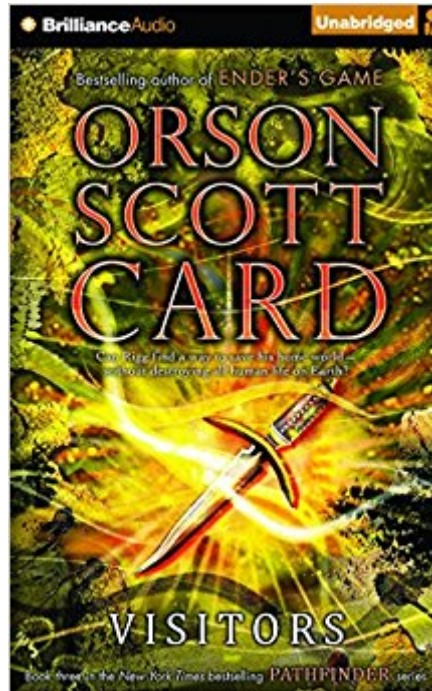




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Visitors (Pathfinder Series)



Synopsis

From the internationally bestselling author of *Ender's Game* comes the riveting finale to the story of Rigg, a teenager who possesses a secret talent that allows him to see the paths of people's pasts. In *Pathfinder*, Rigg joined forces with another teen with special talents on a quest to find Rigg's sister and discover the true depth and significance of their powers. Then Rigg's story continued in *Ruins* as he was tasked to decipher the paths of the past before the arrival of a destructive force with deadly intentions. Now, in *Visitors*, Rigg's journey comes to an epic and explosive conclusion as everything that has been building up finally comes to pass, and Rigg is forced to put his powers to the test in order to save his world and end the war once and for all.

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Customer Reviews

Born in Richland, Washington, in 1951, Orson Scott Card grew up in California, Arizona, and Utah. He lived in Brazil for two years as an unpaid missionary for the Mormon Church and received degrees from Brigham Young University and the University of Utah. The author of numerous books in several genres, Card is best known for *Ender's Game* and his online magazine, Orson Scott Card's *InterGalactic Medicine Show* (www.osciGMS.com). He teaches writing and literature at Southern Virginia University and lives with his family in Greensboro, North Carolina.

Visitors CHAPTER 1 Copies The Place: From the surface of the planet Garden, it looks like a plateau surrounded by a steep cliff, with a mountain in the middle. But from space, it is plain that the plateau is a huge crater, and the mountain is its center point. Buried deep beneath that central mountain is a starship. It crashed into the planet Garden 11,203 years ago. Yet the starship was launched from near-Earth orbit only nineteen years ago. It journeyed seven years, then made the jump that was meant to create an anomaly in spacetime and appear near Garden instantaneously. It was instantaneous to Ram Odin, the pilot of the starship—the only living person awake on the starship. But compared to the surrounding universe, the ship arrived 11,191 years before it made the jump. In the process, it divided into nineteen ships, one for each of the onboard computers that calculated the jump. All those ships contained a duplicate of Ram Odin, along with all the other humans lying in stasis, waiting to arrive at the world they would colonize. All nineteen ships were deliberately crashed into the surface of the planet Garden. The simultaneous impact slowed the rotation of the planet, lengthening the day. Each impact formed a crater. Protected by anti-inertial and anti-collision fields, all the starships and their colonists survived. Nineteen colonies were created, each separated from the others by a psychoactive field called “the Wall.” This starship is in the middle of the wallfold called Vadeshfold. The People: In the control room of the starship, there are either four men, or three, or two, or one, depending on how you count them. One of them is the sole surviving Ram Odin. If you say that there is only one man in the control room, he is that man. He has survived all these centuries by rising out of stasis for only one day in each fifty years, or sometimes for one week after a hundred years—whatever is needed in order to make the decisions that the ship’s computers are not competent to make without him. Another of them looks like an adult man, and speaks like one, but he is really a machine, an expendable. He is called Vadeshex. All the humans in his colony were wiped out in terrible warfare more than ten thousand years before. In the years since then, he has devoted himself to creating a version of a native parasite that might be a suitable symbiotic partner for humans, if they ever came to Vadeshfold again. The two other men were born as a single human being named Rigg Sessamekesh, fifteen years before the present day. Arguably they are not men but boys. Both of them wear upon their heads, covering their faces, the symbiotic facemask created by Vadeshex. The facemask penetrates their brains and bodies, enhancing their senses, quickening their movements, strengthening their bodies, so that some might consider them no longer to be human at all, but rather some strange new hybrid, only half human at best. The Situation: A half hour ago, Ram Odin attempted to murder Rigg, but with his faster reflexes, Rigg avoided him. Then, using the time-shifting power he was born with, he went back half an hour in time and preventively

