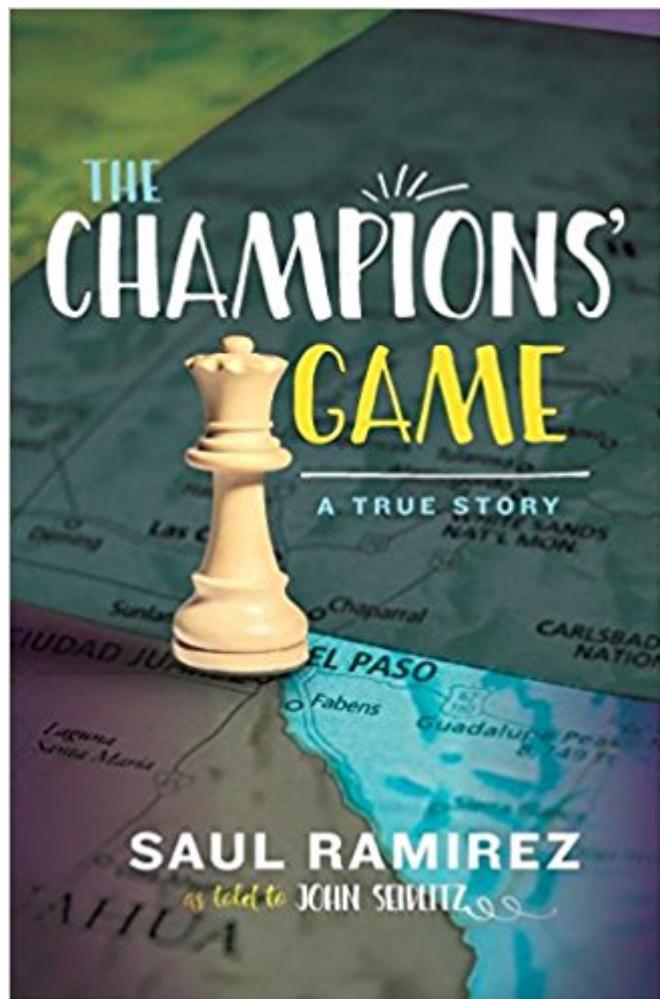


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# The Champions' Game



## Synopsis

In April of 2015, a team of "border kids" from South-Central El Paso surprised the country by competing in the national chess championships. For these kids, dreams of beating highly privileged students from "fancy" schools in upper-crust neighborhoods aren't on the radar. They have bigger issues to deal with in life. And yet, they choose to voluntarily--even enthusiastically--commit countless hours every week to the practice of a game that they had known virtually nothing about until art teacher Saul Ramirez started a chess club at Henderson Middle School. Under Ramirez's caring but firm tutelage, the rising stars of El Paso hunker down, deal with the challenges of life and trust Ramirez to mentor them in their new extracurricular passion--chess. *The Champions' Game: A True Story* chronicles Ramirez's efforts to create a revolution of the mind. Ramirez's genius is not so much the chess that he teaches (even though he's a former Texas state chess champion), but in his ability to intertwine life principles with chess rules to expand the minds, the insight and even the future possibilities of the students he teaches. The book's 14 chapters lay out Ramirez's rules for life--and chess, introducing concepts like guard your queen, control your center and protect your king. Ramirez grew up in El Paso's Segundo Barrio, a neighborhood that might bring to mind Compton, or South Central, or 8 Mile, often noted as the poorest zip code in the United States. Ramirez seems to possess a singular ability to draw out the talents of his students, perhaps because chess is much more than just a game to him. In *The Champions' Game*, he writes, "I want to start a revolution. A revolution of the mind. I want to do what was done for me by [the people] who were always there for me when I was a child, guiding me, teaching me, showing me how to be a man, an artist, a teacher. I want to build children anew, from the mind up. That does not take genius. It takes love."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"An inspiring, true story." - Kirkus Reviews (starred review) "A movie-ready narrative about how [Saul Ramirez]-a scrappy, dauntless Henderson Middle School art teacher-took a dozen students, most from underprivileged or lower-income backgrounds, to the 2015 National Chess Tournament and won. [The Champions' Game] is a love letter to these students, to chess, and to El Paso." - Kirkus Reviews (starred review) "Accessible for all readers, this story is a natural for the big screen: check and mate." - Kirkus Reviews (starred review) Chess is life, and life is chess in El Paso, Texas, the unpretentious setting for an inspiring, true story. As told to Seidlitz through hours of interviews, Ramirez's account is a movie-ready narrative about how he--a scrappy, dauntless Henderson Middle School art teacher--took a dozen students, most from underprivileged or lower-income backgrounds, to the 2015 National Chess Tournament and won. Readers are introduced to 12 Mexican-American and Mexican players who not only choose to learn chess, but are determined to compete. "Mister," as his students fondly call him, cleverly relates life's lessons to chess strategies: protect the king (oneself); cherish your queen (practice proper etiquette and good manners); control your center (or emotions and actions); know when to walk away; and don't judge by appearances. Nuggets of Spanish are intertwined, accurately evoking the border's Tex-Mex sound; translations are efficiently offered as footnotes. While the kids are the stars, it is Mister's coaching and preparation that motivate his players; he believes that race and economic status have nothing to do with what a person is capable of accomplishing. It is not smooth sailing all the way, which makes the journey all the more endearing. More than anything, Mister's account is a love letter to these students, to chess, and to El Paso. Accessible for all readers, this story is a natural for the big screen: check and mate. (appendix, afterword)

