

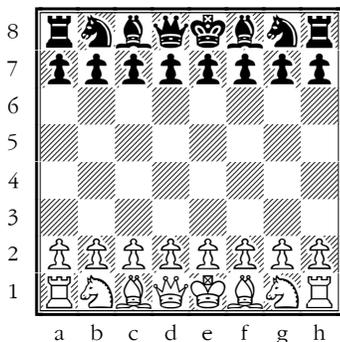
# Phases of a Game, Planning & Your Opponent

## Part 1: The Three Phases of a Chess Game

### Concepts:

- A basic introduction and description of the three “Phases” of a Chess Game:
- Opening, Middlegame and Endgame!

### Phase 1: The Beginning of Every Chess Game is Called the Opening

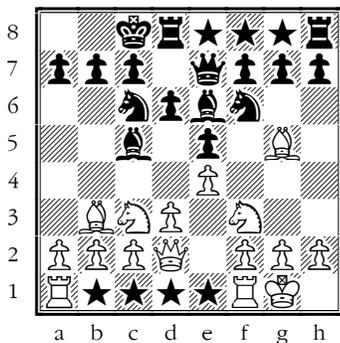


*The Opening “stage” of the game starts with move 1...*

The “Opening” is the beginning of a chess game, from the time when the very first move is played, until all the pieces are **developed** and the players begin creating/choosing their Middlegame plans (see phase 2).

Though we go deeper into the ideas and strategies of development in Lesson 8, here we offer a basic definition of the word development in regards to chess: *The act of bringing one’s pieces out from their starting positions...*

### Phase 1 Continued: The Rooks Are Connected, King is Safe, Opening Completed

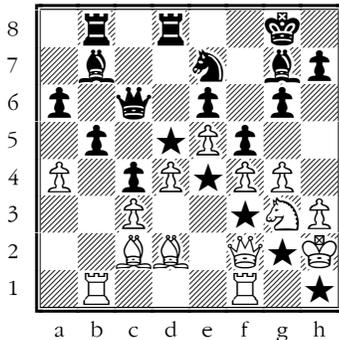


*“Transition” of Opening to Middlegame completed...*

Developing the pieces and finding long term safety for the King could be treated as the two most important tasks of the first phase of a chess game. We find these two tasks are complete once the Rooks become connected by a direct line of unoccupied squares.

In our second diagram, we see a simple example of where the “completion of the Opening” and the “start of the Middlegame” can be found. In the example position, all of both white’s and black’s pieces have been developed. It is now time for each player to begin Phase 2...

## Phase 2: The “Main Battle” for Every Chess Game Happens in the Middlegame

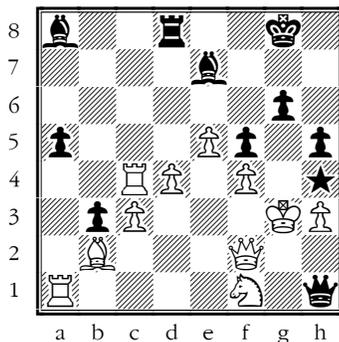


*A famous Middlegame:  
0-1 Gligoric-Smyslov,  
Kiev 1959*

The Middlegame starts when the players have brought out all of their pieces and are now looking for plans of attack on their opponent's pawns and pieces, as well as defense of their own army. In Lesson 5, you learned the basics of attack, defense, “doggy-piles” and counting, and that knowledge is most useful in the Middlegame.

Though you will learn more about **tactics** in Lessons 9-12, here we simply highlight that the best type of tactic or “plan of attack” for your pieces is against the enemy King. Many great chess champions have won games by starting a “checkmate attack”, which means to use your pieces against the King in hopes of achieving checkmate...

## Phase 2 Continued: In the Middlegame, Coordinate the Pieces for Attack/Defense

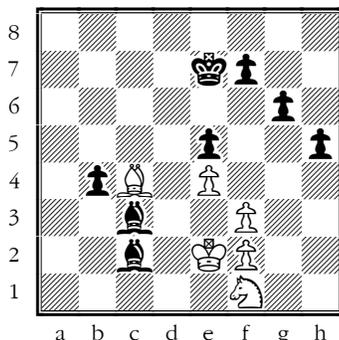


*With strong attacking  
play, the Middlegame  
might end in checkmate!*

In the famous game shown at left, Smyslov used his Queen and Bishop along the h1-a8 diagonal to attack the white King. Black's last move, 39...h7-h5!, threatened checkmate with Pawn to h4 – an unstoppable threat, and Grandmaster Gligoric resigned.

This example was designed to show that with good tactics, a strong checkmate attack might actually turn the “middle” of the game into the “end” of the game. Pawn play or “**positional**” chess is also an important, though more advanced, part of the Middlegame (see Lessons 17 and 18). The Middlegame is typically considered to be over when there are very few pieces on the board, or when Queens and at least a few other pieces have been traded.

