*Ender’s Game*

Orson Scott Card, [*Ender’s Game*](http://www.amazon.com/Enders-Game-The-Ender-Quintet/dp/0812550706)(New York: Tor Books, 1985)

Summary:

Ender Wiggin is a “Third,” a child born to a family that already has two siblings, something that requires government permission. The government allowed Ender to be born because there is a great need. The smartest children in the world are taken to a space station near earth called the Battle School, where they are trained in the art of war to prepare for another fight with “buggers,” the aliens that have already twice gone to war with humans. The genius children, kept from their parents and homes, are trained in a zero gravity game that mimics the space battle conditions. Ender slowly adapts to his new environment and builds a following, all while adults who have their own agenda manipulate him. One of the most popular and awarded science fiction novels, *Ender’s Game* eventually became a favorite of individuals of all ages and stages and is required reading for those in the U.S. military.

Themes, Symbols, & Motifs:

* The title. There is at least a fivefold meaning for the title *Ender’s Game*: the “astronauts vs. buggers” game that Ender and Peter play, the game in the Battle Room, the game of war with the buggers, the “Giant’s Drink” came on Ender’s desk, and the game Ender’s plays with adults.
* Humanity. The buggers are a catalyst for discussing what constitutes being human as well as the oppression of different human races.
* Children. The kids in the book have adult language, problems, and mannerisms; the protagonist of the book is a young boy.
* Communication. The buggers can communicate instantaneously, and they fought humans at first because they did not believe that the humans were sentient beings.
* Identity. Valentine thinks, “[I]t’s impossible to wear an identity without becoming what you pretend to be.”

Discussion Questions:

1. Can children be evil? Is Peter evil? How are good and evil addressed in the book?
2. Evaluate the Wiggin siblings in terms of Freudian psychology: Peter (id), Ender (ego), and Valentine (superego).
3. How and why is Peter regularly connected to the buggers?
4. At what point in the novel did the government overstep its bounds?
5. Discuss how Ender’s leadership style compare and contrast with his other superiors: Bonzo, Dink, Rose the Nose, and Colonel Graff.
6. When is war justified? How was this reasoned in the book?
7. In what way is Ender one who *ends* things?
8. What is the meaning of the symbolism in the fantasy game with the giant: the mirror, the snake, Peter’s reflection, and the game itself?
9. Why is *Ender’s Game* one of the most popular science fiction novels of all time?
10. How does the Machiavellian idea that “the end justifies the means” apply to this novel?
11. What about the plot and themes *Ender’s Game* demonstrate that this story was conceived during the Vietnam War era?