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Ender's Game Mini Analysis

Ender's Game is a book that has surprising amounts of depth, feeling, and intense characterization. We are lead to feel the anguish of a young boy who is forced to mature beyond his years, pushed to every mental, emotional and physical extreme that can be devised, all for what is viewed as the greater good of humanity. Through this, we come to know Andrew "Ender" Wiggin, his capability for destruction, and most peculiarly, - his exceptionally deep ability to empathize.

The primary storyline of *Ender's Game* takes place years after the alien "buggers" invaded the solar system and attacked earth. It follows Ender's training to become the commander of the interstellar fleet. From the day he is born, Ender is manipulated by the shadowy Colonel Graff, trained and molded into the single person who can guarantee the continued existence of humankind. This constant observation and manipulation is justified because Graff believes that Ender (and by extension all the other children, trainers and people at Battle and Command School), are acceptable collateral damage for bringing about the freedom that is represented by the defeat and extinction of the buggers. Graff holds no illusions about his position, his role, nor Ender's understanding of it, as is evidenced by this line: "We might both do despicable things, Ender, but if humankind survives, then we were good tools." (Card, 50)

This single mindedness to a crusade, with the willingness to do whatever is needed, including the

psychological destruction and exile of dozens or hundreds of people brings to mind the 2006 film *V for Vendetta*. This film's protagonist is similarly a shadowy type of character who is seen when he chooses to be seen, and whose plans are so far reaching that the viewer doesn't comprehend them until the climax. The lead character, V, takes a young innocent under his wing, and manipulates and tortures her until she effectively becomes his tool. Finally, we see this younger, impressionable character carrying out the machinations that he had put into place. In another parallel to Colonel Graff, we see that V commits to these machinations knowing the damage that he is doing, but forging on instead: "I know you may never forgive me... but nor will you understand how hard it was for me to do what I did. Every day I saw in myself everything you see in me now" (McTeigue, *V for Vendetta*). Again, we see that V has a greater good in mind - he is attempting to overthrow a corrupt government that spies on and controls its people through media manipulation and fear based gestapo tactics. In both stories, we see the same story arch, the same character manipulations, and the same overarching desire to complete the planned plot, to the exclusion of all else, regardless of the collateral damage. Although in *V for Vendetta* there is a scene implying that Evey can make her own choice as to whether or not to finish off the modern-day gunpowder plot, in reality, she has been brainwashed by V such that she will continue until the end, exactly as Ender does.

The overarching theme of both of these pieces of media is the same - the freedom and safety of humanity. Both take place in a future that has active or impending issues that threaten the life and liberty of the average person, and to some extent, both resolve in a way that opens up the future for people. Where the most critical divergence comes is in the denouement - where *V for Vendetta* resolves in a Hollywood explosion and action violence, *Ender's Game* resolves with

almost a whimper. Ender's realization of his actions, his empathy with the buggers and his desire to help them continue their life make for a much more impacting, meaningful and feeling-laden story. The emotional place that Ender finally comes to amidst all his internal turmoil is that we should strive to love and understand others, and the reader has built such a deep relationship with Ender that we believe and accept this message.

Ender's Game has been accepted as a staple of science fiction for a long time, and it's easy to see why. Orson Scott Card's writing allows us to feel the emotions that Ender experiences, and we empathize with him, his dilemmas, his guilt, his loss of innocence, and his process of hardening and disillusionment in a way that is rare and beautiful. We agonize over the emotional pain that Ender feels, and also share the grief when he realizes he has been directly responsible for the genocide of an entire intelligent species. Card manages to cram an entire lifetime of maturing, schooling, life and death into Ender's character. Despite this, Ender ages only a handful of years, and all of this feels entirely believable - and as a science-fiction writer, almost nothing could be more important than believability. Despite the bleak and somewhat dystopian future that Card depicts - humanity at war, population control and lack of religious freedom, Card manages to create an almost perfect human character in Ender Wiggin. There is no question that *Ender's Game* deserves the accolades that it has won, and will long be considered a classic.

WORKS CITED:

Card, Orson Scott. *Ender's Game*. Tor Books, 1985. Print.

McTeigue, James. *V for Vendetta*. Warner Brothers, 2006. DVD.