



COLUMNISTS

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen



Reviewed this month:

The Queen's Gambit Accepted
by Konstantin Sakaev & Semko Semkov

Albin Countergambit (CD-ROM)
by Luc Henris

The Colle-System (CD-ROM)
by Dmitrij Oleinikov

The Gruenfeld (CD-ROM)
by Knut Neven

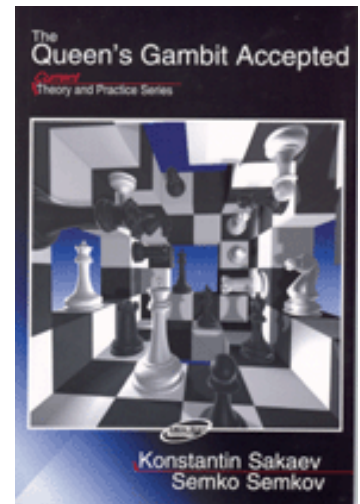
Play 1 d4!
by Richard Palliser

Queen's Pawn Openings

The Queen's Gambit Accepted by Konstantin Sakaev & Semko Semkov, 2003
Chess Stars, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 221 pp., \$24.95

The Queen's Gambit Accepted isn't an opening that has been oversaturated with a steady flow of new books such as the Sicilian Dragon has been. But lately there have been a few books that have paid substantial attention to this opening. However, this one is the first to exclusively present the theory using variation trees, a format that I have a preference for.

Grandmaster Konstantin Sakaev is a 2650+ rated player, with a reputation amongst his colleagues as one who is very thoroughly prepared and has a very good knowledge of openings. His co-author is IM Semko Semkov, who has two GM norms and is the publisher of the Chess Stars series.



The book has 27 chapters, so I have condensed the chapter break-down for clarity's sake:

- **1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4**
- 1-4 3 e4 e5 (4 chapters - 30 pages)
- 5-6 3 e4 c5?! (2 chapters - 11 pages)
- 7-8 3 e4 Nf6 (2 chapters - 21 pages)
- 9-10 3 e4 Nc6 (2 chapters - 17 pages)
- 11-12 3 Nf3 a6 (2 chapters - 22 pages)
- 13-14 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 (2 chapters - 19 pages)
- 15 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Qa4 (1 chapter - 7 pages)
- 16 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e3 e6 5 Bxc4 c5 6 Qe2 (1 chapter - 12 pages)
- 17-25 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e3 e6 5 Bxc4 c5 6 0-0 (8 chapters - 64 pages)
- 26 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e3 Bg4 (1 chapter - 5 pages)
- 27 3 e3 (1 chapter - 5 pages)

I'm no specialist in the QGA, but just from appearances alone this book looks incredibly thorough, with numerous pieces of original analysis, and plenty of suggested alternatives. This by itself is a good indication of a worthwhile chess book.

Yet, the book isn't without flaws. First of all there are small, albeit very minor, omissions in the coverage such as moves that go unmentioned. Secondly, the authors would have done well if they had hired an editor who speaks English as a first language. While what they write is understandable, there are grammatical errors, stilted sentence constructions, and much more that would deeply disturb any English teacher.

For instance, this is what Sakaev and Semkov had to say about the Furman variation: "Form many years it had the role of a side lane in QGA. Probably it

was due to the symmetrical type of the arising positions, that was quite mistakenly assumed as a herald of draw." [sic]

Here are three more examples:

p.77: "OK, wiser is to refrain from this check, but anyway White is a bit planless"

P.117: "It is often good to throw in also the d-pawn"

p.118: "This frequently seen moves looks like a misunderstanding, but also faces White with important decisions to take"

However, one can be very satisfied with the integrity of the variations in this work. There are many explanations, new ideas and analysis, as well as thorough coverage of an opening that is enjoying a surge of popularity.

If you want to be up-to-date in this topical opening, this book is by far the best choice at the present time, and it objectively offers many new ideas for both white and black.

My assessment of this book: 

**[Order](#) *The Queen's Gambit Accepted*
by Konstantin Sakaev & Semko Semkov**

Albin Countergambit (CD-ROM) by Luc Henris, 2003 ChessBase GmbH, Figurine Algebraic Notation, CD-ROM, \$23.95

The Albin Countergambit arises after the moves 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e5. The author, Belgian FIDE Master Luc Henris, quotes from Euwe in the foreword that it is "one of those openings that are not fully correct, but its clear refutation is not known."

