

Ender's Game: Background

Born in 1951 in Washington and raised on the West Coast, Orson Scott Card attended Brigham Young University and spent two years as a Mormon missionary in Brazil. Highly influenced by his Mormon upbringing, in his introduction to Ender's Game, Card mentions that Isaac Asimov's Foundation trilogy inspired him to write science fiction. He claims that in high school he was fascinated by military strategy and especially the crucial role that a leader plays in an army. The idea of the Battle Room, the game
1 around which the novel Ender's Game is organized, came to him when he was sixteen years old, but he did not begin to write the story until years later. Since Card came up with the basic concept of the book at such a young age it is not surprising that his young characters have considerably more penetrating thoughts and complex emotions than children in most other stories. This emphasis on children is one that Card very consciously molded, and he states that one of his goals was for everyone to have to see things from their point of view.

Although Ender is undoubtedly an exceptional child, in many ways, he is very similar to all of the other characters in the book. In Ender's Game, Ender and the other children have the complex emotions and relationships that adults have. Card states that the military histories that he read described soldiers who appeared to be children engaged
2 in deadly games. So, while emphasizing their very real feelings and ideas, Card is always conscious of the fact that these are, after all, boys and girls thrown into an adult world in a time of desperation. Although the idea of battle games permeates the book, Ender's Game itself is anything but a game, and its strong emphasis on moral issues, no doubt, reflects its author's religious background.

The winner of the 1986 *Hugo* and *Nebula* awards, Ender's Game is Orson Scott Card's best-known work. Since its publication in 1985, the book has been considered a science fiction classic. Although the innovative military strategies that form the heart of the story can be traced back to his high school days, the book itself is the work of a mature
3 author. Card, who has a master's degree in literature from the University of Utah, has continued to write at a rapid pace, producing other parts to the Ender series in addition to creating several new series, many plays, short stories, and a handful of other novels. The sequel to Ender's Game, Speaker for the Dead, won the *Hugo* and *Nebula* awards in 1987, making Card the first author to win both awards twice.

Card's writing is deliberately lucid, almost to the point of simplicity, and it is for this reason that his books may be read by people of all ages. His simple style is especially appropriate as he describes the world of children rather than of adults.
4 However, the fact that Ender's Game is as fun and informative for an adolescent as it is for an adult means that the book is destined to be read over and over again by people at various stages of their lives. Card's book conveys a timeless message, as there will always be children who can relate to Ender and adults who both remember what they once were and realize how similar that still is to what they are now.

Now that you've read some background information about the novel and the author, complete the assignment on the back.

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Summarization Assignment

Directions: Work with your group to write a **BRIEF**—two (2) to three (3) sentence—summary of your assigned paragraph(s).

EXAMPLE SUMMARY

- Weak Summary:** The first paragraph is about the author's background and what effect it had on him.
- **After reading your summary, the audience should know the main idea(s) without having to read the paragraph. This summary gives no real information. It describes rather than summarizes.**
 - **What about the author's background?**
 - **What effect does the author's ground have on him?**
- Strong Summary:** Orson Scott Card, the author of Ender's Game, was born in Washington and raised on the West Coast. Card's inspirations for this novel include Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* trilogy and an early fascination with military strategy. Moreover, having come up with the basic idea for this novel at the early age of sixteen, the book heavily emphasizes the point of view of children.
- **Provides the author's name and connects him to the work you'll be reading.**
 - **Provides details about the author's background.**
 - **Explains what effect his background had on him.**