



Earth Afire

Orson Scott Card , Aaron Johnston

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One hundred years before Ender's Game the aliens arrived on Earth with fire and death. This is the story of the First Formic War. Victor beat the alien ship to Earth, but just barely. But it wasn't enough to convince skeptical governments that there was a threat.

Earth Afire Details

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From Reader Review Earth Afire for online ebook

Thomas Edmund says

Earth Afire begins immediately after Earth Unaware, Victor is on the Moon trying to convince the world of their impending doom, Rem is out in space continuing to struggle to define himself from within his father's 'long shadow' and a few other characters its hard to care about do some stuff in space.

Afire offers far in terms of futuristic earth, insight into corporate culture, politics and importantly what earthlings think of 'space-born' While I appreciated the effort to create a believable world for the future, I felt like the novel was essentially anti-China in its politicking. While some of the international relations portrayed seemed to have some level authenticity, the level of belligerence of China in the face of alien invasion is hard to swallow.

On the positive side the level of action is high and there was little boredom to be experienced within the chapters of this book. Like many middle children, one feels like this book is a 'conclusion-tease.' Looking forward to the next installment

Paulette says

This novel is why I'm a huge fan of Orson Scott Card - but woe to be the second book of a trilogy. I'm begging for the final installment already!

In this instance, the reader should really read "Earth Unaware" - the first in the Formic Wars series. Several references are made in this novel that would make more sense having read the first book.

Weaving in four plot lines is a dauntless task, but Aaron Johnston and Card do a marvelous job of bringing it all together by the end. Follow the story of an alien attack on earth and the courageous but flawed heroes who are working to save humankind.

Just know that readers who loved Ender's Game will lose sleep as these books cannot be put down!

Jessica Lester says

Loved it. Would read it again. Would recommend to a friend. I'm a huge fan of the universe and enjoyed the story. There are some nit picky things that bothered me, but didn't stop me from enjoying it at all.

Michael Hirsch says

Ugh. Probably the worst book I've read of Card's. I'd like to think that it is all the fault of the coauthor, because this book has none of the insights and humanity displayed by everything else I've read from Card. The characters are all one note voices. They have one way to react to everything and they never change. The dialog is contrived and completely unbelievable--especially when it is children talking.

There was nothing clever anywhere in the book. There were a lot of really smart characters, but they never did anything particularly smart. In fact, any time the plot require a not so smart move, the smart characters would have a brain fart and do it. it makes the writer's job easier, but as a reader it is very annoying.

Finally, they couldn't even finish the story. There are two plot lines going simultaneously, both approaching the climax. One succeeds (in a totally predictable ways that I saw coming 200 pages earlier) and the other is about 5 pages from a conclusion when the book ends. Very bad form!

I'd recommend against reading the book, but I know you will because it is by Card and is set in the Ender universe.

2.5 stars.

Eric Allen says

Earth Afire

By Orson Scott Card and Aaron Johnston

A Review by Eric Allen

If you wish to skip straight to the review, the beginning will be highlighted in bold for your convenience. Before I begin, allow me to address the elephant in the room. Mr. Card's rather outspoken views on same sex marriage. Being a fellow Mormon, I am **ABHORRED** by his recent behavior, and the way he hides behind religion to support his bigotry. Is this not the same man that wrote *Speaker for the Dead*? A beautiful book that is, at its heart, **ABOUT TOLERANCE**, and learning to live with and accept **THOSE THAT ARE DIFFERENT!**? Christ never said love thy neighbor unless he happens to love dudes. He said to love thy neighbor as thyself **PERIOD**. You do not tell your fans to take up arms against any government that would allow same sex marriage simply because you find the idea to be icky. This flies in the face of **EVERYTHING** his books stand for. So, either the books are complete bullshit, or Card is. Any man that nurtures such hatred and bile for his fellow man is no true Christian, (and yes, Mormons **ARE** Christian, whether you want to believe it or not) for he has forgotten the teachings of the one whom he worships as the Son of God, and the Savior of Mankind.

