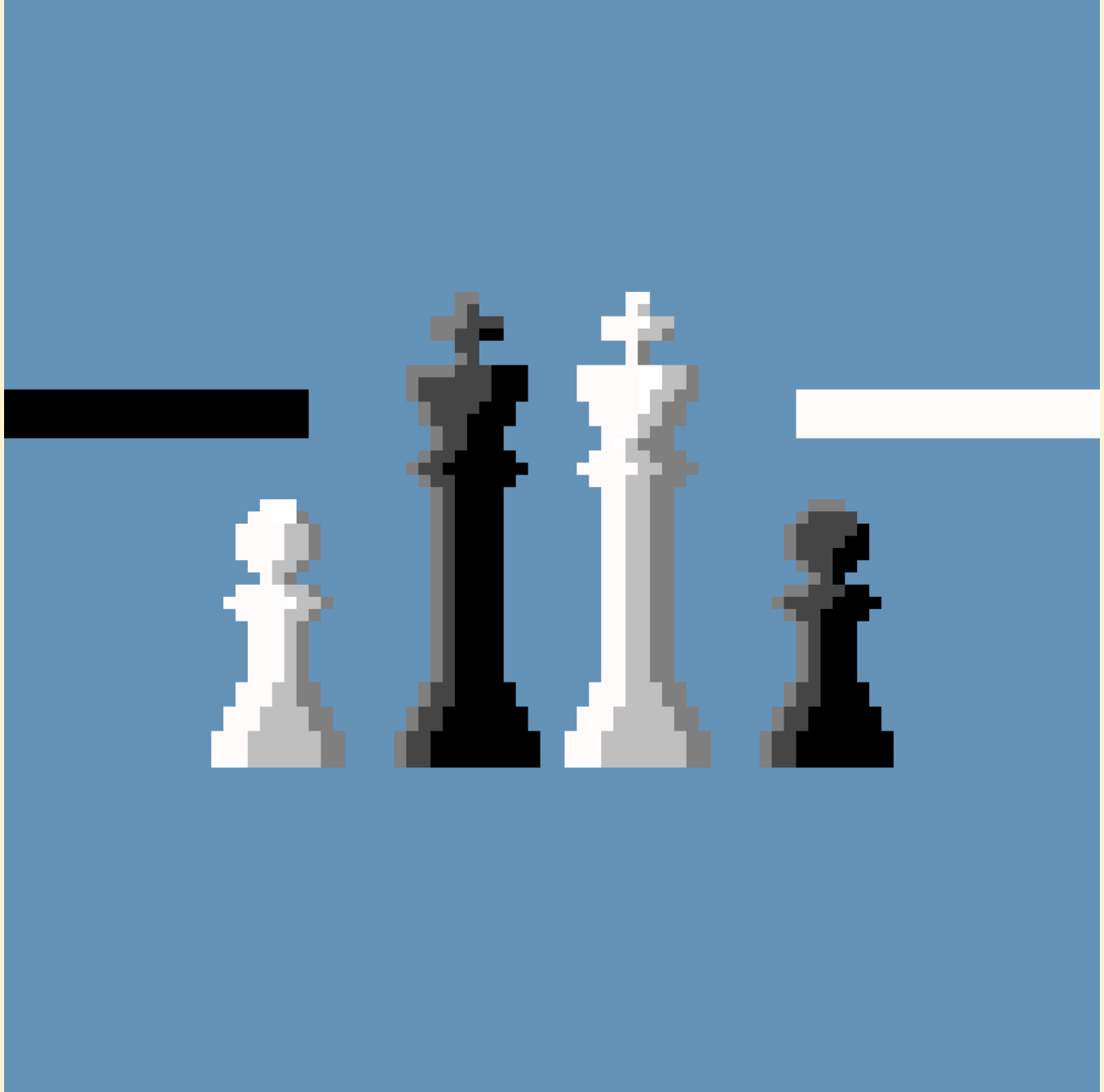


Chess: Two Kingdoms

A storytelling roleplaying game for 2 players



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How to Play

These rules assume the players are already familiar with how to play the board game of chess. If not, beginner's guides can be found online fairly easily, including [here](#).

In addition to playing chess, the players take turns telling their side of the story between these two countries. Every time a player moves a piece, they make a scene related to the group or idea that piece represents. When a player takes a piece, they do their scene first, then the player whose piece was taken goes second.

How to Make a Kingdom

First of all, decide the genre and scope of your game. Chess: Two Kingdoms can be adapted pretty easily to a number of settings, including modern or science fiction, and can be scaled in size from a town to a galaxy, or even larger.

Second, determine an initial conflict. It doesn't have to be large, but it should give you a starting point that leads into greater tension.

Border disputes, food shortages, conflicting religions, etc. can all be good initial conflicts.

How to Make Scenes

A scene can be as simple as a couple sentences of narration, or if the other player is willing, an in-character conversation. In addition to the prompts for each piece, players should keep a few things in mind.

- The piece you move is always moving towards another one, and moving away from others. That movement can be used to illustrate the different relationships between groups in play.
- Chess and conflicts are a series of chain reactions. Events can be set in motion way before they come to pass. Moving a piece to a position you will need much later can be worked into your scenes through foreshadowing or other means.
- Pieces you have lost can be called back to and remembered in scenes, sometimes to powerful effect.

Fire and Brimstone Lists

Chess: Two Kingdoms uses a safety mechanic similar to Lines and Veils from the Sex and Sorcery supplement of Sorcerer by Ron Edwards. On a piece of paper, or shared text file online, make two sections, one for Fire, and one for Brimstone.

