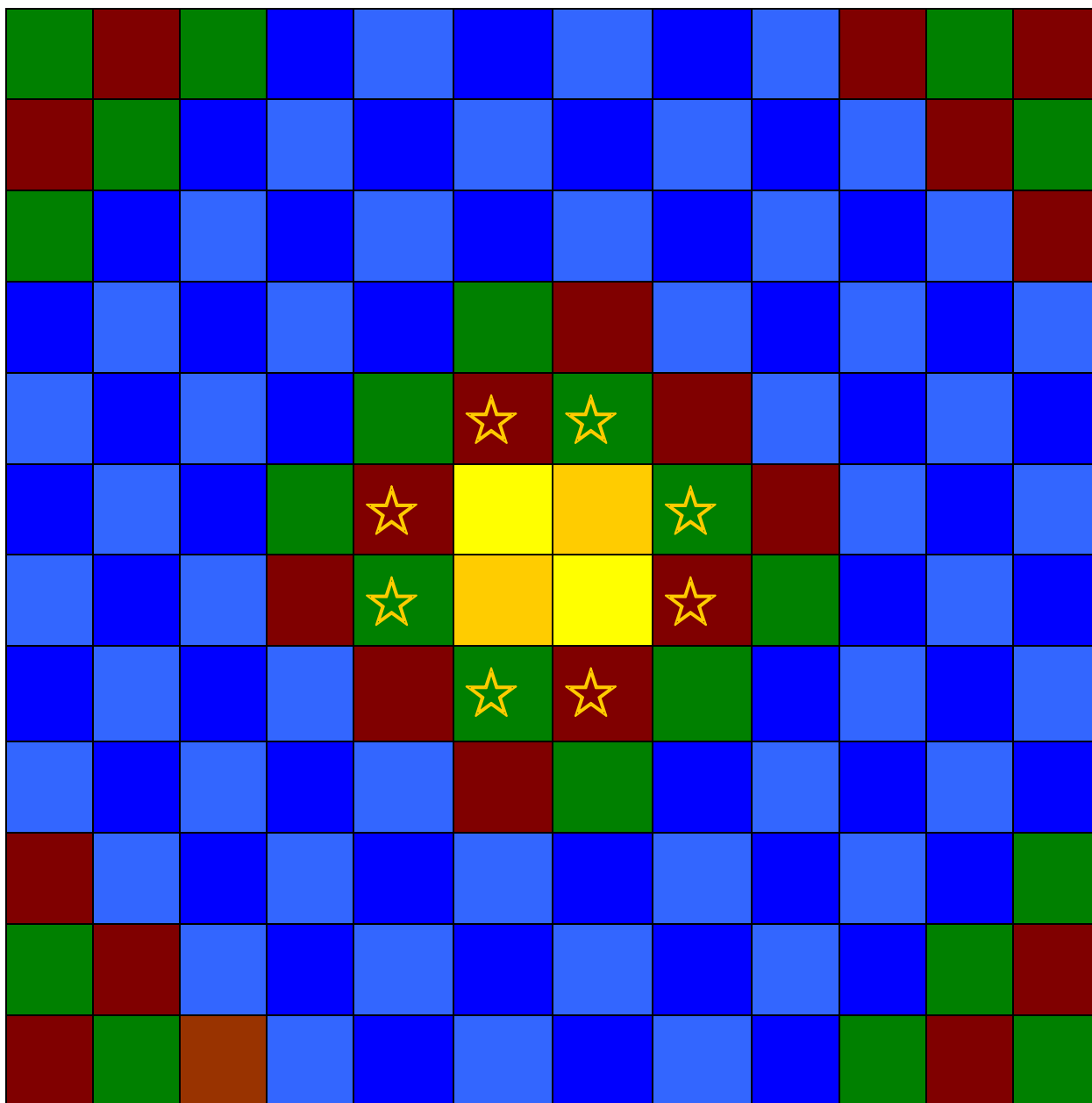


**Temple Island Chess**  
By Karen Deal Robinson



## **Overview**

Temple Island Chess is a solo game played with a chess set on a 12x12 chessboard marked with a central island, an ocean, and four outer islands. A single 6-sided die is also used.

The white pawns are the Pilgrims. The white non-pawn pieces are called the Guardians. The black pieces are the Shadows. The goal is to get all the Pilgrims from the outer islands to gates of the temple on the central island.

































Each time the player moves a Pilgrim or a Guardian, a corresponding Shadow piece of a matching type moves according to a die roll. The Pilgrims must avoid touching the Shadows on their pilgrimage. A Pilgrim must be accompanied by a Guardian to travel across the ocean.

## **Opening setup**

The eight Pilgrims begin on the four outer islands, two per island. The eight Guardians are similarly distributed on the outer islands, two per island. Their exact placement is not fixed, but the Pilgrims are on the two squares orthogonally adjacent to the corners.