killed Ram Odin. It was not just a matter of self-defense. Rigg believed that it was Ram Odin whose actions were destined to destroy the world. Then Rigg went forward two years and saw that eliminating Ram Odin had done nothing to prevent the complete destruction of the human race on Garden. Far from being the worst ã- menace to the humans of Garden, Ram Odin was the only source of information Rigg would need to figure out how to save Garden. So he went back in time and prevented himself from killing Ram Odin, and Ram Odin from killing the earlier version of Rigg. The result was that now there were two copies of Riggã- the one who had done the killing, then learned it had done no good and returned; and the one who had been prevented from doing the killing or being killed, who had not experienced the inevitable coming of the Destroyers, and who now called himself Noxon, recognizing that he could never be the same person as the other Rigg. Thus there are four men, by stature and general shape: Ram Odin, Rigg, Noxon, and Vadeshex. But Vadeshex is not a living organism, so there are only three men. Rigg and Noxon are really one person, divided into two separate beings half an hour ago. So there are only two genetically and biographically distinct men. The Riggs are only fifteen years old by calendar. Older than that by the number of days they have lived through, then repeated, but still they are only boys, not men. And the Riggs are both deeply and permanently connected to the alien facemask, making them by some reckonings only half human, and by other reckonings not human at all. So only Ram Odin, of all the four, is a pure man; yet he is weakest of them all. Far away, in another wallfold, Riggã- s sister Param and Riggã- s friend Umbo also have power over the flow of time, and are also working to save the world of Garden from the Destroyers. But it is these four in Vadeshfold who among them have control over a starship; it is these four who know that a version of Ram Odin is still alive; and it is these four who must now decide what each of them will do in order to save the human race on Garden. For the one thing that never changes is that, despite many attempts to reshape history by the manipulation of time, the Visitors come from Earth, see what the human race has become in the nineteen wallfolds of Garden, and then send the Destroyers to blast all nineteen civilizations into oblivion. The Conversation: ã- ã-“The biggest problem we have is ignorance,ã- said Rigg Noxon. ã- ã-“We donã- t know what causes the people of Earth to decide to destroy our whole world.ã- ã- Though in fact the biggest problem he was having at the moment was the realization that he was capable of killing someone in cold blood. It was the other Rigg who had actually done the killing, but Rigg Noxon knew that they were the same person. If Rigg had not come back and prevented the killings, Noxon would certainly have done just what Rigg did. Only now, because he hadnã- t taken those actions, both Noxon and Rigg continued to exist as separate people with nearly identical pasts. Am I a killer, because I know I

could and would commit murder? Or am I innocent, because something prevented me from doing it? After all, the person who prevented me was myself. A version of myself. The killer version.

“Which is why your friends have to allow the mice from Odinfold to go back to Earth with the Visitors,” said Ram Odin. “They’re deciding whether to stop themselves from warning the Visitors about the stowaway mice,” said Rigg-the-killer. Ram Odin shook his head. “Why is it up to them? You go back and prevent them from giving warning.” “They had good reason for preventing the mice from getting aboard the Visitors’ ship,” said Rigg-the-killer. “The mice weren’t going back to find out what happened. They were infected with a disease which was no doubt designed to wipe out the human race on Earth.” “When you say ‘no doubt’ it means that there is reason to doubt,” said Ram Odin. “People only say ‘no doubt’ when they know they’re making a judgment based on insufficient information.” “They don’t have facemasks,” said Rigg Noxon. “They can’t hear the mice or talk to them. They can’t ask.” “You can hear them,” said Ram Odin. “You can ask.” “We don’t necessarily believe the mice,” said Rigg-the-killer. “They already killed Param once. Our goal is to save the human race on Garden, not provide mousekind with a depopulated Earth for them to inherit.” “There are too many players in this game,” said Ram Odin. “The mice were planning to take several billion of them out of the game entirely,” said Rigg-the-killer. “Not all the players are equal,” said Ram Odin. “Make a decision and make it stick.” “You’ve been alone with the expendables far too long,” said Rigg Noxon. “You think because you can play God with other people’s lives, you have a right to do it.” “You think,” added Rigg-the-killer, “that because you’ve been doing it for so long, you’re fit to do it.” “Power is power,” said Ram Odin. “If you have it, then it’s yours to use.” “The sheer stupidity of that statement,” said Rigg-the-killer, “makes me wonder how Garden struggled along for eleven thousand years with you in control.” “A child lectures an eleven-thousand-year-old man,” said Ram Odin. “There are thousands of examples in history,” said Rigg-the-killer, “of people with power who used it in ways that ended up destroying their power and, usually, a whole lot of innocent people, too.” Rigg Noxon listened to his other self and realized: Having killed Ram Odin changed him. Rigg Noxon would not have treated Ram that way—as if his statements were worthless. Rigg Noxon