Fire: On this list write down things you absolutely do not want to see in the game, especially material that is triggering for you. If a player brings up an item from this list, they immediately forfeit their current or previous turn, which is erased from the game. The other player then takes their turn.

Brimstone: This is a list of things you would rather not focus on in great detail. Anything on this list should be handled with great care. If a player takes something from this list too far, the same penalty from Fire is applied. They immediately lose their current or previous turn, and it is erased from the game. The other player then takes their turn.

When your lists are done, place them where both players can see them during the game. If something comes up during a game that a player wants to add to either list that turn is restarted, the idea is written down, and the same penalty applies to the new addition from that point on.

Ban and Add Lists

Sometimes players may want to have a little more focus in their game beyond what is decided in How to Make a Kingdom. The Ban and Add lists are optional and function somewhat similarly to Fire and Brimstone, but without a penalty. On another piece of paper or shared text file, make two sections: one for Ban, and one for Add.

Ban: This list is for concepts that you'd rather not see in your game. There is no penalty involved, but players should do their best to avoid what is on it. This can include different levels of technology, magic, time travel, and other non-triggering material that you aren't interested in including in your story.

Add: The Add list is for anything that you want to see more of in a game. Do you want more romance? Lots of political intrigue? Cool robots? Write it on the Add list. Refer to this list when you get stuck on a prompt.

When both lists are done, place them with the Fire and Brimstone lists. If something comes up during play that you aren't a fan of or want to see more of, add it to one of the lists.

The Pieces

Pawns

Pawns represent the average citizens of the country. They care least about the conflict but are the most affected.

When a pawn moves: The people move and react to other pieces. Do they lean on religion? Or do they stand in front of their rulers, willing to put their lives on the line?

When a pawn takes a piece: The people of your country overcome great odds. Do they reject the foreign religion? Do they repel enemy soldiers? Do they produce enough crops and prosper?

When a pawn takes another pawn en passant: A group of citizens is directly responsible for the death of a group of citizens from the rival country. They didn't ask for this. They move on and try to forget.

When a pawn is promoted: Someone has taken a long journey through hostile territory and achieved a great goal. The king gives them a title related to their journey, and they become as well known to the country as the queen. The lessons they learned on their journey and their newfound fame have made them very powerful. From that point on, that piece should use the same prompts as the queen.

When a pawn is taken: A portion of your populace dies or abandons your kingdom. Maybe it was enemy forces. Maybe it was an epidemic you failed to contain.

Knights

Knights represent the nobles, or a similar upper class. They typically have more influence and access to the king and queen.

When a knight moves: An event is held. It could be a small tea party, or an extravagant gala. Either way, it is at odds with the lives of everyday people during this conflict.

When a knight takes a piece: The nobles use their status and achieve something they wanted. Sometimes this improves the whole country. Sometimes it only helps the nobles.

When a knight is taken: Nobles are killed or abandon the country. Is it because of the other country, or from within?

Bishops

Bishops represent the religious beliefs of the country. Not necessarily organized religion, this is what people believe in besides their leaders, if they believe in their leaders at all.

When a bishop moves: Some part of the faith manifests itself in the daily life of the people. It could be a good omen, or a prophecy in a dream. Sometimes, it is even a small miracle.

When a bishop takes a piece: The religion accomplishes some great good. They gain more followers. Perhaps a great miracle is accomplished.

When a bishop is taken: The people lose faith. What causes them to turn away? How do people change due to their loss of faith?

Rooks

Rooks represent the infrastructure of the country. Not just physical things, but all the moving parts that help a country function.

When a rook moves: It shows the everyday happenings in the country. A ferry takes a man and his cart across a river. People relax in a clearing in a large protected forest.

When a rook takes a piece: A large project is completed. There are many options to choose from, including bridges, public transportation, or single payer healthcare.

When a rook is taken: Some vital piece of infrastructure fails. It is hugely inconvenient at the very least, extremely dangerous for the public at its worst.

Queen

The queen is the king's partner. They are extremely capable and can do many things the king can't. Usually loved by the people, sometimes despised. The queen can be any gender, or have none.

When the queen moves: The country watches, and sometimes it follows. Do others follow the queen? Do they protect them or let them go alone?

When the queen takes a piece: The queen takes matters into their own hands. Are their methods elegant, or brutal?

When the queen is taken: The whole country reacts. Do they mourn, or rejoice? What ceremony or celebration occurs after their passing?

King

The king represents the leader of the country, but can be anything from a president to an emperor. They try to do what they believe is best for the country. Sometimes, that is not what the people believe. Like the queen, the king can be any gender, or have none.

When the king moves: The country watches. What do the people say about the king in public? What do they say behind closed doors?

When the king takes a piece: The people have some concrete assurance that what the king does is best for the country. Perhaps it is successful policies, better healthcare, extra food for all. Maybe it is a highly successful public appearance.

When the king castles: Resources are diverted to protect the king. Use a combination of the “When the king moves” and “When a rook is taken” prompts to create the scene.

When the king is in check: There is a threat to the king’s life. The utmost effort is made to protect them. What sacrifices were necessary to protect their life?

When the king forfeits: The game is over. Both kings make a public appearance. Looking at the pieces left on the board, was this surrender a wise decision, or too little too late? What has been saved? More importantly, what did the king and the people want to save?

When the king is in checkmate: The game is over. What is their last message for their surviving people? How merciful is the victorious side, if at all?