**Ender's Game Theme of Youth**

What do you usually think of when you ponder childhood? Toys and games? Schoolwork? Innocence? Growing up? Being carefree? *Ender's Game* is all about kids, but it doesn't fit any of our assumptions about childhood: Ender is at school, but his schooling is about warfare. He plays games, but they're military games. Ender is also under a lot of pressure. He's fighting a war against aliens that might invade Earth, after all. And the kids in *Ender’s Game* are not exactly innocent – they’re bullies, killers, and manipulators. Then again, are kids in real life usually innocent? Card doesn't think so. Check out what he has to say about the matter:

*I show children as being every bit as ambitious, conniving, controlling, fearful, ignorant, angry, hungry, and loving as adults. Which, of course, they are.*

The innocence of children comes from the fact that they do not have enough knowledge or understanding to grasp what the full consequences of their actions will be. […] They try for an immediate consequence, without considering what else might result from their action. […] We consider children innocent, therefore, because when they do rotten things, we know that they did not realize that these rotten things would result. Adulthood is when you are expected to anticipate the reasonable results of your choices.

Orson Scott Card sure makes us reconsider our thoughts about how sweet kids are.

**Questions About Youth**

1. Check out the Orson Scott Card quote above.
   1. Do you think that Ender is "innocent" based on Card's definition?
   2. Does he lose his innocence at some point in the book?
   3. Would you consider any of the other children in the book innocent?
2. *Ender’s Game* isn’t exactly a regular coming-of-age novel, but it does show some growing up.
   1. what does it mean to be grown up in this novel?
   2. Are these kids already grown up? Why does Card use kids in this story? Why?
3. According to the Graff, Mazer, and other adult characters, was it necessary to use kids to fight the buggers? Do you agree with them?
4. **Create a theme statement about childhood in relation to Ender’s Game.**