There are 29 introductory texts, 25 of which pertain to the theoretical coverage. The database contains 3602 games of which 95 are annotated by the author. The number of games and annotated games seems quite low in comparison with other CD-ROMs from ChessBase, but the depth of the authors work really reveals itself in the list of games in the database. Probably 80% of the games have some sort of comment, evaluation, or full-fledged annotations. This is an astounding accomplishment that other prospective authors should take note of.



The theoretical texts are also very good efforts. They are detailed and the

author often points to refutations of black's play that haven't been mentioned in other works.

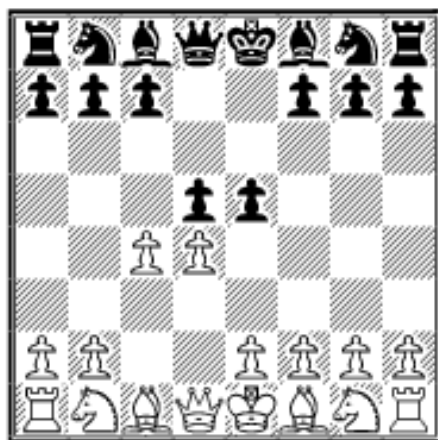
Here's an example of the Albin Countergambit, the annotations are those by Henris.

(787) Levitt,J - Speelman,J [D09]

Torquay, 1982

[Henris]

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e5



3 dxe5 d4 4 Nf3 Nc6 5 g3 Be6 6 Nbd2 Qd7 7 a3 Nge7 8 Nb3 Ng6 9 Nbx d4 0-0-0 10 Be3 Ngxe5 11 Nxe5 Nxe5 12 Bg2 [12 b3 Ng4; 12 Nxe6 Qxe6 13 Qc2!? Bc5!] 12...Bxc4 [12...Nxc4!? 13 Nxe6 (13 Qb3 Bd5!) 13...Qxd1+ 14 Rxd1 Rxd1+ 15 Kxd1 Nxe3+ 16 fxe3 fxe6=+] 13 Qc2 Bc5 14 Nf5?! [Better is 14 Rd1] 14...Bxe2!! 15 Bxc5 [15 Qxc5?? Nd3+ -+; 15 Kxe2? Qb5+ 16 Ke1 Nd3+ 17 Kf1 Nf4+ 18 Kg1 Ne2+ 19 Qxe2 (only move) Qxe2 20 Bxc5 Rd1+ 21 Rxd1 Qxd1+ 22 Bf1 Qc2-+]

15...Ba6! [15...Nd3+?! 16 Kxe2 Qxf5 17 Rhc1! Qh5+ 18 Bf3 (18 Kf1? Nxc5=+ intending 19 Qxc5?? Rd1+-+) 18...Rhe8+ 19 Be3 Rxe3+! 20 fxe3 (20 Kxe3 Qe5+ 21 Be4 Nxc1 22 Rxc1 f5=+) 20...Qxh2+ 21 Kf1 Qxg3 22 Bg2 Nxc1 23 Rxc1+=] **16 Nd6+!** [16 Be4 Bd3!; 16 Rd1 Nd3+ 17 Rxd3 Bxd3 18 Qb3 Rhe8+ 19 Be3 (19 Ne3 b6 -/+) 19...c6 -/+]

16...Kb8! 17 0-0-0 cxd6! 18 Bxd6+ Qxd6! 19 Rxd6 Rxd6 (with compensation) 20 Qa4 Rhd8 21 Kb1 Nc4 22 Rc1 [22 b3!?] 22...Rd4 23 Ka1 f6 24 Qc2 Rd2 25 Qf5 Ne5! [25...Nxb2? 26 Qf4+ R8d6 (only move) (26...Ka8 27 Qxd2+-) 27 Qe4+/-] **26 Bh3 [26 Qxh7!?] 26...b6 27 Qxh7 Bc4! 28 b3?! [28 Qxg7 Rd1! 29 Rb1 (29 Qh6 Bb3) 29...Rxb1+ 30 Kxb1 Bb3!; 28 Bf5!? Rd1 29 Rb1] 28...Bxb3 29 Qxg7? Nc4-+ 30 Rxc4 (only move) Bxc4 31 Bg4 Re8 0-1**

As you can see there are few words, but those that are used lead to my only point of criticism. The sentence construction is often stilted and grammatical errors are found throughout. In particular, when naming the variations, we find such grammatical horrors as: "The Lasker's Variation" and "The Chigorin's Variation."

