

Ender's Game

Synopsis

The Story

Ender Wiggin, the third in a family of child geniuses, is selected by international military forces to save the world from destruction. Before being chosen Ender wears a unique monitor that allows the heads of the military to see things as Ender does. Ender's brother Peter and his sister Valentine also wore this monitor, although neither was selected, nor did they have it for as long as Ender, and Peter will never forgive Ender for this. Peter hates Ender, and even when the monitor is taken out it does nothing to decrease Peter's anger. The same is true of Ender's schoolmates, and he is forced into brutally beating the leader of a gang of bullies in order to protect himself. Although Valentine tries to protect Ender from Peter, he is only saved from his brother when Colonel Graff of the International Fleet comes to take Ender away to Battle School. Ender leaves behind Valentine, who loves him, in order to help save the world from the buggers.

Battle School is located on a ship far from earth. On the flight there Ender demonstrates his ability to brilliantly visualize gravitational effects, and Graff begins to isolate him from his fellow classmates. Ender lives with the new recruits, called Launchies. He makes a few friends among the recruits and ends his isolation, although his brilliance will never cease causing resentment. Inside the battleroom, Ender figures out how to maneuver in null gravity, along with another recruit named Alai. Ender and Alai become friends, and this helps Ender fit in with the rest of the group. Ender manages to get farther in one of the computer games, called the mind game, than anyone ever had before him, and although he does not know, the military commanders take notice.

Ender is abruptly promoted to Salamander Army. There Ender is befriended by Petra Arkanian, the only girl in the army. The army commander, Bonzo Madrid, does not like Ender and does not want him around. Ender practices with Petra and begins to teach his launch group what he knows. Ender helps the army by disobeying Bonzo, who hates Ender, but fortunately Ender is traded to Rat Army. Ender is put in Dink Meeker's platoon. Dink is an excellent toon leader, and Ender does well in battles. He continues teaching his Launchies, even though this causes resentment among other soldiers. Ender gets into a fight and he hurts four older boys who attack him. It is clear to Ender that the teachers are leaving him to fend for himself.

Meanwhile, Peter has convinced Valentine that it is time for them to assert themselves. Peter has unlimited ambition, and he is intelligent enough to try to manipulate world events. Valentine agrees to work with him because she wants their impact to be a positive one. Disguised on the information networks they soon begin to exert an influence. By this time Ender is nine years old and a platoon leader in Phoenix Army under Petra's command. Everyone respects his brilliance and his practice sessions are attended by many, but he is depressed and is stuck in the mind game. Colonel Graff comes to visit Valentine and has her write Ender a letter. The memory of Valentine helps Ender to ground himself, and he is able to continue on in the mind game, which is a great relief to his teachers.

Ender is made commander of Dragon Army and given a group of soldiers, most of them Launchies. The smallest one, Bean, is very bright and precocious, much like Ender was, and Bean proves his mettle in practice sessions. Ender's army is given an unprecedented number of battles to face, with advantages given to the enemies, and he wins every one. Each toon of his army acts as an independent unit, and this revolutionizes battleroom strategy. Bonzo is humiliated when Ender beats him. Bonzo attacks Ender in the shower room and Ender beats him, brutally, because he was forced to. Ender is then transferred out of Battle School to Command School.

The authorities figured out Valentine and Peter's actions but have decided to leave them alone. Valentine visits Ender while he is given a brief vacation, and it is clear that things have changed between them. Graff takes Ender to Eros, the planet that holds the International Fleet command, and there Ender is introduced to Mazer Rackham,

the hero of the second bugger invasion, who saved mankind. Rackham runs Ender through a series of simulated battles, where he now commands an entire fleet. Ender learns that the buggers are like highly evolved insects and they communicate instantaneously—their queen thinks for all of them. Ender begins having strange dreams about the buggers. He fights more and more difficult battles and one day fights a huge battle against impossible odds with many officers watching. Ender wins, at great cost, and it becomes apparent that it was a real battle, as were all of his supposedly simulated battles, and that he completely destroyed the buggers. Ender was used, and he knows it, as do his teachers, but they explain that they needed him, a child, to have the compassion to understand the enemy. At the same time they needed him to think it was a game in order to be able to win with such great loss of life.

Peter has taken over control of the world and Valentine convinces Ender to set off with her on a colonization mission to populate the worlds left behind by the buggers. Before he goes Ender learns that he did kill Bonzo as well as the bully back in school. On the new planet Ender finds an area that he realizes looks just like the mind game and he realizes that the buggers had prepared for his coming—they had looked into his mind and knew he would defeat them. He finds a queen pupa, left behind for him to find a place for the buggers to live again. Ender can think to the queen, and sees that the buggers did not truly wish to fight the humans and feels their sorrow for all that happens. Ender decides to make it his mission to find a place for the buggers to live.

Characters

Ender - The younger brother of Peter and Valentine, at age six Ender is chosen by Colonel Graff and the International Fleet to help save mankind from the buggers. Ender is afraid of his brother and loves his sister. Wherever he goes, Ender makes things happen, and by age nine he is given his own army to command. Ender is angry at the various people who manipulate him throughout the novel.