Though I may disagree with him, he has the basic human right to speak his mind. Taking away this right is on par with his wishes to strip the Homosexual Community of their own basic human rights. What really angers me about the whole situation is the blatant hypocrisy he displays in doing so. He writes book after book about understanding, tolerance, and acceptance. Then he proves that he has none of these things for anyone that is not the same as him. For decades, Card stood in the literary world, making statement after statement of peace and understanding, and now he attacks those different from himself with such vehemence that he would have people rising up in arms against their own governments to stop same sex marriage being legalized. The Holy Bible speaks against homosexuals, this is true, but it also speaks **MORE HARSHLY** against hypocrites. Mr. Card, along the same religious angle you use as justification: When you stand before God on the Last Day to be judged, what will you say to him when he asks why you persecuted and hated these, His children? You, being a Mormon, should understand better than many what it is like to be universally hated simply for being what you are. Why project that same hatred upon others who have done nothing against you save wishing to live a different type of lifestyle from yours? How does allowing homosexuals to marry harm you or make you less in any way? It doesn't. You would deny them basic human rights because you don't like them, and do not wish to accept, or even tolerate them, end of story. The contrast between this behavior and the things you have published is baffling. It is a deep and painful betrayal of the values that you taught me to live by from a young age with your books.

But I digress. This is a review of the book that the man co-wrote, not of the man himself. Despite what some people may think, these things are **NOT** one and the same. The fact that I enjoyed the book does **NOT** mean

that I endorse Card's views on homosexuality, or his position on same sex marriage. I could not disagree with him more. As far as I'm concerned, he is a homophobic, hypocritical bigot. I will tolerate no accusations that I support his views. I do not, and never will. I believe so strongly, in fact, that I am currently boycotting buying any of Card's works until he learns some of the lessons he has tried to teach IN HIS OWN DAMN WRITING!!! My copy of Earth Afire is an ARC provided by my publisher. I did not buy it, nor would I have. I am not in the habit of financially supporting those who would use what power they possess toward hateful ends. It is not much, but that and writing out my feelings on the matter here, are what I can do to show my displeasure with his recent behavior.

With that said, on with the review.

In my review of Earth Unaware, the first book in this prequel series, I stated that I have waited more than twenty years to get the story of the First Bugger Invasion from Ender's Game. It was a part of the backstory that highly intrigued me. I was rather disappointed that the first book, with the subtitle "The First Formic War" was not that book. It was a great book, and highly entertaining in its own way, but it was not the book it promised to be. HOWEVER, Earth Afire is. It is the book I have waited the majority of my life to read, and it was everything I could ever have hoped it would be.

Leaving a trail of destruction in its wake, the Formic ship plows through the Solar System toward Earth, disrupting communications so that little word can be sent ahead of it to warn the people of Earth of the danger. With little effort, the Formics shrug off every attack thrown against them upon reaching Earth and send down landers to southern China, where they begin killing everything in sight and stripping the land bare.

Disobeying orders, Mazer Rackham, future hero of the Second Invasion races to one of the landing sites to help with the evacuation and finds himself alone, behind enemy lines, unarmed, against an entire army of aliens, whilst special forces try to sneak into China against the wishes of the Chinese government to help.

Meanwhile Victor has a plan to take out the Formic Mothership in orbit, and must ally himself with the man who murdered his uncle in order to accomplish it.

The Good? The characters are all very likeable, and well written. Card understands how people think, act and interact with one another. He's always been very good at creating relatable, realistic characters with real moral dilemmas that pull you in and are every bit as exciting as his action scenes.

There are a lot of nods to books that happen later in the Enderverse timeline that fans of the series will likely find highly enjoyable. Normally such things are rather distracting, but Card was able to incorporate subtle winks at his readers throughout the book without it being oppressive or distracting.

Card has really captured the horror of invasion by an utterly alien species that has no understanding of humanity, or care for it. The way the Buggers, a.k.a. Formics, act is consistent with their behavior in later books, and believably alien. Their motivations make sense once the characters sit down and think about them, but on the surface they're completely nonsensical and utterly alien. This is something that Science Fiction writers rarely get right. Aliens are usually either beasts, or so close to human in behavior that they might as well be human. Card realizes that an alien race is going to be alien and does a very good job of conveying it.

The Bad? In Ender's Game, the First Invasion is portrayed as a primarily space based conflict, with a few mentions of landers in China. In this book, it's pretty much the other way around. It's just a nitpick, but it doesn't fit with pre-established continuity. Nor does Mazer Rackham's role in this book. He was the hero of the Second Invasion, an unspecified number of years after the First Invasion, but the implication in Ender's

Game is that it was several decades later, especially with the advancements in technology as described in Ender's Game when talking about the Second Invasion, which was definitively a space conflict. There's just a lot of continuity issues with the original source material. It's nothing that anyone but the most avid of fans will really notice or care about, and it probably won't take away from anyone's enjoyment. But, while I was reading it, I was constantly thinking about how a lot of things didn't fit with pre-established continuity.

The Chinese are not portrayed very well. I believe that Card was going for showing how proud a people they are. However, it does come off as subtly racist. I know it's hard for a white guy to say anything about other ethnicities that can't be construed as racist on some level these days, so I'll leave you to decide for yourself whether he's calling China as he sees it, or whether he's being quietly racist.