Anybody who plays this opening as black will want to own this work and those concerned about being up-to-date with the latest theory as white should definitely get it, too. This CD sets a new standard regarding the overall input from the author. But we shouldn't forget that this opening is very rarely seen, and despite the author's best efforts, it probably will not do much to change that.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *Albin Countergambit* (CD-ROM)

by Luc Henris

The Colle-System (CD-ROM) by Dmitriy Oleinikov, 2003 ChessBase GmbH, Figurine Algebraic Notation, CD-ROM, \$23.95

To be honest I'm not sure there is a need for another work on this opening, especially as it isn't particularly popular among stronger players. But before condemning Oleinikov's work, let's have a look at what the back cover of the CD ROM tells us:



"The Colle System is rather a playing scheme than an opening. White plays d4, Nf3, e3 Bd3, 0-0, Nbd2 and possibly c3 - nearly regardless of what Black replies. Opening knowledge is of secondary importance. Exactly this is where the author starts his work, prioritizing on explaining plans, patterns and typical mistakes. For example, two chapters are titled 'Ten inspirational games' and 'Eight warning games'.

However, Oleinikov naturally also deals with opening theory in the classical sense and discusses the critical variations, at one point showing himself surprised: 'To my amazement, none of my opponents has reached this crucial position so far'. Certainly a hint that the second players know too little about the Colle System and rather play it by ear."

And then they add, "This is what makes chess training fun:

- suited for club players- clear-cut learning database with 380 games
- opening course in 17 chapters
- 100 games annotated by the author
- three topical training databases
- big database with a total of more than 21,000 games
- Chessbase Reader included"

The above is self-contradictory on several points; for example, if opening knowledge is of secondary importance, then why is it such a big deal if black improvises? In fact, the above text indicates that the author, rather than trying to systemize the very tangled web of transpositions, is focusing on general plans and choosing the easy way of covering an opening. In his 17 chapters,

the coverage is rather superficial, and he does not discuss nearly all of the possibilities for both sides.

Still, the presentation in these chapters is generally quite good, using plenty of diagrams, arrows, and links to the relevant games to showcase the typical ideas. In some cases he refers to other sources, however, every now and again we find that he is not quoting them accurately. As for example with the following line:

(385) Bennett,T (2228) - Vreugdenhil,F (2150) [D05]

Coulsden op Coulsden (7), 04.09.1999

[*Oleinikov*]

1 d4 d5 2 e3 Nf6 3 Bd3 e6 4 Nd2 c5 5 c3 Bd6 6 Ngf3 Nbd7 7 0-0 0-0 8 Re1 Qc7 9 e4 cxd4 10 cxd4 dxe4 11 Nxe4 Nd5 12 Nxd6 Qxd6 13 Ne5 N7f6 14 Bg5 Modern theory gives +=. **14...b6 15 Qf3 Rb8** [A nice trap follows after 15...Bb7 16 Bxf6! gxf6 17 Qg3+ Kh8 18 Nxf7+ Rxf7 19 Qxd6+-] **16 Qh3 g6** [if 16...h6 there follows an already familiar blow. 17 Bxh6 gxh6 18 Qg3+] **17 Qh4 Nh5 18 Bh6 Re8 19 Bb5 Rd8 20 Rac1** [20 Be2 Nhf6 (20...Ndf6 21 Bg5; 20...Ng7 21 Nc6; 20...Bb7? 21 Bxh5 gxh5 22 Qg5+ Kh8 23 Qg7 mate) 21 Bg5 Kg7 22 Ng4+-; or better is 20 Nc6 Bd7 21 Nxb8 Bxb5 22 a4 Be8 23 Na6 +/-] **20...Bb7 21 Bc6 Ne7 22 Bxb7 Rxb7 23 g4 f6 24 gxh5 fxe5 25 dxe5 Nf5 26 exd6 Nxh4 27 Rxe6 Nf5 28 Bg5** [=28 Rc7 Rd7 29 Rxb7 Rxb7 30 Bg5 gxh5 31 Rf6 Ng7 32 Bh6+-] **28...Rxd6 29 Rxd6 Nxd6 30 hxg6 hxg6 31 Bf4 Nf5 32 Rc7 Rxc7 33 Bxc7** and White obtains an absolutely won ending (extra pawn plus B vs. N, a great advantage in this kind of position with pawns on both wings). Unfortunately, he failed to convert his advantage into the win..." [Here Oleinikov quotes the rest of the game without further comments] 1/2-1/2.

