

Lens: Historical/Biographical

This lens looks to examine how the issues and characters in the book reflect the time in which the book was written and created. It also goes beyond the book to see in what ways biographical elements from the author's life likely has influenced the plot and message of what we read.

Tips

1. What was going on at the time when the book was being written? What major world events were happening? What was the prevailing ideas and themes of the era? What was different then than now?
2. What events in the author's life may have influenced the characters and messaging in the book?
3. What do we know about the author's attitude and beliefs that may have influenced the character's actions or themes presented in the book? How might some of the existing messages and symbolism be reinterpreted with background information?
4. How should we take the overall theme and message from the book in a new way after considering the author's probable intent as opposed to what modern readers may gather from it?

THE ASSIGNMENT: Analyze section 5 of *Ender's Game* (Chapters 14,15) with this lens. Attached to this sheet are two biographies, an excerpt of major events from the 1970s (the original short story of *Ender's Game* was published in 1977) and 1980s (the novel we are reading was published in 1985). For analysis try to see what historical or biographical elements may appear in *Ender's Game*.

Two Contrasting Biographies: (One positive, one negative)

What elements of Card's life can we connect to characters/themes/events in the book?

Timeline 1970-1985

Highlight events that might be relevant. What can you connect it to in the book?

BIOGRAPHY #1: Excerpted from *Famous Authors*

Orson Scott Card is a contemporary American fiction writer. Additionally, he is a public speaker, columnist, essayist and a critic. He writes in a number of genres but his forte remains science fiction. He is credited for writing one of the epic sci-fi novels of the generation, *Ender's Game* (1985).

Born on August 24, 1951, in Richland, Washington, Card was named after his grandfather. He is the descendent of Charles Ora Card, the founder of a Mormon colony in Cardston, Canada. When he was an infant his family moved to San Mateo, California and then to Salt Lake City as his father had to finish his graduation course following a back injury. Subsequently, they settled in Santa Clara,

California. Since a very early age, Card was an avid reader, who used to visit both children's and adult's books section in libraries. It is here he found out about the fascinating new science fiction genre. In fact, he had an eccentric taste in books given his age.

The American history appealed him as he began to read novels and soon he started reading non-fiction works, such as Bruce Catton's *The Army of the Potomac*. As he grew, his scope of reading widened and he devoured books on all kind of subjects, including Mormon prophets, archaeology, the Holocaust and histories of medicine. During his high school years, he discovered the philosophical works by great Greek and Roman philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch, Euclid and so on. It is through his learning of the philosophies that inspired his writings throughout his professional career.

Card attended Brigham Young High School, when his family moved to Orem, Utah. He was then enrolled at Brigham Young University (BYU), where he opted for archaeology but later switched his major to theatre for which he began to write. However, before earning his graduation degree he volunteered his services as a Mormon missionary in Brazil. During his time in Brazil he grew deeply enamored of their culture and the several cities he served at became model for the setting of his novels. Upon his return to Orem, he started a theater company but as it fell into debt he shut it down.

Subsequently, he pursued his passion for science fiction writing and soon the short story "Ender's Game" appeared while he worked at BYU press. He later adapted the short story into a novel of the same title. The copyrights for the novel were bought by Ben Bova at *Analog Science Fiction and Fact* and published in 1977. He also worked shortly for the LDS Church magazine, *The Ensign*. Following his post-graduation and doctorate, he resumed as a freelance writer and produced the sequel to *Ender's Game*, *Speaker for the Dead*. Both his books were awarded the Hugo Award and the Nebula Award in consecutive years, rendering him the first sci-fi author to win both prestigious accolades...

BIOGRAPHY #2: Excerpted from Wikipedia (citation footnotes can be found on the site)

Teaching

In 2005, Card accepted a permanent appointment as "distinguished professor" at Southern Virginia University in Buena Vista, Virginia, a small liberal arts college run according to the principles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Card has cited his frustration with the dismal teaching methodology for creative writing in most universities as a reason for accepting this position, along with his desire to teach the techniques of effective fiction writing to writers whose values are more congruent with his own.^[8] ...

