

## Mathematics/Science 380 – History of Mathematics

TRENT UNIVERSITY, 2004–2005

### Assignment #2

*Due on Monday, 11 October, 2004*

For this assignment, you will need to read *Words and Pictures: New Light on Plimpton 322* by Eleanor Robson [1]. You can read or download it (in pdf format) from the Mathematical Association of America's web site at:

<http://www.maa.org/news/monthly105-120.pdf>

1. Describe in detail the three major interpretations of Plimpton 322, as described by Robson. Track down another description of each of the three interpretations and provide references. [8]
2. Summarize the arguments Robson gives for and against each interpretation. [8]
3. In your opinion, is Robson correct in her conclusions? Why or why not? [4]

#### REFERENCE

1. Eleanor Robson, Words and Pictures: New Light on Plimpton 322, *American Mathematical Monthly* **109** (2002) 105–120.

#### Error Messages in Haiku

*From a Salon magazine contest.*

Three things are certain:  
Death, taxes, and lost data.  
Guess which has occurred.

The code was willing,  
It considered your request,  
But the chips were weak.

Chaos reigns within.  
Reflect, repent, and reboot.  
Order shall return.

wind catches lily  
scatt'ring petals to the wind:  
segmentation fault

Serious error.  
All shortcuts have disappeared  
Screen. Mind. Both are blank.