Oleinikov claims that after White's 14th move "modern theory gives +=", but exactly which source is he quoting from? Lane, in *The Ultimate Colle*, follows the same game and after White's 15th claims the game to be even. Lane also mentions that 14...Bd7!? should be considered, following the game Brautsch-T.Sørensen, Aarhus 1986, where Black actually went on to win. Why is this not mentioned? Moreover Oleinikov doesn't even bother to indicate where Black went wrong. Any chess engine will show that the evaluation jumps in White's favor after each of Black's 14th, 15th, and 16th moves. The position went from a slight advantage for White to a decisive advantage, without Oleinikov even considering just one of Black's moves dubious. This obviously isn't an objective presentation. One should at least strive to give a correct and relatively unbiased evaluation of the positions one encounters.

There are many who hate playing against openings such as the Colle, because white's super solid set-up isn't much fun for black. However, with a little creativity, it is actually possible to circumvent the most boring lines, because those playing white generally also want to obtain a good position. Oleinikov gives black several choices, perhaps unintentionally, to avoid immediate boredom. For example after 1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 e3 c6 (which deserves a '!', if

Black can get White to play the following move) 4 c4, and now either 4...e6 or 4...a6, are perfect for escaping the sometimes sleep-inducing Colle by transposing into Slav systems. By the way, Oleinikov's coverage of this aspect of the 'Colle System' leaves a lot to be desired.

There is also a chapter that includes a fairly extensive Bibliography, as well as some details about the author. It mentions his two previous works for ChessBase; emphasizing the reviews they received by John Elburg. Those familiar with Elburg's reviews, will know that he hardly criticizes anybody and occasionally gives recommendations to truly horrible works.

The training databases (tactics, strategy, and opening moves) are fairly well done, but some of the comments are just plain odd. For example, in the latter section, after the moves 1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 e3 e6 4 Bd3 c5, I wanted to play 5 b3, which gets the following response: "I see, you are a Rubinstein-Zukertort aficionado, but we are speaking of the Colle move order. Otherwise, why not 1 f4?" This is nonsensical and comments like this are terribly annoying, because it's a perfectly good move, and one he even covers in the theory section.

Other things I'm unhappy with are Oleinikov's game annotations, which in many cases are very superficial, and the fact that the quality of the English used in texts leaves quite a bit to be desired.

The overall quality of this product isn't nearly as good as it should have been; there are numerous omissions and things that could have been done better. I'm not denying that this CD-ROM can be useful to some, but is it worth the cost? I personally think not.

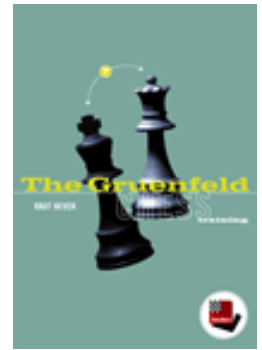
My assessment of this book: ❖❖

[Order](#) *The Colle-System* (CD-ROM)

by Dmitrij Oleinikov

The Gruenfeld (CD-ROM) by Knut Neven, 2003 ChessBase GmbH, Figurine Algebraic Notation, CD-ROM, \$27.95

The Grünfeld arises after 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 with Black playing ...d7-d5 on one of the next few moves, e.g. 3 Nc3 d5. The author is the Canadian Knut Neven, who has previously authored two CD ROMs for ChessBase, and who is editor of the Canadian chess magazine, *En Passant*. In correspondence chess he has three times qualified for the final of IECG World Championship.