## Phase 3: The Final Stage of a Chess Game is the Endgame



*The Endgame: All games  
must come to an end!*

If the game does not end with a checkmate attack, tactics and “positional planning” can be used in the Middlegame to win material (enemy pieces). That material advantage can then be used to win in the Endgame either by winning even more material or by advancing and promoting a pawn (see Lesson 14 for more information regarding Passed Pawns).

With the Queens traded, it is usually not possible to start a mating attack in the Endgame. In our example (left), black is winning by advancing one of his passed pawns. Both the h5 and b4-pawns have “clear paths” to promote on the 1<sup>st</sup> rank. White can not stop both, and will eventually lose.

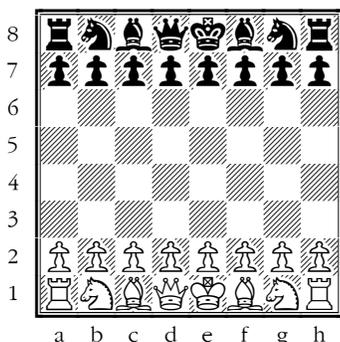
## Phases of a Game, Planning & Your Opponent

### Part 2: Learning the Basics of “Planning” in Chess

#### Concepts:

- The Big Three: “Checks, Captures and Queen Attacks”
- What your “thought process” should be!
- The basics of developing a plan in chess!

#### Before Making a Move, A Chess Player Should...

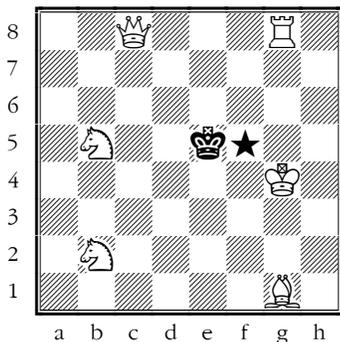


*Before move 1, a player should be ready to think!*

Through the first five lessons of this curriculum you've learned how the pieces move, the primary goal, the basic checkmates, and hopefully captured the fundamental knowledge needed to play through the different stages of a game. Basically, you now know the most important **technical** facets of chess! We will now venture into some of the critical **practical** aspects of the game.

Chess is a game of “cause and effect”, which essentially means your choices and every move you make will have consequences. Learning to “*think before you move*” is extremely important. In Parts 2 and 3 of Lesson 6 we will prioritize what you should be thinking about in terms of your own plans and moves, as well as your opponent's...

#### Before Making a Move... Your #1 Priority is to Look for Checks!

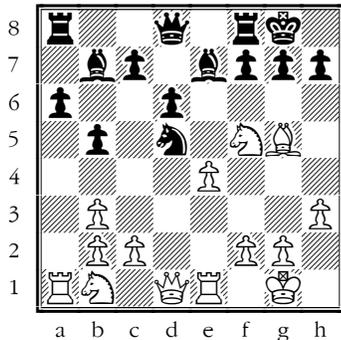


*Do you see all the checks? There are 11!*

The most important moves to consider are those which attack the enemy King. Though not all checks are good, you must be aware of **all** possible ways to give check. Because to miss a chance to check, is also to miss a chance to checkmate!

In our example position, there are eleven ways for white to check the black King, however only one is checkmate. To see a check and move immediately, without considering all your possibilities would be foolish! Good things come to those who consider as many moves as they can. 1.Qf5 is checkmate, while no other check does the job!

## Before Making a Move... Your #2 Priority is to Look for Captures!

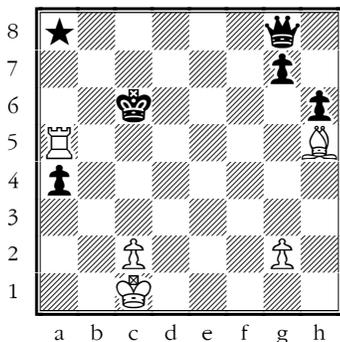


Black's last move was  
*Nxd5 was a big mistake!*

Though no capture without a check ever led to checkmate, to consider every capture is just as important. Outside of checkmate, the most concrete advantage a player can have is a material one. You learned to count the attackers and defenders in every “doggy-pile”, and as you improve, you will learn that no capture should be overlooked.

Our example diagram is a perfect example of needing to consider every possible way to capture. The move 1.Qxd5! wins a piece in this position, despite appearing to lose the Queen for a Bishop. After: 1...Bxd5 2.Nxe7+ Kh8 3.Ng6+! h(orf)xd6 4.Bxd8 Rxd8 5.exd5 – white has won a piece!

## Before Making a Move... Your #3 Priority is to Look for Queen Attacks!

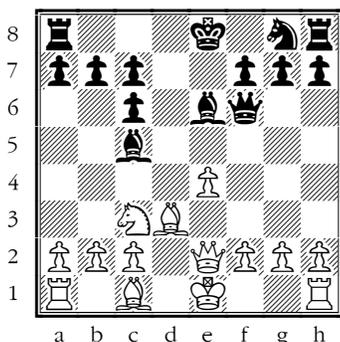


2...Qxa4 was also not  
possible due to 3.Be8+! --  
another winning skewer...

