

**ZMATH 2015d.00645****Conway, John****A characterization of the equilateral triangles and some consequences.**

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Equilateral triangles are characterised as having three sides of equal length. The author generalises this characterisation to what he calls Conway's Little Theorem: Equilateral triangles are characterised by the assertion that each ratio of two sides and each ratio of two angles are rational. For the proof, the triangle  $ABC$  is placed in the complex plane and scaled such that the side lengths  $a, b, c$  are rational and the angles rational multiples of  $\pi$ . Expressing the complex number  $C$  through  $A, B$  and the angles and side lengths, Conway finds an equation of the form  $c + a\omega^{kq} = b\omega^{kp}$ , which holds for all  $k$  prime to  $n$  (modulo  $n$ ) and where  $\omega$  is a primitive  $n$ th root of unity. This leads to  $\phi(n)$  triangles with the given lengths, angles and base  $AB$ . But there are only two such triangles, which then implies that the angles are positive multiples of  $60^\circ$ . Hence the triangle is equilateral. Conway also gives two consequences of his Little Theorem: Let a *rational angle* be an angle that is a rational multiple of  $\pi$ . Then, the only rational angle  $\theta$  in the open interval  $(0, 90^\circ)$  for which  $\cos \theta$  is rational is  $\theta = 60^\circ$ . The only rational angle  $\phi$  in the open interval  $(0, 90^\circ)$  for which  $\sin \phi$  is rational is  $\phi = 30^\circ$ . The other consequence is, the only rational angles for which the square of any of the six standard trigonometric functions is rational (or  $\infty$ ) are the multiples of  $30^\circ$  and  $45^\circ$ .

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