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Ender’s Game: Questions for Discussion
Compiled by Tor Books

1. Is childhood a right? Does a person robbed of a “normal” childhood have any possibility of stability as an adult? Does Ender have any chance of living “happily ever after”?

2. The Buggers communicate telepathically using no identifiable external means of communication. Was it inevitable that war would have to occur when two sentient species met but were unable to communicate?

3. Card has stated that “children are a perpetual, self-renewing underclass, helpless to escape from the decisions of adults until they become adults themselves.” Does Ender’s Game prove or disprove this opinion?

4. The government in Ender’s world plays a huge role in reproductive decisions, imposing financial penalties and social stigma on families who have more than two children but exerting pressure on specific families who show great generic potential to have a “third” like Ender. Is the government ever justified in involving itself in family planning decisions? Why or why not?

5. Is genocide, or in the case of Ender’s Game where an entire alien race is annihilated, xenocide, ever justified? Was the xenocide of the buggers inevitable?

6. Ender’s Game has often been cited as a good book to read by readers who are not fans of science fiction. Why does it appeal to both fans of science fiction and those who do not usually read science fiction?

7. Peter appears to be the personification of evil, but as Locke, acts as a good person. How does Card treat the concept of good versus evil in Ender’s Game?

8. In their thoughts, speech, and actions Card describes children in terms not usually attributed to children. In the introduction to Ender’s Game he states that he never felt like a child. “I felt like a person all along -- the same person that I am today. I never felt that my emotions and desires were somehow less real than an adult’s emotions and desires.” Do contemporary teens feel this same way? Do only gifted children feel this way or is it a universal feeling?
Reader’s Discussion Guide for Ender’s Game

Chapters 1-3

1. What does it mean to “submerge himself in someone else’s will?”

2. Explain the statement, “Sometimes lies were more dependable than the truth.” After you explain it, tell whether you agree or disagree with the statement and give reasons to support your answer.

3. Explain what it seems to mean for Ender to be born a “Third”. Show whether this is a negative or positive fact to:
   - his parents
   - his brother, Peter
   - his sister, Valentine
   - his classmates

Chapters 4-6

1. Explain the following quote from Chapter 4 of Ender’s Game: “Isolate him enough that he remains creative - otherwise he’ll adopt the system here and we’ll lose him.” Your answer should include the terms: isolation, creative, adopt, lose.

2. We are told that “breaking geniuses” makes them better people. Do you see this as true or false? Explain your answer.

3. We are told that being homesick is not acceptable, because the boys leaving are supposed to be seen as “heroes”. Does this mean that “heroes” are not supposed to have the same feelings as other people or be beyond them? Explain your answer.

4. Competition and praising Ender’s skills are meant to set him apart from the others. For what purpose is this being done and what are the possible types of consequences of these actions?

5. Explain the following quote in relation to this story and to your own life: “Individual human beings are all tools, that the others use to help us all survive.”
6. We are told Ender can have friends but not parents. Do you think the outcome of this attitude will be good for Ender or not? What happens to children who do not have parents or good parental role models?

7. Ender works hard to express his feelings in private and not show homesickness in front of any other person. Is it healthy for him or not? What is positive and what is negative about showing feelings? What is positive and what is negative about not showing feelings?

8. Ender sets up a file for a nonexistent student called God. Is this Orson Scott Card's comment on the personality and behavior of God in religion or not? Explain your answer.

9. List the different coping mechanisms (ways of dealing with difficulties) Ender shows. For each one describe whether the overall result of each is helpful or harmful to Ender.

10. How do Ender and his new friends deal with prejudice? Is it successful or not and why?

11. What is the purpose of the "Giant's" Game? How should Ender evaluate his success at this game? Is he a murderer?

Chapter 7 - end

1. We learn in this chapter that there is a question of whether it is OK to sacrifice the well-being of a child in order to save the world. What exactly is Ender having to sacrifice? How do you think he is being trained to save the world?

2. We see that there are some traces or left-over signs of religion and "holiness". What are these? Why have they become forbidden? What does it mean that some still secretly practice these signs despite their being illegal or forbidden?

3. How does Ender react to conflicts? What are his reactions? How would you react to the same events? Is what you would do different from what you would like to do?

4. A snake appears as part of a game. How would you respond at this portion of the game on the screen? Why?

5. What is the "just living" mentioned in this chapter? Is it true that Ender has never done this? How would you feel if you were he?

6. Ender's attitude is growing stronger. Why?
7. Explain the following quote with specific examples from the novel (as far as you have read).

8. What is the difference between “hot” and “cold” anger as mentioned in this chapter? Have you experienced both? If so, how?

9. Why have people abandoned the practice of celebrating birthdays? What would your life be like if your birthday were forgotten or ignored or if it is so now?

