

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

Ender's Game

by Orson Scott Card

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Chapter 1: Third

1. Although Ender is only six years old, he already understands that “sometimes lies [are] more dependable than the truth” and that adults often lie to children. How old were you when you first realized that adults are not always honest? Write a detailed descriptive paragraph about the experience.
2. Card writes that Ender knows “the unspoken rules of manly warfare”—that only an “animal” would strike an opponent who lies helpless on the ground—yet Ender breaks that rule in his fight with Stilson. Pretend that Ender is on trial, you are defending him, and the prosecuting attorney has just mentioned this “rule” to the jury in trying to paint Ender as an animal. Write out the speech you would give in Ender’s defense, explaining why it was necessary for him to act as he did.
3. Ender has had a monitor in his brain since he was a toddler, allowing military officials to hear everything he says and watch everything he does. If, like Ender, you were aware that you had such a monitor, would it change your behavior? Write a paragraph or two about what you might do differently if you knew you were being constantly watched. If you don’t think you’d change anything, write about why you wouldn’t.
4. At six, most of us would call for the teacher if we were approached on school grounds and pushed around by a pack of kids like Stilson and his cronies. Why do you think Ender doesn’t do this? Assume that after the fight, Ender is called into the principal’s office and asked why he resorted to violence rather than calling for a teacher’s help. In a paragraph or two, write Ender’s response to the principal.

Chapter 2: Peter

5. Ender's mother was apparently reluctant to allow Peter to buy a bugger mask and play war games, but Mr. Wiggin pointed out that war wouldn't go away just because you kept your children from playing "war," and that encouraging them to do so could actually help give them a better chance of survival during the next bugger invasion. The question of whether to let one's children play at violence is an issue in our society as well as in Ender's. Write a letter to be printed in a parenting magazine expressing your opinion on this issue. Whichever side of the debate you take, be sure to support your case with at least three reasons.

6. Ender imagines the "buggers" (so-named because they look a bit like giant insects) calling humans "slimies," as humans are so soft and oily compared to buggers. Imagine that you are a bugger scout and are looking down on Earth and observing humans for the first time. Write a detailed field guide entry about humans for other buggers to read (as humans write field guides, for example, about kinds of snakes). Cover such questions as what humans look like, whether or not they appear to be "poisonous," whether or not they appear to be intelligent, etc. Include at least a page of observations about this newly discovered species.

7. Card mentions in his introduction to *Ender's Game* that some readers have complained that his portrayal of certain child characters as murderously violent and calculating isn't realistic. What do you think? Is Peter a believable ten-year-old? Write a letter to Card offering him your opinion, backing it up with observations from your own experience of children and childhood.

8. With the loss of his monitor, Ender feels as though he has become a disappointment—even an embarrassment—to his parents. Write either about a time when you felt this way or about the single thing that, if you were to do it, would most disappoint your parents.

Chapter 3: Graff

9. Card never explains why the government has made it illegal to have more than two children per family (unless a third is permitted to be born for military purposes). First, list three reasons why a government might decide to pass such a law. Then respond to the following statement in one or two paragraphs: a government is never justified in trying to control the reproductive lives of its citizens.
10. Imagine that you have just received the same opportunity Ender has. Are you willing to trust your future to the military and travel through space to the Battle School, knowing that you won't see your friends, family, or home planet for at least six years? Pretend you have a chance to consider before giving your answer to Graff. Write a journal entry, weighing the pros and cons of Graff's offer and finally arriving at your decision.
11. Not only does the population law limit reproduction, it also impedes religious freedom. Graff mentions at least two religions (Catholicism and Mormonism) that can no longer be faithfully practiced under the law. If the government passed a law that made it impossible for you to practice your religion, would you practice it? (If you are not religious, substitute whatever personal beliefs and practices are most important to you). Imagine that the government has passed such a law today. Write a journal entry responding to the law and mentioning how it will (or *if* it will) change your life and practices.

Chapter 4: Launch

12. While fear makes Ender serious, the other boys bounce on the seats and joke as outlets for their pre-launch anxiety. How do you respond to fear? Are you quiet like Ender? Do you fidget and crack jokes to relieve the tension? Write a poem in which you explore the way you act when you are afraid. Make sure to include your *physical* responses to a frightening situation (as, for example, Card mentions that the boys bounce on their seats).
13. Graff tells Ender that “[i]ndividual human beings are all tools.” If this is true, how effective a tool do you think you are? What do you think you help others to achieve? What do you want to be “used” for in your lifetime? Write a journal entry exploring this topic. Remember that “achievements” need not be as grandiose and abstract as “saving humankind.”
14. It could be argued that a sense of isolation among children and teenagers leads to destructive things: despair, frustration, suicide, and, in cases like the school shootings at Columbine, homicide. Yet Graff believes that isolating Ender will be *constructive* for Ender. Thinking not just of Ender’s but of the human condition in general, make a list of at least five constructive or good things that can come about as a result of feeling isolated from one’s peers.

Chapter 5: Games

15. The adults in the I.F. admit to themselves that they don't really know what they're doing. Does this admission of vulnerability make you like them more or like them less? In general, do you think the adults in your life know what they're doing? Do they act as though they do? Write a journal entry exploring these questions.
16. Both in the space shuttle and in his dormitory, Ender immediately assesses the situation (be it null-gravity or coded lockers) and acts on it, while the other boys are still talking and joking casually. Ender's approach will clearly be an advantage in a military situation. Make a list of at least three ways in which it is a *disadvantage* in other situations. What does Ender miss out on?
17. Although Mick is the only person who talks to Ender in the dining hall, Ender quickly decides that he doesn't like Mick. Why? As Ender, write a journal entry in which you describe Mick and mention why you've taken an instant dislike to him.
18. Pretend you're a Launchy in Ender's class. Based on what you've seen of him so far, how do you feel about Ender? Are you jealous? Do you pity him? Do you want to get to know him? Write a letter home that describes Ender and your impressions of him.