would have tried to take them into account. Rigg Noxon would have spoken as youth to adult. But Rigg-the-killer must still be full of anger toward Ram Odin, who had, after all, tried to kill Rigg first. We lived exactly the same life until a few minutes ago, for me; a few weeks or months ago, for Rigg-the-killer. But we are different people. “So you leave the decision up to Umbo and Param,” said Ram Odin. “And Olivenko and Loaf,” said Rigg Noxon. “We’re companions, not a military force with someone giving orders and everyone else required to obey.” “Besides,” said Rigg-the-killer, “I don’t want to leave the future of the human race on both planets in the tiny little hands of the sentient mice of Odinfold.” “What do you plan, then?” said Ram Odin. “To sneak on board the Visitors’ ship?” “Yes,” said Rigg-the-killer. “No,” said Rigg Noxon, at exactly the same moment. They looked at each other in consternation. “We could sneak on,” said Rigg-the-killer. “We can slice time the way Param does, now that we have the facemask to let us perceive units of time that small. We’ll be invisible for the whole voyage back.” “And when we get there, what will we do?” asked Rigg Noxon. “There is only a year between the coming of the Visitors and the return of the Destroyers. Most of that must have been spent voyaging. So when they return to Earth, the response, the decision, it’s immediate. What are we going to do, give speeches? Hold meetings?” “Your talents with time don’t make you particularly persuasive,” said Ram Odin. “And powerful people don’t change their minds because of speeches.” “As soon as we arrive,” said Rigg-the-killer, “we jump back in time and learn everything we need to know, make the connections we need to make.” “Of course,” said Rigg Noxon. “We’ll fit right in. Nobody will notice we’re from another planet. I’m sure that in all human cultures, kids our age will be taken seriously and be able to influence world events. Especially kids wearing parasites on their faces.” “Or you could figure out who needs to be assassinated and kill them,” said Ram Odin. Both Riggs looked at him in consternation. “We know you’re an assassin,” said Rigg-the-killer. “We’re not.” “On the contrary,” said Ram Odin. “You came here bragging that you are.” “In self-defense,” said Rigg-the-killer. “But you—when your ship made the jump and you realized that there were nineteen copies of the ship, of you, of all the colonists, you made the immediate decision to kill all the other versions of yourself.” “Precisely to avoid the kind of weak-minded, incoherent leadership you exhibit,” said Ram Odin. “And please

remember, IÃ¢â¬âm the Ram Odin who didnÃ¢â¬ât order the death of anybody.Ã¢â¬â

Ã¢â¬âNo, youÃ¢â¬âre the sneaky one who hid out until the quickest killer version of yourself had died of old age and then you established your colony in Odinfold, violating most of the decisions your murderous self made and then living forever,Ã¢â¬â said Rigg-the-killer. Ã¢â¬âProving that you donÃ¢â¬ât always think one person is fit to make all the decisions for everyoneÃ¢â¬â even when that person is a version of yourself.Ã¢â¬â Ram Odin rolled his eyes and then nodded. Ã¢â¬âItÃ¢â¬âs extremely annoying hearing this from a child.Ã¢â¬â

Ã¢â¬âBut no less true,Ã¢â¬â said Rigg-the-killer. Ã¢â¬âOnce youÃ¢â¬âve killed somebody,Ã¢â¬â said Rigg Noxon, Ã¢â¬âcan anybody honestly consider you a child anymore?Ã¢â¬â Ã¢â¬âThen youÃ¢â¬âre still a child because I stopped you from killing anybody? And IÃ¢â¬âm an adult?Ã¢â¬â asked Rigg-the-killer. Ã¢â¬âYes,Ã¢â¬â said Rigg Noxon. Ã¢â¬âIn a way. Maybe because IÃ¢â¬âm a child, or maybe because of the quirks of causality arising from the different paths weÃ¢â¬âve walked recently, I have a slightly different plan.Ã¢â¬â Ã¢â¬âEither we go back with the Visitors or we donÃ¢â¬ât,Ã¢â¬â

