

Solution 1: Factor

By the Rational Root Theorem, the possible rational roots of this polynomial are  $\pm 2, \pm 1, \pm \frac{1}{2}$ . We can test these few options and find that the polynomial factors into  $(x+2)(2x-1)(x^2-6x-1) = 0$ .

For  $x = -2$  or  $x = \frac{1}{2}$ , we have  $x - \frac{1}{x} = \boxed{-\frac{3}{2}}$ . The quadratic formula on  $(x^2 - 6x - 1) = 0$  gives us  $x = 3 \pm \sqrt{10}$  for which  $x - \frac{1}{x} = \boxed{6}$ .

Solution 2: Divide by  $x^2$

We have

$$\begin{aligned} 2x^4 - 9x^3 - 22x^2 + 9x + 2 &= x^2 \left( 2x^2 - 9x - 22 + \frac{9}{x} + \frac{2}{x^2} \right) \\ &= x^2 \left[ 2 \left( x^2 + \frac{1}{x^2} \right) - 9 \left( x - \frac{1}{x} \right) - 22 \right] = 0. \end{aligned}$$

Quickly checking, we see that  $x = 0$  is not a solution so we must have  $2 \left( x^2 + \frac{1}{x^2} \right) - 9 \left( x - \frac{1}{x} \right) - 22 = 0$ . Let  $a = x - \frac{1}{x}$ , which means  $a^2 = x^2 + \frac{1}{x^2} - 2$  so we have

$$\begin{aligned} 2(a^2 + 2) - 9a - 22 &= 2a^2 - 9a - 18 \\ &= (2a + 3)(a - 6) = 0. \end{aligned}$$

This gives us  $a = \boxed{-\frac{3}{2}, 6}$ .