

It's Greek to Me

Due Monday, February 2, 1998

The Plot:

There are two ways to go about learning formal computer theory. The first, known as “not as bad as the other way,” involves schematic sketches and an intuitive grasp of the underlying concepts. This section is being taught in that manner. The second method uses mathematical formalisms, which is slightly more precise, but very difficult to learn from. Unfortunately, Levis and Primavera covers the material employ the latter.

It is important, however, to understand and be able to read symbolic representations, because there is really no other way to write a book on computer theory (that is, you will be rich if you figure out how). The point of this exercise is to get a better handle on reading sentences that contain more Greek letters than the Fence during rush week.

The Script:

If your last name starts with any of the letters from ‘A’ through ‘M’, you are working on chapter two of Liver and Pancreas; otherwise you are working with chapter three. For your chapter, make a list of each symbol in the chapter and explain in a few words or a sentence what each means. If a symbol is used in different ways, write multiple definitions and note in which part of the chapter each is used. You may use symbols in your definitions, but avoid creating circular definitions.

The Point:

Depending on how much time we have on Wednesday, we may spend part of section translating one or two of the whoppers from chapters two and three. Come prepared to participate, and bring your book.

Stage Directions:

Your definition list should be e-mailed to me directly (sal@ri.cmu.edu) by midnight of the due date (that is, Monday at midnight).

Remember to bring your copy of Linus and Paramount to class on Wednesday.