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Enchantment
By Orson Scott Card

Discussion Questions

1. Barnes & Noble review stated:

*Enchantment* works on several levels, which is no easy feat even for a writer of Card's caliber. The author is to be commended for all the elements he manages to thread into his story: It's a critical examination of the origins of the fairy tale, a scholarly inquiry into the advancement of an entire religion, as well as an engaging tale of a quest for knowledge, love, and spiritual enlightenment. Card offers us a novel set in an age when religious conversion and the beliefs of old-world worship met in a head-on confrontation, and Ivan's mixed background makes him the perfect medium through which to study the outcome of these issues. Part *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, part ancient fable, and part modern love story, *Enchantment* is a fulfilling addition to Card's canon of powerful and beloved fantasy-folklore-adventure novels.

- Discuss *Enchantment*’s “critical examination of the origins of the fairy tale.”

- What differences exist between this Russian telling of “Sleeping Beauty” and the more familiar French or English versions?

- Discuss *Enchantment*’s “advancement of an entire religion” and “beliefs of old-world worship met in a head-on confrontation.”

2. Reviews claimed that *Enchantment* contained “echoes of Narnia”. Do you agree with this comparison?

3. What does the time travel component of Card’s book add to the story?

4. What stood out about the authors writing style?

5. Describe the characters in the book. Who did you like/dislike? Why?

6. Why did the characters make the choices they did? What would you have changed?

7. Would you recommend this book? Why or why not?
Wikipedia.com

Plot summary

The novel begins in the USSR, where young Ivan Smetski's parents are attempting to negotiate an escape from Communist Russia. To secure their exit, Ivan's parents have declared themselves Orthodox Jews to get visas for Israel, even though they secretly intend to go to America. Ivan learns that his real name is Itzak Schlomo. With the help of Cousin Marek, they emigrate to the States, where Ivan and his father eventually become two of the world's leading authorities on Old Church Slavonic, a tongue from 10th-century Russia. While doing graduate degree research in Kiev in 1999, on linguistics and folk tales, Ivan returns to Cousin Marek's farm, where he re-encounters a wooded grove he stumbled upon as a child. In the center of a lake of leaves is a beautiful sleeping woman; under the lake is a giant bear, which immediately begins throwing large rocks at him. Ivan smashes out one of the bear's eyes with a rock of his own and jumps the chasm, using his training as a high school track-and-field athlete. Then, he wakes the woman with a kiss. With the bear looming over them, she demands (in Old Church Slavonic) that he pledge to marry her. Ivan does.

The princess is Katerina, of the kingdom of Taina, and now the small island has two bridges: one that only Ivan can see, leading back to the 20th century, and one that only Katerina can see, which leads to her time, though if they hold hands they can see the other bridges. Katerina leads him back to Taina, which, to Ivan's surprise, is a Christian kingdom, centuries before anyone thought there would be. Taina is under the grip of Russian arch-villainess Baba Yaga, who, with the power of an enslaved god, the Great Bear, claims to be its rightful ruler, and will hold onto her claim until Katerina is married.

Ivan has a difficult time adapting to his new setting and faces ridicule from the townspeople, Katerina included. Though Katerina and Ivan do indeed get married, they become aware of a plot led by the kingdom's strongest druzhinnik (knight) Dimitri to kill Ivan once an heir is conceived. Instead of consummating their marriage, Ivan and Katerina escape to the enchanted grove where they met and together return to Ivan's time. Now it is Katerina's turn to be dazzled and hindered by a new world. Their escape does not derail Baba Yaga, who, exerting much of her power, follows them to the 20th century, where she lacks Bear's power but none of her cunning.

Returning to Cousin Marek, Ivan discovers that he is, in fact, the god Mikola Mozhaiski, immortal but far reduced in power now that no one believes in him (same as the one-eyed Bear). Ivan thinks his problems are solved, but Baba Yaga's presence, and Mikola's lack of ability in martial areas, results in the newlyweds embarking on a "honeymoon" to America, where they hope Baba Yaga cannot follow.

Ivan's mother Esther receives Katerina warmly, and Ivan discovers to his consternation that she too uses magic; she is heir to the same mystical and ethnic traditions as Katerina. His father Piotr is less sanguine, and Ivan's former betrothed Ruth is incensed at their marriage. Meanwhile, Katerina learns new spells from Esther; Ivan and Piotr grill Katerina on the details of her times and language; and Ivan uses the Internet to find the details on producing gunpowder, vodka for Molotov cocktails, and a hang glider, which are potential weapons for use against Baba Yaga and her army, which is driven primarily by fear.
That night, Katerina uses a magic spell to check on her father and discovers that Dimitri has led a coup and poisoned King Matfei with a potion from Baba Yaga, which has rendered him mute. Meanwhile, Ruth, bent on revenge, buys "love potions" from a gypsy crone and then proposes a day-early Fourth of July picnic with the couple. Unbeknownst to her, the crone is actually Baba Yaga in disguise, having negotiated airports, airlines, and customs using magic and observation. Only some quick wits and Esther's enchantments keep the "love potions" from killing Ivan. It is clear that Katerina and Ivan must return to Taina. That night at dinner, Ivan pledges her his support but gets only a sorrowful smile for his trouble. Dejected, he retires to his bedroom and is surprised when Katerina joins him (they had slept in separate bedrooms until then). The next morning, Ivan asks about her motive. Katerina replies that it is love.

Esther provides Ivan and Katerina with charms and wards for the journey across, during which they will undoubtedly be hounded by Baba Yaga. Ivan takes extra precautions by booking their flight to JFK airport out of Greater Rochester International Airport instead of the more convenient Syracuse Hancock International Airport, because Baba Yaga may not know about it. She figures it out, though: a prickling of suspicion, aided by one of Esther's charms, makes Ivan forgo their scheduled plane flight, and he and Katerina pack up and leave. Shortly after takeoff, the other plane disappears from radar; Baba Yaga leaves the 20th century at the same time. With more time on their hands, Ivan and Katerina take the time to scout out natural deposits in the area of Taina (Cousin Marek's house is right where King Matfei's palace had been) and build a makeshift hang glider before taking the bridge home.