10. Explain the meaning of the nightmare Ender experiences.

11. Ender thinks out his evaluation of Bonzo’s leadership qualities (or lack of them). Do you think the other boys will agree with Ender’s thinking or do you think this is just Ender’s interpretation? Explain your answer.
Reading Group: ENDER’S GAME Discussion

(1) *Ender’s Game* is often criticized for the way the children are portrayed. Critics claim that children just don’t behave like that. Card responds by saying that as a child “[I] never felt that my emotions were somehow less real than adult emotions and desires.” Are the gifted children of the novel portrayed unrealistically?

(2) Why is Alai’s affection and friendship so important to Ender?

(3) What is the significance of the way Ender treats Bean?

(4) The children of the Battle School are exploited mercilessly yet the reader feels that this treatment is justified. Are there contemporary examples of child exploitation that could be compared to that of Ender’s Game?

(5) There is a comparative lack of female characters in *Ender’s Game*. Does this mean that the novel is really only about “boys and their toys?”

(6) Is the character of Peter Wiggin believable? Is he meant to be larger than life as a counterpoint to the more grounded and likable Ender?

(7) What is your major criticism of the novel?

(8) In the context of the SF genre, where do *Ender’s Game* and Card stand amongst the greats of the field?

(9) Card states in his introduction that the novel *Ender’s Game* (expanded from the short story) was really just a means to the end of writing *Speaker for the Dead*. There is a definite shift in tone in the last chapter that is reminiscent of *Speaker for the Dead*. Does this mean that Ender’s Game can’t stand on its own, that the reader must read *Speaker for the Dead*?

(10) What is the highlight of the novel for you? Which character or scene or philosophical point is most important to you?
Orson Scott Card

1951-

Nationality: American

Entry Updated: 11/15/2004

Place of Birth: Richland, WA

Genre(s): Novels; Science fiction; Plays; Horror fiction; Fiction

Award(s):

John W. Campbell Award for best new writer of 1977, World Science Fiction Convention, 1978; Hugo Award nominations, World Science Fiction Convention, 1978, 1979, 1980, for short stories, 1986, for novelette Hatrack River, and 1988, for Seventh Son; Nebula Award nominations, Science Fiction Writers of America, 1979, and 1980, for short stories; Utah State Institute of Fine Arts prize, 1980, for epic poem “Prentice Alvin and the No-Good Plow”; Hamilton-Brackett Award, 1981, for Songmaster; Nebula Award, 1985, and Hugo Award and Hamilton-Brackett Award, both 1986, all for Ender’s Game; Nebula Award, 1986, and Hugo Award and Locus Award, both 1987, all for Speaker for the Dead; World Fantasy Award, 1987, for Hatrack River; Hugo Award, and Locus Award nomination, both 1988, both for novella “Eye for Eye”; Locus Award, World Fantasy Award nomination, and Mythopoeic Society Fantasy Award, all 1988, all for Seventh Son; Locus Award, 1989, for Red Prophet; Hugo Award for nonfiction, 1991, for How to Write Science Fiction and Fantasy; Israel’s Geffen Award for Best Science Fiction book, 1999, for Pastwatch: The Redemption of Christopher Columbus; Grand Prix de L’Imaginaire, 2000, for Heartfire.


Career: Mormon missionary in Brazil, 1971-73; operated repertory theater in Provo, UT, 1974-75; Brigham Young University Press, Provo, editor, 1974-76; Ensign, Salt Lake
City, UT, assistant editor, 1976-78; freelance writer and editor, 1978--; Compute! Books, Greensboro, NC, senior editor, 1983; Lucasfilm Games, game design consultant, 1989-92. Instructor at Brigham Young University, University of Utah, University of Notre Dame, Appalachian State University, Clarion West Writers’ Workshop, Cape Cod Writer’s Workshop, and Antioch Writers’ Workshop. Has served as local Democratic precinct election judge and Utah State Democratic Convention delegate.

WRITINGS BY THE AUTHOR:

SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY

- (Editor) *Dragons of Darkness*, Ace (New York, NY), 1981.
- (Editor) *Dragons of Light*, Ace (New York, NY), 1983.
- *Eye for Eye* (bound with *The Tunesmith* by Lloyd Biggle, Jr.), Tor (New York, NY), 1990.
- *Maps in a Mirror: The Short Fiction of Orson Scott Card* (includes stories originally published under pseudonym Byron Walley), Tor (New York, NY), 1990.
- (Editor) *Future on Ice* (companion volume to *Future on Fire*), Tor (New York, NY), 1998.
- *Magic Mirror*, illustrated by Nathan Pinnock, Gibbs Smith Publisher (Salt Lake City, UT), 1999.
• (Editor, with Keith Olexa) *Empire of Dreams and Miracles: The Phobos Science Fiction Anthology*, foreword by Lawrence Krauss, Phobos Books (New York, NY), 2002.


