

Question

Find the small ε expansion of the roots of $\varepsilon x^2 - 4x + 1 = 0$.

Answer

$$\varepsilon x^2 - 4x + 1 = 0$$

This is a singular perturbation as ε multiplies highest power of x : when $\varepsilon = 0$

obtain only one root $x = \frac{1}{4}$.

CHEAT!

Exact solution is

$$\begin{aligned} x &= \frac{4 \pm \sqrt{16 - 4\varepsilon}}{2\varepsilon} \\ &= \frac{2 \pm \sqrt{4 - \varepsilon}}{\varepsilon} \\ &= \frac{2}{\varepsilon} \pm \frac{2}{\varepsilon} \left(1 - \frac{\varepsilon}{4}\right)^{\frac{1}{2}} \\ &= \frac{2}{\varepsilon} \pm \frac{2}{\varepsilon} \mp \frac{1}{4} \mp \frac{\varepsilon}{64} + O(\varepsilon^2) \\ &= \begin{cases} \frac{4}{\varepsilon} - \frac{1}{4} \mp \frac{\varepsilon}{64} + O(\varepsilon^2) \\ \frac{1}{4} + \frac{\varepsilon}{64} + O(\varepsilon^2) \end{cases} \end{aligned}$$

so now try it the other (proper) way:

Use ansatz

$x = \frac{x_0}{\varepsilon} + x_1 + O(\varepsilon^2) \rightarrow$ for singular root $\rightarrow x_0 = 0 \Rightarrow$ regular root discord
or $x_0 = 4$ actual one.

$x = x_0 + \varepsilon x_1 + O(\varepsilon^2) \rightarrow$ for regular root

Substitute into equation and balance at each order to show coefficients above.