Though Dimitri has declared martial law for Taina's protection, he is not a deft ruler, and the people rejoin Katerina and Matfei with open arms. They then plan their campaign against Baba Yaga. She has been using her captured Boeing 747 as a sort of chariot—the contemporaries describe it as a house with chicken legs—and is holding its crew and passengers prisoner in her castle. On the field of battle, Ivan will lead a group of grenadiers to winnow away her army, while Matfei and his men stand and fight. Katerina, meanwhile, will use a hang glider to enter Baba Yaga's castle and free the prisoners. The battle goes mostly to plan; however, Dimitri betrays the king at a crucial time, before being slain by Sergei, a monk friend of Ivan. At then end of the battle, Baba Yaga, using Ivan's real name in a spell, traps him in the 747 and then switches places with Bear.

Ivan faces Bear, who has already let slip some significant information to Katerina: namely that he and she will trade places exactly when Baba Yaga's spell goes off. Katerina uses that opportunity to lay a trap, which holds Baba Yaga in place for several minutes. Bear says he's going to kill Ivan, not out of spite but simply because "it isn't right for someone to put out the eye of a god and walk away." Ivan, however, realizes that he is right near his intended seat, where Katerina accidentally left a book bag containing a potent spell that breaks Bear free of his enslavement. In Baba Yaga's castle, the prisoners escape and are eventually discovered in a forest in modern-day Ukraine. Katerina also makes her escape just before the place collapses in the absence of Bear's magic. Baba Yaga, though alive, is never seen again.

The final chapter takes place 10 years later. Ivan is a celebrated scholar for his contributions to the field of Russian linguistics, and every year he and Katerina, along with their four children, return to Taina for the summer using the magic bridges. None of the children can cross without
their assistance, and they face the ever-looming question of who will end up living where. Regardless, Ivan and his Sleeping Beauty have finally found their happy ending.

**Creation and inspiration**

Part of the inspiration behind *Enchantment* may have been Card's interest in history. In a 1998 interview given during work on the novel, Card stated that he had realized he knew little about Slavic history and suggested that the novel was inspired by extensive research in the area.[1] In 2008, Card also credited singer/songwriter Bruce Cockburn's album *The Charity of Night* as an influence on his writing of the book. In the same article, he stated that he believed *Enchantment* might be his best novel.[2]
www.hatrack.com

Biography

Best known for his science fiction novels *Ender's Game* and *Ender's Shadow*, Orson Scott Card has written in many other forms and genres. Beginning with dozens of plays and musical comedies produced in the 1960s and 70s, Card's first published fiction appeared in 1977 -- the short story "Gert Fram" in the July issue of *The Ensign*, and the novelet version of "Ender's Game" in the August issue of *Analog*.

While Card's early science fiction stories and novels were earning attention (Card won the John W. Campbell Award for best new writer from the World Science Fiction Convention in 1978), he supported his family primarily by writing scripts for audiotapes produced by Living Scriptures of Ogden, Utah.

Later, in the mid-1980s, he wrote the screenplays for animated children's videos from the New Testament and Book of Mormon, while the novel version of *Ender's Game* and its sequel *Speaker for the Dead* were winning the Hugo and Nebula awards.

Card's writing ranges from traditional sci-fi (*The Memory of Earth*; *Pastwatch: The Redemption of Christopher Columbus*) to biblical novels (*Stone Tables; Rachel & Leah*), from contemporary fantasies (*Magic Street; Enchantment; Lost Boys*) to books on writing (*Characters and Viewpoint; How to Write Science Fiction and Fantasy*). His "Tales of Alvin Maker" series (beginning with *Seventh Son*) reinvented medieval fantasy in an American frontier setting.

Meanwhile, Card's commentaries on subjects from literature and film to restaurants and consumer products appear weekly in his column "Uncle Orson Reviews Everything" (published by the *Rhinoceros Times* in Greensboro, NC, and then online), while his writings on culture, politics, and world affairs, online at "The Ornery American" (www.ornery.org), are a part of the new blog journalism.

Card's first collection of poetry, *An Open Book*, appeared in 2004, and that same year, in Los Angeles, he directed a production of *Posing As People*, three one-acts adapted by other writers from short stories by Card.

Card's first venture in writing illustrated novels is the comic series *Ultimate Iron Man* for Marvel; he will also be scripting the comic book prequels to *Advent Rising*, a videogame he helped write.

Card offers writing workshops from time to time, and recently committed himself to a longterm relationship with Southern Virginia University, where he teaches writing and literature. His
"Hatrack River" website (www.hatrack.com) also offers free writing workshops, for both adults and younger writers.

**Growing Up in the West**

Born in Richland, Washington, in 1951, he was named "Orson" for his grandfather, Orson Rega Card, who was a son of Charles Ora Card, the founder of the Mormon colony in Cardston, Canada, and Zina Young Card, a daughter of Brigham Young. Orson Rega's childhood was spent in a pioneer household with American Indians as frequent visitors, and the family credits Blackfoot neighbors with saving his life as a baby.

Even though Card is only two generations removed from Mormon pioneers, his own growing-up years were more like those depicted in Ray Bradbury's *Dandelion Wine*.

Card's parents, Willard and Peggy Card, first moved to San Mateo, California, when Scott was an infant. Then, when a back injury forced them to abandon Willard's sign company, the family moved to Salt Lake City while he completed his bachelor's degree. Then they returned to the bay area of California, buying a house in the little town of Santa Clara.

It was long before the word silicon meant anything more than another name on the periodic table of elements: To young Scott, living in Santa Clara meant attending Millikin Elementary, then wandering through orchards and exploring dry creek beds with his friends, or hopping on his bicycle and riding down to the Santa Clara library, where he devoured all the books in the children's section and then sneaked into the adult section to discover the then-new genre of science fiction.

But Card was always eclectic in his reading. At eight years of age, he read *The Prince and the Pauper*, which first attracted him to English history. (He soon got over the disappointment of learning that Tom Canty did not exist.)

Other historical novels -- YA novels about the Civil War and French and Indian War by Joseph Altsheler, the Williamsburg novels by Elswyth Thane, and Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind* -- drew Card into American history, and when his parents gave him Bruce Catton's brilliant three-volume *The Army of the Potomac* for his tenth birthday, he had his first experience of the reality (rather than the romance) of war at every level.