“ENDER” SERIES; SCIENCE FICTION

• *Ender’s Game* (also see below), Tor (New York, NY), 1985.
• *Speaker for the Dead* (also see below), Tor (New York, NY), 1986.
• *Ender’s Game* [and] *Speaker for the Dead*, Tor (New York, NY), 1987.
• *Xenocide*, Tor (New York, NY), 1991.
• *Children of the Mind*, Tor (New York, NY), 1996.
• *First Meetings: In the Enderverse* (includes “Ender’s Game,” “The Polish Boy,” and “Teacher’s Pest”), Tor (New York, NY), 2003.

“HEGEMON” SERIES; SCIENCE FICTION

• *Ender’s Shadow*, Tor (New York, NY), 1999.
• *Shadow Puppets*, Tor (New York, NY), 2002.
• *The Shadow Saga*, Orbit (New York, NY), 2003.

“TALES OF ALVIN MAKER” SERIES

• *Prentice Alvin*, Tor (New York, NY), 1989.
• *Alvin Journeyman*, Tor (New York, NY), 1995.
• *Heartfire*, Tor (New York, NY), 1998.
• *The Crystal City*, Tor (New York, NY), 2003.

“HOMECOMING” SERIES

• *The Memory of Earth* (also see below), Tor (New York, NY), 1992.
• *The Call of the Earth* (also see below), Tor (New York, NY), 1993.
• *The Ships of Earth* (also see below), Tor (New York, NY), 1993.
• Earthfall, Tor (New York, NY), 1994.
• Earthborn, Tor (New York, NY), 1995.

PLAYS

• The Apostate, produced in Provo, UT, 1970.
• In Flight, produced in Provo, UT, 1970.
• Of Gideon, produced in Provo, UT, 1971.
• A Christmas Carol (adapted from the story by Charles Dickens), produced in Provo, UT, 1974.
• Liberty Jail, produced in Provo, UT, 1975.
• Fresh Courage Take, produced in Salt Lake City, UT, 1978.
• Barefoot to Zion (book and lyrics), music composed by Arlen L. Card, produced in North Salt Lake City, UT, 1997.


OTHER

• Listen, Mom and Dad, Bookcraft (Salt Lake City, UT), 1978.
• Ainge, Signature Books (Midvale, UT), 1982.
• A Woman of Destiny (historical novel), Berkley (New York, NY), 1983, published as Saints, Tor (New York, NY), 1988.
• Characters and Viewpoint, Writer’s Digest (Cincinnati, OH), 1988.
• How to Write Science Fiction and Fantasy, Writer’s Digest (Cincinnati, OH), 1990.
• (Editor, with David C. Dollahite), Turning Hearts: Short Stories on Family Life, Bookcraft (Salt Lake City, UT), 1994.
• Treasure Box (novel), HarperCollins (New York, NY), 1996.
• Pastwatch: The Redemption of Christopher Columbus, Tor (New York, NY), 1996.
• Stone Tables (novel), Deseret Book Co. (Salt Lake City, UT), 1997.
• Enchantment, Del Rey (New York, NY), 1999.
• Sarah (first novel of “Women of Genesis” series), Shadow Mountain (Salt Lake City, UT), 2000.
• Rebekah (second novel of “Women of Genesis” series), Shadow Mountain (Salt Lake City, UT), 2001.
• An Open Book (poetry collection), Subterranean Press/Hatrack River Publications (Burton, MI), 2003.
• Rachel and Leah (third novel of “Women of Genesis” series), Shadow Mountain (Salt Lake City, UT), 2004.


Card’s manuscripts are housed at Brigham Young University. His books have been translated into Catalan, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Slovakian, Spanish, and Swedish.

Works in Progress: Rasputin, in the “Mayflower” trilogy; Magic Street, a contemporary fantasy novel.

Media Adaptations: Xenocide was adapted as an audiobook read by Mark Rolston, Audio Renaissance, 1991; Seventh Son was adapted as an audiobook, read by Card, Literate Ear, Inc., 1991; Maps in a Mirror was adapted as an audiobook, Dove Audio (Los Angeles, CA), 1999; audiobook productions of most of Card’s novels have been acquired by Blackstone Audiobooks (Ashland, OR). Card’s short stories “Clap Hands and Sing,” “Lifeloop,” and “Sepulcher of Songs” were adapted for the stage as Posing as People by Scott Brick, Aaron Johnston, and Emily Janice Card respectively, produced 2004.

“Sidelights”

Orson Scott Card is the award-winning author of over sixty books of science fiction, fantasy, history, and ghost stories. With the creation of Andrew “Ender” Wiggin, the young genius of Ender’s Game, Card launched an award-winning career as a science
fiction and fantasy writer. Since his debut in the field in 1977, when the short story “Ender’s Game” appeared in Analog magazine, Card went on to become the first writer to win the genre’s top awards, the Nebula and the Hugo, for consecutive novels in a continuing series. These two novels—Ender’s Game and Speaker for the Dead—have been described by Fantasy Review contributor Michael R. Collings as “allegorical disquisitions on humanity, morality, salvation, and redemption”—evaluations that many critics have applied to Card’s other works as well. Such thematic concerns, in part influenced by Card’s devout Mormonism, are what critics feel set him apart from other writers in the science-fiction field. Beyond the “Ender” series, Card’s other projects include creating the American fantasy series “Tales of Alvin Maker,” a retelling of ancient scripture in the “Homecoming” series, contemporary novels with occult and ghost themes such as Lost Boys, Treasure Box, and Homebody, and a series with a religious theme, “Women of Genesis,” begun with the novels Sarah and Rebekah.

