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Children Of The Mind (The Ender Quintet)



Synopsis

The planet Lusitania is home to three sentient species: the Pequeninos, a large colony of humans, and the Hive Queen, who was brought there by Ender Wiggin. But now, once again, the human race has grown fearful; the Starways Congress has gathered a fleet to destroy Lusitania. Ender's oldest friend, Jane, an evolved computer intelligence, can save the three sentient species of Lusitania. She has learned how to move ships outside the universe, and then instantly back to a different world, abolishing the light-speed limit. But it takes all the processing power available to her, and the Starways Congress is shutting down the network of computers in which she lives, world by world. Soon Jane will not be able to move the ships. Ender's children must save her if they are to save themselves. Children of the Mind is the fourth book in Orson Scott Card's Ender Quintet.

Book Information

Series: The Ender Quintet (Book 4)

Audio CD

Publisher: Macmillan Audio; Unabridged edition (May 30, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1593974841

ISBN-13: 978-1593974848

Product Dimensions: 5.8 x 1.6 x 4.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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Customer Reviews

Having read and loved the first three books in the Ender series, there was no way I was going to miss this entry. Like so many others, though, I am of split mind about the finale (and how appropriate, given the schizophrenic existence of its lead characters Ender-Peter and Val-Jane). While "Children of the Mind" does contain Card's trademark wit and while the last 100 pages kick into high gear, the final installment, on its own, is as unsatisfying as it is pleasing. One of the major problems is Card's ill-considered decision to publish "Xenocide" and "Children of the Mind" as two books rather than one cohesive unit; the fourth entry seems more an epilogue to the series--a 350-page denouement--than the climax it should have been. Card admits he originally planned the

two books as one work, and this admission resonates like an apology. Well over a third of "Children of the Mind" summarizes what happened in previous volumes, and another third is riddled with endless conversations on political and metaphysical topics, many of which the characters already debated at length in "Xenocide." Only in the last 100 pages does Card finally abandon the themes that were presented more thoroughly (and competently) in the earlier books and turn his attention to resolving the many loose ends. In sum, Card would have been much wiser to have written a unified 600-page book rather than 900 needlessly repetitive pages. The second problem is that Card's philosophical ruminations often steer awfully close to quasi-religious mumbo-jumbo. The entire section set on Pacifica, a planet governed by Samoans, feels particularly incongruous. (Peter and Wang-mu wonder aloud--twice--what they are doing on this particular world, a question that is never really fully addressed.

About halfway through "Children of the Mind" I realized that I hated it. With a passion. Anything that evokes so much passion can't be worthless. That's why I'm giving it 3 stars. If you loved the first three books as much as I did, you may similarly feel a strong emotion when you read this one. It's not exactly boring. I just felt like I was in another universe trying to understand what in the world Card was doing. Why do I hate it so much? Because the characters are all varying degrees of unsympathetic, and all of the major action surrounds Card's weird new mysticism, rather than the intense ethical dilemmas of the previous books. This book is like the opposite of the other books and I couldn't understand why. No one is rational, no one is wise, no one has any empathy at all. The spirit of Ender Wiggin doesn't exist in this book. No, Ender isn't really present in this book. Card would like you to believe that he is, in the form of Peter and Valentine, Ender's "children of the mind", but I found those characters frustrating and unbelievable and not at all like any side of Ender. Interestingly, they could be viable characters on their own, but Card insists on treating them as if they are not real people and we should not care what happens to them (especially Young Valentine who is subjected to extreme emotional torture but we're not supposed to care about her feelings, she's just an "empty vessel"). No strong characters rise up to replace the absence of Ender. Card tries, with Miro (who becomes loathsome in my opinion) and Peter (all the fun sociopathy drained out of him). With the exception of Wang-Mu, all of the female characters come off looking really bad. You'll wonder why Ender married Novinha, as awful, self-centered and destructive as she is.

Talk about pretentious -- in the afterword to Children of the Mind, Orson Scott Card compares himself to Nobel Prize winning author Kenzaburo Oe. And that really illustrates the problems not

only with this latest novel, but the problem of the Ender series, in general. Card is so taken with moral and character dilemmas that he gives short shrift to the actual plot of the story. It might be acceptable if Card had the craft and skill of good "mainstream" author, but he is so heavy-handed that his attempts at literary depth are embarrassing. Ender's Game was a great novel because Card did a magnificent job of compression; the result was a taut, gripping and moving story. Speaker For The Dead was a very good novel because the main plot involving the mystery of piggy culture and biology was strong enough to carry the reader past the bland soap opera of the Portugese biologist's family. But the third novel, Xenocide, completely collapsed under its weight, and Children of the Mind -- after starting with what is admittedly a touching scene with Ender and his wife in the monastery -- dissolves into a mess. Any interesting plot flow that might have moved the book forward stops dead every time -- and there are many of them -- Mr. Card yields to his didactic side and inserts a boring, almost expository, conversation about the meaning of reality. Mr. Card also continues another unfortunate trend that began in Speaker For the Dead, as he again speculates on how different ethnic cultures might handle space colonization.

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