

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Ender's Game

by

Orson Scott Card

Book Information

Orson Scott Card, Ender's Game
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Andrew "Ender" Wiggin thinks he is playing computer games. But in reality he is being trained to be the military genius that the planet needs in its all-out war with an alien enemy.

Award: ALA Best Book for Young Adults; Margaret A. Edwards Award; Nebula Award/Finalist

Topics: Mysteries, Conspiracies; Mysteries, Secrets; READNOW - Renaissance Learning, RLI - High School (Theme: Tough Decisions); Recommended Reading, ALA Outstanding Books for College Bound; Recommended Reading, Book Sense 76 - Top Ten; Recommended Reading, California Recommended Lit., English, 9-12; Recommended Reading, NY Public Library 100 Best Titles; Science Fiction, Aliens; Science Fiction, Other Worlds; Series, Ender

Main Characters

Alai Ender's strong and intelligent classmate who eventually helps Ender defeat the buggers

Andrew Wiggin (Ender) a brilliant and compassionate young boy who is sent to military school in the hopes that he will be able to vanquish the buggers

Bean the small boy whose intelligence and ability to innovate make him a valuable part of Ender's army

Bernard Ender's peer who attempts to bully him

Bonzo Madrid the commander of the Salamander Army at Battle School; he hates Ender and sets a high value on honor

Colonel Hyrum Graff the director of primary training at the Battle School; he drives Ender to excel despite his sympathy for the child's suffering

Dink Meeker a supporter of Ender who becomes part of Ender's army during the fight against the buggers

Major Anderson the co-worker of Colonel Graff who assists in Ender's training

Mazer Rackham the legendary leader of the Strike Force that defeated the buggers in the Second Invasion

Peter Wiggin Ender's brutal oldest sibling; he schemes to become the ruler of Earth

Petra Arkanian the young girl who teaches Ender how to shoot

Rose the Nose the lazy and crass commander of the Rat Army at Battle School

Stilson a bully; he is savagely beaten after attacking Ender

Valentine Wiggin the kind-hearted older sister of Ender; she is the only person Ender completely trusts

Vocabulary

cruelty meanness

isolate to separate from all others

meddling interfering with other people's business

tormentor one who hurts or tortures others

triumph victory

weariness a state of being tired; tiredness

Synopsis

Ender Wiggin is taken from his family and sent to an isolated military school when he is only six years old. Although Ender is sad to leave Valentine, his beloved sister, he is happy to escape Peter, his cruel brother. He is put in the care of Colonel Graff, who is determined to create a brilliant military leader before Earth's third encounter with the alien buggers.

Graff believes that the best way to train Ender is to isolate him from all others. He deliberately sets up situations where less talented students will notice Ender and resent him. Ender is constantly fending off attacks from his peers, but he still excels at the games. When he loses his motivation, Graff uses

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Valentine to remotivate him. Eventually Ender becomes the top commander of the mock armies at Battle School. When Ender humiliates Bonzo, one of his old enemies, Bonzo challenges him to a fight. Ender kills him, and Graff decides Ender should move on to Commander School.

Unfortunately, Ender is demoralized by his fight with Bonzo. He hates hurting others and resents being manipulated by the teachers. Graff gives him a short leave on Earth and then enlists Valentine's help to persuade Ender to continue his training. Valentine has secretly been working with Peter on a plot to install Peter as the ruler of the world. She agrees to help Graff partially because he threatens to reveal this plot.

Ender's training resumes on a space outpost named Eros. After several months of playing the computer to learn strategies, Ender is introduced to the legendary military leader Mazer Rackham. Mazer was the last person to defeat the buggers, and he offers Ender insight into fighting them. He informs Ender that future simulated fights will be programmed by him. From that point on, Ender is in charge of several squadron leaders who obey his orders. When Mazer finally tells Ender that he is ready for his final test, Ender is given a situation where his fleet is greatly outnumbered, and the technology available to him is extremely outdated. Ender destroys the enemy's home world and turns to discover the adults in an uproar. Mazer finally tells him the battles were not simulations. Ender is horrified to discover that he has just wiped out the entire bugger species.

Time passes, and Peter becomes the ruler of Earth. Valentine persuades Ender to come with her to colonize the bugger home world. There Ender learns that the bugger species can be revived with his help. He begins to plan for the future of the buggers.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

Why does Valentine ensure that Ender is blocked from returning to Earth?

Valentine fears that Peter will control Ender and force Ender to continue a life he hates. She also wants to be free to reacquaint herself with Ender without Peter's influence.

Literary Analysis

What does the name "Ender" symbolize in this story?

Ender is the last child to be born into his family. He is also the one who is supposed to end the threat of a bugger invasion. In addition, he is the one who concludes almost every direct confrontation he is engaged in.

Inferential Comprehension

Why is it important that Ender not be told about Stilson's or Bonzo's deaths?

Ender hates killing and does not want to think of himself as a killer. He has several moments when he seriously considers giving up. The knowledge that he has become that which he most hates would probably destroy his ability to be a military leader.

Constructing Meaning

Ender resents being forced to kill others. Do you think it was necessary to make Ender do this? Why or why not?

Answers will vary. Some may agree with Graff that the buggers were a real threat and that Ender was needed to deal with them. Others may feel that the adults should have tried to fight the buggers without using the children. Still others may feel that the buggers were not a true threat and that the Third Invasion was unnecessary.

Teachable Skills

Understanding Characterization In order to effectively lead his army, Ender must know the strengths and weaknesses of each of his

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commanders. Have the students make a chart of the people who become part of the army that helps Ender defeat the buggers. Have them list the characteristics of each person as shown in detail in the book.

Identifying Persuasive Language At the end of this story, Ender longs to bring back to life the species that he has destroyed. Have the students write an essay arguing for or against the revival of the buggers. Have them use details from the book to support their arguments.

Comparing and Contrasting This story describes Earth in the future. Have the students write a paper explaining how it is similar and how it is different from present-day Earth.

Understanding the Author's Craft This book is told mainly from Ender's point of view. Have the students recount one of Ender's battles from the point of view of his opponents. Have them include the feelings and thoughts of the opponents regarding Ender and his actions.