5.2 THE NATURAL LOGARITHMIC FUNCTION

EXAMPLE A Sketch the graph of $y = \ln(4 - x^2)$.

A. The domain is

$$\{x \mid 4 - x^2 > 0\} = \{x \mid x^2 < 4\} = \{x \mid |x| < 2\} = (-2, 2)$$

B. The y-intercept is $f(0) = \ln 4$. To find the x-intercept we set

$$y = \ln(4 - x^2) = 0$$

We know that $\ln 1 = \log_e 1 = 0$ (since $e^0 = 1$), so we have $4 - x^2 = 1 \Rightarrow x^2 = 3$ and therefore the x-intercepts are $\pm\sqrt{3}$.

C. Since $f(-x) = f(x)$, f is even and the curve is symmetric about the y-axis.

D. We look for vertical asymptotes at the endpoints of the domain. Since $4 - x^2 \to 0^+$ as $x \to 2^-$ and also as $x \to -2^+$, we have

$$\lim_{x \to 2^-} \ln(4 - x^2) = -\infty \qquad \lim_{x \to -2^+} \ln(4 - x^2) = -\infty$$

Thus the lines $x = 2$ and $x = -2$ are vertical asymptotes.

E.
$$f'(x) = \frac{-2x}{4 - x^2}$$

Since $f'(x) > 0$ when $-2 < x < 0$ and $f'(x) < 0$ when $0 < x < 2$, f is increasing on $(-2, 0)$ and decreasing on $(0, 2)$.

F. The only critical number is $x = 0$. Since f' changes from positive to negative at 0, $f(0) = \ln 4$ is a local maximum by the First Derivative Test.

G.
$$f''(x) = \frac{(4 - x^2)(-2) + 2x(-2x)}{(4 - x^2)^2} = \frac{-8 - 2x^2}{(4 - x^2)^2}$$

Since $f''(x) < 0$ for all x, the curve is concave downward on $(-2, 2)$ and has no inflection point.

H. Using this information, we sketch the curve in Figure 1. ■

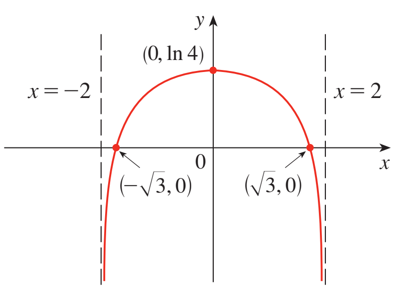

FIGURE 1
$y = \ln(4 - x^2)$