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## Sample MonkeyNotes

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# *Ender's Game*

by

**Orson Scott Card**

**1985**



MonkeyNotes Study Guide by Kelly McCauley

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## KEY LITERARY ELEMENTS

### SETTING

The novel starts off on Earth, with scenes at the school and the Wiggin home. Little attention is given to the details of this setting, not even the name of the city, and so it comes across as a standard American neighborhood. The shuttle ride introduces Ender to space environments. This involves a degree of disorientation, and it is on the shuttle that Ender learns how to change his perspective as to which direction is up in his setting.

Battle School is composed of army barracks with rows of bunk beds; dining halls one for soldiers and one for commanders, with scoreboards decorating both; the game room, with various video games for the children to play; battlerooms, where the children have practice and battles in zero gravity; and a gym with shower rooms, where Ender and Bonzo fight. There is also an area for teachers' quarters, which the children never go to, but it is presumably in this vicinity where the conversations between Graff and other adults takes place. Although the Battle School is a very controlled setting, Ender comes to realize that the adults will use this.....

### LIST OF CHARACTERS

#### Major Characters

**Ender** - Ender is a small boy, only six years old when the novel begins, and not much older than ten years old when he defeats the buggers. He is a Third, but permitted by the government to be born because he has the superior intelligence of the Wiggin children and a disposition that is kinder than Peter's, but not as sensitive as Valentine. As such, Ender is able to do well in Battle School and go on to successfully command the human mission to the bugger home world in Command School, but he regrets the deaths he has caused, and is glad for the chance the hive queen presents of trying to redeem himself.

**Valentine** - The sister of Ender, she consistently comes to his defense, whether it be when Peter threatens him, or when she feels that Graff is suggesting that Ender is mentally similar to Peter. Although she agrees to go along with Peter's plan for keeping the world united by taking on the identity of Demosthenes in her writings on the nets, she believes that her ability to persuade by flattery along with her.....

**Peter** - The oldest of the Wiggin children, Peter uses threats and violence in order to control those around him. Despite having tortured a squirrel in the woods, he admits that he fears becoming.....

**Graff** - Although the character appears only at the beginning of the chapters and then sporadically through the events, he is the main adult character in the novel. It is Graff who decides.....

#### Minor Characters

**buggers** - Little is known about them throughout the novel, even though they are presented as the threat to humankind. Because they are unable to communicate with humans, they are unable to explain the misunderstanding that resulted in them fighting against the humans in the.....

Additional characters are discussed in the complete study guide.

### CONFLICT

**Protagonist** - "Ender" Wiggin is the protagonist, the main character, about whom the action revolves. The majority of the story is told as events occur to him, and all other characters have ties to him. While he.....

**Antagonist** - the buggers are seen as the overall antagonist- the character who stands in opposition to the protagonist. Although it is unclear why, they have fought humans in two other wars, and.....

**Climax** - The climax, the peak of action in a story which events have been building up to, comes when Ender uses Dr. Device on the bugger home planet. Although he expects to be reprimanded for.....

**Outcome** - The following chapters summarize what occurred afterwards, the outcome. Peter comes into power on Earth, where Ender is never allowed to return. Instead, Valentine and Ender go to the first colony.....

## **SHORT PLOT / CHAPTER SUMMARY (Synopsis)**

*Ender's Game* starts out with two unnamed people talking, the one convincing the other that a boy is the one they are looking for; even if now he is malleable, they can change that by surrounding him with enemies. Then the novel switches to the story of Ender, a small six-year-old boy, who gets his monitor removed, a sign that he is no longer a candidate for a government program. This leaves him vulnerable to the school bully, Stilson, who, with his gang, surround Ender after school and begin picking on him, calling him a Third (a term for the third child born in a family, with government permission because of population restrictions). Ender realizes he must fight back, and so, when the other boys let go of him for a one-on-one fight with Stilson, Ender kicks Stilson just above the chest, taking him down. But Ender wants to end the fighting for good, so he keeps kicking Stilson, until (although Ender does not know it at the time) Stilson is dead. He warns the others, walks away, and cries because he thinks he is just like his older brother, Peter.