Saul Ramirez is the chess coach and art teacher at Henderson Middle School in El Paso, Texas, where he coached his students to win the national chess championships in 2015 and 2016. Ramirez grew up in El Paso's Segundo Barrio, one of the poorest zip codes in the United States, and discovered chess as a child, which became a pathway out of misfortune. Ramirez, like his current students, competed and became a champion in various state and national tournaments. Ramirez graduated from the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) in May 2010 and started teaching at Henderson Middle School in August of that same year, where he continues to create new paths for the dreams of his students. He lives in El Paso with his wife, Edna, and two children, Saul Jr. and

Frida. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Saul Ramirez should be the nation's teacher of the year! The way he loved, cared, taught, inspired his students was amazzzzzing! The way he weaves the game of chess with the game of life inspires us all! Everyone will love reading this book! :)

This is the story of a middle school in El Paso, Texas that had a devoted art teacher who wanted to build a national chess championship. Saul Ramirez develops his rule for chess play which he applies to rules for life. I could see this becoming a film like "The Queen of Katwe."

This book has the power to change lives, especially those of marginalized children. When the vision of a great coach is merged with the desire of young people to chart their own course in the world, great things happen. I've met these champions and their coach. Their story, while compelling and fun to read, is merely the beginning. They have nothing but great things awaiting them in the years ahead.

What an amazing book! I loved reading about how these students and their teachers persevered! Not only a great book about chess but how the rules can be applied to real life.

What a wonderful book! It was very motivating and a reminder why educators chose their profession; to make a difference in the lives of students! !

SaulÃ¢Â™s story is an engaging illustration of the power of chess to transform lives and communities. I have watched teachers discover the value of chess in the classroom and enthusiastically introduce chess to their students to impact literacy, math, critical thinking, and life skills. The ChampionsÃ¢Â™ Game is an up-close journey of a teacher, his school, and his community as they realize the changes that follow when students learn the Royal Game. For any educators who wonder if chess could make a difference in their schools, this is a must-read!

As teachers of diverse learners, we always struggle to find relevant, culturally responsive and authentic literature, especially for middle school kids. This book meets all three! The story is not only current but real. It's a story of success. Yes! This book is positive and full of corazÃ n. Thank you for telling your story Saul. This gives us teachers hope and helps us to believe that with passion and

high expectations, we can help young kids reach their dreams. I want to buy a class set!

An inspirational true story of middle school children from a penurious background in El Paso, Texas that beat the odds to become national chess champions. Receiving tutelage from their tenacious coach, Saul Ramirez, he himself a chess champion with anakin upbringing. The reader is treated to how purpose was instilled and nurtured in Ramirez's life during his formative years and how that foundation was built upon and fostered to the next generation. Using the principles of chess and relating it to life Ramirez and his protégés achieve great triumphs. This story reminds me of "Lean on Me" (1989) and "Stand and Deliver" (1988) movies. It should be on the cinematic screen too.

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