Questions

1. State the degree and list the zeros of the polynomial function $f(x) = (x-1)^3(x+2)^2$. State the multiplicity of each zero and whether the graph crosses the x-axis at the corresponding x-intercept. Then sketch the graph of the polynomial function by hand.

2. Using only algebra, find a cubic function with zeros given by $1, 1+\sqrt{2}, 1-\sqrt{2}$.

3. Sketch $f(x) = (4x-7)(9-x)(13-x)^2$.

Solutions

1. State the degree and list the zeros of the polynomial function $f(x) = (x-1)^3(x+2)^2$. State the multiplicity of each zero and whether the graph crosses the x-axis at the corresponding x-intercept. Then sketch the graph of the polynomial function by hand.

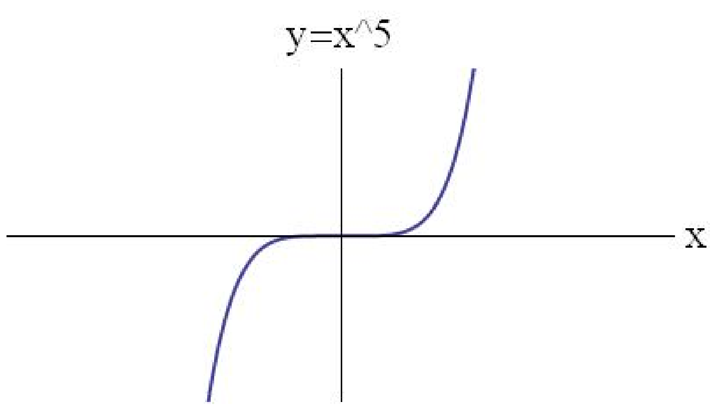
This is a fifth degree polynomial, so it will have at most 5 real valued roots and 4 local extrema.

The polynomial will have two zeros, at $x = -2, 1$.
The polynomial will change sign (cross the x axis) at the roots with odd multiplicity; these roots are
$x = 1$ multiplicity 3,
The polynomial will not change sign (cross the x axis) at the roots with even multiplicity; these roots are
$x = -2$ multiplicity 2.
The end behaviour of the polynomial is found by determining the leading term, which is

$$(x-1)^3(x+2)^2 \sim (x)^3(x)^2 = x^5 \text{ for large } |x|.$$

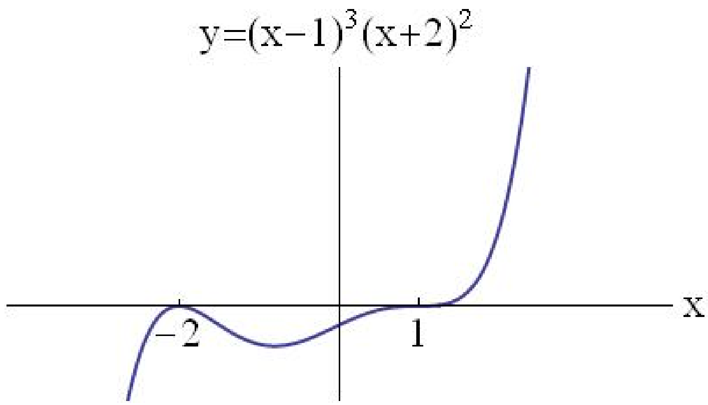
The end behaviour of the monomial x^5 is

$$\lim_{x\to-\infty} x^5 = -\infty \qquad \lim_{x\to\infty} x^5 = \infty$$



This sketch tells us the end behaviour of the polynomial.

Putting it all together, we can sketch the polynomial f



2. Using only algebra, find a cubic function with zeros given by $1, 1+\sqrt{2}, 1-\sqrt{2}$.

We can get the cubic from the zeros by writing the factored form, where c_i are the roots. In this case, we are given all three roots, so each root is multiplicity one.

$$\begin{aligned} f(x) &= (x-c_1)(x-c_2)(x-c_3) \\ &= (x-1)(x-(1+\sqrt{2}))(x-(1-\sqrt{2})) \\ &= (x-1)(x^2-2x-1) \\ &= (x^3-2x^2-x)-(x^2-2x-1) \\ &= x^3-2x^2-x-x^2+2x+1 \\ &= x^3-3x^2+x+1 \end{aligned}$$

I have simplified to standard form for a polynomial.

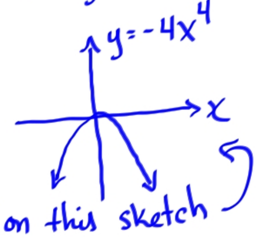
Check our answer by substituting in the roots:

$$\begin{aligned} f(1) &= (1)^3-3(1)^2+(1)+1 \\ &= 0 \\ f(1+\sqrt{2}) &= (1+\sqrt{2})^3-3(1+\sqrt{2})^2+(1+\sqrt{2})+1 \\ &= (1+3\sqrt{2}+3(\sqrt{2})^2+(\sqrt{2})^3)-3(1+2\sqrt{2}+(\sqrt{2})^2)+(1+\sqrt{2})+1 \\ &= 1+3\sqrt{2}+6+2\sqrt{2}-3-6\sqrt{2}-6+1+\sqrt{2}+1 \\ &= 0 \\ f(1-\sqrt{2}) &= (1-\sqrt{2})^3-3(1-\sqrt{2})^2+(1-\sqrt{2})+1 \\ &= (1-3\sqrt{2}+3(\sqrt{2})^2-(\sqrt{2})^3)-3(1-2\sqrt{2}+(\sqrt{2})^2)+(1-\sqrt{2})+1 \\ &= 1-3\sqrt{2}+6-2\sqrt{2}-3+6\sqrt{2}-6+1-\sqrt{2}+1 \\ &= 0 \end{aligned}$$

3. Sketch $f(x) = (4x-7)(9-x)(13-x)^2$.

Zeros: $4x-7=0 \Rightarrow x = 7/4$ multiplicity 1, so f will change sign.
$9-x=0 \Rightarrow x=9$ multiplicity 1, so f will change sign.
$13-x=0 \Rightarrow x=13$ multiplicity 2, so f does not change sign.

End behaviour: $f(x) = (4x-7)(9-x)(13-x)^2$
$\sim (4x)(-x)(-x)^2$ if $|x|$ large
$\sim (4x)(-x)x^2$
$\sim -4x^4 \Longrightarrow$



so $\lim_{x\to\infty} f(x) = -\infty$ and $\lim_{x\to-\infty} f(x) = -\infty$ based on this sketch

sketch