Valentine - Ender's older sister is the only person in the world who truly loves him. She protects him from Peter, their sadistic older brother. Along with Peter, Valentine takes an active interest in the world's political situation, and writing under the pseudonym Demosthenes begins to exert influence over the growing situation. Valentine also writes a letter to Ender at one point that helps him get control of himself. At the end of the book, Valentine convinces Ender to go with her to colonize the bugger worlds, and she works on a history of the world on the way there. Later she travels with Ender as he searches for a new world for the buggers.

Peter - Ender's older brother Peter is a cruel and evil child, gifted in manipulation. He has the same ruthlessness that his siblings contain but without any of their compassion. Valentine is able to protect Ender as best she can from Peter until Ender goes away. Peter then decides to take an active role in world affairs and convinces Valentine to help him. Under the pseudonym Locke he begins to gather power, working through the communication nets. After Ender's victory Peter obtains total control of earth and becomes Hegemon, the ruler of the world. His ambition is sated and he actually makes for a good ruler, although he is as amoral as he ever was.

Colonel Graff - Graff has unerring faith in Ender and, although he manipulates Ender, he also loves him. Graff is the head of the Battle School until Ender leaves, at which time he accompanies him until he passes off the training of Ender to Mazer Rackham. He is one of the few characters who at various times allows Ender to act like the child he is, although Graff also demands much of Ender. He is put on trial after the war because of the deaths of Stilson and Bonzo but acquitted.

Mazer Rackham - Ender's last teacher, Rackham makes no attempt to become Ender's friend, although, like Graff, he loves and respects the boy. Rackham is forced to deceive Ender into thinking he is playing mere games and explains to him that no one but a child could have won the war—it took both compassion, daring, and ruthlessness that he himself could not have had since he knew it was not a game.

Major Anderson - Second in command only to Colonel Graff at the Battle School, Major Anderson is in charge of setting up battleroom scenarios. He stacks the odds against Ender, and Ender views him almost as an enemy, but, like Graff, Anderson feels for Ender. He questions some of Graff's actions but stands by him during his trial.

Bean - Ender's last friend at Battle School, Bean is very reminiscent of Ender when he first arrived. Bold and brilliant, Bean helps Ender with Dragon Army and also helps him hold on to his humanity. He is one of Ender's commanders against the buggers.

Alai - A member of Ender's launch group, Alai becomes Ender's best friend and helps him gain acceptance with the other recruits. Several times his friendship is enough to keep Ender from falling into despair. Later on he is one of Ender's commanders in the battles against the buggers.

Dink Meeker - Ender's platoon leader in Rat Army, Dink is a very good strategist who always looks out for Ender. He tries to stop Bonzo and warns Ender of the plot to kill him. Dink is one of Ender's squadron leaders in the battles with the buggers.

Petra Arkanian - While in Salamander Army Petra helps Ender learn how to fight in the battleroom. They remain friends through the rest of the book, even though she is upset when his Dragon Army defeats her Phoenix Army. She is one of his commanders in the battles with the buggers.

Bonzo Madrid - Bonzo is Ender's enemy and was the commander of Salamander Army. His pride cannot accept the fact that Ender is smarter and better than him, and this makes him cruel. His honor forces him to fight Ender man-to-man, and Bonzo is killed in that fight.

Bernard - Bernard has his arm broken by Ender on the shuttle ride over because he attacked him. Bernard tries to bully the launch group into disliking Shen and Ender. Bernard is one of those who went with Bonzo to corner Ender in the showers.

Stilson - The bully who attempts to gang up on Ender back in the days before battle school, he is unintentionally killed by Ender in a fight. Ender learns that he killed Stilson while watching the tapes of Graff's trial.

Shen - A small recruit in Ender's launch group who becomes a friend of Ender's through their mutual dislike of Bernard. Shen is one of Ender's commanders in the battles with the buggers.

Crazy Tom - One of Ender's toon leaders in Dragon Army, Crazy Tom takes the initiative well and thinks quickly on his own. He is one of Ender's platoon leaders during the battles of the Third Invasion.

Fly Molo - He is one of Ender's toon leaders in Dragon Army. Fly Molo is also with Ender during the battles against the buggers.

Han Tzu - Han Tzu is another of Ender's toon leader from Dragon Army. He works again with his commander in the war with the buggers.

Carn Carby - The commander of Rabbit Army, Carn Carby treats Ender well even though he is beaten badly by Dragon Army. He is one of the platoon leaders in the Third Invasion.

Rose the Nose - Ender's commander in Rat Army, Rose the Nose tries to control Ender. Largely due to Dink's suggestion that he stick up for himself, Ender is able to make Rose the Nose back down and he lets Ender be.

General Pace - The chief of the I.F. military police, Pace wants Graff to do something about the plot to harm Ender. Graff wins out, and Ender saves himself, although Bonzo dies in the fight.

Dap - The only teacher assigned by the school to actually befriend the Launchies, Dap looks out for the boys. He informs General Pace of the plot against Ender.

Admiral Chamrajnagar - The leader of the fleet, Chamrajnagar questions the three month vacation that Graff let Ender have and then fills Graff in on their plans for Ender at Command School. He and Graff have a mutual dislike but respect each other.

Major Imbu - The computer expert at the Battle School, Major Imbu explains to Colonel Graff what he knows about the mind game. He tell Graff that the game showed Ender the picture of Peter because it thinks that is what he needed to see, but also that it is making the game up as it goes along.

General Levy - A high military official, he takes interest in Ender and questions Graff as to how he will bring him along. Levy points out that the children at the Battle School do not act like normal children, and Graff says that they are not.