In many of his works Card focuses on the moral development of young protagonists whose abilities to act maturely and decisively while in challenging situations often determine the future of their communities. Card, a devout Mormon, is intrigued by the role of the individual in society, and credits his solid religious background with instilling in him both a strong sense of community and an affinity for storytelling. “I don’t want to write about individuals in isolation,” he told Graceanne A. DeCandido and Keith R. A. DeCandido in Publishers Weekly. “What I want to write about is people who are committed members of the community and therefore have a network of relationships that define who they are. I think if you’re going to write about people, you have to write about storytelling.” In his works Card is deeply concerned with his own unresolved moral and philosophical questions as well, and maintains that science fiction affords him the benefit of exploring these issues against a futuristic and imaginative backdrop. “In some of the best SF, you move into a universe where all moral bets are off, where you have a group of aliens, or humans in an alien setting, who live by different rules because some key aspect of life that we take for granted as human beings has been changed radically. . . . After a while we can see ourselves through their eyes and see how bizarre we are. Then you come back and you question everything.”

Though a profoundly moral writer, Card dismisses standard black-and-white versions of good and evil. As he told Laura Ciporen of Publishers Weekly, such representations are “so boring.” Card further explained, “When a character comes upon a case of right and wrong and chooses to do wrong, that shows you he’s the kind of jerk who’d do that. My characters wrestle with real moral dilemmas where all the choices have steep prices. If they make the selfish choice, then I show the consequences. I’m not trying to teach that lesson, though it underlies everything I write.”

Card was born in 1951, in Richland, Washington, the son of a teacher father and an administrator mother. Card moved often in his youth, growing up in California, Arizona, and finally Utah. As a teenager, both the theater and science fiction captured Card’s attention. At only sixteen, he entered Brigham Young University and three years later saw his first play, Tell Me That You Love Me, Junie Moon, produced in Provo, Utah. Ten plays and adaptations followed through the seventies, mostly with scriptural or historical
themes, but Card’s education and writing were put on hold for several years in the early 1970s when Card served as a missionary in Brazil. Returning to Provo, Card founded a theater company and earned his B.A., with honors, in 1975. Thereafter he became an editor at Ensign magazine, the official publication of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and also worked for the Brigham Young University Press. There was, however, little money in writing plays. “I was supporting myself on the pathetic wages paid to an editor at a university press--and BYU’s wages were even more pathetic than usual,” he told the DeCandidos. “I knew there was no hope of paying off my debts through my salary, so I made a serious effort to write fiction as a career.”

“All the time that I was a playwright,” Card once said, “these science fictional ideas that never showed up in my plays were dancing around in the back of my mind.” The genre, he felt, offered him the most expedient way of getting published, since the field thrives on up-and-coming talent and fresh ideas. He also admitted that he chose science fiction because, as he noted, “I knew the genre. While it was never even half my reading, I had read enough to be aware of the possibilities within it. It allowed the possibility of the kind of high drama that I’d been doing with religious plays for the Mormon market. . . . In order to write the kind of intense romantic drama that I wanted to write, I needed the possibilities that science fiction and fantasy offered.”

Hoping to break into the field, Card sent “The Tinker,” one of his first short stories, to Ben Bova, then editor of the leading science-fiction magazine Analog. Bova in turn rejected the work, though he did not crush the aspirations of its author. “Apparently he [Bova] saw some reason to hope that I might have some talent,” Card explained to the DeCandidos. “His rejection letter urged me to submit a real science fiction story, because he liked the way I wrote.” The real story became “Ender’s Game,” which, upon its publication, garnered Card the World Science Fiction Convention’s John W. Campbell Award for best new writer.

Though Card was thrilled with his sudden success, he later admitted to a Publishers Weekly interviewer that he was “not so stupid as to quit my job.” He retained his position as editor for Ensign and in 1978 began composing audio plays for Living Scriptures. He also continued honing his writing skills and released his first book, Capitol, during that same year. A collection of short stories, the work follows the fall of the planet Capitol and revolves in part around the drug somec, which induces a state of suspended animation in its user and allows him to live for several thousand years. At least one reviewer remarked upon Card’s literary skill in Capitol. The collection “demonstrates a fine talent for storytelling and characterization,” decided a critic for Publishers Weekly. Card’s 1980 novel Songmaster generated praise as well. The lyrical tale, set in a futuristic galactic society that reveres those who sing, focuses on Ansset, a “Songbird” who is summoned to serve the emperor. The work encompasses “personal growth and exploration melded into a tale of interplanetary politics and court intrigue,” asserted Richard A. Lupoff in Washington Post Book World. “Songmaster is a first-class job.” Some of Card’s other early works, however, including Hot Sleep and A Planet Called Treason, encountered critical censure for employing standard science fiction elements and for containing what some reviewers considered gratuitous violence. George R. R.
Martin in the *Washington Post Book World* especially criticized Card’s 1981 work, *Unaccompanied Sonata and Other Stories*, which he found filled “with death, pain, mutilation, dismemberment, all described in graphic detail.” The volume includes such unfortunate characters as a malformed infant who is drowned in a toilet and whose body is sliced to pieces, and a woman whose breasts are chopped off and eaten. Apart from these negative evaluations, the general critical consensus of Card’s early works was that they display imagination, intelligence, literary aptitude, and promise. “Card is a young, talented, and ambitious writer,” conceded Martin.

