



Speaker for the Dead

Orson Scott Card

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In the aftermath of his terrible war, Ender Wiggin disappeared, and a powerful voice arose: the Speaker for the Dead, who told of the true story of the Bugger War.

Now long years later, a second alien race has been discovered, but again the aliens' ways are strange and frightening...again, humans die. And it is only the Speaker for the Dead, who is also Ender Wiggin the Xenocide, who has the courage to confront the mystery...and the truth.

Speaker for the Dead Details

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From Reader Review Speaker for the Dead for online ebook

Britney says

UGGHHH! I figured since some of my all-time favorite books are Ender's Game and Ender's Shadow, that Speaker for the Dead - another installment of Ender's life - was going knock my socks off too...I was SO disappointed. This book won the Hugo and Nebula awards - and one critic even said this was Card's best work. I have to assume that they weren't reading the same novel I was. They just couldn't have been. It was awful. This book was such a let down, I wish I never would have read it. It completely ruined the future Ender for me, so I'm going to forget the whole story as soon as possible. It was SO far out there, completely boring, and just too nuts that during the most intense part of the book, I found myself reading it as "and blah blah blah, and then blah blah blah..." Ender isn't the same brilliant and complex character he once was, and the new characters Card introduces are just sad. If you are looking for another story that brings back the excitement and intrigue of battle school, look elsewhere. Ender's future is bleak...make a good future for yourself by picking a different book.

Kerry says

Blah. After Ender's Game, I was all excited to read this one, and it . . . was pretty boring. It wasn't TERRIBLE -- I finished it, but it was mostly boring.

The only really interesting things about it were a) biological concepts that are totally different from what we have here on earth, which, after watching a lot of "forehead aliens" on Star Trek is a nice change, and b) the impact of the whole you-don't-age-when-you're-travelling-close-to-the-speed-of-light thing (i.e. relativity and whatnot.) Besides that . . . eh. Jane could have been interesting, but she wasn't. And I missed Valentine. And the stupid Portuguese names were too similar and therefore confusing.

Spider the Doof Warrior says

I've read this book several times since I first read Ender's Game back in 2001.

The problem with this book is everything could have been solved by simply asking the aliens how they reproduce from the start instead of assuming they reproduce like humans do. That kind of story almost always annoys the beejesus out of me.

No, I'm sorry, Orson Scott Card is NOT a good writer. Why doesn't anyone else NOTICE this? It drives me nuts. Maybe I should read this again, but I don't want to. I just seems like this one simple little thing would have changed everything. But OSC has to make things SEEM complicated. Like Novinha can't marry the man she wants to marry because he'll learn everything because she will be one person with him.

Why? For what reason do married people have to be the SAME PERSON? So, if you have some secret account, your husband gets to share it suddenly? This makes no sense. There's no real reason for it. I have got to get these OSC books out of my house. Anyone want them?

Edit-I am sorry, but no real actual scientist would ever, ever encounter aliens and assume they reproduced the same way humans do! This is just so deeply dippy. Couldn't Libo or that other fellow simply have said, we can't turn into trees, don't cut us? And you get 2 people in which this happens to. How are we supposed to believe that two people could not have said, don't do this, our bodies don't work like that. SEE? Simple! I'm sorry, OSC is overrated!

Another Edit

Now, you have to understand that I was a fan of OSC since Jr. High school when I read *Seventh Son* for the first time. But he's been driving me crazy. There's the homophobia to consider, the constant nagging in his stories and SWITCHING FROM THIRD PERSON TO FIRST PERSON! It's extremely irritating. You are not SAYING something silently but THINKING it and there's no reason to switch from third person to first person every few paragraphs.

I'm skimming through this book and I still can't believe that characters would actually be this stupid in the sense of letting themselves be killed by the piggies when they didn't have to be. This doesn't make them look noble or self sacrificing but really, really dumb and lacking in respect for another being's culture and way of life.

Also, the romance between Ender and Novinhua is not believable. Perhaps from Ender's side, but not from her.

On the bright side, at least Jane is AWESOME. I love her. I do find her whole part very satisfying and I hate when Ender turns her off and she becomes lost.

12/18/12 Edit-

Why did I read this book again? I think I need to just not read OSC the way I should NOT watch *Anti-christ* by Lars von Trier because I don't even want to SEE all of that genital mutilation.

I will hurt.

OSC just isn't a good writer. It seems like he is but he isn't. He nags and lectures. He tells when he should show you. He has no subtlety. His bad guys are too evil and his good guys are too good. He's terrible at character development. You're better off reading *Wraethlu* or something like that. Especially if you are keen on gay rights. That serious has fantastic character development, interesting beings going from being human to something else dealing with that. It's also very gay friendly too, unlike OSC who will never be gay friendly and will always think homosexuality will destroy society if you just allow people to openly be themselves.