At about the same age, his older sister was required to read William L. Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* in high school, and passed the book down to Scott. The account of the political and diplomatic maneuvering and of the war itself was fascinating; but the story of the holocaust was devastating.

Alongside fiction and history, Card also read scripture -- the Book of Mormon and the Bible -- and collections of sermons by Mormon prophets. He was also fascinated by histories of medicine and by books about the exploits of archaeologists. So when he advises young writers that their best education is to try, through reading, to "learn everything about everything," he is only
counseling them to embark on an endless quest that he began in childhood and continues to this day.

Meanwhile, Card inherited a love of performing from his mother. Card was a boy soprano with enough of an ear to make up harmonies as he joined in family singalongs; he grew up in a house filled with music ranging from Lawrence Welk to Scheherezade, from Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons to church hymns.

Above all, though, was the music of Broadway -- Cole Porter, Richard Rodgers, Lorenz Hart, George and Ira Gershwin, Oscar Hammerstein, Lerner & Loewe, and many others. In the Card family, Broadway was always only just next door, and because in those days the Mormon Church also greatly encouraged the production of plays, he was surrounded by the flurry of rehearsals and performances.

When Willard Card took a position at Arizona State University in 1964, the family moved to Mesa, Arizona, just in time for the 1964 presidential election. This was where Scott was first initiated into political activism. When the organizers of a mock political debate in the junior high school turned up not one student who admitted to being for Lyndon Johnson (Mesa was one of the most conservative towns in a pro-Goldwater state), Card volunteered and did his best to present LBJ's case to the student body. It was Card's first experience with the notion that it might be possible to be a Democrat....

Card had played French horn and tuba in California, and marched in school bands in Arizona playing E-flat alto horn and sousaphone (at different times).

When a family friend, Owen Peterson, then a new Spanish teacher at Scott's junior high, bought a set of the Great Books, he had no children of his own and so chose Scott to enter the scholarship competition that the Great Books then offered. Scott plunged in and had his first acquaintance with Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, Plutarch, and many other writers of the ancient world. He eventually won a thousand-dollar scholarship; the money was quickly gone, but the reading was a lasting gift.

The Utah Years

At age 16, Card moved with his family to Orem, Utah, so his father could take a position at Brigham Young University. After a year at Brigham Young High School, a private academy associated with the university, Card graduated from high school at the end of his junior year. He won a Presidential Scholarship to BYU which he entered as an archaeology major.

He soon realized that he was spending all his time in the theatre department, however, and changed his major. It was as a theatre student that he first began to school himself to be a writer. "It's the best training in the world for a writer, to have a live audience." Not to mention the actors: "If an incorrect reading of a line is possible, the actor will invariably find it." Even now, Card says that he doesn't so much write his novels as improvise them in front of an invisible audience. "I'm constantly shaping the story so the audience will know why they should care about what's going on."
Like many young artists in love with their art, Card resented all the hours that the university required him to "waste" on general education requirements; as a novelist, however, he found that those were the most useful parts of his college education.

Only a few credit hours shy of graduation, Card left for Brazil on a two-year mission for the LDS Church. Serving in the cities of the state of São Paulo (Ribeirão Preto, Araraquara, Araçatuba, Campinas, Itu, and São Paulo itself), Card became fluent in Portuguese and fell in love with Brazilian culture.

He returned home to his family in Orem and quickly finished up the remaining work for his bachelor's degree in theatre. Meanwhile, he founded a repertory theatre company and was the first to produce plays at "The Castle," an outdoor amphitheater that was built as a government project during the Depression, located directly behind the state mental hospital in Provo. The rent was free; the other expenses were met by Card personally selling a hundred season tickets at $20 each.

The plays at the Castle were a success; unfortunately, an attempt to run a fall season at a remodeled barn in Provo came nowhere near paying back the money Card borrowed to finance it, and after limping through another break-even summer season, Card closed the company. It was because of the expenses of the company, and the hopelessness of repaying the debt from his meager salary as a copy editor at BYU Press, that Card set his hand to writing science fiction. The result was "Ender's Game."

But it took a couple of years to see any payment from that project, and in the meantime, Card changed jobs to become a staff editor at The Ensign, the official magazine of the LDS Church. He moved to Salt Lake City and he and two friends at the magazine -- Jay A. Parry and Lane Johnson -- avidly traded story ideas and read each other's work. They also took a very long lunch one day to see Star Wars on its first day in Salt Lake City, a memorable event because it marked the creation of science fiction as a blockbuster film genre rather than a mere branch of the horror genre.

Meanwhile, though, Card had dated, sometimes quite seriously, but kept returning to the first woman he dated after returning from his mission, Kristine Allen. Kristine's father, James B. Allen, was a BYU professor of history and also an Assistant Church Historian for the LDS Church. Card learned much from Kristine's father, but fell in love with his daughter, and after three years of up-and-down courtship, they got married in May 1977.

Their first child, Michael Geoffrey, was born in 1978, and as other children were born -- Emily Janice, Charles Benjamin, Zina Margaret, and Erin Louisa -- they were all given at least one name in honor of a writer that Scott and Kristine admired: Geoffrey Chaucer, Emily Bronte and Emily Dickinson, Charles Dickens, Margaret Mitchell, and Louisa Mae Alcott. (Their third child, Charles Benjamin, was afflicted with cerebral palsy and died soon after his seventeenth birthday. Their fifth child, Erin Louisa, died the day she was born.)

Scott and Kristine first lived in Salt Lake City, but after he left fulltime employment to support himself as a writer, they were free to move, first to Sandy, Utah, and then to Orem.
Card pursued the hobby of higher education, earning a master's degree in English from the University of Utah in 1981.

They moved to South Bend, Indiana, that summer so Scott could begin doctoral work at Notre Dame. Unfortunately, the recession of the early 80s dried up Scott's income for one long year, forcing them to seek fulltime employment.

Offered two jobs, one at Coleco in Hartford, Connecticut, and the other with Compute! magazine in Greensboro, North Carolina, they chose the latter and thus began their sojourn in the American South. The job at Compute! lasted only nine months; their love affair with Greensboro is still going on.

