one had ever asked before and one that couldn't actually be answered for another three centuries. Still, in trying to work out an answer, Kepler raised some fascinating questions about physics, math, and biology, and now you can watch in wonder as a great scientific genius unleashes the full force of his intellect on a seemingly trivial question, complete with new illustrations and essays to put it all in perspective."—**io9, from their list "10 Amazing Science Books That Reveal The Wonders Of The Universe"**

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About the Author

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