Knowing every possible check and capture for your army is by far the most important thing to think about, but because the Queen is the most powerful piece – considering all possible ways to attack her is also critical! Here white has two ways to attack the black Queen on g8.

Though both 1.Bf7 and 1.Ra8 seem equally bad, they should both be considered. As long as they are both given thought, we suddenly see that black can't capture the Rook on a8 due to 2.Bf3+, skewering (see Lesson 10) the King and Queen. After: 1...Qa2 2.Rxa4 again white attacks the Queen and forces 2...Qg8 3.Ra8 Qh7 4.Bg6! Qxg6 and 5.Ra6+, applying a deadly skewer that wins the game

## Finding a Plan (What to do?) If There Are No Checks, Captures, or Queen Attacks



Both white and black  
have useful “planning”  
moves to play!

Though checks, captures and Queen attacks may be the most critical moves to be aware of – not every position will offer a good way of playing one of those moves. There are many other things to think about and ways to improve your position if indeed that is the case.

Here white and black can both play useful “developing moves”: Be3 or d2 bring the bishop out and 0-0 would give safety to the King. For Black, Ne7 and Rd8 would both develop pieces. Anytime a useful check, capture or Queen attack does not exist, look for ways to activate your pieces, control the center, or make a plan that threatens a good check, capture or Queen attack...

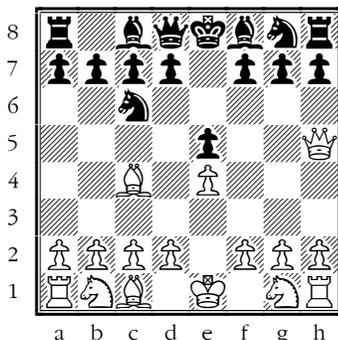
## Phases of a Game, Planning & Your Opponent

### Part 3: Why Did My Opponent Move There?

#### Concepts:

- The Big Three: “Checks, Captures and Queen Attacks”... for the other guy!
- Recognizing and stopping your opponent's threats!
- Preventing your opponent's plan!

#### After Your Opponent makes a Move: Why THAT Move?

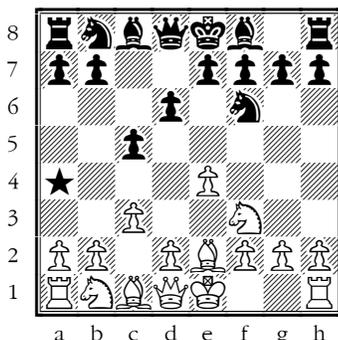


Why did white play 3.Bc4?

As we learned in Part 2, the most important and powerful moves in chess are checks, captures and Queen attacks. So certainly, being aware of our opponent's possible checks, captures and Queen attacks would make sense!

Perhaps the only reason a chess player, of **any** level, ever loses a game is failure to ask and answer one crucial question: **Why did my opponent move there and what is he/she trying to do to me?** In the diagrams of Lesson 6 Part 3, we have created small puzzles to be taken from black's perspective. They are designed for beginning players to learn to stop their opponent's threats. In example 1, black must stop 4.Qxf7. 3...g6 followed by 4...Nf6 is best.

#### Before Making a Move Look for Your Opponent's... Checks!

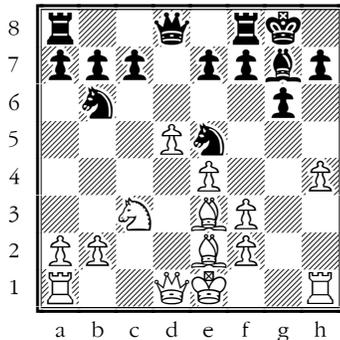


Can black safely capture the “undefended” e4-pawn? Look for checks!

Building the essential habit of thinking about what your opponent would do next, starting with every check, capture and Queen attack, is what we plan to achieve in this lesson. The diagramed position occurs after the moves 1.e4.c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.c3 Nf6 4.Be2 from the Sicilian Defense.

This common trick has caught many “Pawn grabbing” players who don't think about their opponent's next move off-guard. The move 4...Nxe4? drops a piece after 5.Qa4+, forking (see Lesson 9 for more information of the “Fork” or “Double Attack” tactic) the King on e8 and the Knight on e4. White will capture the helpless Knight next move...

## Before Making a Move Look for Your Opponent's... Captures!

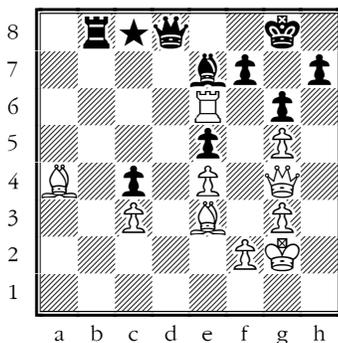


...Qd7 would complete development and connect the Rooks. Good move?

As the diagram caption says, the move Qd7 for black seems very logical. In fact, this is a commonly reached position from a main line Opening variation. Many players have quickly moved Qd7 in order to complete development, connect the rooks, and prepare for the Middlegame.