Life in the South

It was in Greensboro that their last three children were born and two of them died; it was in Greensboro that their children have all gone to school. They have been active in the local Mormon community, and in recent years Card's columns for the Rhinoceros Times (reprinted online at Hatrack.com and Ornery.org) have brought him more involvement in the community at large.

But Greensboro is only home base. They travel often, having taken their kids on many visits to New York, Los Angeles, Boston, Washington D.C., and other American and Canadian cities and towns, as well as visits to London, Paris, Barcelona, Rome, Florence, Berlin, Leipzig, and Jakarta -- and one wonderful summer in Provence.

Son Geoffrey is married to Heather Heavener Card and lives near Seattle, where he is a game designer for Amaze Entertainment (Samurai Jack: The Shadow of Aku and Shark Tale) and Heather is a tutor and substitute teacher. Daughter Emily is an actress, poet, singer, and audio producer in Los Angeles. Zina is living at home, attending school, and playing videogames and chess.

Meanwhile, Card continues to ply his trade as a writer, including efforts to get good films made of some of his books. Ender's Game is in development at Warner Brothers, and other film projects are at various stages. Meanwhile, Card remains an avid watcher and critic of film and television, as well as books and music.
As one of the most consistently exciting writers to emerge in the last twenty-five years, Orson Scott Card has been honored with numerous awards, immersing readers in dazzling worlds only he could create. Now, in Enchantment, Card works his magic as never before, transforming the timeless story of Sleeping Beauty into an original fantasy brimming with romance and adventure.

The moment Ivan stumbled upon a clearing in the dense Carpathian forest, his life was forever changed. Atop a pedestal encircled by fallen leaves, the beautiful princess Katerina lay as still as death. But beneath the foliage a malevolent presence stirred and sent the ten-year-old Ivan scrambling for the safety of Cousin Marek's farm.

Now, years later, Ivan is an American graduate student, engaged to be married. Yet he cannot forget that long-ago day in the forest — or convince himself it was merely a frightened boy's fantasy. Compelled to return to his native land, Ivan finds the clearing just as he left it.

This time he does not run.

This time he awakens the beauty with a kiss . . . and steps into a world that vanished a thousand years ago.

A rich tapestry of clashing worlds and cultures, Enchantment is a powerfully original novel of a love and destiny that transcend centuries . . . and the dark force that stalks them across the ages.

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Enchantment was chosen by the American Library Association Young Adult Library Services Association for its "2005 Popular Paperbacks for Young Adults List" in the "Gateway to Faerie" category.
Praise for Orson Scott Card and *Enchantment*

"Card is skilled at pacing and good with an action scene, but he has raised to a fine art the creation of suspense by ethical dilemma, and in doing so has raised his work to a high plane."

-- *Chicago Sun-Times*

"Charming and lively."

-- *San Francisco Chronicle*

"To anyone who doubts that Orson Scott Card is a master storyteller, here, in the fantasy *Enchantment*, is the ultimate proof, the preeminent test of storytelling: being able to move intimately in totally foreign lifestyles and cultures and to make the readers believe that the writer always lived there. Between getting the cadence of the dialogue correctly and fears and rationalizations of both Jewish and Russian cultures, Card has produced a magnificent fairy-tale-that-isn't-a-fairy-tale-at-all."

-- *Anne McCaffrey*

"[Card's] prose is a model of narrative clarity; the author never says more than is needed or arbitrarily withholds information, yet even a simple declarative sentence carries a delicious hint of further revelation."

-- *The New York Times*

"At once deeply realistic and shot through with curious magic . . . The extreme effects of culture clash and shock often prove to be funny, and there's a whiplash of comedy driving through the grim and gritty scenes, the perceptive comments on serious moral questions."

-- *Locus*

"*Enchantment* is enchanting, and it resonates with the unkillable magic of the fairy tale it has followed."

-- *Interzone*

"Card understands the human condition . . . He tells the truth well -- ultimately the only criterion of greatness."

-- *Gene Wolfe*

"Appealing . . . [Card's] new look at a classic tale is clever . . . adding attractive whimsical twists and cultural confluences to a familiar story."
-- Publisher's Weekly

"Fascinating . . . richly detailed and engagingly peopled."

-- Kirkus Reviews

"Have you ever wondered what happens after Happily Ever After? . . . Breathe a long sigh of relief, for at last, the wait is over. Orson Scott Card's Enchantment takes us beyond the curtain of the cursive scrawl of 'The End' that normally bars our way, past the famous folklore kisses, past everything we've come to know of classic folktales, and on into a realm that will open your tear ducts even as it opens your eyes . . . Enchantment is so much more than merely that ancient tale with a modern twist . . . It feels like a cross between Twain's A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court and the tale of Jack and the Beanstalk with a splash of two-way time travel. This is a compelling and vibrant story that turns classic ideas on their heads, written by a true master. Every fan of fantasy, of Card, or of storytelling will consider it priority reading."

-- Realms of Fantasy
A Conversation With Orson Scott Card

By Claire E. White

Nobody had ever won the Hugo and Nebula awards for best novel two years in a row, until Orson Scott Card received them for Ender's Game and its sequel, Speaker for the Dead, in 1986 and 1987. Ender's Game tells the story of Ender Wiggins, a brilliant child who is recruited into Battle School, where child geniuses are trained through game playing for their future role in the upcoming battles between Earth and the aliens who have almost destroyed humanity. Ender's Game was groundbreaking in its premise, and in its compelling portrayal of the brilliant children who were forced into moral decisions that even experienced adults would have found difficult. The third novel in the series, Xenocide, was published in 1991, and the fourth and seemingly final volume, Children of the Mind, was published in August 1996. Now a new novel in the Ender's series, titled Ender's Shadow, has just been released from Tor, but it's not a sequel. Instead, it returns to the events of Ender's Game and views them from the point of view of another character, a street urchin named Bean. Ender's Shadow is already garnering rave reviews from both readers and critics alike. But Orson Scott Card's experience is not limited to one genre or form of storytelling. His contemporary novels Lost Boys, Treasure Box, and Homebody brought a powerful emphasis on character and moral dilemmas to the old-fashioned ghost story. And his newest contemporary novel, Enchantment (Del Ray, 1999), is a romantic fantasy that has Sleeping Beauty being awakened by an American graduate student in Ukraine in 1991. The characters pass back and forth between Sleeping Beauty's world of ninth-century Russia and today's America, with the famous anti-hero of Russian folklore, the witch Baba Yaga, following close behind.

