

Snell's Law Song

Words by Marian McKenzie & Walter Smith 12-8-02

Tune: Sweet Betsy from Pike (traditional)

$$n_1 \sin \theta_1 = n_2 \sin \theta_2$$

C C G7 C
Come listen and learn, I've a story I tell,
C Am G G7
I sing of the genius of Willebrord Snell
C Em F C
A mathematician who lived long ago
C C G7 C
In the Netherlands where the Rhine river does flow.

C C G7 C
He set for his mind occupations of worth,
C Am G G7
Improved navigation and measured the Earth!
C Em F C
He gave us the sine law, that wonderful guy,
C C G7 C
And he made more precise calculation of pi!

C F (or C) G (or G7) Am (or C)
Singin' $n_1 \sin \theta_1$, hey, hey, hey,
C F (or C) G (or G7) C
Equals $n_2 \sin \theta_2$, hip hooray!

C C G7 C
His greatest feat came in Sixteen Twenty-one,
C Am G G7
When optics as science was really begun!
C Em F C
While flashes of lightning illumined his page,
C C G7 C
He wrote down Snell's law, his great gift to the age!



Willebrord van Roijen Snell
1580-1626

(Note that the first name is actually pronounced "Villbrort", but in the song is pronounced "Vill-e-brort".)

C C G7 C
So if you wear glasses or like to fry ants,
 C Am G G7
Be grateful your lenses were not made by chance!
 C Em F C
Astronomers hail him with each new-found star!
 C C G7 C
Microscopists toast him from each sleazy bar!

C F (or C) G (or G7) Am (or C)
Singin' n1 sine theta-sub-1, hey, hey, hey,
 C F (or C) G (or G7) C
Equals n2 sine theta-sub-2, hip hooray!

C C G7 C
Now some credit Harriot, others Descartes,
 C Am G G7
Both studied refraction, and both were real smart.
 C Em F C
But we prefer Willebrord van Roijen Snell --
 C C G7 C
He laid down the law, and he did it darn well!

C F (or C) G (or G7) Am (or C)
Singin' n1 sine theta-sub-1, hey, hey, hey,
 C F (or C) G (or G7) C
Equals n2 sine theta-sub-2, hip hooray!