In 1985 Card released *Ender’s Game*. This novel began as a short story, which Card once described as “still the most popular and the most reprinted of my stories, and I still have people tell me that they like it better than the novel. . . . When I started working on the novel that became *Speaker for the Dead*, a breakthrough for me in that story was realizing that the main character should be Ender Wiggin. That made it a kind of sequel, although its plot had nothing to do with the original plot; it was just using a character. . . . I told the publisher, Tom Doherty, that I needed to do a novel version of ‘Ender’s Game’ just to set up *Speaker for the Dead*. That’s the only reason ‘Ender’s Game’ ever became a novel.”

*Ender’s Game* concerns the training of Ender Wiggin, a six-year-old genius who is the Earth’s only hope for victory over invading “bugger” aliens. While this plot appears to be standard science-fiction fare, *New York Times Book Review* critic Gerald Jonas observed that “Card has shaped this unpromising material into an affecting novel full of surprises that seem inevitable once they are explained.” The difference, asserted Jonas and other critics, is in the character of Ender Wiggin, who remains sympathetic despite his acts of violence. A *Kirkus Reviews* contributor, for example, while noting the plot’s inherent weakness, admitted that “the long passages focusing on Ender are nearly always enthralling,” and concluded that *Ender’s Game* “is altogether a much more solid, mature, and persuasive effort” than the author’s previous work. Writing in *Analog*, Tom Easton noted that *Ender’s Game* “succeeds because of its stress on the value of empathy,” and *Washington Post Book World* reviewer Janrae Frank concluded that “Card is a writer of compassion.”

Following the success of *Ender’s Game*, its sequel, *Speaker for the Dead*, was hailed as “the most powerful work Card has produced” by Michael R. Collings in *Fantasy Review*. “*Speaker* not only completes *Ender’s Game* but transcends it. . . . Read in conjunction with *Ender’s Game, Speaker* demonstrates Card’s mastery of character, plot, style, theme, and development.” Ender Wiggin, now working as a “Speaker for the Dead,” travels the galaxy to interpret the lives of the deceased for their families and neighbors; as he travels, he also searches for a home for the eggs of the lone surviving “hive queen” of the race he destroyed as a child. “Like *Game, Speaker* deals with issues of evil and empathy, though not in so polarized a way,” observed Tom Easton in his *Analog* review. Some critics found an extra element of complexity in the “Ender” books; *Washington Post Book World* contributor Janrae Frank, for example, saw “quasi-religious images and themes” in the conclusions of both novels.
With the publication of 1991’s *Xenocide*, Card’s reputation as an unflinching explorer of both moral and intellectual issues was firmly established. In this novel, Card picks up the story of Ender as he works feverishly with his adopted Lusitanian family to neutralize a deadly virus. Many critics venture that with *Xenocide*, Card relies more on the scientific ruminations of a multitude of contemplative characters rather than on a plot. “The real action is philosophical: long, passionate debates about ends and means among people who are fully aware that they may be deciding the fate of an entire species, entire worlds,” observed Gerald Jonas in the *New York Times Book Review*.

In 1996 Card published *Children of the Mind*, the final volume of the “Ender” series. In this novel, Ender is already moving off the stage, playing a relatively minor part in the hectic attempt to avoid destruction of the planet Lusitania by the Starways Congress. Characters who take a more active role in this episode are Peter and Young Valentine, who are copies of Ender’s brother and sister, and both products of Ender’s mind. Also instrumental in Ender’s current bid to save his adopted planet is Jane, a rather irascible Artificial Intelligence who has the uncanny knack of transcending the light-speed barrier. Together these three must roam the galaxy to find a new home for the three races of Lusitania that may all too soon become refugees. Meanwhile, they also try and convince politicians to halt the Starways Congress from destroying the planet. “Card’s prose is powerful here,” commented a reviewer for *Publishers Weekly*, “as is his consideration of mystical and quasi-religious themes.” The same writer went on to wonder whether this book, “billed as the final Ender novel,” would in fact be the last the reader hears of Ender or his world. “[T]his story leaves enough mysteries unexplored to justify another entry.”