Doc Opp says

When I first read this book I was in middle school and I hated it. It was such a disappointment as a follow up to the brilliance of *Ender's Game*. I re-read it when in grad school, and it was an entirely different experience.

The book has elements of mystery, religion/mysticism, anthropology (albeit fictional anthropology),

philosophy, politics, and intrigue. But its got a very slow start, and there isn't much in the way of action - its all about two cultures trying to understand each other. Its not a traditional sci-fi read, but for the right reader, it can be a really deep and meaningful experience.

Lyn says

Ian McKellon, Ellen DeGeneres, Nathan Lane, Jim Parsons and Samuel Delany sit in a trendy coffee house in Chelsea and discuss Orson Scott Card's 1985 novel Speaker for the Dead.

Ian: Let me begin our book club meeting with a very special thank you to our very gracious host, thank you Andre, as always your staff have been kind and hospitable and have once again made us all feel at home.

[all thank the host and servers]

Ian: Alright, so ... Speaker for the Dead, Card's sequel to his fine novel Ender's Game, any opening remarks?

Nathan: Well, what can I say, I loved it.

[all agree]

Ellen: It reminded me of Ursula Le Guin's writing, much more so than Ender's Game or any other of his writing that I have experienced.

Samuel: Yes, and Card used Le Guin's ansible, the device that allows for instantaneous communication across light years of distance.

Jim: On the set of Big Bang Theory, we often talk about the technology as a part of our back-story and we have frequently discussed the ansible.

Samuel: Speaking as a science fiction writer myself, I have to say that this may have been his virtuoso performance, again, more so than Ender's Game, which has some irony because Card stated that this was the book he intended to write before Ender's Game, and Ender's Game was written almost as a prequel, and then it became far more popular.

Ian: Certainly this was the more spiritual of the two books.

[all agree]

Nathan: I think that Card also borrowed from or paid tribute to many other writers in this book: Heinlein, obviously Le Guin, Clarke, and also maybe Joe Haldeman.

Jim: The lost in time, relative time gaps, where a traveller in a near light speed vehicle will age less than someone on Earth may be a ubiquitous them in his work.

Samuel: Yes, this was reminiscent of his The Worthing Saga stories, where one character finds himself centuries, even millennia older than his peers.

Ian: What do you think of his use of the aliens as being described as "piggies", was this perhaps an allusion to William Golding's brilliant 1954 novel Lord of the Flies?

Ellen: I wondered about that too! I mean maybe, almost in reverse, as if they are the alien juveniles to our older, but still immature and incomplete adults.

Nathan: Yes, I think that was definitely a goal of his – to make the piggies into a kind of retro mirror to ourselves, although they are certainly alien.

Samuel: The inclusion of the Hive Queen and the Hegemon is also an important inclusion, very much like something Frank Herbert would write, to offer a path towards redemption.

Ian: So it's unanimous, we all like his work and simply must invite him to our next book club meeting.

Lacey Louwagie says

Orson Scott Card has said that Speaker for the Dead is the book he always "meant to write" and that the only reason he wrote Ender's Game was as a "prequel," so he felt a little baffled when Ender's Game ended up becoming his most famous and most read work. After reading Speaker for the Dead, I understand where he's coming from. The complexity of issues tackled in Speaker for the Dead are much deeper than those in Ender; likewise, the cultures and worlds explored through Speaker are much more intricate. One thing I love about Orson Scott Card -- which I somehow always end up forgetting when I'm not reading him -- is that, despite the fact that he writes fairly "hard science fiction," his stories are still completely character driven. Unlike many SF writers, he spends as much time developing his characters as he spends developing his society, and the result is a compelling book regardless of the plot. (Heck, I even enjoyed Ender's Shadow, which basically had the same plot as Ender's Game except told from a different character's perspective.)

Despite my enjoyment of the book, there were a few things that annoyed me. Although Orson Scott Card's characters are well-developed, the female characters seemed to have less complexity; in particular, the principle female character spent about 3/4 of the book wallowing in her own self-pity. This may endear her to male readers with a knight-in-shining-armor complex (as, indeed, it endeared her to Ender), but as a female reader I wanted her to just get over it already. Orson Scott Card seems to play the female moral superiority card even as he grapples with some real ambivalence about female leadership -- the female leaders in this book were either veiled tyrants (whom Ender felt compelled to put in their place) or rendered ineffective as leaders the moment Ender burst on the scene. Finally, Ender himself is a main character in this book whom you're almost tempted to despise just because the author is so clearly in love with him. But truth be told, that didn't keep me from being a little enamored with him, myself -- although the "piggies," an alien race introduced in this book -- held my heart and my attention most completely.

