1056-01-625     **Amy Ackerberg-Hastings\*** (`aackerbe@verizon.net`), 5908 Halsey Road, Rockville, MD 20851. *What is a Great Book? A Case Study of Legendre's Éléments de Géométrie (1794) and Playfair's Elements of Geometry (1795).*

Both *Éléments de Géométrie* and *Elements of Geometry* were wildly popular textbooks in their day and remain well known to mathematicians, educators, and historians. Since they were published so close together and were so influential, it is logical to juxtapose their content and their authors. Adrien-Marie Legendre of France and John Playfair of Scotland both enjoyed international reputations, although Legendre made more substantial contributions to pure and applied mathematics. Yet, both authors directed these particular works at students, although there is some evidence that they also had larger contributions in mind. This raises questions about how we assess the quality of a textbook and whether we measure research content or pedagogical approach. In a larger sense, who decides which works are great books in mathematics, and what are the criteria to achieve the status of a great book? This talk, therefore, seeks to extend the themes raised in the MAA Short Course, "Exploring the Great Books of Mathematics," and the MAA Contributed Papers Session, "Mathematical Texts: Famous, Infamous, and Influential." (Received September 14, 2009)