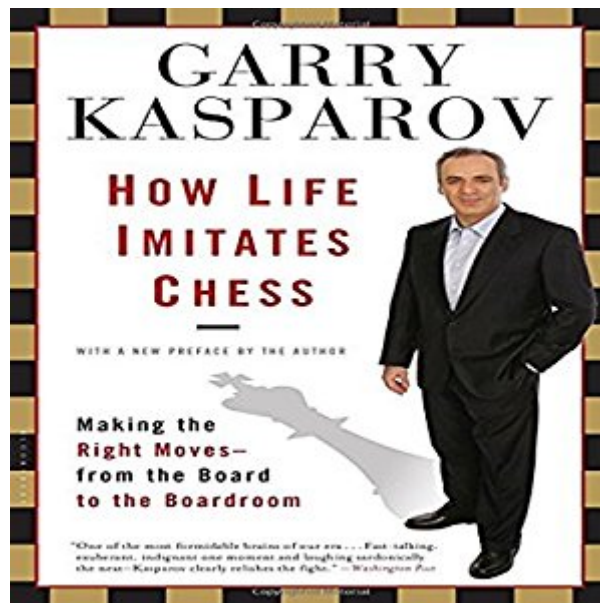


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# How Life Imitates Chess: Making The Right Moves, From The Board To The Boardroom



## Synopsis

Garry Kasparov was the highest-rated chess player in the world for over twenty years, and is widely considered the greatest player that ever lived. In *How Life Imitates Chess*, Kasparov distills the lessons he learned over a lifetime as a Grandmaster, to offer a primer on successful decision-making: how to evaluate opportunities, anticipate the future, devise winning strategies. He relates in a lively, original way all the fundamentals, from the nuts and bolts of strategy, evaluation, and preparation to the subtler, more human arts of developing a personal style, and using memory, intuition, imagination, and even fantasy. Kasparov takes us through the great matches of his career, including legendary duels against both man, (Grandmaster Anatoly Karpov), and machine, (IBM chess supercomputer, Deep Blue), enhancing the lessons of his many experiences with examples from politics, literature, sports, and military history. With candor, wisdom, and humor, Kasparov recounts his victories and his blunders, both from his years as a world-class competitor, as well as his new life as a political leader in Russia. An inspiring book that combines unique strategic insight with personal memoir, *How Life Imitates Chess*, is a glimpse inside the mind of one of today's greatest and most innovative thinkers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

*How Life Imitates Chess* by former World Chess Champion and grandmaster Garry Kasparov does an incisive job of showing how life is a mirror for chess. Or is it the opposite? Filled with much erudition regarding the intricacies of life, *How Life Imitates Chess* sifts through the data points, or

perhaps “life-lessons” is a better term, which helped him grow as a chess player that became a grandmaster, but more importantly, as an individual. Each of these life-lessons helped him grow in countless ways, regardless whether it was facing dismal defeats, or manifesting intensely resounding victories. To that effect, Kasparov makes it a point to go into why constant self-analysis is essential not only to survive in the world, but in fact to thrive. Self-awareness and peak performance go hand in hand, as some of you may know. Because of this Kasparov urges everyone to become conscious of their individual inherent decision making process and strive to polish it to become wiser. Some of the varying components featured in the book are the myriad fascinating stories of individuals, chess matches, companies et al., which are used to drive home lessons to be gleaned from the events that took place within those instances. Another notable point mentioned in the book is the importance of not becoming your own enemy. In one instance, the author noted how it’s important to find the nascent stage of a crisis before it becomes a full-fledged crisis. This might seem obvious at first blush, but we’ve all seen our mental state “or that of someone else” be overridden by emotions, which therein overrides our logic. And not being able to use logic is downright disastrous since your mental precision is only a shade of its true power. Furthermore, when an individual gets emotional, not only does the amygdala go into overdrive, but “the logic center processors [neocortex] get almost turned off and blocked. Adrenaline, hormone levels, and blood pressure rise, and our memories become less efficient. We begin to lose our ability to communicate effectively, and we turn to a form of autopilot to make decisions.” [Emphasis Added][1] Hands down, my favorite part of the book, although admittedly there were many intriguing points, was how Kasparov relentlessly speaks about having to question everything. As he warns: “Question the status quo at all times, especially when things are going well. When something goes wrong, you naturally want to do better the next time, but you must train yourself to want to do it better even when things go right.” [135] [Bold Emphasis Added][2] This reminds me of poker, as well as many other things in life, where a person might make the most ridiculous and stupid choice, and still get rewarded. If an individual chooses not to question their actions, they will simply not grow. Someone may make a very poor choice, and still end up winning untold sums of money. When such is the case, individuals rarely if ever opt for introspection to verify that they were correct. The assumption is that if the money is won “then the choice” had to “be a good one. Nothing could be further from the truth. Moreover: “Questioning yourself must become a habit, one strong enough to surmount the obstacles of overconfidence and dejection. It is a muscle that can be developed only with constant practice.” [3] Another additional point brought up by Kasparov was about the vital