Back at home, Peter beats Ender up, but Valentine intervenes before it can get too bad, saying that she has evidence against him. Peter says one day he will kill Ender and although he tries to play it off, Ender and Valentine believe him. However, later that night, when Peter thinks Ender is asleep, he tells him that he is sorry about the monitor being removed, he understands, and that he loves him.

However, the next day, the arrival of a man from the International Fleet (I.F.) arrives at the house to get Ender to come to Battle School, a training school for children to fight in the war against the buggers (an alien race that has attacked humans unsuccessfully twice before). The man, Colonel Graff, says that it is Ender's choice, that Battle School will not be easy, and that he will be away from Valentine for a long time. Ender does not want to go but eventually says he will. Ender says goodbye to his family and leaves with Colonel Graff, with Valentine crying out to him as he does.

On the launch on the way from Earth to Battle School, Ender learns how he can reorient directions in zero gravity. Because of this, Graff singles him out as the only competent one, and the other children turn against him. When one of the boys starts hitting Ender in the head, Ender grabs his arm.....

## **THEMES**

### **Major Themes**

**Children (capable) versus Adults (untrustworthy)** - The dichotomy that is most strictly adhered to in the novel is that of children and adults. The interaction between the two groups is minimal, and even in the structure of the novel this is emphasized, by having the adults speak at the beginning of the chapter, and then the children's perspective takes over. Instead of portraying the children as innocent though.....

**The line between Good and Evil** - This theme is epitomized in Ender and Peter, and the meaning changes as the novel progresses. In the beginning, Peter is seen as evil and Ender is good; in their fight at home, Peter easily overpowers Ender, while Ender remains virtually helpless. Then the situation becomes .....

Many additional themes are discussed in the complete study guide.

## **MOOD**

The mood in the novel is one of seriousness. Even though the main characters are children, their lives are not like those typically portrayed. Peter is capable of evil acts, like torturing the squirrel, and gaining power, despite his youth. Up at the Battle School, there are few light-hearted moments, and the friendships that Ender does develop are all of a grave nature; at one point, Alai and Shen are jokingly .....

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION - BIOGRAPHY**

Orson Scott Card (1951-) is best known for *Ender's Game* and the other novels in the series, especially *Speaker for the Dead*, which have been recognized and awarded among science fiction circles. Card has also written in a variety of other genres, including plays, short stories, books on writing, the *Homecoming* series, other science fiction books, and nonfiction, such as articles on computer technology.

*Ender's Game* first appeared in abbreviated form in a magazine in 1977. Card later expanded it.....

## **LITERARY / HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

The main literary influence on Card was the *Foundation* novels by Isaac Asimov. The books are based on the idea that there are predictable cycles to history, and a psychohistorian uses these to predict the future in order to shorten a dark period; on a much smaller scale, Peter does this, when he influences events to prevent large-scale war from breaking out. Also in common with *Ender's Game* is the need to save mankind, and the spread of man through the universe. Fighting is seen as a last option, and trickery and deceit are.....

## **CHAPTER SUMMARIES WITH NOTES / ANALYSIS**

### **CHAPTER ONE: Third**

#### **Summary**

The book starts off with two unnamed people discussing the test results of three siblings. Though one brother and a sister have already proved inadequate for the mysterious people's purposes, the younger brother is still a question. While one of the people feels that the boy can be too easily subdued to others' wills, the first speaker feels that he is the one they need and that this weakness of malleability can be overcome by keeping him in the presence of enemies always. This seems cruel, but the two people decide it is acceptable, since it not only pales in comparison to what the buggers would do, but it also is saving the world. The buggers, and what it all has to do with saving the world, are explained later.

After this brief conversation, the chapter shifts focus to six-year-old Andrew Wiggin, also known as Ender. He is getting the monitor, which has been on him for three years, removed. Although Ender hopes that this will allow him to be brothers with Peter, who treats him poorly and calls him "Third", he realizes that this cruelty in Peter makes such a change unlikely. The removal of the monitor hurts (as he expected it would, since the adult said it would not), and, as his body spasms, the nurse and doctor have to struggle to hold him and give him medicine. The doctor is shook up and agitated after this, saying that by leaving the monitor in for so long, its removal could have killed Ender.

