

# Worksheet: Venice-Rome courier

**Problem:** A courier travels from Rome to Venice in 7 days. An other courier starts at the same time and travels from Venice to Rome in 9 days. The distance from Venice to Rome is 250 miles. In how many days will the couriers meet?

How can we spice this problem up? First of all, there is history involved. There is the riddle, who was the author of the riddle? It turns out to be the first arithmetic, printed in There is the excitement that this was the first problem ever printed:

e quante miglia bauera fatto ciaschaduno di loro.  
fa secondo la regola cosi.

7	i	3	5	)
9		1	6	3
16		1	6	3

partitore      30mi.

Unde in 30mi. 3.e i 5 se scontrano.

Se tu vuol sapere quanta miglia bauera fatto ciaschaduno: fa per la regola del. 3. dicendo  
E primo per quellui da Roma.

7	i	2	)	250	=	63
1		1	6	3		16

250	i	6	3	)	250
63		1	6	3	0
187		1	6	3	0
124		1	6	3	0
57		1	6	3	0

Quellui che vien da Roma bauera fatto miglia i 40.e 5/8

Doi mettila regola per el corriero da Venezia.

44	i	9	)	250	=	63
9		1	6	3		16

250	i	9	)	250	
63		1	6	3	0
187		1	6	3	0
124		1	6	3	0
126		1	6	3	0

FIG. 38.—From the earliest printed arithmetic, 1478

But there is more. First of all, the number 250 miles is not quite right. If you google "Venice Rome distance in miles" you get 326 miles. But the problem is not so far off: the flying distance is 250 miles!

**Subject:** Basic linear equations



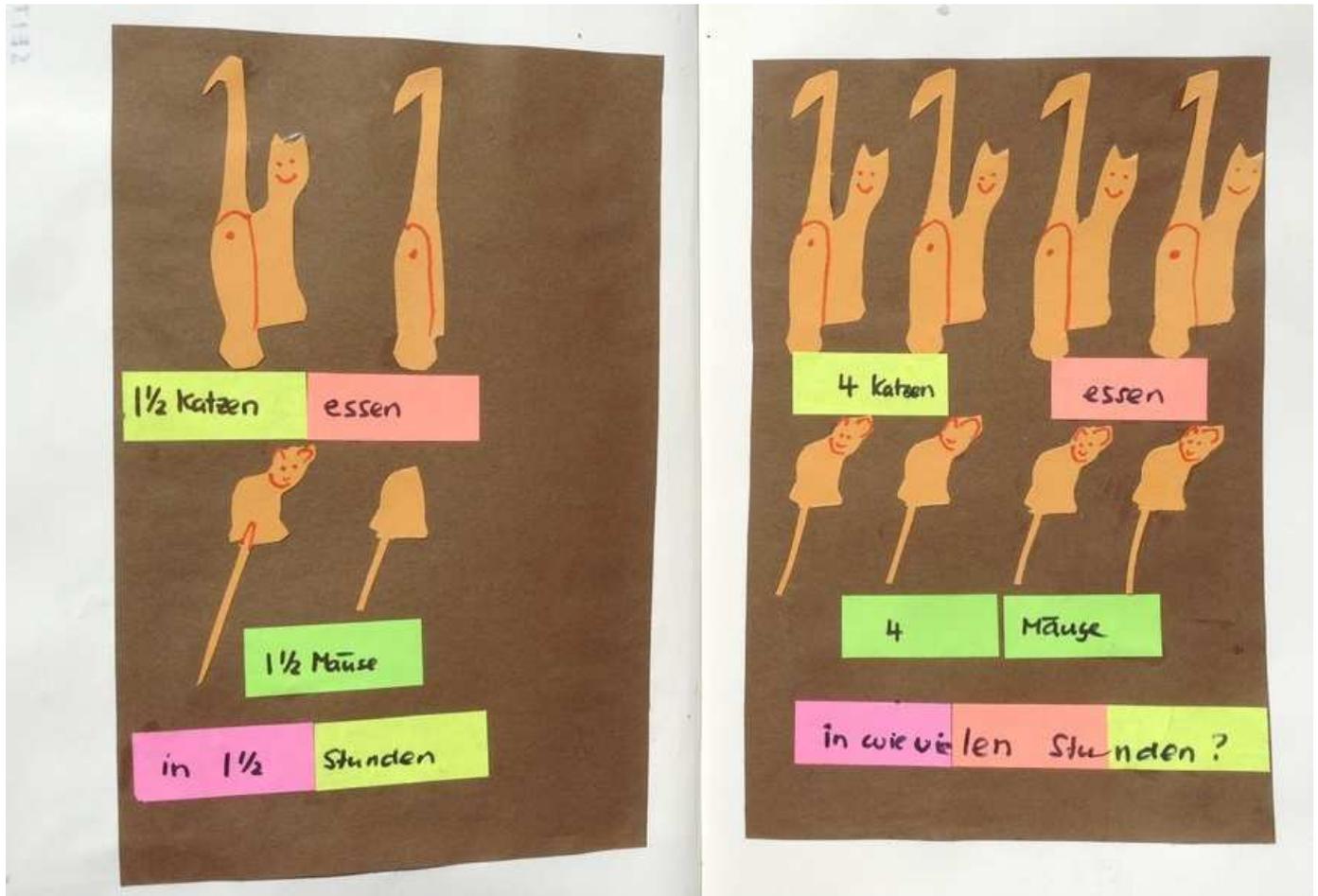
Source: [1]

## References

[1] F. Cajori. *A history of Mathematical Notations*. The Open Court Company, London, 1928.

# Worksheet: A cat problem

**Problem:** If one and a half cats eat one and a half mice in one and a half hours, then four cats eat four mice in how many hours?



This entry is from the "visitors book" in our little house in the Swiss alps.

# An ambiguity with fractions

By the way, there is a nice ambiguity here. As many write  $11/2$  for one and a half  $1 + 1/2$ . One could read this is  $1 \cdot 1/2 = 1/2$  or then as  $11/2 = 5.5$ . In general, the mixed notation (often done in schools), is very dangerous.

**Tip:** Write fractions clearly!

The above picture from a book you see on the table near the fondue. The house in the mountains is visible below.