In conclusion, this book was pretty enjoyable. It does have some continuity issues with later books in the Ender Saga, but they don't really detract too much from enjoyment. The characters are well written and interesting, and the aliens are sufficiently alien. The horrors of war are very well described, and things come to a very good climax, followed by an excellent lead-in to the next book. I only wish that this book was not overshadowed by Card's vocal hypocrisy and persecution of those who do not share his own lifestyle. Those that feel strongly enough about Card's personal views not to read any more of his books are missing out on a great read. However, I completely understand the desire not to even pick it up in protest. Whichever side of the fence that you happen to fall on, I'm sure you'll choose to do what is best for you. I mean no offense toward any persons, groups or organizations with the things I have said in this review. If you are offended by my words on the subject, I apologize. I'm simply stating my anger at a man who taught me so much about tolerance, and then turned out to be highly intolerant. I, and a great many other people, feel very betrayed over the matter.

Check out my other reviews.

Kasia says

In love with Lem

Kelly Flanagan says

The mile a minute thrilling second book in the Formic War series. A pre-trilogy to the "Ender's Game" saga. And just as I was helpless to put down 'Ender's Game' as well as the first book to this series "Earth Unaware."

My only suggestion is that these are so good you don't want to stop, therefore wait for book 3 to come out!!

Kevin Stilley says

It was difficult to become engaged in the book. The book has six different parallel storylines going on simultaneously, and every time one storyline becomes interesting it shifts to another. The disjointed narrative requires constant work on the reader's part to stay engaged. I didn't notice this so much in volume 1 of the trilogy, so maybe it won't be a problem in the final volume.

Sarai says

This book is excellent all the way through. I've been waiting for this release after reading the Ender's books, the Shadow series books, and the book before this one "Earth Unaware". It's really interesting to experience the events leading up to Ender's Game and to delve further into the backstories of characters like Mazer Rackim. I also really loved the way the author always paints a picture of the world politics surrounding an event such as an alien invasion. OSC always weaves an amazing tapestry out of plot, character development, and social environments all laced with action. Can't wait for the next one!

Ethan I. Solomon says

I would again like to take this opportunity to mention that I would love if Goodreads had a 1-10 rating system. If so I would give this book 2 out of 10 stars.

This is the second book in the First Formic War trilogy. If you are expecting any sort of greatness, I would restrain myself. Ender's Game this is not. No grand ideas on philosophy and morals are explored here. Once again, the characters are sidelined for the all too predictable story. An exploration of Mazer Rackham's character is barely begun in the first book and not explored in this book either.

All in all, I can only recommend this book to diehard Ender's Game series fans. It seemed to me that Orson Scott Card had very little to do with the writing of this book but perhaps simply gave his name to be used by the other author Aaron Johnston. These books already exist as a series of Marvel produced graphic-novels and was then adapted into these books.

Very poor execution, poor writing, poor characters and progression. The entire book is an exercise in money-making, with OSC's name on it and it being part of the Enderverse will assure its success.

Woztraz says

Y paso lo que siempre pasa cuando se lee una saga de la cual se sabe no se podrá leer pronto el siguiente libro, final abierto y el siguiente libro no está en castellano... No es la mejor saga del mundo de Ender pero como entretiene, se dejan a un lado las confusas historias filosóficas y enredos mentales de libros pasados y pasan a contar sin más como es el encuentro y lucha contra los Formicos. Debo aprender inglés ya para por fin leer toda esa lista de libros que no he terminado por no traducirlos a lo poco que entiendo de mi idioma,

Buck says

This is the middle book in the First Formic War trilogy, the prequel to Ender's Game. I read the first book, Earth Unaware, when it was first published, almost four years ago. It was good - lots of excitement - but it left us hanging for the second book. Now that I've finished the second book, I see that this is really a very long novel divided into three parts. If you read it, I recommend that you read all three in fairly close succession. I've immediately started the third book. It continues exactly where the second left off, without a

pause.

There are a number of concurrent stories, some continued from the first book and some of which have converged. I expect that the still separate story tracks probably will converge in the third book.

From Ender's Game, we know that New Zealand pilot Mazur Rackham saved humanity. He was introduced in the first book. His story continues in the second as he repeatedly narrowly escapes from certain death. He hasn't defeated the formics yet, so I guess that's coming in the third book. One of the heroes, Mazur's young companion, is an 8 year old boy. Card continues his fascination with exceptional young children, like Ender and his cohorts.