Let's look at how the material has been divided:

- 01 Introduction
- 02 Contents
- 03 Historical Overview
- 04 Themes and Plans
- 05 Theoretical Overview
- 06 Odds & Ends (9 subchapters)
- 07 Fianchetto System (5 subchapters)
- 08 Russian System (6 subchapters)
- 09 Exchange Variation (10 subchapters)
- 10 Bibliography
- 11 About the Author

Everything is neatly organized and easy to find. I'm pleased to see that Neven listed a bibliography, which isn't an everyday occurrence on CD ROMs. However, neither Davies' *The Grünfeld Defence* nor Janjgava's *King's Indian & Grünfeld: Fianchetto Lines* are mentioned.

Of the other non-theoretical chapters, I was surprised that his otherwise reasonable *Historical Overview* ended with a Kasparov game from 1986. Isn't it worth mentioning that Kasparov more or less has abandoned the Grünfeld since he lost to Kramnik with it in their World Championship match? And who is carrying the torch now?

The *Themes and Plans* is the one I found most enlightening. The explanations are really good and the illustrative games purposefully serve the verbal presentation. He has done an excellent job!

The theoretical chapters are also very well-written with numerous links to illustrative games, but these linked games are missing evaluations, which is something that should be obligatory. It may be easy enough for someone rated 2300 or higher to come up with a clear evaluation of some of the linked positions, but a regular club player, at whom the CD-ROM is aimed, will not be able to do that.


Even though these chapters are well-written they are not perfect. For example in the Fianchetto Lines, in chapter 07.03, he has taken quite a short-cut with the following move order 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 g3 Bg7 4 Bg2 d5 5 cxd5 Nxd5 6 Nf3 Nb6, which avoids a lot of theory, but should also be an incentive to

cover what remains quite comprehensively. And this is hardly the case; as in the continuation 7 Nc3 Nc6 8 e3 e5 9 d5, he writes the following:

"...although this can hardly be called a success given that White has missed out on the more popular lines without e3. Now Black can play 9...Ne7 10.e4 c6!? and practically force White into the somewhat double edged and largely untested 11.d6 as played in Smejkal,J - Ree,H ½-½ Wijk aan Zee 1972." The game, by the way, is linked without any comments or evaluations whatsoever. However, as Janjgava illustrates, White can actually obtain an advantage by means of 11 d6 Ng8 (so far Smejkal-Ree) 12 b3 Bg4 13 Ba3 Nf6 14 h3 Bxf3 15 Qxf3 Qd7 16 Rd1 0-0 17 0-0 (17 h4!?) 17...Rfd8 18 Rd3 with a fairly clear advantage for White.

I could find further examples of this type, but it seems like Neven has mainly drawn from the conclusions already made by others, and hasn't taken them to the next level, and as so fails what John Watson calls 'the author involvement test'. It's a shame because the framework for a really good effort was certainly in place.

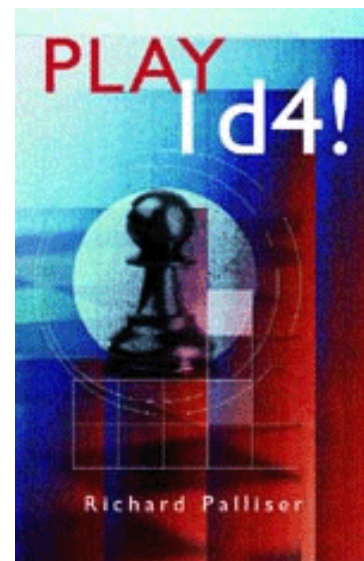
The usual accompanying database has been broken down into three separate bases due to the huge volume of games, over 67,000! Of these approximately 200 have been annotated by the author, or at least that's what we are being told on the CD cover. If you check the index of annotators, there are only 73 games to be found under Neven. The remaining games are those where he has added his own comments to someone else's annotations. This product is slightly above average, and will probably be quite useful for club players, but for players rated over 2000 it falls short on several counts.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *The Gruenfeld* (CD-ROM)
by Knut Neven

Play I d4! by Richard Palliser, 2003 Batsford BT, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 288 pp., \$23.95

This is Palliser's first book, and he has taken on the very ambitious task of compiling a worthwhile repertoire for white starting with 1 d4. And, contrary to most other authors, he covers openings that are part of his own repertoire. This means that he knows the openings very well, but also is giving away a lot of secrets that he could use against future opponents.