Card has taught multiple courses in English and creative writing including courses analyzing the works of J. R. R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, hymn and lyric writing, and LDS fiction.

...

Children's books

Card ... asserted that "There is no such thing as children's literature." Furthermore:^[26]

I have not worked with YA editors; my work has never been marketed that way until Tor put a YA cover and a new ISBN on *Ender's Game*—fifteen years after the book first came out, and long after it had become popular with young readers. *Ender's Game* was written with no concessions to young readers. My protagonists were children, but the book was definitely not aimed at kids. I was perfectly aware that the rule of thumb for children's literature is that the protagonist must be a couple of years older than the target audience. You want ten-year-old readers, you have a twelve-year-old hero.

At the beginning of the book, Ender is six. Who, exactly, is the target audience?

Politics

Card has voiced his opposition to same-sex marriage and support of laws against homosexual activity, which led critics to organize to a boycott of the film version of *Ender's Game*^[30] – a development which itself received criticism.^[31] Owing to political developments, by the early 2010s Card believed the question of U.S. legalization of same-sex marriage moot.^[32]

Describing himself as a political liberal^[33] and moral conservative,^[34] ... In 2000, Card said, "Most of the program of both the left and the right is so unbelievably stupid it's hard to wish to identify myself with either... I regard the Soviet Union as simply state monopoly capitalism. It was run the way the United States would be if Microsoft owned everything. Real communism has never been tried! I would like to see government controls expanded, laws that allow capitalism to not reward the most rapacious, exploitative behavior. I believe government has a strong role to protect us from capitalism."^[37]

A vocal supporter of the U.S.'s War on Terror,^{[38][39]} according to *Salon*, Card is close to neoconservative concerning foreign policy issues.^[40]

...

Card became a member of the U.S. Democratic Party in 1976 ... As of at least 2011 he continued to call himself a democrat.^[41] Card supported Republican presidential candidates John McCain ...

In an August 2013 essay, presented as an "experiment" in fiction-writing called "The Game of Unlikely Events",^[44] Card described an alternative future in which President Barack Obama ruled as a "Hitler- or Stalin-style dictator" ...

Views on homosexuality

Card has publicly declared his support of laws against homosexual activity and same-sex marriage.^{[40][50]}

...

In May 2013 Card further wrote that since the US Supreme Court had ruled those laws unconstitutional in 2003, he has "no interest in criminalizing homosexual acts".^[52] Responding to public criticism of the 1990 essay, Card noted:

Oddly enough, even as I am attacked by some as a homophobe, I am attacked by others as being too supportive of homosexuality, simply because I cannot see individual homosexuals, in or out of my books, as anything other than human beings with as complex a combination of good and evil ...

Religion

Card's membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been an important facet of his life from early on. He is a great-great-grandson of Brigham Young, the Church's second president and prophet, and all of Card's ancestors for at least three generations have been members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. His ancestors include several other figures notable in the Church, including the Cardston colony founder Charles Ora Card. As such, his faith has been a source of inspiration and influence for both his writing and his personal views.^[11] Since 2008 Card has written a column of Latter-day Saint devotional and cultural commentary for the *Mormon Times*.^[64] Card has served as a bishop of his ward and has held various other church callings.

Personal life

Card and his wife, Kristine, have had five children, each named after one or more authors he and his wife admire. Their children's names are Michael Geoffrey (Geoffrey Chaucer), Emily Janice (Emily Brontë and Emily Dickinson), Charles Benjamin (Charles Dickens), Zina Margaret (Margaret Mitchell) and Erin Louisa (Louisa May Alcott). Charles, who had cerebral palsy, died shortly after his 17th birthday and their daughter Erin died the day she was born.^[10] Card and his wife live with their youngest child, Zina, in Greensboro, North Carolina.^[10]

...

