

Themes and calculations

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One of the hardest things for beginners to tackle is calculating more than one move ahead. They need to see a change in the position of the pieces on the board before they make the next move. The secret is to develop a theme (or an idea) such as I can pin a Knight in front of the Queen and then bring other pieces to attack the Knight. In these examples we will look a different theme - the back rank mate.

Look at diagram (a) or set it up on your chess board at home. The Black King is rather exposed on the back rank and there is a threat of mate in one move by White. Can you see it?

(a)



(b)



Now go to position (b) - the same theme but now it will take 2 moves by White to deliver mate. That is because Black has one piece defending the back rank mate (the Rook on a8) but White has two pieces that can attack the mating square e8. Can you see this without moving pieces on the board?

In diagram (c) Black has 2 pieces defending the mating square e8 but White has 3 pieces attacking this. So White to play and force checkmate in 3 moves.

(c)



For diagram (d) this is another 3 move checkmate by White. Now Black has the option to block the check with Bf8 but this does not stop White giving checkmate. How?

(d)



In all these exercises (a) to (d) every White move has had one common feature - what is it?

See all answers [HERE](#)

Now try the Novice and Intermediate problems below. The Novice moves have a common theme - can you spot it?

This month's problems - Novice

Problem N47



N47. Black to play and win a piece and a pawn

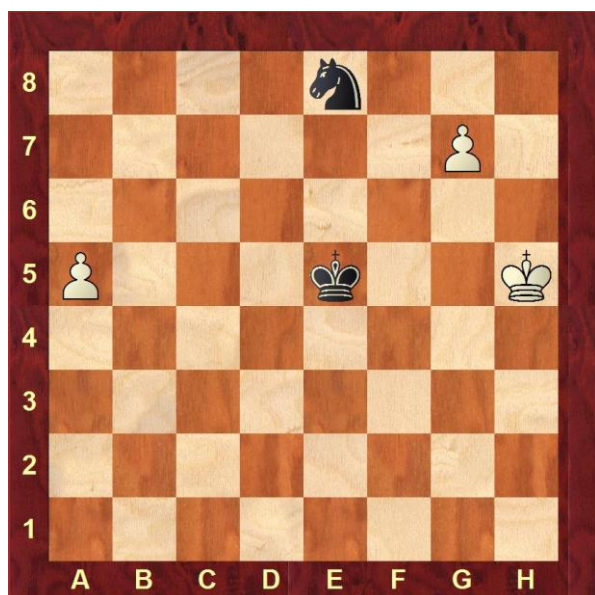
Problem N48



N48. White to play and win Black's Queen

This month's problems - Intermediate

Problem I47



I47. White to play and win

Problem I48



I48. White to find a winning attack

Solutions to last month's problems - Novice

Problem N45



N45. White to play and give checkmate in 5 moves or less

HINT do not forget the humble pawn

Two options

1. Rg7+ Kf8
2. Rxh7 Ke8
3. Rdg7 Kf8
4. h6 a5
5. Rh8#

Or

1. Rg7+ Kh8
2. Rxh7+ Kg8
3. h6 b5
4. Rg7+ Kf8
5. Rh8#

Problem N46



N46. Black is in trouble here and is losing but what is the best move?

Black must play

- 1..... Rf8

This protects the pawn at f7 and prevents the White rooks taking all the pawns on the kingside and creating mate threats. Black will lose the pawn at c7 but can still fight on.

Solutions to last month's problems - Intermediate

Problem I45

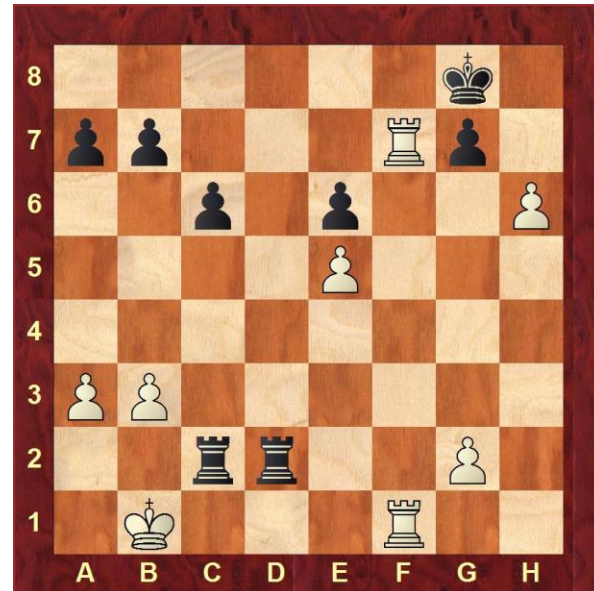
Problem I46



145. You are White but it is Black's move - if they play Nb4 what is your reply?

Just give up the Queen with

1. Rcx7 Nxa2
2. Rxg7+ Kh8
3. Rxh7+ Kg8
4. Rcg7#



146. (a) If you were White and it was your move, how do you win this game?

(b) In fact it is Black to play - is there a winning line?

Answers

(a)

1. Rxg7+ Kh8
2. Rf8#

(b) Black can draw by perpetual check after Rb2+ and then keep checking with the Rook from b2 more opportunities to win can be created by

- 1..... Rb2+
2. Ka1 Ra2+
3. Kb1 Rdb2+
4. Kc1 Rxc2
5. Kb1 Rab2+
6. Ka1 Rxa3 and Black has won a couple of pawns and threatens to remove White's queenside pawns and create a steamroller with the connected passed pawns currently sitting on a7, b7 and c6.

Answers to Themes and Calculations (return to Problems [HERE](#))

(a) White plays

(d) Same theme to mate in e8.

1. Re8#

(b) White still attacks via e8

1. Re8+ Rxe8

2. Rxe8#

(c) The theme continues with the attack on e8

1. Qe8+ Rxe8

2. Rxe8+ Rxe8

3. Rxe8#

1. Qe8+ Bf8

So is the attacked stopped - NO!

2. Qxf8+ Kxf8

3. Re8#

What was common with all the White moves played in these 4 tests? They were all checks!!

The important message was that the same idea (checkmate on the back rank) occurred with calculating 1, 2 or 3 moves ahead. If you managed to do these then you can calculate ahead for any position on the board. Just develop an idea and then plan the moves to make that plan work

So did you find the correct answer to all these problems? If you did then look for these type of moves in your games - they can occur quite often. Now try the Novice and Intermediate puzzles.