

## 5 Fantastic Chess Movies to Watch at Home with Your Kids

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If you have watched Netflix at any point during the last six months, you have no doubt heard of the highly popular TV series, *The Queen's Gambit*. This smash hit reinvigorated an appreciation for chess, even for those who do not play. But before you reach for the remote to begin watching with your child, there's just one small problem that may make you want to hit the pause button: the show is just not appropriate for kids. The content of the show is meant for adults, and while it portrays a fascinating look into the world of chess in the 1960's and 70's, it also includes many adult themes that are inappropriate for little viewers, such as references to drugs and alcohol.

Beyond *The Queen's Gambit*, you may not have heard of any other shows or films that revolve around chess. Luckily, while they might not be widely known, there are a quite a few family-oriented options available that can easily be streamed from the comfort of your very own couch.

# Movies to Watch: Films to Fill Your Queue

## Queen of Katwe (2016)

### Synopsis:

Produced by Walt Disney Studios, *The Queen of Katwe* is the heartwarming true story of a young Ugandan girl who discovers the game of chess. At 10 years old, Phiona Mutesi meets a missionary who teaches children to play chess. As she learns to play, she receives support from her impoverished family and community, which allows her to defy all odds and expectations given her social status and limited resources. As she and her mother discover her natural talent, Phiona is encouraged to pursue school, which is not always a given for her peers.

Eventually, she climbs the ranks to become an extraordinary player and teams up with her missionary mentor to become an international chess champion. In doing so, she helps to break herself and her family out of poverty.

### Why it's great:

*Queen of Katwe* is a classic “rags to riches” story that is made even more extraordinary because not only is it true, but it's about someone who broke all the odds to become successful in chess. As a female in an impoverished area of Uganda, Phiona had the entire world against her as she and her peers were offered little to no access to education or resources that might help her. Thanks to the kindness of a missionary, she was able to discover her natural talent and harness it to help her family. This is clearly a story to watch with children, as it will help to boost morale and confidence while showing that anything is possible with a little bit of determination and grit!

### Where to watch it:

To watch, you can stream *Queen of Katwe* for free with your Disney+ subscription, or you can rent it on the most popular streaming apps such as Amazon Prime Video, Vudu, YouTube, and more!

## Searching for Bobby Fischer, 1993

### Synopsis:

Bobby Fischer was arguably the greatest real-life chess player of all time, but he did not live an enviable life. After his defeat of the Russians, he faded from notoriety into a troubled life shrouded in mystery. Also based on a true story, *Searching for Bobby Fischer* is about a young chess prodigy named Josh Waitzkin, who was essentially another young Bobby Fischer; he was a child who held such incredible talent and

promise it the game, that his parents struggled to determine how to balance nurturing his craft without stunting any other skills or joy in his life.

Eventually, Josh's father, Fred, seeks out a mentor for him named Bruce Pandolfini, who is otherwise known as one of the most famous chess coaches in the US. He and Josh clash over the young boy's quick-thinking moves and tactics, and they struggle to see eye-to-eye while Josh becomes sullen and detached. Finally, the mentor and mentee reconcile, and Josh uses Bruce's advice to win an intimidating match against another young chess prodigy.

Why it's great:

If you're looking for a drama that has the same intrigue as *The Queen's Gambit*, this movie is it! In fact, many attributes of the contemporary Netflix hit are reminiscent of this film, even down to the way both the film and the series end! Ultimately, *Searching for Bobby Fischer* tackles one of the same themes as does "*The Queen's Gambit*": that it's easy to get lost in one's own talent and to grow as a player and person, one must learn to trust others and to heed sound advice. This film strives to change the outcome of young prodigies everywhere by cultivating young minds and talent, while tempering that support with tools that will enable players to become successful and happy outside of chess. This is an excellent movie not only for motivating young chess champions, but for teaching crucial life skills as well.

Where to watch it:

To watch this film, stream it for free with your Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, or Crackle accounts. Rental options are also available from popular apps, like YouTube, and Google Play Movies & TV.

## Brooklyn Castle, 2012

Synopsis:

Unlike the other options above, *Brooklyn Castle* is a documentary rather than a narrative film, so there is no doubt that this film is about a true story. It follows the success of an after-school chess program at Intermediate School 318, which is an urban school located in Brooklyn, New York. Due to the recession, budget cuts in the school system threatened to hinder the school's prized chess team's success.

What's more is that most of these kids live in Brooklyn, and come from impoverished home lives, and rely on the game and their team to get by. Keep watching to see how these fabulous middle school students defy all the odds to win more championships than any other school!

Why it's great:

Brooklyn Castle is an irresistible chess kid movie, made to inspire young players. At Intermediate School 318, the kids who make up the chess program are some of the most popular and fun-loving kids in the school, which may seem opposite from what most people think when they imagine a school's chess club! This documentary can go a long way towards encouraging young players to love the game even more than they already do!

Where to watch it:

Stream it by renting it from Amazon Prime Video, Vudu, Apple TV, or Google Play Movies & TV!

## A Little Game, 2014

Synopsis:

10-year-old Maxine doesn't fit in at her school. She is the new kid and isn't quite used to her new high-class surroundings. She has no friends and feels as though her peers make fun of her, especially one girl named Isabella. If all of this wasn't bad enough, Maxine's grandmother passes away unexpectedly, leaving her to feel even more isolated and alone.

Finally, an older grumpy man name Norman agrees to teach Maxine how to play chess. Norman happens to be a chess master, who teaches her everything that he knows about the game. Throughout the film, chess helps Maxine to cope as she hones her craft. Her determination learning to play becomes symbolic of the struggles she faces at school and how to deal with her bullies.

Why it's great:

This fictional film takes a very relatable scenario—moving to a new and unfamiliar school—and uses the game of chess as a coping mechanism overcome her struggles. Over the course of the film, the challenges she faces with chess mirror those she faces in real life at school. When Maxine discovers Norman, she dives into the world of chess, and through it learns valuable lessons that relate to her real life. What makes this film so great is that it teaches children the value of chess, and how learning to play and competing can yield rewarding lessons that players can utilize throughout their lives.

Where to watch it:

Watch it for free using your Amazon Prime Video subscription.

## Gerí's Game, 1997

Finally, we come to Geri's Game, which unlike all the above selections, is merely a Pixar "short". Most of us already know that Pixar shorts are very brief films that are ordinarily played before a longer Pixar movie, and are completely unrelated to the longer film. In Geri's Game, an old man who faces off against his toughest opponent: himself. In the film, Geri plays a game of chess against himself, playing both white and black pieces, jumping from side to side of the board. As the film progresses, it really does seem as if there are two different players, but viewers learn that Geri has a more aggressive alter ego, who begins to take the lead, capturing almost all his "opponent's" pieces. In a bid to outsmart himself, he attempts to fake a heart attack to distract his alter ego into losing.

Where to watch it:

Watch this this heartwarming film as an upbeat lesson that sometimes our toughest opponents are ourselves. Find it on Disney+ or on [YouTube](#).

As you can see, there is no shortage of quality kid-friendly chess films to watch with your children. View any of the above movies to use as motivation, or even to teach an upbeat lesson or two. After enjoying the movies together, help your child head to the Kids Academy app to practice chess moves!

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