

Ender's Game
Orson Scott Card

Um, if you ever want to know why so many folks think they'd make good writers, it's because they read a book like Ender's Game and realize that the author couldn't possibly have spent much time thinking things through. That being said, moment to moment, I liked the book. I enjoyed it actually, but the plot holes... let's just say they were hard to miss, and the inconsistencies jumped to the forefront of my mind every time I paused in my reading.

I list my major exceptions below, in no particular order:

1) If (along with his brother and sister) Ender was the incredible genius that he is portrayed to be, not only would the government have given his parents a waiver for a fourth child, they would have forced the couple to have a fifth, a sixth, and a seventh child as well.

2) Very few generals, politicians, or adults of any profession are willing to put their personal future or the future of the entire world into the hands of an 11 year old child. The fact that a child would be given command of Earth's Starfleet is implausible to say the least.

3) Shipping 6 year olds into space along with all the food, clothing, and supplies that they will need and then shipping the rejects back to Earth is a thousand time more expensive than putting 6 year olds through an intensive Earthside training program, and then only sending the successful teenage graduates into space.

4) Ender spends the vast bulk of his time learning how to be a company level space-marine commander. The skill set learned in this (squad level tactics, infantry command, zero-g combat, laser practice, etc.) is all pretty much meaningless when it comes to commanding a squadron of spaceships from afar via radio control. If Ender was being groomed for the Admiral's chair, the training could have been a lot more relevant.

5) In Battle School, Ender was so far ahead of the best of the best, that it made a mockery of the entire concept of the best of the best. The tactics, behavior, and strategy of the opposition commanders was so poor that it was hard to believe they were even fit for command, much less successful applicants to the most elite military school in all the universe.

6) Oh, did I mention that Ender's brother Peter winds up becoming the de facto ruler of the world at age twelve, and that after going away to a distant colony, Ender writes a book that becomes the basis of the Universe's largest religion? No. I guess both of these points were just trivial details then. Twelve year old becomes ruler of the world... hardly worth mentioning, much less making the basis of a book.

7) Everything that Ender does is to prepare him to fight the alien bug penance. It should be noted somewhere that after killing millions of humans, the bugs are, "Sorry," and didn't know that humans were sentient. Yeah, that's it. And the white man didn't know Indians were flesh and blood. Or, maybe both groups knew and neither cared.

8) The bugs colonized countless worlds and sent a spaceship to Earth with a queen aboard, but when Ender destroys their home planet, he manages to kill every last queen bug in existence in one fell swoop. Whatever happened to all of those colonized worlds and their queens? Apparently the failed colonization of Earth was THE ONLY TIME a queen bug ever left their home world.

9) Oh, but it gets better. Even if you assume the buggers can't (or won't) leave their home world, rather than sending a full grown queen to a neighboring planet, the bugs ship off an egg, and then place the egg inside a monument built specifically for Ender on the one world where he eventually decides to settle. Picking that particular planet was pretty prescient of them when you get right down to it. Anyhow, the egg is the sole surviving bugger queen. Trust me, when you deconstruct it, it makes perfect sense... if you are brain dead or a six-year-old boy.

Anyhow, it comes down to story or substance. Moment to moment the story is fun. But long term, why anyone would give this book an award or assign it as reading for a college level course is beyond me.

Oh, and as a sort of post script, they had the third book in this series and a group of short stories by Orson Scott Card at the library (like for free in the giveaway pile) and I decided to give both of them a pass... as I most likely will give to anything else by Mr. Card in the future.

{Um, yeah, and I welcome Orson Scott Card's scathing review of any of my work. Or that said, moment to moment, the writing really did flow.}

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