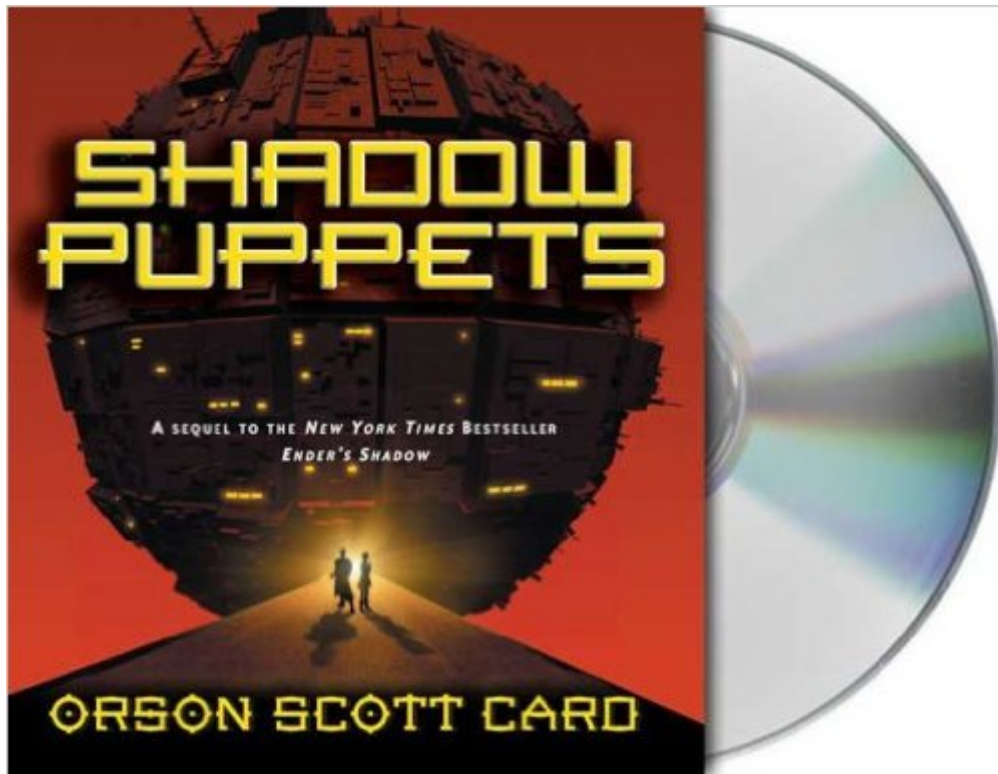


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Shadow Puppets (The Shadow Series)



Synopsis

Bestselling author Orson Scott Card brings to life a new chapter in the saga of Ender's Earth and The Shadow Series. Earth and its society have been changed irrevocably in the aftermath of Ender Wiggin's victory over the Formics. The unity forced upon the warring nations by an alien enemy has shattered. Nations are rising again, seeking territory and influence, and most of all, seeking to control the skills and loyalty of the children from the Battle School. But one person has a better idea. Peter Wiggin, Ender's older, more ruthless, brother, sees that any hope for the future of Earth lies in restoring a sense of unity and purpose. And he has an irresistible call on the loyalty of Earth's young warriors. With Bean at his side, the two will reshape our future. *Shadow Puppets* is the continuing story of Bean and Petra, and the rest of Ender's Dragon Army, as they take their places in the new government of Earth.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The spectacular Ender's Game and its very good to excellent sequels established Card as a major SF writer. With Ender's Shadow, he came close to matching the brilliance of the original story. Then came Shadow of the Hegemon, with its focus on Peter Wiggin and Achilles, and it seemed like all the power, originality, and dramatic tension faded away, leaving only a shadow to lay across your mind. This latest work is neither as good as Ender's Shadow nor as mundane as Hegemon, but rather somewhere in-between. Here we find Bean growing beyond the norm, symptomatic of his

genetic flaw that will eventually kill him while still a young man. And growing in other ways, as his relationship with Petra finally flowers under her tenacious insistence. This is probably the best part of this novel, as we see sides of the two that have not been in great evidence in the prior works. And we get some small looks into the thoughts and characters of some of the other Battle School graduates, mainly Virlomi, Han Tzu and Alai, each of whom contribute some major items towards Peter and Bean winning their current battle with Achilles. The Wiggin parents emerge from obscurity and are revealed to be (unsurprisingly) very intelligent and (surprisingly) quite forceful. All good things...So where does this book fail? The main failure is Peter Wiggin himself. For a man who could sway world opinion with his exacting, careful logic as Locke and browbeat everyone into emotional frenzy as Demosthenes, Peter is depicted here as a remarkably stupid, arrogant, and emotional teenager. Achilles, the demon, remains almost totally offstage, providing little room for dramatic confrontations, and what ones there are come off as almost anti-climatic.

I put a question mark next to the word conclusion in the title of this review because it's not clear if "Shadow Puppets" is the final book in the entire 'Ender's Saga' ('Bean sub-saga'). A large number of issues are resolved in this book, but others are still left up in the air. At the present time, there is listing or information about any future episodes in this series. So, for the time being, I will assume this is the last book. If it is, despite seeming loose ends, it would make a satisfactory conclusion. "Shadow Puppets" should probably be the end, though. Much like the last portion of "Xenocide" and all of "Children of the Mind" in the original 'Ender's Quartet', Orson Scott Card seems to be running out of steam with these characters. Card still displays his gifts of representing human interactions, but "Shadow Puppets" has less ability to stand on it's own. Unlike "Ender's Shadow" and, to a slightly lesser degree, "Shadow of the Hegemon", you absolutely have to have read the previous books in the series for "Shadow Puppets" to have any true meaning. Whereas "Ender's Shadow" and "Shadow of the Hegemon" were connected by similar characters, yet told different stories (much like "Ender's Game" and "Speaker for the Dead"), "Shadow Puppets" merely continues the storyline from "...Hegemon". To summarize, Peter Wiggin has achieved his long sought after goal of becoming the Hegemon, but the title carries little power with it in the wake of a large Chinese invasion throughout southern Asia, and subsequent assumption of the position of Earth's premier military power.

The genesis of the Bean/Achilles interaction was clear. Two telegenic, winning characters (to the other characters, not necessarily to the readers). One with a tragic physical flaw that is likely to kill

him, the other with a tragic moral flaw, ditto. The problem is that the writing, especially in this book, doesn't rise to the level that Card seeks. Unless you enjoy endless conversations about minor issues, or five-page musings by minor characters, you are likely to find this book very slow moving indeed. This book resolves the Eastern crisis that Card set up in the last book. But it does it in almost a storybook fashion. After a drop by drop setup (Chinese water torture, maybe?), we are told of tremendous military manoeuvres that I really don't find convincing. Sure, maybe the Muslims can do all the things that Card has them do. But the denouement relies on all the things being UNDETECTED, it is never explained how that is possible. What happened to radar, satellite imagery, intelligence (in more ways than one)? The whole military plot relies on the Chinese being slightly stupider than a comic book villain and little weapons advancement beyond 1949. Very strange. The Bean/Achilles conflict reaches its resolution in this book as well, I will not say how. But by the time we finally get to it, it is difficult to care. In my opinion, this is due to Card's failure to make us feel anything except irritation when it comes to Achilles, however much we may like Bean. Shadow of the Hegemon gave Card the opportunity to make Achilles interesting, rather than just an almost hypnotically alluring (to the other characters) villain. It didn't work. We get to see more of Peter Wiggin in this book. But he comes across more as a sullen teenager, who (no fewer than twice!

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