Andrew Obrigewitsch says

One of the better Sci-Fi book written this year, and considering it's also a one of those dreaded Young Adult stories it was actually pretty good. It stands head and shoulders above other young adult books I've read.

Crystal Watanabe says

Good added characters and I liked reading about Mazer. The book suffers the most from the cliffhanger ending for me. If not for that I'd have given it 4.

Susan Townsend says

Added this note a good bit later: I was in a really bad mood when I wrote this review, but the ending really ticked me off. I stand by what I said about not reading it unless you can go directly into the 3rd book (which I still haven't read.) I still think it's not up to the standard I expect from OSC, but it's probably not as bad as the 1 star rating I originally gave it. I'm willing to update that to 2, maybe 2.5. My comments on the audiobook stand! Except that it wasn't Stephen Rudnecki I disliked so much. Mow here's the original review.....

STOP! Before you read this book....

(NOTE: this is really a review of the audiobook -- I am vision-impaired and do most of my "reading" aurally.)

I got this because of the author, without having listened to Earth Unaware -- not a problem. I had no trouble understanding what was going on.

I was going to give it 3 stars until the last sentence. DO NOT read/listen to this book until the series is complete. It stops right in the middle of a crucial scene, then....."to be continued." Boo. Hisssss. Note to authors: it IS possible to do a series in which each book wraps up at least part of the action and still leaves the reader hungry for the next installment. See Ender's Game for an example of how it is done.

I'm a big Orson Scott Card fan, but this is not one of his best. (Collaborations should raise suspicions.) It took me awhile to get into it, but I eventually got interested in the characters. I really liked the military types, the strategies, etc. The aliens are enigmatic and creepy, nicely done. (Knowing what's going to happen in the Ender series does sort of change your reactions. I think it's best to suspend foreknowledge and accept the point of view of the characters, who DON'T know how it's going to turn out.) I don't mean to be totally negative: I enjoyed a lot of it, and I'll consider getting the next book in the series, if only to see what happens in the scene that was left hanging.

Now for the narration: some of the narration rates 1 star, if that much, while some of it is quite good. I almost quit listening about 10 minutes in: there is a young boy whose voice is the second most grating one I've ever heard on an audiobook; unfortunately, the little girl in the same scene is worse. The narrator who does the parts about Victor (I think it's Stefan Rudnicki) sounds like he's doing a bad imitation of a person doing a eulogy for someone he never met, trying really hard to sound mournful.

Like I said, wait until the 3rd book in the trilogy comes out. Then, go ahead and give it a listen if you have time on your hands and an extra credit. Better, avoid the cheesy narration and read it, if that's an option for you and you like OSC.

Nathaniel says

Congratulations! Another entrant into my "too-bad-to-finish" collection!

This book doesn't offend reason or human decency like some horrors I've confronted (Red Mars, Ringworld, or Ancillary Justice all come to mind), but it's a dull, utterly lifeless work.

The characters? I. Don't. Care. Mazer Rackham was at least interesting because, you know, Ender's Game, but he only showed up for one of the 9 chapters that I read and then did absolutely nothing of note in it other than pose in front of plot devices that were obviously, obviously going to come back and be used again in obvious, obvious ways.

The plot? Idiotically predictable. How do I know, since I didn't finish? I read the plot summary on Wikipedia. And it's just slavishly predictable. It's like someone wanted you to not have to read the book, because everything you need to know exactly how the story ends is presented in the first few chapters.

Fact: if some random and obnoxious Chinese kids are shown as characters who obviously are not getting out of their village any time soon, then obviously the aliens are going to get to Earth and land conveniently near their village.

Fact: if two absurdly overly-specific military inventions (an anti-grav transport and--I kid you not--an underground burrowing thingy) get introduced then those silly devices are going to be combined to surprisingly kill the alien invaders near the aforementioned Chinese village.

Having Mazer actually get sent to China to train the Chinese on the anti-grav transport doohickies was like writing "PLOT" on a wooden plank and then smashing me in the face with it. Enough, already.

Also: B.O.R.I.N.G. It's bad enough that we get long, tedious scenes of nothing happening except the author clumsily manipulating the plot to get people in the right place to see stuff we're supposed to know about, but what really rubs salt in the wound is that interesting things *do* happen. We just don't get to see them. A lone mining ship mounts a desperate attack on the alien ship... but it's off-camera. A coalition of 60 mining

vessels try to gang up on it... and we see the battle tersely described on recovered footage dozens of pages after we already know how it ends. I mean, come on, it's like every time the author saw something that could plausibly be exciting they pulled out all the stops to make sure we didn't get anywhere near it!

