

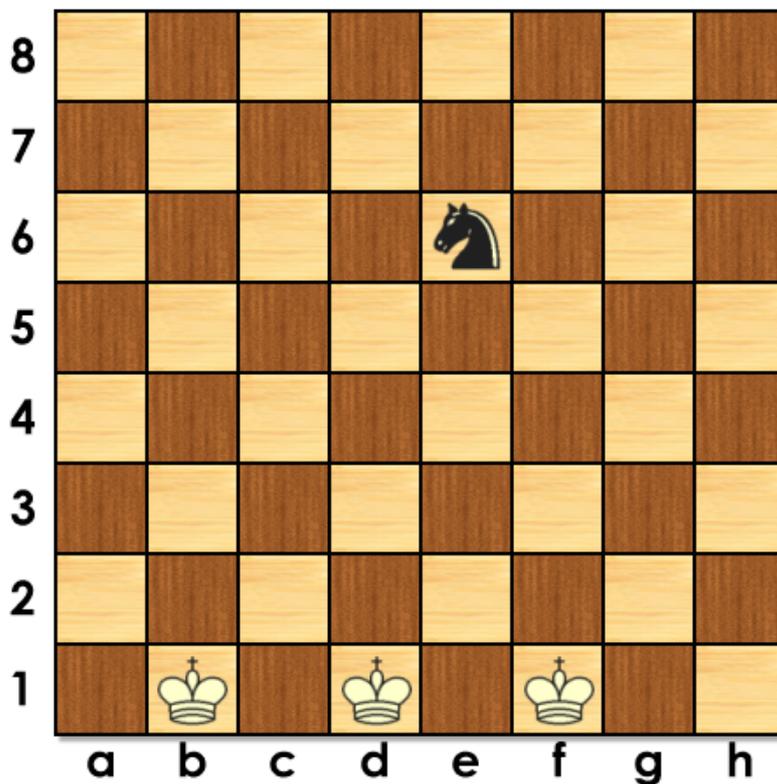
My Kingdom for a horse

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My Kingdom for a horse is a collaborative game designed to be played by four players. Three players are playing the three Kings. One player is playing with the Knight. The aim of the game is to trap the Knight in the fewest moves possible. If the Knight is not trapped after 20 moves played, he can claim the victory. The Kings are not allowed to put themselves or stay in check.

After a few games played, a variation would consist in creating a collaborative winning method (for 4th or 5th graders), which turns the game in a collaborative research project.

Here is the starting position. White to play.



The collaborative side of the game makes it fun and enjoyable for the children. It's a good tool to learn what responsibility is. The players with the Kings have to take care of others' pupils Kings if they want to avoid deadly forks. They also have to be able to cooperate to trap the Knight. A non-collaborative approach can only lead to a defeat.

Several observations :

-Having four players on each board makes it easier for the teacher to check.

-Pupils love to play with Knights and need to handle them often to master the way they move.

-Check is a difficult concept that can be worked through this game.

-Another observation we can make is about the number of Kings. The more Kings you have on the board, the easier it looks. But, quite surprisingly, it's not that true. Because the more you have Kings the more cautious you have to be about forks.