However, Ender recovers and returns to class, dazed and with the sense that something is missing, a sensation which the doctor warns him will occur; it is the monitor Ender is missing. Since Valentine, his older sister, had taught him math when he was three, Ender is free to ignore the lesson, playing on his desk instead, which he knows he can get away with. A message- the word "Third"- is sent to him, meant as an insult. It refers to the number of children in his family; more than two is considered socially unacceptable. He was only allowed by the government to be born and schooled as an experiment, of which the monitor was a part of. Its removal is supposed to signal that Ender, along with all the other children who no longer have them, is not the child the government is looking for, and Ender imagines they would just as soon they had never let him be born at all.

When Ender sees the word though, he smiles. He was the one who had realized how to use the desks to send the

messages and have them march around, so while it was an insult, the imitation of his methods is also a compliment. Once school lets out though, the abuse becomes more physical. Stilson, a bigger boy, wait for him and start pushing him around. Ender does nothing at first but then realizes he has few options; with the monitor gone, help was not likely to come.

Ender asks if it takes so many to fight him and when the other boys let go of him, he quickly kicks Stilson just above the chest and he drops. The other boys stand in shock, wondering if Stilson is dead. Ender, though he realizes it is against the rules of fighting, also knows that he must win the fight for good then or they will come after him again. So Ender just keeps on kicking the bleeding and helpless Stilson. He gives a warning to others and walks away.

Ender turns a corner, puts his head against a wall, and cries. In beating up Stilson, he has showed a side of himself that is just like Peter.

## Notes

It is not until the sequel to *Ender's Game*, *Speaker for the Dead*, that Ender's name is explained. When his sister Valentine was young, she was unable to correctly pronounce Andrew, saying it like Ender. The meaning of the nickname can be seen better later in the book, but the general drift is that Ender puts an end to things. He did not, for example, let the fight with Stilson and the other boys be resumed later; he took it to the most extreme that he could to be sure that it was over for good.

This chapter introduces the reader to a technique that will be used throughout the book. Card begins chapters with these two seemingly omniscient beings conversing, then returns to the narrative from Ender's point of view. This creates a contrast between Ender as a child with limited control and knowledge over his surroundings, and the two people who are manipulating and observing events. For example, the first discussion ends with talk of saving the world; the next scene has Ender overwhelmed with pain.

Two major themes are also presented, one is that of being different. Not only is Ender separated from the other kids by being a Third, but also by having the monitor for so long. Both characteristics have singled him out at school and at home. When Ender first returns to the classroom, he thinks Stilson's name is Peter and the two are alike in that they both pick on him. However, Ender reacts to them differently; whereas Stilson drives him to animal-like behavior, the thought of Peter has a kind of controlling influence, since Ender fears so much that he will become him.

This leads to the second theme. Unlike in most literature, youth is not presented as innocence. Ender fought beyond the boundaries of what could be accepted in a civilized world, and knew it. As will continue to be proved by later events, childhood is not protected from the cruelties and brutalities of life.

## CHAPTER TWO: Peter

### Summary

This time, the mysterious figure- a soldier, as is his companion- is not as sure of Ender as he had been in the previous conversation. It is hard for him to read the boy's emotions now, without the help of the monitor. Their discussion mentions the fight with Stilson though, so it is clear that Ender is still under some form of surveillance, which will be used to see how Ender will deal with his brother Peter. Both of the people acknowledge that they are messing him up.

When Ender returns home, Valentine sympathizes with him over the removal of his monitor, though he says he is glad, and tries to make it seem that Ender is now one of them. Peter, however, does not see it that way, since Ender had his in for so long, and now Peter has a gleam of anger in his eyes. He wants to play buggers and

astronauts, a game that inevitably becomes violent for the buggers. Ender, as always, must play the part of the bugger.

With his mask on to look like a bugger, Ender's vision is severely restricted and he cannot dodge Peter's blow. But Peter will not let him take off the mask. Instead he puts his knee into Ender's chest while he is on the ground, pressing the air out of Ender. Peter says that he could kill Ender this way, that the whole thing would look like an accident, and he means it. Valentine intervenes, pointing out that he could not kill her as well, claiming it was an accident, and she would tell. Plus she also has a letter in a vault that will be opened if she is to die under suspicious circumstances, blaming Peter for her death. Such a letter would prevent Peter from getting elected into the government as he wants.