We must consider all of our opponent's captures before making a move in chess. Even if a capture seems a little odd, taking the time to consider why our opponent might want to make that capture is critical. After 1... Qd7 white can play the surprising 2.Bxb6! followed by 3.f4 – trapping the Knight on e5, winning a piece, and seizing a huge material advantage.

## Before Making a Move Look for Your Opponent's... Queen Attacks!

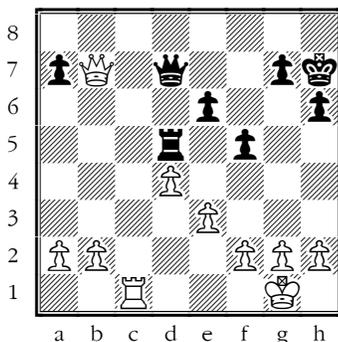


1-0 Fischer-Shocron  
Mar Del Plata 1959

In this famous game by the former American world champion Bobby Fischer, black played the move 39...Qc8. Pinning (see Lesson 10 for information on "Pin" tactics) the e6-Rook to the white unprotected Queen on g4, and seemingly winning back the Rook on e6 after it captured a black Knight. However, Shocron had overlooked the young Fischer's response move. A killer Queen attack!

White responded with 40.Bd7!! – "unpinning" the Rook, and attacking the black Queen. After 40...Qxd7 41.Rxg6+ the Queen on g4 captures the undefended black Queen on d7. Black should have considered **every** Queen attack...

## Your Opponent Has No Checks, Captures, or Queen Attacks: What is Their Plan?



Should white play 1.Rc7?  
- Look for weaknesses!

What to think about if there are no good checks, captures, or Queen attacks for your opponent? Though there are many ways to improve your own position, the best thing to think about in regards to your opponent's threats is what **weaknesses do you have**.

Before deciding whether or not to simply trade Queens and go into an Endgame ahead two pawns or play 1.Rc7 – white should try to establish what **his/her biggest weakness is**... 1.Rc7?? loses on the spot to 1...Rc5!!, a huge counter strike that exposes white's weak back rank: If 2.Rxd7 Rc1#; if 2.dxc5 Qd1#; and if 2.Rxc5 Qxb7 winning the Queen and the game for black....



## Phases of a Game, Planning & Your Opponent

### Instructor's Guide

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When teaching the introduction to the different stages of a chess game (Part 1), the most important thing for the student(s) to understand is simply that there **are** three different stages and that the general plan will change throughout the game. The critical details and strategies of these different stages are broken down and given more attention in later lessons.

We recommend that you refer to these lessons when in need of guidance or further explanation of a particular topic or idea: See lessons seven and eight for more on the Opening; lessons nine through twelve, as well as seventeen through twenty, for more on the Middlegame; and lessons thirteen through sixteen for more on the Endgame.

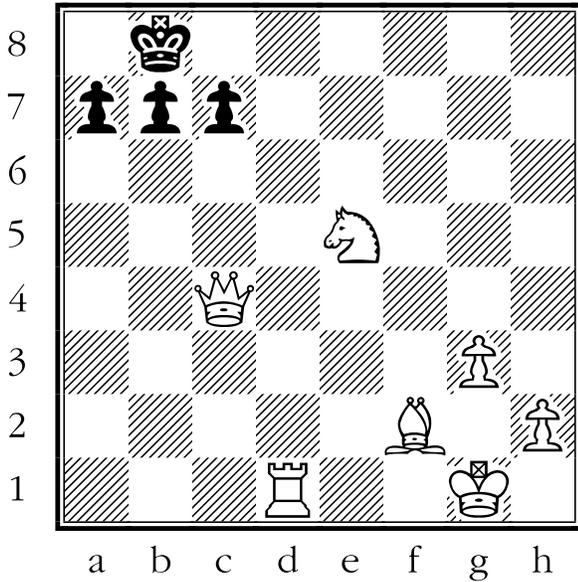
We recommend using the multiple worksheets included with the lesson for practice **during** the instruction process of Parts 2 and 3. Understanding and then recognizing every check, capture and Queen attack is made much easier with practical exercises. The positions are designed to be simple and ask the obvious questions and should ease every student's learning challenge.