Clouds says

Christmas 2010: I realised that I had got stuck in a rut. I was re-reading old favourites again and

again, waiting for a few trusted authors to release new works. Something had to be done.

On the spur of the moment I set myself a challenge, to read every book to have won the Locus Sci-Fi award. That's 35 books, 6 of which I'd previously read, leaving 29 titles by 14 authors who were new to me.

While working through this reading list I got married, went on my honeymoon, switched career and became a father. As such these stories became imprinted on my memory as the soundtrack to the happiest period in my life (so far).

I really liked this book.

I've never read *Ender's Game*.

I've never read any other Orson Scott Card.

But I will, because I *really* liked this book.

The overall premise is superb – mankind's dark history with the buggers, their potential for redemption with the piggies, the mysterious Descolada plague, the precautions taken to protect the xenobiology making understanding the evolutionary leaps impossible... it's fascinating stuff.

But it's the individuals who populate this world – Ender who is the very epitome of his race, the killer seeking redemption, the last Hive Queen, Jane, the insecure AI, Ender's genius sister, Valentine, Novinho, the brilliant but bitter xenobiologist who Ender is determined to make accept his love – her dysfunctional family! and finally, there are the stars of the show – the piggies themselves – an alien race who rank up there with Hamilton's Kiint as my personal favourites. Lots of sci-fi starts with a good idea or two – but very few have a cast like this.

It's awkward, anguished personal stuff, wrapped up as a murder-mystery inside a scientific enigma, driven along relentlessly by a humble messiah.

My only complaint is the choice of names, the 'buggers' and the 'piggies'. Let's face it – these are bloody ridiculous names for well-crafted alien races.

One of the ways I judge a book is by how many moments remain behind afterwards, resonating with my understanding of the world. For *Speaker*, there are dozens – and they've lingered in vibrant, sparkling form.

The one I'll never forget is the moment that gives Ender his purpose (and the book it's title) – when he Speaks the Death of Marcão. It's a scene that I knew was coming from the get-go, – a scene I tried to guess and second guess, and still found surprising, still found emotional and couldn't have broken away from had my wife gone into labour while the house was on fire.

When the piggies ask (view spoiler) for wood – I was grinning like a loony!

When the piggies realize why (view spoiler) – my heart broke for the (view spoiler) little aliens!

When Ender helped (view spoiler) Human – my chest ached.

When they crack (view spoiler)!

When Ender wins over (view spoiler)!

When Valentine (view spoiler)!

Olhado's eyes!
When Ender (view spoiler) Novinho!
When Ender (view spoiler) Queen!
When Ender writes (view spoiler)!

Speaker for the Dead is the kind of book I was looking for when I started my Locus Quest and I've found it hard to resist buying *Ender's Game* and *Xenocide* immediately. But those are the bad old ways – to find a new author I like and then devour their catalogue before moving on - that's a habit I'm trying to break. So I'll space out the Ender's Saga books – enjoy them over a few months (or maybe years?) – but I will definitely be reading them at some point.

(I've now read Ender's Game and Xenocide too and loved them both, so we're still going strong with one more in the core series to go)

Apatt says

Ender's Game is one of those rare sf classics that are placed in the top 5 of most "All-time best sf books", I have seen it occupy the pole position in a few such lists. Such accolade is not undeserved as Ender's Game is a great book, and one of the best military sf novels ever published, alas military sf has never been my favorite sf sub genre so Speaker for the Dead is much more to my taste. What makes this book very special are the existential and philosophical issues raised by this book. I also love the *Pequeninos* (piggies) alien species and their highly unusual stages of growth. Their culture is very alien and this leads to a terrible misunderstanding and a couple of tragic human deaths, that said, there are some recognizable human characteristic in their behavior. Characterization has always been a particular strength of Orson Scott Card and this is very much a character-centric book, though the sf element, the sense of wonder and immersion is very strong. The character of Andrew Wiggin (Ender) is very different from the previous novel he has grown up, grown old and attained a lot of wisdom. Some of the alien piggies characters such as Rooter and Human are as vivid as the human ones. For me this book has a lot more emotional resonance than its predecessor as I can identify with some of the problems the characters go through. This book epitomizes all that I look for in a perfect sf novel.

The two books in the Ender's Saga that follow this one, Xenocide and Children of The Mind are not shabby either.