Peter responds that she had better be around Ender all the time. Valentine reminds Peter that he is not any smarter than her and Ender, but he just repeats his threat, that he will strike sometime in the future. Then he laughs, saying that Valentine and Ender are gullible. However, Ender really does believe that he meant what he said, and thinks Peter deserves the beating he gave Stilson. He even shows him the blood on his toe but Peter does not believe him.

When Mother and Father return home, they try to console Ender about his monitor being removed. However, Father's talk about how nice it was that they now had three children, only makes Ender feel even more aware of the fact that he is a Third.

That night, Peter gets up to go to the bathroom, and on his way back, stops at Ender's bed. Ender thinks he is going to kill him. Instead Peter, thinking Ender is asleep, says that he is sorry, understands what he is going through, and loves Ender as a brother. Ender waits for Peter to go to sleep and then takes off the bandaid covering where his monitor was and cries.

## Notes

The reason for Peter's hostility towards Ender is made clear here. He sees Ender as a constant reminder of his own failure. Peter had been promising enough to have the government allow Ender to be born, hoping that he would be even better. Peter of course does not like this judgment, or the embarrassment that comes with having a Third in the family.

The bugger and astronaut game is a preview of the larger plot. Literally, it is an imitation of a real war that serves the basis for events in the book. Also, the war is presented in the format of a game, as it will be presented to Ender until the very end of the book.....

## OVERALL ANALYSES

### CHARACTER ANALYSIS

**Ender** - The novel covers much of Ender's youth, beginning when he is a six-year-old boy who is helpless against his older brother and ending sometime after his 10<sup>th</sup> birthday, when he has learned the lessons of Battle and Command School- no one will ever come to his aid, adults will deceive and manipulate, and, under certain circumstances, he too can be driven to kill to ensure his own survival. With this last lesson, he is the average of Peter and Valentine, killing but regretfully, with all of the Wiggin children intelligence that makes it possible for him to do so. Ender rarely comes across as a child, either to those around.....

**Valentine** - Valentine changes from a young girl in fear of Peter to one who comes to realize her own power. By the time Ender returns from Battle School, she has changed so that she is now willing to convince him to continue training for her own good. When he finishes with Command School, she is.....

**Peter** - Overall, Peter demonstrates the themes of capable children versus adults, and good versus evil. In the case of the latter, the line blurs somewhat from the beginning of the novel to the end, as both Ender and Peter change. At the start, through Ender and Valentine's eyes, Peter is capable of anything, no matter how bad it seems. Although he says he fears becoming even worse, Valentine is never.....

**Graff** - Graff is significant as a kind of omniscient manager of events. It is Graff who receives the reports on the bugger expedition, knows the true identities of Locke and Demosthenes, and decides what will be done to Ender in order to shape him into a commander. Although he is put on trial after the war, he is pretty much able to do what he sees fit. For his job and the war effort, he knows that Ender will be.....

## **PLOT STRUCTURE ANALYSIS**

The plot is chronologically linear, and predominately told in the third person, through the point of view of Ender. This is not the case when the story looks at events back on Earth, when Valentine becomes the main focus, or in the beginnings of the chapters when adults are conversing, usually somewhat mysteriously. Readers therefore are slightly more aware of the overall plot than Ender, but also do not know how events look from the bugger's point of view until the end of the novel, at which point Ender does as well.

The overall problem driving the plot is that of the conflict between buggers and.....

## **THEMES - THEME ANALYSIS**

**Children versus Adults** - Ender sees this as the major conflict; once the adults tarnish his memory of Valentine and force him to fight with Bonzo, he is set on beating the teachers. Although in the end it could be seen that the adults win since they trick Ender into destroying the buggers, Ender is able to fight back in his own way by finding the hive queen somewhere to live again. Card presents the two sides in a non-traditional manner, by having the adults talk about how they do not know what to do and the children as capable of handling themselves. It is the children who act like history, who save the world from.....

**Good versus Evil** - The line between good and evil, as portrayed through Ender and Peter respectively, becomes less and less distinct as the novel goes on. The fantasy game shows Peter's face instead of Ender's reflection in the mirror, Ender kills a wasp that just idly lands on the raft, and Peter puts.....

Additional themes are analyzed in the complete study guide.

