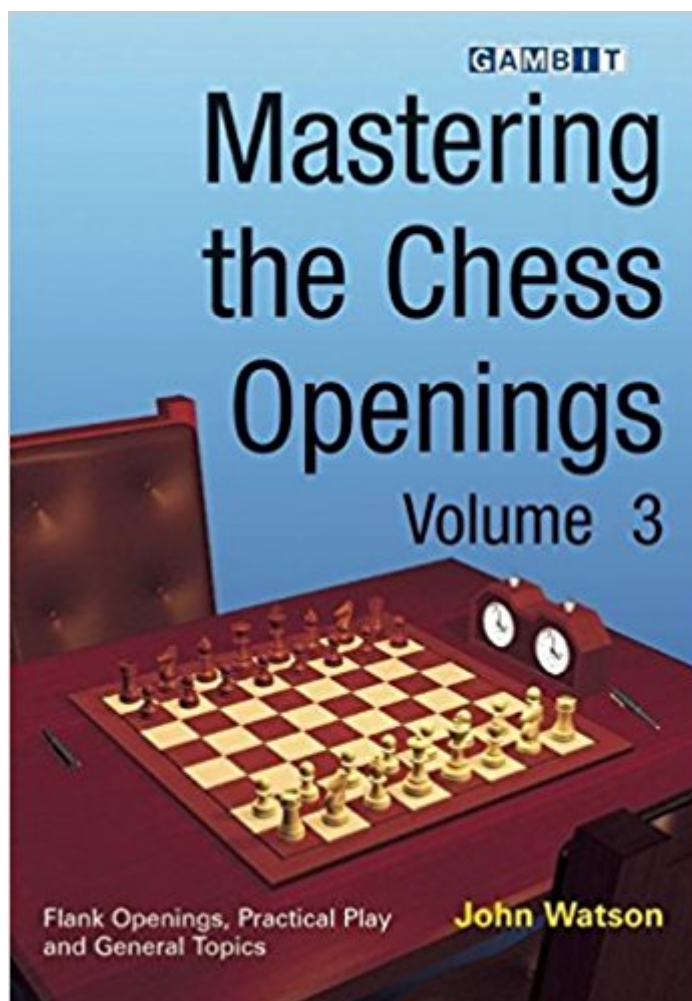




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Mastering The Chess Openings, Volume 3



Synopsis

For many chess-players, opening study is sheer hard work. It is difficult to know what is important and what is not, and when specific knowledge is vital, or when a more general understanding is sufficient. Tragically often, once the opening is over, a player won't know what plan to follow, or even understand why his pieces are on the squares on which they sit. In this highly-acclaimed and popular series, John Watson helps chess-players achieve a more holistic and insightful view of the openings. He explains not only the ideas and strategies behind specific openings, but also the interconnections of chess openings taken as a whole. By presenting the common threads that underlie opening play, Watson provides a permanent basis for playing openings of any type. This third volume focuses on the English Opening while also drawing together many threads from the first two books in a wide-ranging discussion of general opening topics. Particularly in the context of reversed and analogous forms of standard structures, we understand why certain ideas work and others don't, and experience the concept of 'Cross-Pollination' at work in even more varied forms than seen in the first two volumes.

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Customer Reviews

International Master John Watson is one of the world's most respected writers on chess. His groundbreaking four-volume work on the English firmly established his reputation in the 1980s, and he has produced a string of top-quality works since. In 1999, *Secrets of Modern Chess Strategy*, Watson's first book for Gambit, won the British Chess Federation Book of the Year Award and the United States Chess Federation Fred Cramer Award for Best Book. He reviews chess books for *The Week in Chess* and hosts a weekly radio show on the Internet Chess Club.

