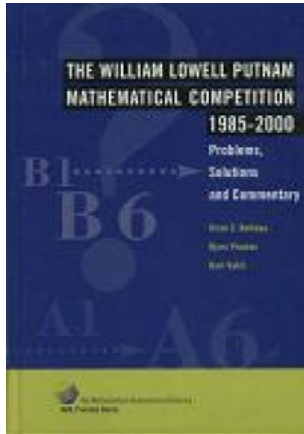


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The William Lowell Putnam Mathematical Competition is the premier undergraduate mathematical competition in North America. This volume contains problems from the years 1985-2000, with solutions and extensive commentary. It is unlike the first two Putnam volumes and unlike virtually every other problem-based book, in that it places the problems in the context of important mathematical themes. The authors highlight connections to other problems, to the curriculum, and to more advanced topics. The best problems contain kernels of sophisticated ideas related to important current research, and yet the problems are accessible to undergraduates. The heart of the book is in the solutions, which have been compiled through extensive research. In editing the solutions, the authors have kept a student audience in mind, explaining techniques that have relevance to more than the problem at hand, suggesting references for further reading, and mentioning related problems, some of which are unsolved.