Stephen says

One of my **ALL Time Favorites**. I loved Ender's Game, but I think that this novel surpasses it on just about every level. Writing, emotional resonance, characterization and depth. This novel is a much more "adult" read than Ender's Game. It impacted me greatly and I found that it stayed with me long after I finished reading it.

6.0 stars. HIGHEST POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATION!!

Winner: Hugo Award Best Novel.

Winner: Nebula Award Best Novel.

Winner: Locus Award for Best Science Fiction Novel.

Nominee: Campbell Award Best SF Novel.

Tony says

My favorite book of all time, if only because it brings back sentimental memories. More than simply a sci-fi page turner, it deals with non-trivial matters such as guilt and love. In a whole different league than the rest of the Ender series, not to mention the rest of Scott Card's works. A must read for anyone who was ever interested in sci-fi.

J.G. Keely says

While Ender's Game is a solid piece of modern sci fi, the sequel falls all too short. 'Speaker' is preachy and allegorical, and the characters often devolve into simple mouthpieces for the author's opinions, which are numerous, long, and not particularly original.

While I do respect that every author has his own point of view, and that one should be able to glean some understanding from their books, such a heavy-handed case detracts from the story and characters as a whole. The suspension of disbelief should not be broken by the author's message; rather, the message should be communicated by carefully built characters and situations so that it emerges naturally and believably.

While in the first book the main character was often guilty of extended internal monologue, this underlined the character's personal journey instead of just pushing a preconceived worldview. The second novel has a transparency of motive that, for me, destroyed both believability and the central flow of the story. Card's belief is not a hindrance to his ability to write a good story, but his overbearing expression of it sadly is.

Wes Morgan says

Wow. This book was a very pleasant surprise. Absolutely one of the finest works of fiction I've ever read. It's unfortunate that it's technically science fiction because that stigma will cause many to dismiss it out of hand. That would be a big mistake, as this is a great novel regardless of genre.

Speaker for the Dead is a sequel to Card's best-known work, Ender's Game. I read that first and enjoyed it, but it is The Hobbit to Speaker's Lord of the Rings. It helps you understand the characters and names of things and places better, but reading it first is not essential to appreciating the story in Speaker. Although, if you enjoy Speaker half as much as I did, you'll want to (re-)read Ender's Game next anyway just to get more background on Ender himself and the events of his childhood. So you may as well start there. :)

Speaker for the Dead reminds me of other epic, character relationship-focused novels such as One Hundred Years of Solitude or Midnight's Children. Here the advanced future technology stands in for the magical realism of those works. Unlike much science fiction, the characters are very well realized and developed, as

are their relationships with each other. Card's background is in psychology, not technology, which makes the book much more accessible to those who aren't big sci-fi geeks (and, I would argue, a more interesting story over all). As an example of this, the book focuses on the painful effects space travel has on human relationships (because of the time dilation effects of relativity, a voyage of a few weeks for those on the ship lasts several decades for those they leave behind) rather than how the propulsion technology works.

The story revolves around a small colony of Brazilian Catholics on a planet they've named Lusitania. They discover another intelligent species on this planet, the second humanity has ever run into. We wiped out the first such species in an act of self-defense, but we have since come to regret this action after realizing it was based on mutual misunderstanding. So humanity is determined not to let the same thing happen here.

This story of epic scope is told from the perspective of the family who is charged with studying this species on Lusitania and the small community of the colony in which they live. We see 3 generations of this family over the course of the book, but most of the novel focuses on Novinha (pronounced no-VEEN-yah) and her 6 children. The family's broken home and lives of quiet desperation are interrupted only by death, on several occasions and twice at the hands of the alien species. These deaths deflate humanity's hope of peaceful coexistence with the aliens.

Into this mix comes Ender, who has a very unique connection to the first alien species we wiped out (I won't say anymore about that because it's a spoiler for Ender's Game). He is now a Speaker for the Dead, which is a sort of humanist priesthood of people who learn about those who have died and speak the truth of their lives, their hopes, fears, intentions, virtues, and vices. He is called by several members of the family to speak the deaths they have experienced in an act of defiance of the Catholic hierarchy that essentially runs the colony.

As I've implied, the characters are what make this book great, and that applies to all of them, human or otherwise. The alien species on Lusitania are called "piggies" because they resemble pigs who walk upright and speak. They are a fascinating creation of Card's imagination and you grow to care very much about them and a few individuals in particular as you read the book, as does Ender in the story. The humans' attempts to understand their culture and help them to understand ours are a central component of the book and cast many things we take for granted in a fascinating light.