#### **Practical Notes and Advice – Lesson 6:**

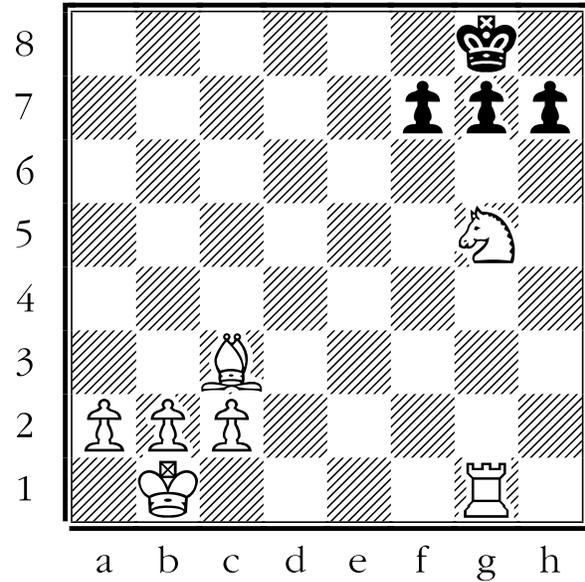
- **Taking a break from instruction to allow for practical games will help keep the focus of your student(s). During the study of Lesson 6 (Parts 2 and 3), ask the student(s) to tell you, or each other in large classes, out loud every time there is a potential check, capture or Queen Attack on the board.**
- **In one-on-one lessons, have the student also tell you when their opponent has a check, capture or Queen Attack.**
- **Once the recognition of every check, capture and Queen Attack is no longer an issue – as the student(s) to explain whether or not each particular check, capture or Queen Attack is good – and why.**

## Lesson 6: Checks and Captures!

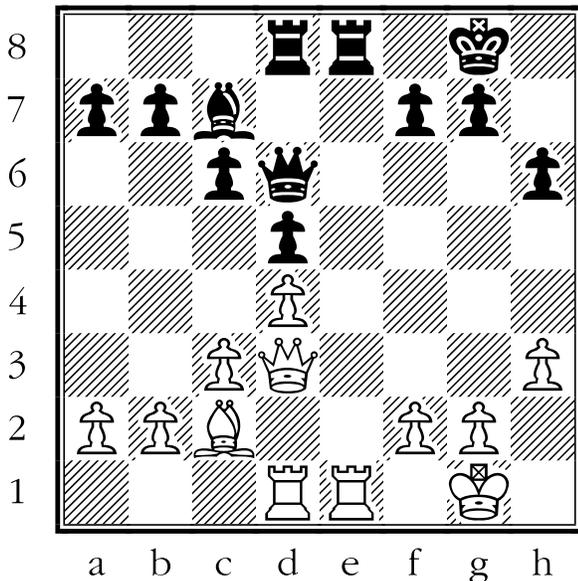
**White to play:** Can the black King be placed in Check? Circle Yes or No. If "Yes", circle every piece that can attack the black King, putting him in check.



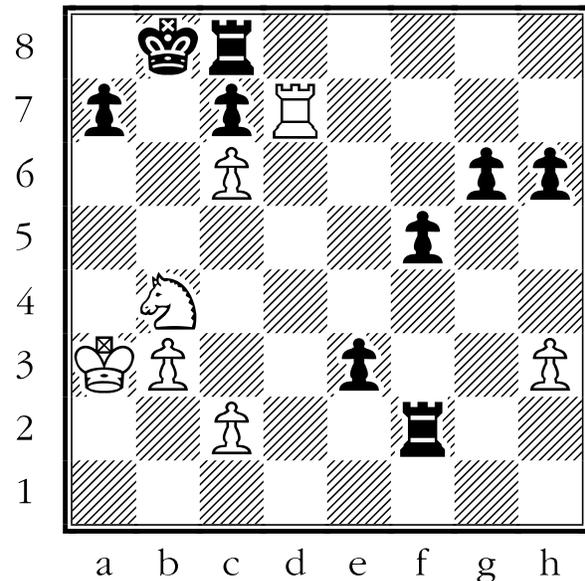
Circle the correct answer:  
Yes? Does white have a check? No?



Circle the correct answer:  
Yes? Does white have a check? No?



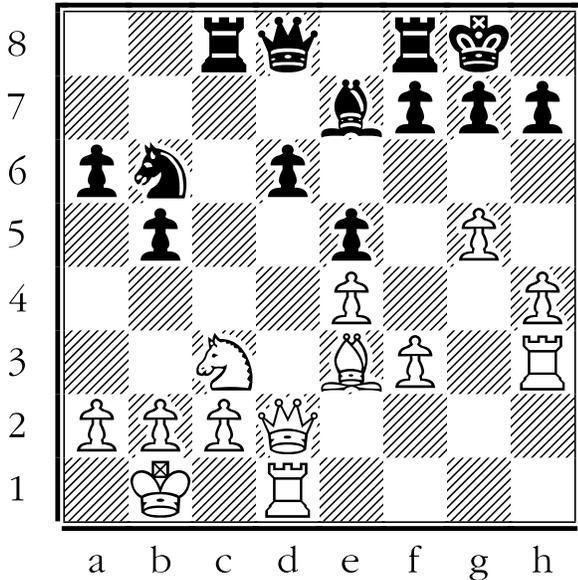
Circle the correct answer:  
Yes? Does white have a check? No?