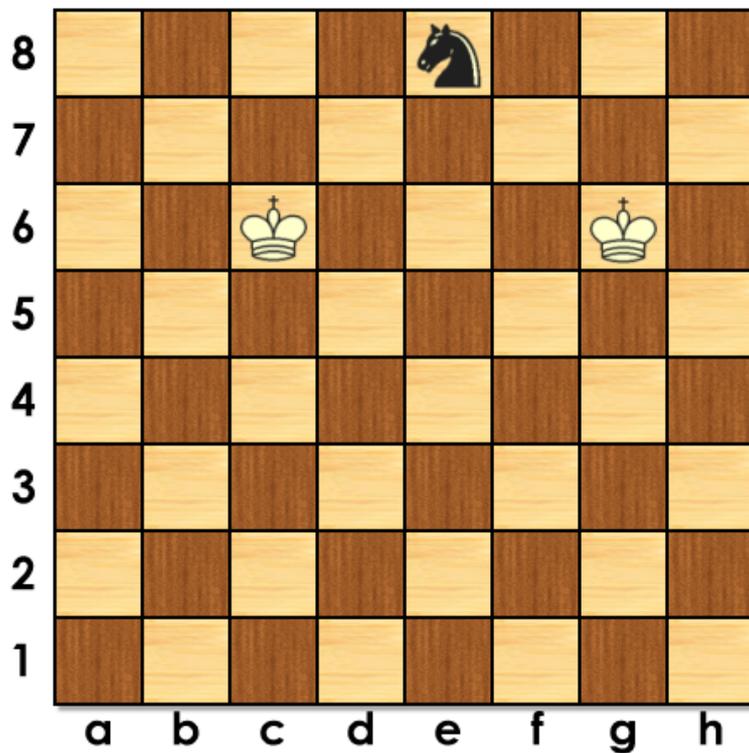
Consequently, the Knight must start far from the Kings or you will have forks threats already, which can be confusing for children. The other way to avoid direct threats is to make pieces start on the same colour squares.

-With the youngest pupils, it is advised to use a competency scale so that you get at least a One star badge even if you play very poorly.

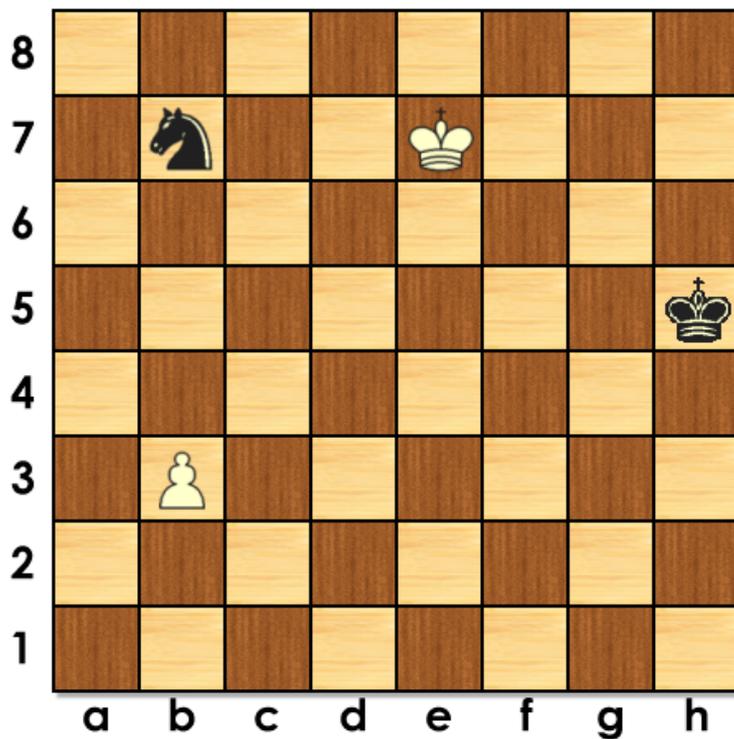


To me, this game provides children with educational benefits such as anticipation, collaboration, problem-solving approach, self-reflexivity (especially if the pupils are asked to provide a winning method, which can be a tough exercise for 4th or 5th grade).

It provides them with chess benefits as well. For example here, White don't need to attack the Knight. He's going to stick his head in the lion's mouth by himself ! Following this idea, two Kings can make a great job against a Knight not by attacking him but by controlling the squares on which he could jump.



In real chess, you could find a position like this one :



Trying to catch the Knight with Kd7 is very weak because of Nc5+ leading to a draw. Far stronger would be b4 ! followed by Kd7 and Kc7, gaining the Knight and leading to an easy win.