Card's work is quite diverse. The Homecoming Saga (the novels The Memory of Earth, The Call of Earth, The Ships of Earth, Earthfall, and Earthborn) was a retelling of ancient scripture as science fiction. Pastwatch: The Redemption of Christopher Columbus is an alternate history novel, in which time travelers return to keep Columbus from discovering America -- or at least from returning to Europe after having discovered it. Perhaps Card's most innovative work is his American fantasy series The Tales of Alvin Maker, whose first five volumes, Seventh Son, Red Prophet, Prentice Alvin, Alvin Journeyman, and Heartfire are set in a magical version of the American frontier.

A dozen of Card's plays have been produced in regional theatre, including the musical
Barefoot to Zion (written in collaboration with his composer brother, Arlen L. Card), which played to sold-out houses in Utah as part of the Mormon Church's celebration of the sesquicentennial of the entry of the pioneers into Salt Lake Valley. His historical novel, Saints, has been an underground hit for several years, and Card has written hundreds of audio plays and a dozen scripts for animated video plays for the family market. And his TV series concept, The Gate, was purchased by the WB network for development. Meanwhile, Ender's Game is being developed for film by Robert Chartoff, co-producer of The Right Stuff, Raging Bull, and the Rocky series, with Card writing the screenplay.

Card has written two books on writing: Character and Viewpoint and How to Write Science Fiction and Fantasy, the latter of which won a Hugo award in 1991. He has taught writing courses at several universities, including most recently a novel-writing course at Pepperdine, and has also taught at such workshops as Antioch, Clarion, Clarion West, and the Cape Cod Writers Workshop.

Born in Richland, Washington, Card grew up in California, Arizona, and Utah. He lived in Brazil for two years as an unpaid missionary for the Mormon Church. He received degrees from Brigham Young University (1975) and the University of Utah (1981). He currently lives in Greensboro, North Carolina. He and his wife, Kristine, are the parents of five children: Geoffrey, Emily, Charles, Zina Margaret, and Erin Louisa (named for Chaucer, Bronte and Dickinson, Dickens, Mitchell, and Alcott, respectively). A devout Mormon, he believes that all fiction has a strong moral message. He believes that the message should be positive; nevertheless, his choice of subject matter and the amount of violence in his books have led to some raised eyebrows in the Mormon church.

Card's characters are usually put in a position of having to make difficult and interesting moral choices. Card believes that it is the character's interaction with other people which makes him interesting. Family is also a central theme in his work.

His fans are devout, and growing in number. His website is a popular stop where fans and students can read about his work, and even get their writing questions answered from Uncle Orson. He practices what he preaches -- a devoted husband and father, he makes family time a priority in his life and is known for his willingness to help writers who are willing to work hard. Orson talks with us about his work and his life, and shares some terrific advice for beginning writers.

I'd like to talk first about your recent fantasy book, Enchantment. How did this story come into being? What attracted you to the story of Sleeping Beauty?

My film company had acquired the rights to an idea: Sleeping Beauty wakes up in Russia today. As with many such high-concept ideas, there really wasn't much more to it than that. For me, the fascination was not so much with Sleeping Beauty waking up today or even with the fish-out-of-water scenario of a medieval woman in modern times. I was interested in the call to heroism -- the guy who wakes her thinks he's kissing a princess, but instead he's taking on a full-time -- and lifelong -- job.
What was the most challenging aspect of creating this character of Ivan, the hero of Enchantment?

The story required certain things: A reason for him to start a Russian but end up an American; the ability to speak the language of the princess; enough athletic ability to get across the chasm to the princess; a reason to go back to Russia; some ability or abilities that would be useful in fighting the wicked witch. These requirements forced me to move him through an unusual life pattern. To get him from Russia to America, I made him part of the Jewish emigration in the 1970s. To give him Old Slavonic, I made his father a professor of ancient languages who talked shop at home. To get him back to Russia, I made him a grad student -- and to prepare him to understand what was going on, I made him a student of ancient Slavic folklore. And I also made him a lifelong athlete. All these were required by the story, but in the process of making these things fit together into a coherent life with a believable family, I ended up falling in love with Ivan and both his parents -- especially his mother. Ivan's frustration was being misjudged by everyone; but what I admired about him was that no matter what he might wish, he kept coming down on the side of Doing the Right Thing. Not the dramatic battle between Good and Evil, but the quotidian battle between unwillingness and responsibility.

Let's talk about Sleeping Beauty herself -- Princess Katerina. How did you approach the creation of Katerina? Were there any character traits you were specifically trying to avoid?

I wanted to avoid the obvious: Making her anachronistically feminist or modern in some other way. The story only worked if she was a woman of her time. Nor did I want her to be passive, waiting to be rescued. Her people depended on her, and she took her duties seriously in an age when monarchs were not just political but also religious leaders. She had to be in every way the opposite of Baba Yaga -- without being Susan Silverman from the Spenser novels.

Ivan's relationship with his parents is a complex one and, although most people's mothers aren't talented good witches, the exchanges between son and parents ring very true. How much of your family life do you find creeping into your work?

Ivan's parents were very different from mine, and largely unplanned. What mattered to me was simply that they be good parents, in this era when people only seem to write about dysfunctional families -- or erase the family entirely, treating their heroes as if they sprang like Minerva from the head of Jove. So Ivan's parents had to be involved in his life without consuming him with their own ambitions; worried about him but willing to let him make his own choices ... to a point. How do you keep "good parents" from being boring? Well, in truth, the real problem is, how do you keep bad parents from being boring! I've seen the same bad parents in so many books and movies that I'm tired of them. In creating Ivan's family, the "forced conversion" to Judaism was the biggest problem, because it was such a morally complicated thing to do and the level of sincerity in the conversion had to be believable and not utterly cynical. In solving that
first dilemma I found the seeds of both parents' relationships with Ivan. In truth, the secret to all characterization for me is expressible in two maxims: Every character is the hero of his own story, and You don't write characters, you write relationships. In practice the first maxim means that you must let characters have their own purposes and agendas, not just do what the plot requires, and the second maxim means that nobody is the same person to everyone -- who they are depends in large part on whom they're with.