Card is an avid fan of the science fiction television series *Firefly* and makes an appearance in the documentary *Done the Impossible* about *Firefly* fandom. He has also served on the boards of a number of organizations, including public television station UNC-TV (2013–present)^[66] and the National Organization for Marriage (2009–2013).^[67]

Card suffered a mild stroke on January 1, 2011, and was briefly hospitalized. He reported expecting to make a full recovery despite impairment of his left hand.

1970-1985 Timeline of Historical Events excerpted from *Wikipedia*

- 1970 – The first Earth Day is observed.
- 1970 – Kent State and Jackson State shootings occur during student protests which grow violent.
- 1970 – *American Top 40*, hosted by radio personality Casey Kasem, becomes the first successful nationally syndicated radio program featuring a weekly countdown.

- 1970 – The Public Broadcasting System (PBS) begins operations, succeeding National Educational Television (NET).
- 1970 – Singer-songwriter-guitarist-musician Jimi Hendrix dies of a drug overdose at the age 27.
- 1970 – Singer Janis Joplin dies of a drug overdose at the age of 27.
- 1970 – The Environmental Protection Agency is created.
- 1970 – The Occupational Safety and Health Act, or OSHA, is signed into law.
- 1971 – Singer Jim Morrison dies of a drug overdose at the age of 27.
- 1971 – President Richard Nixon ends the United States Gold standard monetary policy, known as the Nixon Shock
- 1971 – A ban on radio and television cigarette advertisements goes into effect in the United States
- 1971 – The landmark situation comedy, *All in the Family*, premieres on CBS.
- 1971 – The 26th Amendment is ratified, allowing 18-year-olds to vote.
- 1971 – In *New York Times Co. v. United States*, the U.S. Supreme Court rules that the *Pentagon Papers* may be published, rejecting government injunctions as unconstitutional prior restraint.
- 1972 – President Richard Nixon visits China, an important step in formally normalizing relations between the United States and China.
- 1972 – The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty is signed with the USSR.
- 1972 – First African-American major league baseball player Jackie Robinson dies.
- 1972 – Watergate scandal: Five men arrested for the burglary of the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate office complex in Washington, D.C.
- 1972 – U.S. presidential election, 1972: Richard M. Nixon re-elected president, Spiro T. Agnew reelected vice president
- 1972 – Apollo 17 flies to the Moon, and becomes the last manned mission there (as of April 2019).
- 1973 – President Nixon and Vice President Agnew begin second terms.
- 1973 – Former president Lyndon B. Johnson dies in Stonewall, Texas, of his third and final heart attack. It was at the LBJ ranch.
- 1973 – State Funeral of President Lyndon Johnson
- 1973 – *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court ruling overturns state laws against abortion.
- 1973 – The Paris Peace Accords ends direct U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.
- 1973 – The Senate Watergate hearings begin, highlighted by Fred Thompson's discovery of Nixon's secret tapes.
- 1973 – Skylab is launched as the USA's first space station.
- 1973 – Vice President Spiro T. Agnew resigns in disgrace as part of a plea bargain. Representative Gerald R. Ford of Michigan becomes the first person to be appointed Vice President under the 25th Amendment to the Constitution.
- 1973 – Watergate scandal: President Nixon fires two Attorneys General, and their appointed acting-Attorney General replacement fires the Watergate Special Prosecutor over disposition of the secret tapes.
- 1973–1974 — The United States is affected by the Arab Oil Embargo; gasoline prices skyrocket as supplies of gasoline and heating oil are in short supply. In response, Daylight Savings Time is started in January (nearly four months earlier than usual), and the national speed limit is lowered to 55 mph.