I say "the author" 'cause the book says it's "Orson Scott Card with..." somebody else I've never heard of. Given that Card is a busy man and wouldn't share headline space unless the other guy did a lot of work (and the incredibly amount of suck crammed into this book) I'm going to assume the other guy wrote it and I'm too lazy to look up his name right now.

Why bother?

Do. Not. Read. This. Book. If you really, really need an Ender fix either re-read one of the originals or check out the graphic novel (that was pretty good!) or the comics or something. This "novel" was just a total waste of space.

Oh, almost forgot, I was listening to it on Audiobook and they splurged for a full cast, but some of the voices are TERRIBLE. The make the little Chinese girl sound even more annoying than her dialogue alone would be, and then there's this guy named "Chubs" who sounds like he's being voiced by a drunk rejected from a Loony Tunes audition. Yuck.

Mike says

This one keeps you on the edge of your seat from start to finish. The Formics arrive at Earth and bad things happen. Great characters and 3 different story lines are going on: Victor tries to warn of the impending arrival of the aliens; Mazer Rackham locates to China on a peacetime training mission when the Formics arrive nearby; and the free space miner wives and children who survived the battle of the asteroid belt join up with some space scavengers to survive. I only take a star away because we already know Mazer Rackham will survive this battle...takes away from the excitement of his adventures in China. **4 Stars**

Mark says

This is the second book in the novelization series of the prequel "Formic Wars" era to the Ender Quartet. Pacing is good and characterization's *not bad*. But the reason I can only give it three stars is perhaps personal preference: Unlike the Ender books, which offered a sense of closure at the end of each of the books of that series, the first two books of the Formic Wars series is not really serial in nature but rather episodic, with cliffhangers setting up each installment of the subsequent book.

As a series author myself, I've always felt it important to provide a complete story for each book -- even when I wanted to expand and take the meta story to another level or in a new direction. That's clearly not the intent here. Card pulled this off nicely with other Enderverse novels.

I suspect it may have something to do with the original format for the Formic Wars as a series of graphic novels. The authors state they wanted to flesh out and deepen the story left untold in the visual version, and kudos to them for that. But the artifactual result is a storytelling format that leaves readers unsatisfied at the end of each episodic installment.

Be forewarned that readers will need to resort to the Marvel Comics *Formic Wars: Burning Earth #1-7*

telling of the tale to see the whole prequel vision -- that, or await the release of one book at a time (this latest book was just released summer 2013), which will take quite some time at this rate.

Kurt says

Not until after I finished did I realize I read book 2 of a 3 part mini series. Doh! Being an Ender's Game slut, I will of course read the other two now. This was a good book, but not to the quality of the original Ender books nor the Shadow series.

SPOILER'S BELOW.

The book's main failure was the unrealistic nature of most of the characters. It just wasn't believable to me that they would all be so petty in light of the Earth being attacked by aliens.

I thought the book was worth reading for two reasons:

1) Getting the background stories of Mazer Rackham as well as the formics/buggers. The book was interesting in that once you see how ruthless the formics were in action, you look at Speaker for the Dead a little differently. Ender understandably felt bad about wiping out the formics, but perhaps had he known what they were really like, he wouldn't have been so contrite.

2) The science fiction technology. I really enjoyed getting a glimpse of what will reasonably be the future of computing. Seeing how far voice recognition and data analysis has come in the last 10 years makes me think the computer technology shown in Earth Afire will be achieved in our lifetime.

Leonor says

Reseña

Esta es la continuación de la saga de la Primera Guerra Fórmica, donde de hecho llega la nave de los Fórmicos (o insectores, como prefieran llamarlos), a la Tierra. Como bien decía el título del primer libro, los seres humanos prefirieron no creer en la hostilidad de estos seres y estaban completamente desprevenidos para lo que hicieron ellos al llegar. De hecho, hubo reacciones desesperadas y los planes más inteligentes de contraataque fueron llevados a cabo por pequeñísimos grupos de personas.

Seguiremos con distintos puntos de vista: el del minero libre en misión de avisar a la Tierra, Víctor Delgado; el del hijo de la persona más rica del planeta, Lem Jukes; el del brillante niño chino, Bingwen; y el de nuestro conocido guerrero maorí, Mazer Rackham.

Crítica

Esta es una trepidante novela donde la acción ocurre muy rápido desde cierta parte del libro en adelante. Además, conoceremos ciertas tecnologías como el Med Assist, que bien quisiéramos tener en nuestra época.

Me gustó mucho el libro, refleja la burocracia, las normas estúpidas y la separación que hay entre los distintos países de la Tierra, tanto así que ni siquiera pueden acordar unirse para hacer frente a un enemigo en común.

5 / 5 estrellas