How did you approach the research needed for this book? Do you use the Internet for research?

I tried the Internet for research and found it nearly useless. A more experienced friend, D'Ann Stoddard, did manage to find useful information on the manufacture of gunpowder from natural materials. But for myself, I found nothing useful directly. But in an indirect way, the best "find" was through the Internet -- when I got an email from a grad student in Russian studies who was inquiring about my use of Russian words and names in my Homecoming series. I mentioned to her the book I was working on and hired her to read my manuscript and make suggestions. The result was every speck of authenticity on Russian culture and language in the book.

Otherwise, my research was really in the folklore: A collection of Russian folk tales and a collection of Jewish folk tales. These gave me the shape of the story, for Russian folk tales make western European tales look cheery indeed. They have a way of going way beyond the "happily ever after." In one extravagantly vile tale (which I loved) the hero wins the girl's hand in marriage -- but then she tries to kill him! Naturally, I had to use a variation of that one, along with some fun Baba Yaga stuff. And the Jewish folk tales had the recurring theme of a marriage covenant broken -- a betrothal denied, and the punishment that comes until the original betrothal is honored. So that, too, became a complicating element in *Enchantment*. Then I also read extensively in early Russian and pre-Russian Slavic history. Not that there's all that much to read! I cite my sources thoroughly in the acknowledgments, which I treat as a bibliography whenever research is important to a book.

Please tell us about your upcoming release, *Ender's Shadow*. I understand it's not a sequel to *Ender's Game*?

*Ender's Game* is about a kid fighting a war in space. The sequels -- *Speaker for the Dead*, *Xenocide*, and *Children of the Mind* -- take
place three thousand years later! The sequels thus make a trilogy of their own, but *Ender's Game* has no true sequels in the sense of providing a dose of the same milieu or the same kind of story. That had never bothered me, since I try never to write the same book twice anyway, but as years passed I realized that there were a lot of possibilities in the other kids in Battle School. I had finished with Ender -- he dies well before the end of *Children of the Mind* -- but I wanted to look at these other children formed and deformed by war. At first I wanted these to be sequels to *Ender's Game*, but it just didn't work. What finally made it come together was writing the story of Bean (one of Ender's companions) as he experienced the same events that are depicted in *Ender's Game*. So instead of being a sequel, it's a parallel novel. The challenge then was not to make it Ender Light, but a novel in its own right -- without diminishing the character Ender or the novel *Ender's Game* in any way. I also wanted to make sure someone who had never read *Ender's Game* could pick up *Ender's Shadow* and read it without barriers. We'll see whether I succeeded when the book comes out on August 31st.

Recently there seems to be a trend towards creating and understanding complex evil characters. In some books, the villains seem to be more entertaining than the heroes, in fact! But in your books, the "good" characters are always more interesting. Is that intentional? As a writer, do you find it more challenging to write an interesting "good" person than to write an interesting villain?

To paraphrase Tolstoy: Good people are endlessly fascinating, but wicked people are all weak, cowardly, or evil in the same old ways. I don't find evil fascinating. I find...

"There is a myth that 'expressing' or 'fulfilling' an emotion makes it go away, as if humans were balloons that need to vent these gases or explode...Repression caused us no discernable harm beyond temporary frustration -- and as any good lover knows, temporary frustration is the essence of the art of satisfaction. But..."
it predictably self-serving. But good people are the ones who struggle to balance their own needs with the needs of loved ones and the communities to which they have given allegiance. The result of this attitude of mine is that, with rare exceptions, I don't create "pure" villains. Even with Baba Yaga, who is as close to pure evil as I've written, I lay down hints about how she became the woman she is and show how her utter uncompassion allows her to live with herself. Achilles in *Ender's Shadow* is the "villain," but one gets a clear idea (I hope) that he, like Bean, is a product of survival hunger of the streets. My villains, in short, are heroes of their own stories. But they're not the heroes of *my* story. Because my heroes are the ones who keep society running, who hold things together. The Lone Ranger is boring to me, the adolescent who is uninvolved. Indeed, the reason I wrote nothing much about Ender's wandering years (those three thousand years between *Ender's Game* and *Speaker for the Dead*) is because he was that boring Lone Ranger character during that period -- dropping into a community, studying it, intervening, and going away. My heroes are the people who stay and face the consequences of their choices. They're the parents who try to be good to their kids and place them before career or entertainment; they're the spouses who stay together even when adultery calls. Especially in an era when we choose to keep as our president a faithless man who has never met a promise that he even pretends to keep, I feel that the most important thing I can do is show my readers at least one view of what being a grownup is all about.

**Your books always seem to deal with the interrelationships between the main characters and family, friends, foes and others, as opposed to the modern trend in many literary novels of exploring the inner life of one lead character. How is this a reflection of your personal philosophy of life?**

There is no inner life of a person in isolation. There is only the life of the individual in relation to others. Inner life is a myth, and a harmful one at that. Studying yourself teaches you nothing about yourself, just as trying to build your self-esteem does nothing for your self-esteem. Only turning outward -- and I mean *only* turning outward -- gives you a life worth living and a reason for self-esteem and an understanding of what and who you are. I say this as a confirmed introvert (grins). So when I see other writers exploring a person's "feelings," I get impatient. Feelings can be chemically induced; they come and go; they're not any kind of guide to who a person is. Only what a person chooses to do can tell an observer or himself who he is. And since we become different people in every relationship we have, the only way to get any kind of understanding of my main character is by showing him in juxtaposition with many other fully-realized characters. In fiction as in life, we are what we do to others. Jesus was not playing paradoxes when he said that to find your life, you must lose it in the service of others. Nothing is more empty than a person who lives only for himself and seeks to find himself through examination of that empty room.
What has the reaction in the Mormon church been to your work, overall?