## **RISING ACTION**

The rising action is what takes place at Battle School before Ender is transferred to Command School. This includes his troubles with the fantasy game, the struggle to learn new.....

## **FALLING ACTION**

The falling action begins after Ender is told that the battle was real, that he has killed the buggers, and then he goes to sleep. Peter comes into power on Earth, and rules with little further comment on.....

## **POINT OF VIEW**

The novel is told from the third person point of view, which is effective in a number of ways. By switching focus between Ender and Valentine, Card is able to have two plots going on at once, and combine them at the end. It also ensures that Earth remains a setting, and Peter and Valentine, both major influences on Ender, are still central to the story. Having third person perspective at the beginning of .....

## **OTHER ELEMENTS**

**Historical Allusions** - This includes the mention of historical figures such as Napoleon, Wellington, Caesar, and Brutus by the adults when they discuss how the Battle School children act, and those.....

**Science Fiction Elements** - *Ender's Game* is a science fiction novel, as seen in the use of technology (gravity manipulation, primarily), space setting, and bugger enemies. Although no specific date is.....

## QUOTES - QUOTATIONS AND ANALYSIS

From revised mass market edition July 1994, published by Tom Doherty Associates, LLC

1. **"I have to win this now, and for all time, or I'll fight it every day and it will get worse and worse."** p. 7 (Ender, during his fight with Stilson) Ender's theory when fighting, which drives him to kill Stilson and Bonzo, as well as to fight brutally against the older boys in the battleroom, the Giant, and the buggers. He will not follow the traditional rules of combat, whether it is by fighting beyond the normal point, striking an opponent in a new way, or going against what he sees as the teachers' rules for a game.

2. **"As a species, we have evolved to survive. And the way we do it is by straining and straining and, at last, every few generations, giving birth to genius. The one who invents the wheel. And light. And flight. The one who builds a city, a nation, an empire.... Human beings are free except when humanity needs them. Maybe humanity needs you. To do something."** p. 35 (Colonel Graff to Ender, as he arrives at Battle School) This seems to pretty much sum up Colonel Graff's thinking, as to why he himself is involved. It is why he will push Ender to the boy's limits.....

Many additional quotations are analyzed in the complete study guide.

## SYMBOLISM / MOTIFS / IMAGERY / SYMBOLS

**Monitor** - Although it is only with Ender for the first part of the novel, at that point it has come to represent safety and assurance that nothing bad will happen to him. It is constant adult supervision of his life. The removal of the monitor means that he is on his own and that no.....

**Peter** - The squirrel that Peter tortures in the woods is a symbol for Peter himself- his cruelty, combined with a desire to control and manipulate those around him. Peter, as evident from his appearance in the mirror in the fantasy game as well as Ender's talk with Valentine on the lake in.....

Additional symbols / motifs are discussed in the complete study guide.

## IMPORTANT / KEY FACTS SUMMARY

**Title:** *Ender's Game*

**Author:** Orson Scott Card

**Date Published:** 1985

**Meaning of the Title:** The title refers to the war with buggers, during which Ender is commanding the human fleet but thinks it is a simulation. Therefore, it is just a game to him but the adults.....

## VOCABULARY

**malleable:** likely to give in to pressure from others

**maladroit:** awkward, lacking skill

**salaam:** peace

**toon:** a small military unit

**hegemony:** leadership over others

**I.F. :** International Fleet

## STUDY QUESTIONS - MULTIPLE CHOICE QUIZ

1. What is identified as Ender's weakness?
  - a. too cruel
  - b. cannot bring himself to kill
  - c. too malleable
  - d. spiders
  
2. What mask does Peter make Ender wear when they are playing?
  - a. astronaut
  - b. one of Peter
  - c. one of Stilson
  - d. bugger.....

### Answer Key

1.) c 2.) d 3.) c 4.) a 5.) a 6.) b 7.) a 8.) d 9.) c 10.) b 11.) d 12.) a 13.) d 14.) d 15.) c 16.) b

## ESSAY TOPIC IDEAS / BOOK REPORT TOPICS

1. What effect does the setting have on the mood of the novel? How is it significant that so much of the story takes place off of Earth?
2. Compare and contrast the ways in which the children at Battle School act like children on Earth. To what extent does the novel correctly reflect the behavior and thoughts of children?.....

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