- 1974 – The 1974 Super Outbreak, the second-largest series of tornadoes in history (at 148), hits 13 U.S. states and one Canadian province; 315 people are killed and more than 5,000 are injured.
- 1974 – Hank Aaron of the Atlanta Braves breaks Babe Ruth's home run record by hitting his 715th career home run.
- 1974 – Watergate scandal: The House Judiciary Committee votes to impeach the President
- 1974 – *Sweet Home Alabama* released by Lynyrd Skynyrd.
- 1974 – President Nixon resigns, becoming the first and only U.S. President to step down. Vice President Ford becomes the 38th President. Nelson A. Rockefeller of New York becomes the second person to be appointed Vice President under the 25th Amendment to the Constitution.
- 1974 – Watergate scandal: Ford pardons Nixon for any crimes he may have committed against the United States while President, believing it to be in the "best interests of the country."
- 1974 – Restrictions are removed on holding private gold within the United States.
- 1975 – President Ford signs The Helsinki Accords.
- 1975 – The movie *Jaws* is released. It is a landmark in Steven Spielberg's movie career.
- 1975 – Construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System begins.
- 1975 – The Vietnam War ends.
- 1975 – Fall of Saigon
- 1975 – Bill Gates founds Microsoft, which will eventually dominate the home computer operating system market.
- 1975 – The Apollo–Soyuz Test Project begins, where an American Apollo spacecraft and a Soviet Soyuz spacecraft dock in orbit, marking the first such link-up between spacecraft from the two nations.
- 1975 – President Ford survives two assassination attempts in a 17-day span.
- 1975 – The television series *Wheel of Fortune* and *Saturday Night Live* premiere on NBC.
- 1975 – Sony's Betamax becomes the first commercially successful home video recording unit.
- 1976 – The Copyright Act of 1976 makes sweeping changes to United States copyright law.
- 1976 – Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak, and Ronald Wayne found Apple Inc.
- 1976 – Americans celebrate the Bicentennial of the United States.
- 1976 – U.S. presidential election, 1976: Jimmy Carter is elected president, Walter F. Mondale is elected vice president.
- 1977 – Carter sworn in as the 39th President, Mondale as Vice President
- 1977 – The first home personal computer, the Commodore PET, is released for retail sale.
- 1977 – The television miniseries *Roots* airs on ABC, to critical acclaim and record audiences.
- 1977 – The science-fiction space opera film *Star Wars* debuts in theaters.
- 1977 – The New York City blackout of 1977 lasts for 25 hours, resulting in looting and other disorder.
- 1977 – Elvis Presley, the king of rock and roll, dies in his home in Graceland at age 42. 75,000 fans line the streets of Memphis for his funeral
- 1977 – The Atari 2600 becomes the first successful home video game system, popularizing the use of microprocessor-based hardware and cartridges containing game code
- 1978 – Volkswagen becomes the second non-American automobile manufacturer (after Rolls-Royce) to open a plant in the United States, commencing production of the Rabbit.