The sixteen Shadows begin on the central island. The eight Shadow pawns are in the starred Temple Gates, which are the final goal of the Pilgrims, and the other Shadow pieces are distributed elsewhere on the island. For aesthetic purposes, I like to place the black pieces in each quadrant so that they mirror the white pieces on the corner island of that quadrant. But for variety you can set them up other ways. (When a white piece moves, the player may choose any black piece of the same type to be its shadow for the duration of the move. The black piece does not have to be in the same quadrant.)

A sample set up is given in the diagram.

## **Goal**

At the end of the game, the Pilgrims should be in the eight starred Temple Gates, the spaces orthogonally adjacent to the four central squares where the Temple is. All the Guardians should be on the Temple Island, and all the Shadow pieces should be in the ocean.

For aesthetic purposes, I like to have the King, Queen, one Rook and one Bishop in the Temple itself, and the other four Guardians diagonally adjacent to the Temple, but that is not necessary for a successful conclusion to the game.

## **Movement**

The Guardians and their corresponding Shadows move as in ordinary chess. The Pilgrims and their Shadows move one space in any direction, like a chess king.

No piece is ever captured. When a white piece moves, a black piece automatically responds using the rules specified below. Neither the white nor the black piece can move any farther than the corresponding piece can move.

## **Touching**

Two pieces are considered to be touching if they are on adjacent squares, either orthogonally or diagonally. A Pilgrim may not touch any Shadow at any time. While a Pilgrim is on an ocean square it must be touching a Guardian at all times. On any of the islands, Pilgrims can move independently of the Guardians but still may not touch Shadows.

## **Shadow movement**

Shadow pieces are moved in one of two ways.

1. If a Guardian could attack a square containing a Shadow piece under normal chess rules, it may exchange places with that Shadow. Such a move may not leave a Pilgrim unsupported on the Ocean, or expose a Pilgrim to the touch of a Shadow of any kind. In this case the Shadow piece does not have to be of the same type as the Guardian.

2. When a Pilgrim or Guardian moves to an empty square, the player selects a corresponding Shadow piece to move according to the throw of a die as explained below. The player may select any black piece of the corresponding type to be the Shadow of the white piece. For example, if a white Rook moves, the player may select either of the black Rooks to move. Both the Guardian Rook and its Shadow must have a clear path to move, making sure the Shadow does not touch any Pilgrim and that a Pilgrim on the ocean is touching a Guardian at all times.

## Die Roll

The six-sided die is rolled first, before selecting a Pilgrim or Guardian and the corresponding Shadow, since the result of the roll will limit which pieces can be moved. On a crowded board with the rules about touching, there may be only a few possibilities.

**If the roll is 1 or 3**, the Shadow is moved in the exact opposite direction and the same distance as the white piece. (Odd = Opposite) (If you picture the motions as two vectors, the two vectors are opposites.)

**If the roll is 2 or 4**, the Shadow is moved in the same direction and the same distance as the white piece. (If you picture the motions as two vectors, the two vectors are equal.)

**If the roll is 5**, the Shadow is moved at right angles to the white piece, and the same distance. If you look in the direction of movement of the white piece, the Shadow will move to the **left**.

**If the roll is 6**, the Shadow is moved at right angles to the white piece, and the same distance. If you look in the direction of movement of the white piece, the Shadow will move to the **right**.

## Penalties

I have found in playing this game that it is easy to inadvertently break the rules about leaving a Pilgrim unsupported on the ocean, or touched by a Shadow. If you notice that you have done this before making the next move, you may go back and redo the move. If, on the other hand, you notice it too late to fix it, the Pilgrim is sent out of the world, off the board. To bring it back into the world, a Guardian piece must go to one of the outer islands to a square touching an empty corner square. It must follow the rules of the game in traveling, including moving the Shadow piece. At that point the exiled Pilgrim may be returned to the corner square.

## Comments

Though I haven't tested all possibilities, I believe that with patience and persistence this game can always be brought to a successful conclusion. After many years playing two-player games right-hand-vs.-left-hand, I'm not that interested in winning or losing, but rather in the fun of the playing. I don't see this as a game to sit down and play all at once, but one to leave set up on the table and play for a while, and then come back later and play some more. Like all pilgrimages, it takes time.

If you're the sort of player who finds it more exciting to play with the possibility of losing, here are some options:

1. If you make a mistake and leave a pawn unsupported or touching a Shadow, it is removed from the game entirely. If a certain number of pawns are lost in this way, you lose the game.
2. If you are left with a roll that gives you no legal moves, which seems very unlikely, you lose the game. For myself, I would just roll again.
3. To make the game much more difficult to win, you could select a white piece to move **before** rolling the die. In that case it would be fairly likely that you would have no legal move.

**Acknowledgements**

I am indebted to the suggestions of Chaz Campos and Sean Fenemore on the Abstract Nation Facebook page. I had posted some preliminary ideas and asked for help. Chaz suggested having the black pieces be the shadows of the corresponding white pieces. They would move when the white pieces moved and block the white pieces from reaching their goal. Sean added that there could be a sun effect that would change the directions of the shadows over time.

September 20, 2018