When Card once again approached that same world it was not from Ender’s point of view, but from the perspective of a young orphan named Bean. In the first book in the four-part “Hegemon” series, 1999 *Ender’s Shadow*, he again enters his parallel universe. *Library Journal*’s Jackie Cassada noted that “Card returns to the world of his award-winning *Ender’s Game* to tell the story of a child’s desperate struggle for recognition and self-worth.” The superhuman child in question, Bean, is taken from the streets of Rotterdam and sent to the Battle School to learn to fight the insect-like Buggers. Bean wins selection to the Battle School by his understanding of personal motivation—a skill that kept him alive in the mean streets when he was a starving child. At Battle School he learns how to command fleets for the war with the alien Buggers. When he comes into contact with Ender, Bean wants to understand what makes this larger-than-life figure tick. “Thus Bean’s story is twofold,” wrote a *Publishers Weekly* contributor, “he learns to be a soldier, and to be human.” Through Bean the reader learns about the formation of Ender’s Dragon army and also about the last of Ender’s games. “Everyone will be struck by the power of Card’s children,” concluded the same reviewer, “always more and less than human, perfect yet struggling, tragic yet hopeful, wondrous and strange.” Cassada felt that Card’s “superb storytelling and his genuine insight into the moral dilemmas that lead good people to commit questionable actions” blend together to make the novel a “priority purchase.”

Questioned by Laura Ciporen in *Publishers Weekly* about his child protagonists, Card observed that, for children, life is very real. “They don’t think of themselves as cute or
sweet. I translate their thoughts from the language available to children into the language available to adults.” For Card, children are every bit as complex as adults, and in fact their thoughts and fears--because they have fewer such to compare with--can be even more real than those of adults. Card’s ability to portray young protagonists sympathetically yet not condescendingly is part of what makes him a popular writer for adults and juveniles alike.

The “Hegemon” series continues with *Shadow of the Hegemon* and *Shadow Puppets*. With the wars over and Ender off to colonize a new world, the children of the Battle School become increasingly important to those nations wishing to gobble up their neighbors, and Peter Wiggin rises to the position of hegemon, ruler of the Earth government. In *Shadow of the Hegemon*, Bean is second best of the Battle School children and aide to Wiggin; he is wooed for his powers by Wiggin’s nemesis, Achilles, an unbalanced genius who wishes to conquer Earth. In *Shadow Puppet* Bean is forced to confront his mortality--his body grows too quickly, dooming him to an early death--and with his young wife Petra pregnant, he seeks an antidote against a similar fate for his unborn children. “The complexity and serious treatment of the book’s young protagonists will attract many sophisticated YA readers,” observed a writer for *Publishers Weekly* in a review of *Shadow of the Hegemon*, the reviewer further commenting that Card’s “impeccable prose, fast pacing and political intrigue will appeal to adult fans of spy novels, thrillers and science fiction.” *Library Journal* reviewer Jackie Cassada dubbed the same novel a “gripping story of children caught up in world-shaking events,” while in *Booklist* Sally Estes praised *Shadow Puppets* for Card’s ability to maintain “the action, danger, and intrigue levels” of the previous series installments.

Card’s storytelling techniques are further displayed in the “Tales of Alvin Maker” series. “This series began as an epic poem I was writing during graduate study at the University of Utah,” Card once commented, “when I was heavily influenced by Spenser and playing games with allegory. That epic poem won a prize from the Utah State Institute of Fine Arts, but I realized that there is very little future for an epic poem in terms of reaching an audience and telling a story to real people, so I converted it and expanded it and, I think, deepened and enriched it into something much longer and larger.” The series includes the novels *Seventh Son*, *Red Prophet*, *Prentice Alvin*, and *The Crystal City*.

The first novel in the “Tales of Alvin Maker” series, *Seventh Son*, “begins what may be a significant recasting in fantasy terms of the tall tale in America,” wrote *Washington Post Book World* reviewer John Clute. Set in a pioneer America where the British Restoration never happened, where the Crown colonies exist alongside the states of Appalachia and New Sweden, and where folk magic is readily believed and practiced, *Seventh Son* follows the childhood of Alvin Miller, who has enormous magical potential because he is the seventh son of a seventh son. While *Fantasy Review* contributor Martha Soukup admitted that “this could easily have been another dull tale of the chosen child groomed to be the defender from evil,” she asserted that Card’s use of folk magic and vernacular language, along with strongly realized characters, creates in *Seventh Son* “more to care about here than an abstract magical battle.”
“Because we know it is a dream of an America we do not deserve to remember, Orson Scott Card’s luminous alternate history of the early 19th century continues to chill as it soothes,” Clute explained in a review of Red Prophet, the second volume of Alvin’s story. The novel traces Alvin’s kidnapping by renegade Reds employed by “White Murderer” William Henry Harrison, who wishes to precipitate a massacre of the Shaw-Nee tribe. Alvin is rescued by the Red warrior Ta-Kumsaw, however, and learns of Native American ways even as he attempts to prevent the conflict caused by his supposed capture and murder. While “Red Prophet seems initially less ambitious” than its predecessor, covering a period of only one year, a West Coast Review of Books contributor commented that, “In that year, Card creates episodes and images that stun with the power of their emotions.” Sue Martin, however, believed that the setting was not enough to overcome the plot, which she described in the Los Angeles Times Book Review as “yet another tale of Dark versus Light.” She conceded, however, that while Alvin “seems almost Christlike” in his ability to heal and bring people together, the allegory is drawn “without the proselytizing.” Booklist writer Sally Estes summarized, “Harsher, bleaker, and more mystical than Seventh Son,” Card’s second volume displays his strong historical background, “keen understanding of religious experience, and, most of all, his mastery of the art of storytelling.”