This book is a wonderful story of redemption; of old misunderstandings and pain turning into mutual respect and love via decades of blood, sweat, and tears; of humans (and non-humans) learning and growing and being better than our worst demons; and of loss and suffering planting the seeds of new loves and lives.

It's a story spanning thousands of years and a hundred worlds, but told in the most intimate of settings, a single extended family. It shows humans at their best and their worst, and makes you care a great deal about the individual characters all the while. I can't recommend this novel highly enough.

Brian says

Calling this book the sequel to Ender's Game is like calling Mary Poppins the sequel to Star Wars. It's boring, overly observational, and totally unrelated in style and setting to Ender's Game.

Carolyn says

I can understand why this book might not enthrall all of its readers but for me, it was brilliant. The anthropological framework certainly entertained me and the deeper themes hooked me.

The concept of a Speaker for the Dead and the healing properties of truth make the book a self-searching read. Perhaps the book does not glorify the catholic concept of confession, but it certainly values repentance and forgiveness while acknowledging the absurdity of the act of forgiveness. Above all, it reminds readers of our common humanity and urges each to pursue peace through understanding.

"When you really know somebody, you can't hate them...Or maybe it's just that you can't really know them until you stop hating them...Once you understand what people really want, you can't hate them anymore. You can fear them, but you can't hate them, because you can always find the same desires in your own heart."

"...she felt strangely healed, as if simply speaking her mistake were enough to purge some of the pain of it. For the first time, then, she caught a glimpse of what the power of speaking might be. It wasn't a matter of confession, penance, and absolution, like the priests offered. It was something else entirely. Telling the story of who she was, and then realizing that she was no longer the same person. That she had made a mistake, and the mistake had changed her, and now she would not make the mistake again because she had become someone else, someone less afraid, someone more compassionate."

"Sickness and healing are in every heart. Death and deliverance are in every hand."

"How suddenly we find the flesh of God within us after all, when we thought that we were only made of dust."

Will M. says

Card claims that this is his masterpiece. He said that he only wrote Ender's Game so that he could write this. It's such a shame though that Ender's Game became such a hit, and Speaker for the Dead became its shadow.

Before I start with the serious part of the review, let me start with something that I can't seem to erase from my mind while reading this. The new alien species are called piggies. Piggies. The thing running inside my head was

and it stayed like that till the end. I'm not proud of it, but for me, Card wrote of a new alien species, in which they are pigs. Not so new to me.

Another thing running in my mind would be the word ramen. It kept appearing from time to time. Mr. Card, a ramen for me would be

I believe that this is my first time using pictures for my review. Might be my last time, but who knows what

the future might hold.

Like what 90% of the goodreads people say about this, Speaker is more of a philosophical novel, rather than a hardcore SF-war one. That didn't bother me, to be honest, because the issues tackled in the novel were quite interesting. There was not a dull moment in the novel, so that's a good start. The reason why I didn't like this though would be because of the bad ending. After such an amazing world building and character development, the ending was just terrible (for me). It felt rushed and incomplete. He could've made the novel a bit longer, considering how average the size is. It's either the novel was inadequate in size, or I was just wanting more.

Only two characters from Ender's Game were still present in this novel, Ender and Valentine. I really liked both characters, so I was thrilled to read more of the two. The novel was 90% Ender of course, and probably 5% Valentine. I'm not complaining much because Ender's one of my favorites, but the other characters were just not interesting to me. The main problem would be their names. I hated their names. They were made up and weird as shit. I hate those things, it hinders my ability to like a character. If I hate the name right from the start, odds are I'll hate the character itself. Come to think of it though, even if the characters had better names, I don't think I'd like them as much as some characters from Ender's though. Most of the characters here were rather flat and boring. They contributed a lot in the plot, but I couldn't see myself remembering them in the future.

Plot wise, this novel was above satisfactory. It didn't falter off at one point, so consistency was present. Chapter after chapter I was impatient to know what would happen next, and what would be the explosive ending I was expecting. I was really disappointed though. Even the secret of Pipo was terribly bullshit. After reading the whole novel to find out about it, it felt like Card gave me a piece of canned meat, after expecting a nicely grilled steak.

4/5 stars. Main problem would be the dull characters and terrible ending. Overall though, this novel was really great. The "journey" was good, but not enough to garner a 5 star rating. I really liked Ender's Game more, but I'm not saying don't read this, on the contrary, I'm also recommending this. Not sure if I'll read Xenocide right away, because the ending of this one doesn't make me want to know what's going to happen next, but I will read it probably next year (2015).