significance not only to move out of our comfort zones, but also to challenge ourselves in creative ways to push us into new boundaries. Regarding this, Kasparov minces no words: "When we regularly challenge ourselves with something new – even something not obviously related to our immediate goals – we build cognitive and emotional muscles that make us more effective in every way. If we can overcome our fear of speaking in public, or of submitting a poem to a magazine, or learning a new language confidence will flow into every area of our lives. Don't get so caught up in what I do that you stop being a curious human being. Your greatest strength is the ability to absorb and synthesize patterns, methods, and information. Intentionally inhibiting the ability to focus too narrowly is not only a crime, but one with few rewards." [4] This book almost has shades of being a self-help book, almost. The book isn't that, but it's so versatile, and the book harpoons so many little nuggets of knowledge that it can certainly be used as such a tool. In plain speak, if you're looking for a book that delves into Chess, Life, Business, while also searching for gems of wisdom that may help you become a sharper, stronger, and more intuitive individual, but also dives into the importance of quality actions via precise decision making, then ruminate upon this book.

Sources &

References [1] Christopher Hadnagy, *Unmasking The Social Engineer*, pg. 166. [2] Gary Kasparov, *How Life Imitates Chess*, pg. 135. [3] *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35. [4] *Ibid.* pg. 170.

So I read this book even though I am not such a big fan of "the boardroom." Poor Garry has been getting himself arrested lately for being the leader of Russia's opposition party. Did he not see those photos of Putin barechested and packing heat? That could have been interpreted as a clue. I understand he's left the country to live somewhere else in one of the world's 180+ nations that accord (relative) freedom to its citizenry. This book is incisive and though many authors and pundits have drawn analogies between the decisions and actions that characterize great chess play and those that shape history in the real world, I am impelled to insist that the one thing that benefits most – above all others – from keen chess savvy... is chess. An 18-inch board with 64 squares and six different types of interacting "characters" can hardly be compared to the complexities of living life. Granted that many players, like Garry Kasparov and Bobby Fischer and Ludek Pachman (just to name a very few) become politically involved in a dramatic way. Chess, as its conducted at the world-class level, is intensely characterized by political intrigues, and many great players are paid to endorse chess products (computers, sets, books) just like athletes in the more physical sports, and – yes – chess has been the artificial intelligence benchmark

for computer programmers for decades. But it certainly doesn't stand alone as a template for understanding and coping with life. Greatly admire the author. Humbled by his chess prowess. The book was OK. Well worth the read.

It's painful to give a chess-related book such a poor rating, but this is well deserved. Kasparov wrote this as he was attempting to run for Russian office believing in his "Power of Me" method (this is a term I'm making up and not in the book). It's interesting to see how much Kasparov attributes to himself and only occasionally mentions the importance of his teachers, but this isn't the big problem with the book. The big problem with the book is that Kasparov has decided that the theory and practice can explain and help with a wide variety of topics in life. The big problem is that all his analyses on non-chess parallels are highly superficial with ALL the research used in the book done with a single day going through Wikipedia. I wouldn't go within a country mile of anyone providing "business advice" from someone who needed zero business sense to gain his or her achievement. For Kasparov, there have been no business struggles, only business failures. Today, Kasparov is limited to claiming to be teacher of chess Super GMs such as Kramnik and Carlsen. But Carlsen didn't need Kasparov since his universal style is much more like Fisher's. The same goes for Kramnik as well as Nakamura (much more like Tal), notably difference styles. I can't even imagine the bored look on Carlsen's face as Kasparov rambled on through the material in this book which is either obvious or just not interesting. The only redeeming feature could have been the chess antidotes, but there really was little new information in the book. Also, Kasparov never in the book able to humanize himself and show that he wasn't something more than a product of the Soviet chess system. It's well known that Kasparov had teams of people working on various elements of chess for him, but this is never really even mentioned. It might have been the only real management that had unique value, but his ego wouldn't let those words make it on paper (or maybe he just doesn't realize it at all). If you're a chess junkie, you'll probably read this anyway. I got this for my Kindle on one of the 1.99 specials, so not much was lost. And even better, it's not staring me down on my bookshelf, begging for donation to a library sale.

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