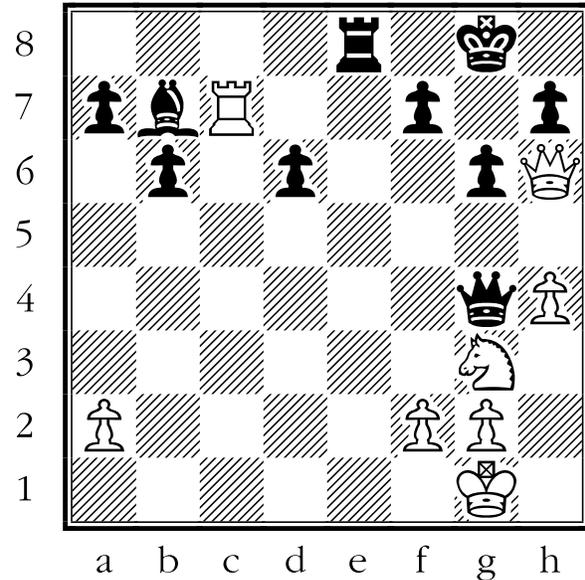
Circle the correct answer:  
Yes? Does white have a check? No?

## Lesson 6: Checks and Captures!

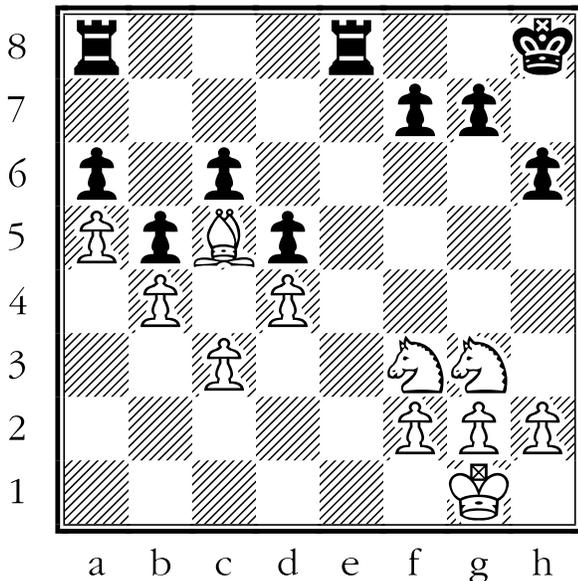
**White to play:** Can white capture any of black's pieces? Circle Yes or No. If "Yes", circle every piece that can be captured. Circle the white piece that can make *your favorite* capture.



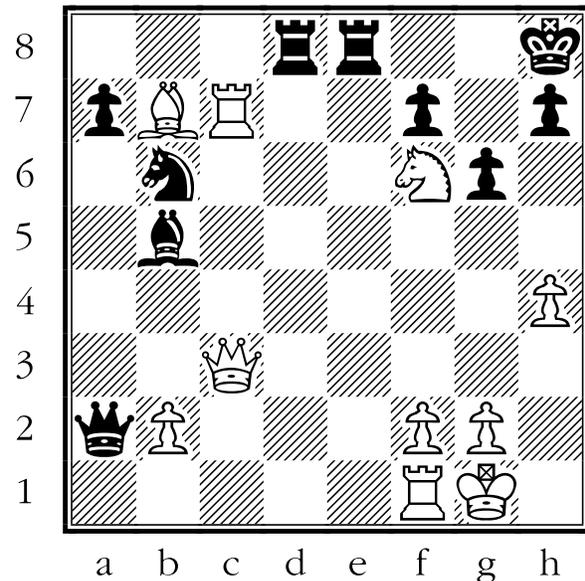
Circle the correct answer:  
Yes? Does white have a capture? No?



Circle the correct answer:  
Yes? Does white have a capture? No?



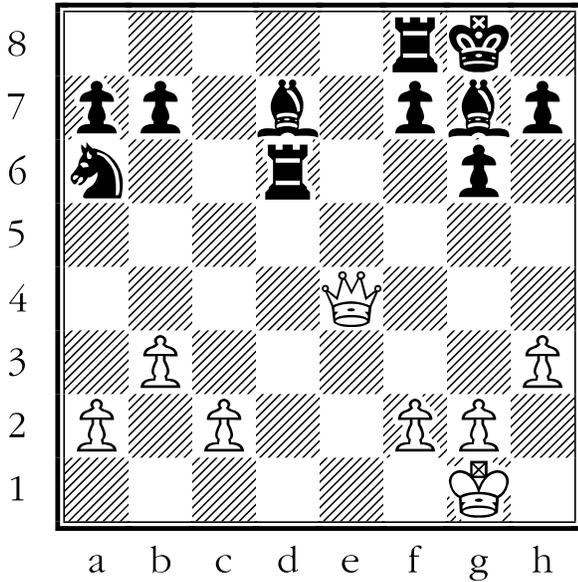
Circle the correct answer:  
Yes? Does white have a capture? No?



Circle the correct answer:  
Yes? Does white have a capture? No?