In Prentice Alvin and Alvin Journeyman Card explores Alvin’s life during and following his apprenticeship. In the second volume Alvin’s bad but similarly talented brother, Calvin, leaves for Europe, hoping to learn the arts of manipulation and domination from Napoleon Bonaparte. Alvin himself is forced to leave Vigor Church after being accused of improprieties by a girl dreaming of his passion. He returns to Hatrack River, his birthplace and the location of his apprenticeship, but has to defend himself in court. Written with the input of Card’s fans via online forums, the story could have descended into mediocrity, as Martin Morse Wooster noted in the Washington Post Book World. However, Wooster declared, “Card appears to have resisted the encroachments of his admirers because Alvin Journeyman is a well-written, engaging entertainment.”

Heartfire and The Crystal City continue the Alvin Maker adventures. Heartfire sees Alvin traveling to New England during Puritan times with historical friends such as John James Audubon, seeking to put an end to anti-witch laws. Meantime Alvin’s wife, Peggy, who has the ability to see into the hearts of others, tries to put an end to slavery in the South and to stop Alvin’s more malevolent brother, Calvin, from destroying her husband. In The Crystal City Alvin’s ability to channel Native American and African magic works to his advantage as he works to heal the frontier’s ills and create a peaceful utopia he calls the Crystal City. “Card’s antebellum settings, dialogue and historical figures seem authentic and thoroughly researched,” according to a writer for Publishers Weekly, who noted however that in Heartfire Card “is as occasionally windy and preachy as ever.” Jackie Cassada, reviewing the novel in Library Journal, concluded that the fifth installment to the “Tales of Alvin Maker” series “exhibits the same homespun charm of its predecessors.” Noting that The Crystal City “still enchants,” a Publishers Weekly contributor commented that “a large part of the appeal” of the sixth “Alvin Maker” installment “lies in the book’s homegrown characters using their powers for ordinary purposes.”
In 1992 Card introduced his “Homecoming” series with The Memory of Earth, a novel many critics found to be a mixture of philosophy, futuristic technology, and biblical lore. Memory opens on the planet Harmony, where for forty million years humans have been controlled by Oversoul, a powerful, global computer programmed to prevent humanity from destroying itself through needless wars. David E. Jones, in Chicago’s Tribune Books, argued that “what Card gives us [in The Memory of Earth] is an interaction between supreme intelligence and human mental capability that is at once an intellectual exercise, a Biblical parable and a thoroughly enjoyable piece of storytelling.”

Card joined forces with a newer science fiction voice, Kathryn H. Kidd, for the publication of Lovelock in 1994. The title shares its name with the central character, a genetically enhanced monkey, who is trained to record the activities of important persons for posterity. Realizing his own servitude and the indifferent neglect of his masters, Lovelock plots his escape. The work was welcomed by several critics as a solid blending of two talents. “Masterful,” commented Maureen F. McHugh in the Washington Post Book World, who found the character of Lovelock to be, “Clearly as nasty and clever as a genetically enhanced capuchin monkey could be expected to be.” McHugh continued, “None of Card’s previous tellings has possessed the satirical bite we see here, which makes for a welcome change.”

Card concludes his “Homecoming” series with the fourth and fifth novels, Earthfall and Earthborn. In Earthfall, the wandering humans return from Harmony to Earth to continue the species when it appears Harmony is about to self destruct. They meet two new species who have evolved in the absence of humans and must make peace with them. “As in other Card novels, plotting is intricate, characters are multifaceted, and strange creatures co-exist with humans,” observed Pam Carlson in Voice of Youth Advocates. Earthborn focuses on the three groups from Earthfall who are speaking a common language but who differ in their habitat. The sky people are able to fly as angels; the earth people or diggers are treated as slaves; the returned humans from Harmony are known as the middle people. As Gerald Jonas noted in the New York Times Book Review, “As in all Mr. Card’s novels, the characters spend . . . time talking about what they are going to do and why they are going to do it.” The critic continued, “these long philosophical discussions crackle with tension.” While several reviewers appreciated the “Homecoming” series, the concluding volume received mixed reviews.