There are Mormons who love my work and absolutely get what I'm doing. There are Mormons who think I'm the devil. Oddly enough, the latter category is equally divided between leftwing Mormons who think I'm the devil because I'm so rigidly orthodox, and rightwing Mormons who think I'm the devil because I'm so obviously heretical. As long as the hatred is evenly balanced on both sides, I'm probably OK. As for the official Church, the reaction is that despite the distaste some Church leaders have had for some of my works, they have found me loyal enough and orthodox enough in my life and actions to engage me to write major projects for the Church: The Hill Cumorah Pageant presented every year near Palmyra, NY, and the musical play "Barefoot to Zion" (with my brother Arlen as composer) honoring the Mormon pioneers on the 150th anniversary of their entry into the Salt Lake Valley. Oddly, even those Mormons who love my work often assume that in order to be a successful writer, I must somehow be "not a good Mormon." I get letters telling me how much the person loved my novel Saints or some other work with a Mormon bent, and then asking at the end, "When did you leave the Church?" or "Have you ever been a Mormon?" It seems to be a stereotype today that all writers must be iconoclastic and cynical. And yet there is no activity more dependent on a sense of allegiance to a community than the act of writing fiction. In truth, I am iconoclastic and skeptical (not cynical) -- but skepticism, if it's honest, also doubts its own doubts; too many would-be skeptics in fact embrace their questions as if they were answers. I continue to know that my questions are questions, and even my answers are only approximations to truth; I remain perpetually ready to adapt to genuine evidence when it presents itself. In the meantime, though, I find that my Mormon faith coincides with reality far more accurately than any other belief system I have found, and the Mormon community is the one to which I have the most allegiance and whose purposes I am most committed to advancing. The more deeply I explore Mormon thought and Mormon life, the more truth and virtue I find within both.

You are so prolific. Have you ever faced the curse of writer's block? If so, how did you deal with it?

I don't feel prolific. I'm keenly aware that if I could ever find the discipline to work steadily, I could write six books a year. My total of less than two a year tells you exactly how unsteadily I work (sighs). As for writer's block, I regard it as my unconscious mind telling me that I'm making a gross mistake in the project I'm working on. It's not a problem, it's a blessing, and the mystery is to find out the mistake, toss out the ineffective section, and write a new version that works. This sometimes means throwing away as much as a hundred pages -- sometimes more -- but I have never found "writer's block" to be wrong. Whenever I'm stopped on a project, it's because I was doing something false or weak, and when I get it right, it becomes more powerful and
true.

**What did you enjoy most about writing the musical, "Barefoot to Zion"?**

Working with my brilliantly talented brother, Arlen, who wrote Broadway-worthy music that made my lyrics sound better than they are.

**How important is music to you in your life?**

I listen to music constantly, of many kinds, by many artists. I sing whenever people will listen, I conduct a choir from time to time, I love directing amateur musicals because I can help people learn how to sing for performance. I wish we still had the tradition in American culture that my parents had when they were growing up -- of singing as a part of regular social life. Of parties that include singing around the piano. Of piano lessons as necessary to become presentable in society. Today, the proliferation of recorded music has largely killed social music because nobody can compete with a CD with full production values. For most Americans, there's professional music or nothing. Too bad.

**What do you love most about teaching writing?**

Watching student writers "get it" and seeing the change in their work as they acquire the tools that let them tell their own stories far more effectively -- or to find truer, more important stories to tell.

**What are the most common mistakes that beginning writers make?**

First person, because it feels easier and they're too inexperienced to realize that first person imposes far more limitations and weaknesses to overcome. Idea-story structure where it isn't appropriate, so that the revelation of the idea is always set up as the climax of the book, instead of the first sentence. Trying for style when they should try for clarity and let style come naturally and unnoticed. Trying for drama or comedy when they should try for truth first, pain second, and let the drama and comedy emerge from the responses of the characters to truth and to suffering. Imitating writers they admire or trying to duplicate stories they've loved.

**What is your advice to the aspiring SF or fantasy novelist?**

Don't even think about writing sf or fantasy unless you've read every story in: The Hugo Winners, The Science Fiction Hall of Fame, *Dangerous Visions* and *Again Dangerous Visions*.

These stories are the root of the field. If you don't know them, you will try to reinvent the wheel; and since the readers do know them, it will kill your work. Besides, you can't learn the tools of the trade without being familiar with how they've been used and...
developed. Science fiction is more demanding than literary fiction, and is harder to do well; the reward is that science fiction and fantasy allow you to tell any story that can be told in li-fi, and far more that can’t.

**How has your background in the theatre affected your writing?**

I already knew how to write a scene before I started. Good thing, because I had no clue how to write a story or novel, and my scene-writing carried my work and allowed me to get published and paid while learning how to do the rest of the job. But the most important thing is the absolute impossibility of ignoring the audience when you write for theatre. Writers who are victimized by li-fi writing teachers often become downright hostile to the audience, making it needlessly difficult for them to care about or understand what they're reading. But even the most audience-unfriendly writers for theatre sink out of sight if they don't entertain the audience. What people forget about Beckett and Ionesco and Pinter and others who seemingly broke "all" the rules is that Waiting for Godot and Rhinoceros and The Birthday Party (if I remember the titles right) are all marvelously entertaining every moment. The writer was aware of the need to engage the audience and keep them engaged, for if they don't, the play closes. Whereas far too many writers of li-fi act as if the reader had a duty to finish the book regardless of how much confusion and boredom and showing-off the writer forces upon them. Nobody buys their books, either -- but they are able to tell each other, and mostly believe it, that the people don’t buy their books (or read their poems!) because the audience is a bunch of uneducated idiots. In theatre, you know that it is never the fault of the audience if they hate the show.

**I know you are fond of playing Civilization II. What's the appeal of this game to you?**

It gives me the illusion of accomplishing something important, but by saving constantly I can undo all my mistakes. This works much better than real life, where most of what I do is not important at all, and my mistakes always bite me.