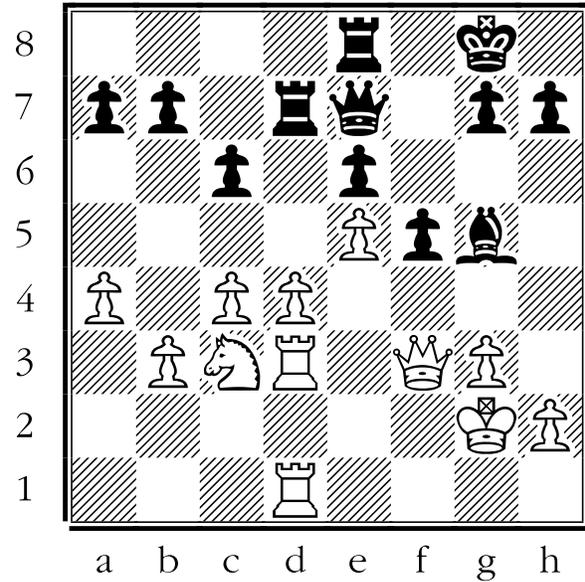
## Lesson 6: Attack the Queen!

**White to play:** Can black attack white's Queen in one move in each of the following diagrams? Circle Yes or No. If "Yes", circle every piece that can attack the white Queen.



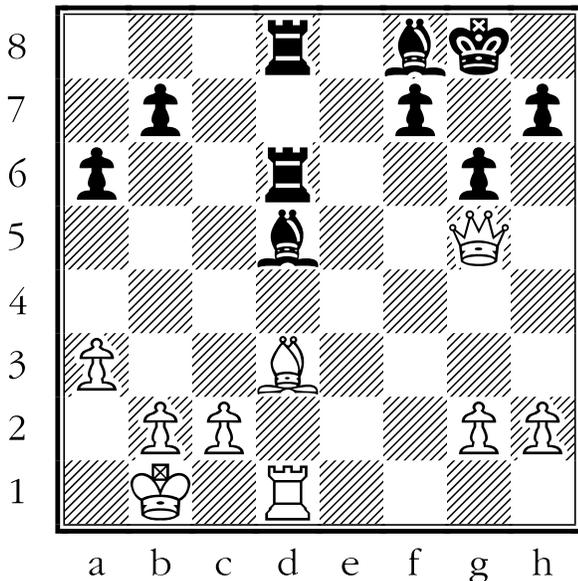
Circle the correct answer:

Yes? Can black attack white's Queen? No?



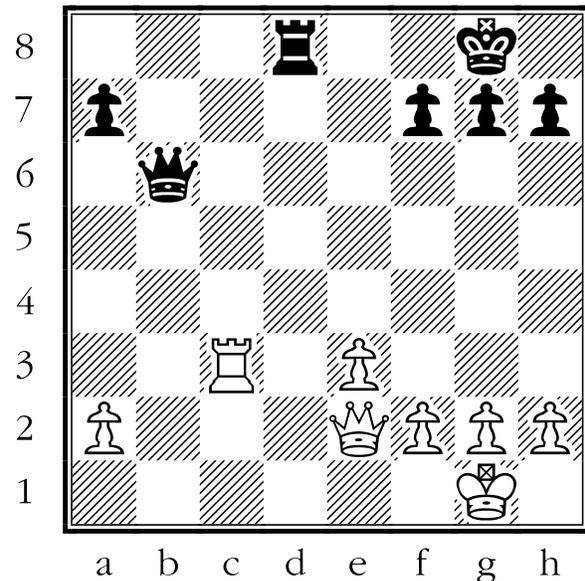
Circle the correct answer:

Yes? Can black attack white's Queen? No?



Circle the correct answer:

Yes? Can black attack white's Queen? No?

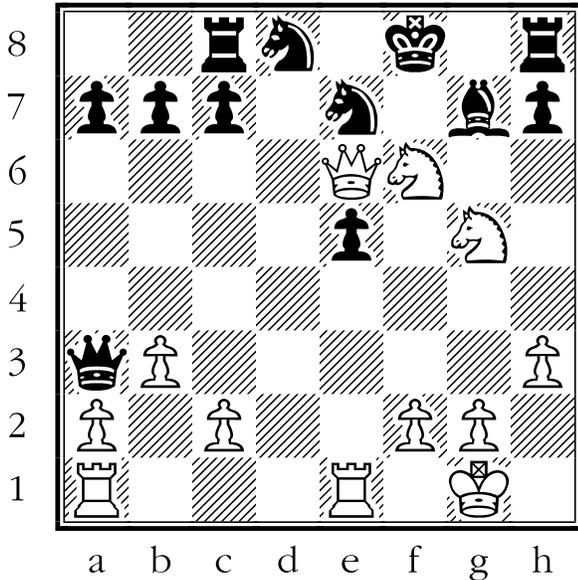


Circle the correct answer:

Yes? Can black attack white's Queen? No?