It took joining a local chess club and repeatedly getting clobbered right out of the opening to realize that in order to stand much of a chance I needed to invest more time in the study of opening theory. I already have a copy of MCO but it is heavy on spewing out moves, light on explanation and has more than a few typos that sometimes make following the variations difficult. I researched books on opening theory and finally settled on Watson's Mastering the Chess Openings series. This is a somewhat more costly resource than many of the others available (four volumes instead of a single book) but it's a worthwhile investment. Volume 3 of the series is different than the others in that it really addresses one single opening system - 1. c4, the English Opening. I like to play this opening frequently when I have the white pieces and I thought I knew this opening fairly well. It turns out I only knew a very small fragment of it. The variants of the English Opening (and related topics) that this volume covers includes:- Reversed Sicilian- 2. Nc3- 2..Nf6 and g3 Systems- Four Knights Variation- Three Knights and Closed English- Pure Symmetrical Variation- Main Lines with 2. Nf3 and d4- Asymmetrical Variations- The Hedgehog Variation- Mikenas Attack and Nimzo-English- King's Indian Variations. For a single opening system, that's a tremendous amount of coverage! As with his other books, Watson does more than just list a variation and rattle off a set of moves without explanation - he explains the ideas behind the moves and the overall goal of each variation, followed up with example games and annotations. This makes it easier to actually understand what is going on during the opening instead of just providing mindless memorization. Watson's writing style is very clear and approachable. He neither talks down to his readership nor does he assume that everyone has a doctorate in chess. This is a superb series on chess openings which will leave the reader with a much clearer understanding of not just the moves involved in the openings but also an understanding of the purpose and goals of any given opening and variation covered. Although the cost of the series is more than that of a single volume it is well worth it.

Watson wrote THE series on the English Opening back in the 1970's and early 1980's. It was four books and around 800 pages, but it's still considered a classic. To this day, people still refer to those books when they want to learn how to play the English. I know that I did. However...theory moves on, of course, and so some of the lines are outdated or simply not relevant any more. Here comes Watson to the rescue! This book is a large 350 pages filled with brilliant analysis and lucid explanatory prose. I simply love this book. It's like taking a college course on 1.c4 with an excellent professor to guide you. Watson covers a lot of minor deviations and early stuff in order to ground the reader as to WHY they're not considered best. This helps you understand WHY the main lines

represent the critical tries. Once you understand that, you can keep up with the latest trends thanks to a solid foundation. To make a long story short: I recently lost this book when I moved, and when I found out it was missing... I ordered it AGAIN from .com! It's so good, it's worth buying twice. Get it.

I've been out of chess for about ten years and so I thought I'd make a comeback and learn the English opening. I bought four different books on the subject. I had intended to use Watson's book to give me a good understanding of the strategy and then use the other books to work out a repertoire. But the more I studied all the books, the more I ended up using Watson's almost exclusively. This book is enormous, it gives an excellent survey of the current state of the English, it is full of the author's analysis and suggestions, and has great explanations of the strategy and tactics. I had played the English a long time ago when I was a C-player (I'm 2281 now, or was when I last played) and I had a pet line, a temporary pawn sacrifice that I liked (I had got it from Nigel Povah's book on the English, written in the 80s). It was the first thing I looked up in Watson's book to see what he said. Although it is a real sideline, Watson analyzes it in detail showing why it doesn't give white an advantage. In addition to the standard 'refutation' of this line, he gave two different suggestions of his own for playing against the line. This is typical of the whole book. The book is in a large format, about 10" tall, and thick - 351 pages. The book has 12 chapters. It starts out with an introduction followed by an in depth discussion about viewing the English as a reversed Sicilian. This is quite interesting and a recurring theme in the book. White would always like to have one of the better Sicilian lines but with a tempo up. The following ten chapters each discuss various English systems in detail. The opening is explained using individual games which includes a great deal of discussion and analysis. Every game includes a great deal of discussion of both White and Black's plans and tactical ideas (the book isn't written from either side's perspective). I highly recommend "Mastering the Chess Openings 3" For anyone who is interested in the English Opening as either White or Black, or someone who just wants chess strategy explained at an advanced level.

Detailed and concise. Follow the openings on a board, or two or three and you will gain understanding of the opening

This is THE BOOK if you want to either learn the English Opening as White or play the specified defenses as Black against it. Full coverage for both is offered.

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