In the preface he tells us: "The lines given are all sound, but are not at the cutting edge of theory and so one *Informant* novelty will not refute a whole variation overnight! Coverage at times is quite detailed but this is to provide the stronger club player with enough theory to employ these lines with confidence, whilst at the same time illustrating several examples of typical themes in each variation. As I have discovered from my own games, the weapons presented here are quite easy to understand but they are by no means innocuous! Indeed I believe the repertoire as a whole will enable readers to gain good practical results."

I can add that those openings that look fairly harmless often deliver better results than those that look terribly dangerous. The reason is that players get lulled into a false sense of security and tend to play inaccurately.

Let's look at the contents page, and how much space he has allotted for each opening:

- Index of Complete Games (1 page)
- Preface (1 page)
- Bibliography (1 page)
- 1 The Slav (23 pages)
- 2 The Queen's Gambit Accepted (27 pages)
- 3 The Queen's Gambit Declined (43 pages)
- 4 The Queen's Gambit: Others (14 pages)
- 5 The Queen's Indian Defence (24 pages)
- 6 The Grünfeld Defence (21 pages)
- 7 The King's Indian Defence (36 pages)
- 8 The Benko Gambit (17 pages)
- 9 The Benoni (18 pages)
- 10 The Dutch (19 pages)
- 11 The Modern (10 pages)
- 12 Other Defences (28 pages)
- Index of Main Variations (2 pages)

Well, that's about all the openings there are, and the page allotment seems just right. Plus, the lines are very well-chosen, and they offer White sound

positions to play from.

One of the reasons why I like this repertoire is that the lines are ones I have played myself. One of these is the Furman Variation against the Queen's Gambit Accepted, which always yields white better results than its reputation. Rather amazingly, Palliser's book covers this particular variation in more detail than the one dedicated to the Queen's Gambit Accepted by Sakaev and Semkov. In particular, it is the numerous new ideas suggested and analysed by Palliser that makes this book far superior to most other books in this genre.

While the coverage isn't 100% flawless, it gets as close to that as it can be. I am thoroughly impressed by the amount of work that has been put into this book. Players of nearly all levels can draw inspiration from this book for several years to come.


Let's take a look at one of the games employing one of the recommended lines. I have removed the annotations and theoretical coverage that was attached to it. In the book this game alone takes up nearly seven pages!

Palliser-Crouch

4NCL, 2000

**1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 b6 3 e3 Bb7 4 Bd3 e6 5 0-0 c5 6 c4 Be7 7 Nc3! 0-0?! 8 d5!
exd5 9 cxd5 d6 10 e4 Na6 11 Re1 Nc7 12 Rb1! a6 13 a4 Rb8 14 b4 cxb4?!
15 Rxb4 Nd7 16 Be3 a5 17 Rb1 Na6 18 Bxa6! Bxa6 19 Nd4 Bb7 20 Nf5
Re8 21 Bd4! Bf8 22 Nh6+! gxh6 23 Qg4+ Qg5 24 Qxd7 Bc8! 25 Qb5!
Bh3? 26 Qf1 f5 27 f4 Qg6 28 Re3! Bg4 29 h3 Bh5 30 exf5 Qxf5 31 g4 Qc2
32 Rc1 Qb2 33 gxh5 Rxe3 34 Bxe3 Bg7 35 Nd1 Qa3 36 Qc4 Re8 37 Kf2
Bf6 38 Rb1 Bh4+ 39 Kf3 Be1 40 Qb3 1-0**

This is a book you will want to have and I'm looking forward to seeing others from this young IM.

My assessment of this book: 

**[Order](#) *Play 1 d4!*
by Richard Palliser**

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>The Ratings</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"> — A poor book, not recommended.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"> — Not a particularly good book, but perhaps useful for some readers.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"> — A useful book.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"> — Good book, recommended.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"> — Excellent book, highly recommended.</p>

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