How many moves can you make?  

The major pieces in chess (aside from the pawns) move in different ways, and they have different strengths. Here is a good way to think about how powerful each piece is. A piece is more powerful if it can move to, or attack, more squares than another piece. Let’s figure out how many places each piece can move to, depending on where it is on the board.

Start with the rook. Place a rook on one square on an empty chess board and count how many other squares it can move to. Write that number on the corresponding square on the chess board at the right. One square is already done for you – from that square, the rook can move to 14 other squares. Fill in all 63 other squares yourself.

Next, move on to the bishop. Place a bishop on one square on an empty chess board, figure out how many squares it can move to, and write that number in that square on this sheet. One square is already done for you. Do the same for the knight, the queen, and the king. Some squares are done.

What do these numbers tell us about how powerful the pieces are? Imagine you had to explain to someone who is new to chess why the queen is the most powerful piece and the rook is the second most powerful. Write your explanation here: _______________________________________________

Which do you think is more powerful, the bishop or the knight? _________

Why? ________________________________________________________

When there are other pieces on the board, they may block the bishop, but the knight can jump over them. How does this change your answer? _________

Where would you like your pieces to be?

When the knight or the king is in a corner, there are very few squares that they can move to. They are less powerful when they are in a corner, stronger when they are on an edge, and most powerful when they are in the center of the board. Where is the bishop the most powerful? _________.

Where is the queen the most powerful? _________.

Where is the rook the most powerful? _________.

Developed by Craig L. Zirbel, see http://www-math.bgsu.edu/~zirbel/chess