

Adapted from :

<https://ryersonian.ca/the-queens-gambit-challenges-stereotypes-of-women/index.htm>

# The Queen's Gambit\*

## challenges stereotypes of women



Chess is not just a male sport.

written by [Ekaterina Giannikos](#) March 9, 2021

Competing at the highest level of chess , Beth Harmon crushes the gender barrier . The female lead (= role) in *The Queen's Gambit* rises to the challenge of being on top in the male-dominated world of chess. Beth Harmon, played by Anya Taylor-Joy in the fictional historical drama miniseries written and directed by Scott Frank, is driven by passion and determination to compete at the same level — despite an uneven playing field. She is not afraid to show her intelligence and use her opponents' surprise against them in order to win.

As a teenager, Harmon signs herself up for a chess tournament. She never doubts herself, even if she is seen as unworthy (= *indigne*) and strange by the male organizers only because she is a woman.

Dimitrios Latsis, a film studies professor, refers to Harmon's strength as "soft power."

"She uses her mind rather than her might to plan her strategies in chess," Latsis says.

Harmon is an American girl who represents something different in being able to overcome not only the fact that she is a girl, but that she is one during the late 1950s to early 1960s.

Harmon remains focused on succeeding against her male competitors and rises to the top of the chess world. The series is said to be inspiring, especially because of Harmon's achievements. Women are still trying to reach (= *atteindre*) equality in the world. "It's so important to show a woman lead trumping\* (*trump= surpasser*) all these stereotypes, making it to the top."



Female empowerment does not mean being strong and noble all the time. An important part of empowerment is the portrayal of the fully human, complex and vulnerable side of the individual.

Harmon overcomes drug and alcohol addiction with support from her friends. Not only does she break into the chess world, but she also breaks out of her self-destructive addictions.

Seeing Harmon's success overcoming her obstacles should give women the confidence to rise up through the ranks of their own careers or competitions.

"It's important to show that it doesn't matter who you are, it doesn't matter what race, what gender ; as long as you're determined, as long as you work for it, you can achieve anything," declared the lead actress.

\*Gambit : *sacrifice d'un pion pour gagner un avantage en position*

**Vocabulary check** : A) match the French word to its English translation

surmonter	■	■ the might
inégal	■	■ overcome
la force, la puissance	■	■ focused on
une dépendance à ...	■	■ uneven
l'adversaire	■	■ matter
importer, avoir de l'importance	■	■ an addiction to
concentré, focalisé sur	■	■ the opponent
émancipation, autonomiation	■	■ empowerment



B) Highlight in the text all the phrases (= expressions) related to SUCCESS.

**Basic information** : read the text and answer :

\* What is *the Queen's Gambit* ?

\* about the story : **Where** does it take place ?

**When** ?

\* about the **main character** : What's her name ?

What's her occupation ?

- Circle the adjectives describing best her personality : She is described as ....

funny • determined • attractive • smart / intelligent • weak •  
passionate • impatient • self-confident • competitive • caring (= *attentionnée*)  
naive • sensitive • self-destructive • persistent (= *persévérante, tenace*)

- What obstacles did she have to overcome ?

**Grammar** : Translate these sentences with BE EXPECTED TO- BE SUPPOSED TO – BE THOUGHT TO

a) L'héroïne n'était pas censée affronter des hommes. (the heroine / compete against)

b) Les gens s'attendaient à ce qu'elle échoue. =>

c) On la trouvait bizarre et arrogante\*. (\* mot transparent)