Though firmly established as a successful author of science fiction, Card has not limited himself to that genre, publishing throughout his career numerous works of nonfiction, drama, and, most notably, historical fiction. In A Woman of Destiny (later published as Saints), for example, he returns to the subject of the life of Joseph Smith, first touched upon in Seventh Son. A Woman of Destiny offers an account of the lives of Smith, the founder of Mormonism, and Dinah Kirkham, a (fictional) English woman who is converted to Mormonism and becomes Smith’s polygamous wife. When Smith is murdered in 1844, Kirkham escapes with a group of fellow Mormons to Utah, where she becomes a staunch leader as well as one of the wives of Brigham Young, Smith’s successor as president of the Mormon Church. Los Angeles Times Book Review critic
Kristiana Gregory pronounced *Saints* an “engrossing epic,” stressing that Card “is a powerful storyteller.”

Card’s *Treasure Box* is billed as a mainstream novel, yet it contains elements of the supernatural. Quentin Fears loses his beloved older sister Lizzy as a young boy. However, he continues to confide in her following her death. A millionaire, following his sellout of his computer firm, he meets his true love, Madeleine, at a party and marries her. But there are gaps in her background, and when he finally meets his in-laws at a spooky mansion in upstate New York, events unravel following Madeleine’s insistence that Quentin open a box supposedly containing her inheritance. 1998’s *Homebody* is another mainstream supernatural fantasy, combining elements of spirituality, the occult, and psychological insight in a haunted house tale. *Homebody* tells the story of Don Lark who, grieving the death of his two-year-old daughter, sets out to renovate the Bellamy House, a grand old Victorian mansion in a terrible state of disrepair. His three elderly neighbors warn him about the house’s dark powers, but he goes forward with his project and becomes attached to a squatter who lives there. She is the occult key to the violent history of the house as a brothel and speakeasy. A writer for *Kirkus Reviews* assessed the novel as “solid but undistinguished work, not high in either tension or in depth.”

“Sidelights”

A *Publishers Weekly* reviewer found more to like, saying that the novel has “great potential that shines through its superfluous detail,” and describing it as “a powerful tale of healing and redemption that skillfully balances supernatural horrors with spiritual uplift.”

Card turns from the realms of the haunted to those of fairy tales with *Enchantment*, a blending of the story of Sleeping Beauty with Russian mythology. Ten-year-old Ivan is both frightened by and attracted to a lovely woman frozen in time in the midst of a Russian forest. A decade later and now an up-and-coming track star, Ivan returns to the forest to set this bewitched woman free. Drawn back into the ninth-century world of his princess, Ivan discovers that his modern-day talents do not stand him in good stead in his desperate battle to defeat the mythical witch Baba Yaga and claim his princess. Ivan takes Princess Katerina back to the modern world for a time, and the pair learns each other’s powers before returning to battle the witch. A *Publishers Weekly* reviewer felt that Card’s “new look at a classic tale is clever . . . [due to] adding attractive whimsical twists and cultural confluences to a familiar story.”

In *Stone Tables* Card returns to biblical themes, telling the story of Moses and retelling Exodus in a novel “that exhibits the same profound and compassionate understanding of human nature that marks his best sf and fantasy efforts,” according to a contributor to *Publishers Weekly*. Card puts the focus here on the difficult relationship between Moses and his siblings. With *Sarah* Card inaugurated a new series, “Women of Genesis.” In Card’s retelling, Sarah is to become a priestess of Asherah until she meets a man named Abram, a mystic and desert wanderer. Sarah realizes that her destiny is tied up with Abram’s and she waits eight years for his return, only to have many more years of a
childless marriage test her belief in Abram’s God. “Card adds depth, understanding, and human frailty to the woman who became known as Sarah,” wrote Melanie C. Duncan in a Library Journal review. Duncan felt the novel “will attract secular readers as well.” A reviewer for Publishers Weekly maintained that Card’s rendering of Sarah as “a wise and virtuous figure who struggles to have the unflinching faith of Abraham,” and his portrait of Biblical life and times, creates a “playfully speculative novel” that “succeeds in bringing Sarah’s oft-overlooked character into vivid relief.”

In a critique of the author’s 1990 story collection, Maps in a Mirror: The Short Fiction of Orson Scott Card, Analog reviewer Easton characterized Card as “an intensely thoughtful, self-conscious, religious, and community-oriented writer.” In spite of such critical acclaim and the numerous awards his writing has earned, Card seems to prefer a simpler description of himself; as he told the DeCandidos, “I’m Kristine’s husband, Geoffrey and Emily and Charlie’s dad, I’m a Mormon, and I’m a science fiction writer, in that order.” Replying to a query by Ciporen of Publishers Weekly as to why he writes mainly science fiction, Card replied: “The truth is, SF is the most powerful genre available right now. Mainstream literature is so stultifyingly rigid. I don’t just want to talk to people who believed everything their English teacher told them. I want to reach people who read books for the sheer pleasure of it, because those are the people who are open to having their lives changed by what they read.”

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