**Do you believe that violence depicted in computer games, TV and films have an effect on teen violence, such as that which occurred at Columbine High School?**

Serious studies have shown that for those who are violence prone, depictions of violence can raise their level of likelihood to act violently. This is hardly a surprise -- if our entertainment media did not cause us to be more likely to act in imitation of or admiration for what we see, advertising would not work and so those arts would not pay (grins). However, common sense also tells us that the violence-prone managed to do plenty of mayhem before television or radio or movies or computer games existed. That's because all these are storytelling media, and before these media existed, we still had stories. Check out Jack and the Beanstalk and the grisly events in Homer. We have stories about hunger, love, and death because that's what we care about in our lives.
So the problem isn't that we have these new media which give us stories we've never had before. The problem is that the new media give them to us with a level of realism that we've never had before, and the filmwrights and gamewrights are so lacking in taste, proportion, and social conscience that they treat both violence and sexuality with a prurient fascination that has long since passed the boundaries of wackoland. Is there anyone in the audience who needs yet another graphic depiction of sex or violence? Is there anyone who ever needed it? You can have the threat of violence and the promise of sex without ever showing them -- and they're almost always far more effective presented that way than they ever are when graphically displayed. It's bad art, and it has a bad effect on those who are most vulnerable to it. But unfortunately, most of these arts are practiced by people who have not grown out of the adolescent stage of wanting to shock people in order to seem cool -- even though, like adolescents, they can't think of a single new way to shock anybody, so nobody is actually shocked at all, they're just embarrassed or bored ... or, if they're marginal personalities, excited in a sick way. There is a myth that "expressing" or "fulfilling" an emotion makes it go away, as if humans were balloons that need to vent these gases or explode. But the opposite is true, and we've known it all along, despite the bogus "experts" who told us repression was bad for us. If you act out your anger, you get angrier. If you act on your lusts, it takes even more to stimulate them next time. The more violence and sex we get from our entertainment, the angrier and more violent and more perverse and more sex-obsessed we become. Repression caused us no discernable harm beyond temporary frustration -- and as any good lover knows, temporary frustration is the essence of the art of satisfaction. But massive "expression" of the "truth" of violence and sex has caused us great harm. Of course, the boundaries of taste are drawn in different places for different people. Things that offend me might not offend you, or vice versa. That's why the idea of government meddling in censorship is so bad -- from the first moment, the censors always go straight for things whose "evil" is visible only to them, while ignoring the things that are truly awful. The trouble is that when there is no self-restraint, governments eventually get involved. If smokers, for instance, had merely been courteous and kind to others, there would be no anti-smoking laws. It was the shameless rudeness of smokers that led to them being fenced around with law, and I have no pity for them. Likewise, if we get government censorship it will be wholly because of the irresponsibility of storytellers who cared not a whit for the effect their work might have on the community they live in. They have fouled the nest; if they don't clean it up themselves, they probably aren't going to like it when somebody else cleans it up for them. I hate censorship; but I hate having to raise my children in the culture these irresponsible people have created and are creating for us. When the balance tips, it will tip hard and far, and I personally resent the all-or-nothing crew who, by adamantly rejecting all self-restraint and celebrating the most vile stuff as "edgy" and admirable, will someday provoke the puritan backlash that will clean my slate along with theirs. They'll whine about the censors, but I'll know that it was their own excesses that led

"As to a writer's 'style,' I have no patience with writers who even think about it. A narrative voice matters; a writer's style matters only insofar as it interferes with his ability to communicate with his audience. I find the voice that is appropriate for the narrator and the narrator that is appropriate for the story."
society to prefer the censors to them. The only consolation is that the public can only stand censorship for a little while. Within a generation, the theaters reopened in England; the people of Iran are already wishing for more freedom. But wouldn't it be better to use good taste and a sense of decency and public responsibility to keep the censorship from ever seeming necessary?

I understand that *Ender's Game* is to be made into a feature film. Can you share some details with us as to the status?

I just finished the draft of the screenplay that finally works. Previously we tried to find strategies to childproof the script -- to decullkinize it, if I may coin a phrase. But since then we've had contact with a young actor who can actually carry the emotional weight of a film like this, and so I could write a script that put the emotional center back on the character of Ender Wiggin where it belongs. Now the script, even at 136 pages, stands up and sings. Besides, if *Ender's Shadow* is a bestseller, Hollywood will take it seriously, since money is the trump card in every trick.

What were some of the challenges you faced turning *Ender's Game* into a screenplay?

The same challenge you always face finding a movie in a book. Movies are 120 pages long, as a rule. Novels are many times that length. Some novels, like those of Grisham, seem to lose little in the transition, but if you're already spare in your writing, a 600-page novel will have no extraneous scenes or storylines that can be cut. That's why Grisham's novels work abridged as books on tape, while mine don't. I simply don't include things that can be cut in the first place. (This is not a virtue, it's just a way of approaching the question of what to leave in and what to leave out. And my way is damnably inconvenient when you *must* abridge.) So the biggest challenge was simply finding the part of the story that expressed the whole. I think I tried versions with every scene in and every scene out. Characters added and characters combined and characters dropped. And for this task, the novelist is the least-suited for the task, since he already decided that everything in the book was worth including; if he thought it could be cut, it wouldn't be in the book in the first place (grins). I can adapt someone else's work far more easily than my own.

How do you handle the conflicting demands of your busy professional life and your commitment to your family? Is it a difficult balancing act?

It's not a balancing act. It's a process of falling off the tightrope repeatedly, now on one side, now on the other. I'm going to miss the whole month of September with my family because I'll be touring for *Ender's Shadow*. That stinks. But then, sometimes I hang around the house and do fun stuff so much that I don't get the work done, and that doesn't have very happy results either. It's the dilemma that every working parent faces:
Do we need the money more than we need me to spend time with the kids? By and large, writing as a career has allowed me far more time with my family than I would ever have had with a nine-to-five job.

**As a genre, do you think SF lends itself most easily to writing moral fiction? Why or why not?**

It is impossible to write fiction of any kind that does not make powerful moral statements. But in science fiction, you can transform the "reality" of the story so as to clarify the issues, allowing the moral dilemma to be brought into sharper relief.

**What projects are you working on now?**

A novel about Sarah, the wife of Abraham, for the LDS audience; the screenplays of *Feed the Baby of Love* and *Dogwalker* and *Pastwatch*; several TV series projects, including *BorderTown*, whose pilot we just filmed on spec in Mexico; the next Alvin Maker book; selling the *Ender's Game* movie to a director and a studio; a musical film version of my story *Pageant Wagon*. Lots of balls in the air. Some of it's bound to get done, someday, though I've noticed that by and large none of these things happen till I actually get to work on them.