- 1978 – The Camp David Accords commence, where Prime Minister Menachem Begin (Israel) and President Anwar Sadat (Egypt) begin the peace process at Camp David, Maryland.
- 1978 – The Humphrey Hawkins Full Employment Act is signed into law, adjusting the government's economic goals to include full employment, growth in production, price stability, and a balance of trade and budget.
- 1978 – The Senate votes to turn the Panama Canal over to Panamanian control on December 31, 1999.
- 1978 – Supervisor Harvey Milk and Mayor George Moscone are assassinated by Dan White in San Francisco on November 27.
- 1979 – The Three Mile Island nuclear accident occurs, America's most catastrophic nuclear power plant accident in its history.
- 1979 – The Iran hostage crisis begins. In the aftermath, a second energy crisis develops, tripling the price of oil and sending U. S. gasoline prices over \$1 per gallon for the first time.
- 1979 – American Airlines Flight 191 crashes after takeoff from O'Hare International Airport, killing all 271 aboard and two on the ground, making it the deadliest aviation incident on U.S. soil to date.
- 1979 — Facing bankruptcy, Chrysler receives government loan guarantees upon the request of CEO Lee Iacocca to help revive the company.
- 1979 – The Sugarhill Gang releases *Rapper's Delight*, widely considered the first major hip hop song. The hip hop music movement occurred in the Early 1970s, but would evolve over time.
- 1980 – The Refugee Act is signed into law, reforming United States immigration law and admitted refugees on systematic basis for humanitarian reasons
- 1980 – The Mount St. Helens eruption in Washington on 18 May kills 57.
- 1980 – U.S. presidential election, 1980: Ronald Reagan is elected president, with George H. W. Bush elected vice president
- 1980 – Former Beatle John Lennon is murdered by a gunman on 8 December in New York City.
- 1981 – Ronald Reagan inaugurated as the 40th President (January 20, 1981-January 20, 1989); George Bush becomes Vice President. On the same day Iran releases hostages, marking the end of the Iran hostage crisis.
- 1981 – Attempted assassination of Ronald Reagan by John Hinckley Jr.
- 1981 – 1982 United States is part of the global recession, with national unemployment as high as 9%, with some areas much higher, and inflation as high as 13.5%. Early_1980s_recession
- 1981 – Kemp-Roth Tax Cut
- 1981 – MTV signs on, becoming the first 24-hour cable network dedicated to airing music videos.
- 1981 – A hotel walkway collapses in Kansas City, Missouri, killing 114 and injuring over 200; it was the deadliest structural collapse to occur in the United States until 9/11.
- 1981 – The Space Shuttle *Columbia* is launched, marking America's first return to space since 1975.
- 1981 – Sandra Day O'Connor becomes the first woman on the U.S. Supreme Court.
- 1981 - In August, President Reagan fires 11,345 striking air traffic controllers. Professional_Air_Traffic_Controller_Organization_(1968)

- 1981–1982 — The killing of 6-year-old Adam Walsh (1981), and the disappearance of Johnny Gosch, a 12-year-old newspaper carrier from Des Moines, Iowa (1982), raise awareness of missing children cases in the United States.
- 1983 – 241 U.S. Marines are killed by a suicide bomb in Lebanon.
- 1983 – The United States invades Grenada.
- 1983 — Singer Karen Carpenter dies from complications of anorexia nervosa, raising awareness of eating disorders.
- 1983 – Chrysler unveils its minivans — the Dodge Caravan and Plymouth Voyager (as 1984 models) — to the public.
- 1983 - The Reagan Administration creates the Strategic Defensive Initiative, nicknamed Star Wars, to block nuclear missile attacks.
- 1984 – Most of the Eastern Bloc boycotts the Summer Olympics in Los Angeles.
- 1984 – U.S. presidential election, 1984: Ronald Reagan is re-elected president, with George H. W. Bush re-elected as vice president.
- 1984 – The drug problem intensifies as crack (a smokable form of cocaine) is first introduced into the Los Angeles area.
- 1984 – Awareness of child sexual abuse by pedophiles raised through high-profile media coverage on programs such as *60 Minutes* and *20/20*.
- 1985 – President Reagan and Vice President Bush begin their second terms.
- 1985 – Bernhard Goetz is indicted in New York on charges of attempted murder after shooting four young men whom he claimed were intent on mugging him.
- 1985 – Professional wrestling hits the mainstream with the World Wrestling Federation's first WrestleMania and the debut of *Saturday Night's Main Event*. The WWF's flagship star, Hulk Hogan, becomes a cultural icon.
- 1985 – World awareness of famine in Third World countries spark "We Are the World" and *Live Aid*. Also, awareness of AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) is raised with the death of actor Rock Hudson.
- 1985 – Country music singer Willie Nelson and John Mellencamp organize the first Farm Aid concert to raise money for family farmers facing financial crisis.
- 1985 – The Ford Taurus and Mercury Sable (as 1986 models), and the Nintendo Entertainment System are released to the public.
- 1985 – Gramm Rudman Hollings Balanced Budget Act