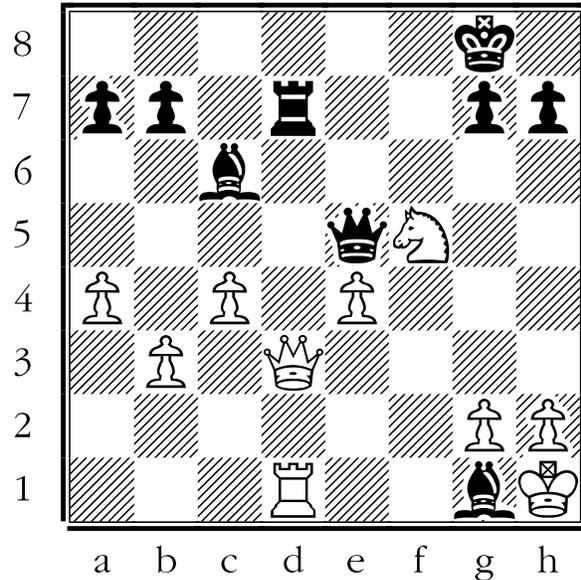
## Lesson 6: Why Did They Go There?

In the following diagrams, your opponent (black) has just made a move. Why did he/she go there? Is there a check, capture or Queen Attack threatened? Circle "Yes" or "No".



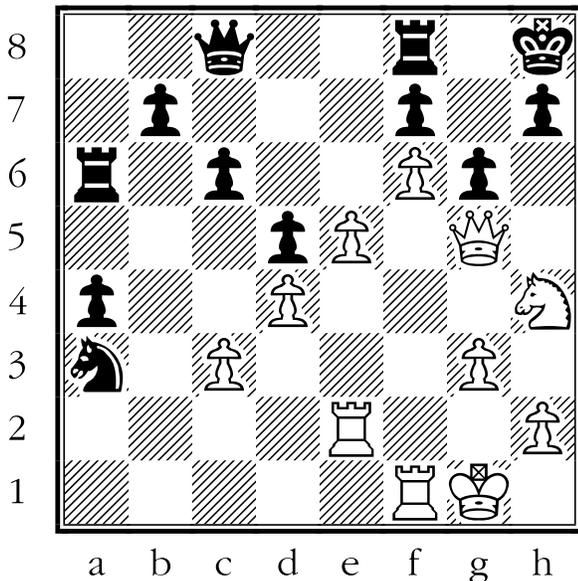
Circle the correct answer:

Yes? Black played 1... Ncd8 - Why? No?



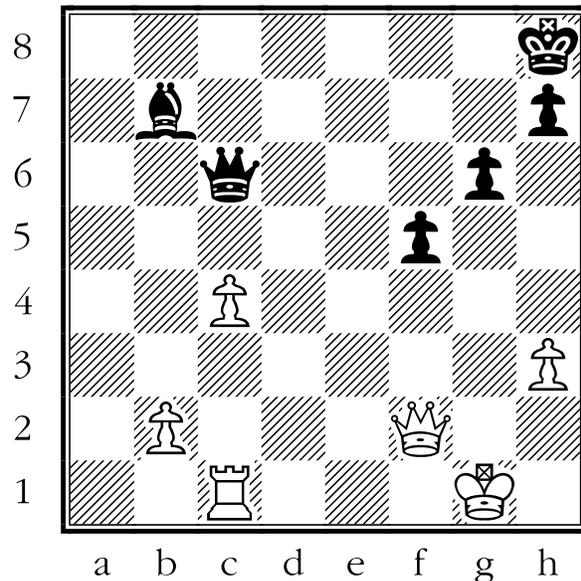
Circle the correct answer:

Yes? Black played 1... Bg1 - Why? No?



Circle the correct answer:

Yes? Black played 1... Qc8 - Why? No?



Circle the correct answer:

Yes? Black played 1... Qc6 - Why? No?



## Lesson 6

# Checks, Captures, Queen Attacks and Your Opponent

### Answer Key

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#### Worksheet Page 1 – “Checks”:

**Diagram #1** – Yes. Circled: Queen-c4, Rook-d1, Knight-e5 and Bishop-f2

**Diagram #2** – Yes. Circled: Queen-d3 and Rook-e1.

**Diagram #3** – No.

**Diagram #4** – Yes. Circled: Knight-b4.

#### Worksheet Page 2 – “Captures”:

**Diagram #1** – Yes. Circled: Knight-b6, Pawns b5 and d6. Best: 1.Bxb6

**Diagram #2** – No.

**Diagram #3** – Yes. Circled: Bishop-b7, Pawns f7, g6 and h7. Best: 1.Rxb7

**Diagram #4** – Yes. Circled: Rook-e8, Pawns f7 and h7. Best: 1.Nxe8

#### Worksheet Page 3 – “Queen Attacks”:

**Diagram #1** – Yes. Circled: Rooks d6 and f8, Bishop-d7, Knight-a6, Pawn-f7.

**Diagram #2** – Yes. Circled: Bishop-f8, Pawns-h7 and f7

**Diagram #3** – No

**Diagram #4** – Yes. Circled: Queen-b6 and Rook d8.

#### Worksheet Page 4 – “Why did my opponent move there?”:

**Diagram #1** – Yes.

**Diagram #2** – No.

**Diagram #3** – Yes.

**Diagram #4** – Yes.