Ã¢â¬â said Rigg-the-killer. Ã¢â¬âThe difference isnÃ¢â¬ât slight.Ã¢â¬â Ã¢â¬âDonÃ¢â¬ât be like him,Ã¢â¬â said Rigg Noxon, Ã¢â¬âand assume that because you didnÃ¢â¬ât think of it, it must be wrong.Ã¢â¬â Ã¢â¬âThink of what?Ã¢â¬â asked Ram Odin impatiently. Ã¢â¬âI think I should go to Earth, but not with the Visitors,Ã¢â¬â said Rigg Noxon. A couple of beats of silence, and then Ram Odin shook his head. Ã¢â¬âThis ship canÃ¢â¬ât fly again. The inertial field kept it from damage when it collided with Garden, but we canÃ¢â¬ât raise it from the planetÃ¢â¬âs surface. Even if we could get rid of the millions of tons of rock above us right now, the ship doesnÃ¢â¬ât have enough power to lift us out of the gravity well of Garden.Ã¢â¬â

Rigg Noxon shook his head. Ã¢â¬âYouÃ¢â¬âre forgetting what we do,Ã¢â¬â he said. Ã¢â¬âHe means for one of us to go backward in time to when the ship arrived,Ã¢â¬â said Rigg-the-killer. Ã¢â¬âHe means for us to keep making little jumps into the past, following your path moment by moment, backward along with this ship as it slammed into Garden. I mean, as it unslams, backing out of this hole and up into space, backward and backward until it gets to Earth. Until we get to the point where you launched on this voyage.Ã¢â¬â

Ã¢â¬âThis ship was built in space,Ã¢â¬â said Ram Odin. Ã¢â¬âIt never was on Earth.Ã¢â¬â Ã¢â¬âWe go back to when it was built,Ã¢â¬â said Rigg Noxon. Ã¢â¬âThen we follow someone elseÃ¢â¬âs path off the ship.Ã¢â¬â Ã¢â¬âIf you can even do that,Ã¢â¬â said Ram Odin,

Ã¢â¬âwhatÃ¢â¬âs the point? Why not go back with the Visitors as the other Rigg suggested and then jump back in time?Ã¢â¬â Ã¢â¬âThere are some key differences,Ã¢â¬â said Rigg

Noxon. "First, we don't have to spend the voyage in hiding—not the way we would by slicing time on the Visitors' ship. Rigg-the-killer was nodding.

"And we'll have the jewels," he said, holding up the bag of jewels that gave them the ability to control the ships' computers and stored all the information the computers had gathered in the meantime. Ram Odin looked at the jewels. "Each time you jump backward," said Ram Odin, "the ships' computers and the expendables will be sensing these things for the first time."

"And each time," said Rigg Noxon, "it will give them a complete account of everything that's been learned in the eleven millennia of history on Garden."

"So they can take preventive measures and cause us all not to exist?" asked Ram Odin.

"They wouldn't cause us not to exist," said Rigg-the-killer. "Preservation of causality and all that. But yes, it might cause them to prevent the terraforming of Garden in the first place. What about that?" he asked Rigg Noxon.

"Do we leave the Å-Å-jewels behind? If we do, the ship will process us as stowaways and have the expendables put us into stasis or just kill us." Rigg Noxon shook his head.

"No. Remember what Umbo learned in his reading in the library in Odinfold? The Odinfolders—or the mice, who can tell?—worked out the math of what happened in the jump. It didn't just create nineteen copies of the ship and all the humans and machinery on it. It also made either one or nineteen other copies that moved exactly backward in time."

"So what?" asked Rigg-the-killer.

"They're moving backward in time. Even when we jump around, at the end of a jump we're still moving forward in time, the same direction as the rest of the universe. And the backward movement of the ship or ships would exactly duplicate the forward voyage of the ship coming here, so we'd still be inside the ship that voyaged out. We'll never be able to find the backward-moving ship. Or ships."

"Not with the skill set we've had up to now," said Rigg Noxon.

"But what if we could learn to go the other direction?"

"What if we could jump straight to Earth without using any starship at all?" asked Rigg-the-killer.

"Because we can't. There's no reason to think we can."

"I think Param holds the key," said Rigg Noxon.

"She slices time very thin, but she still moves forward in time."

"Because all she knew was slicing," said Rigg Noxon.

"She couldn't jump forward or backward, the way we can. Now, with our facemasks, we can slice time the way she does. We can see those tiny divisions and do something about them. But we can also jump backward. We can slice time backward."

"We're still moving forward," said

Rigg-the-killer. "Between slices." "So what?" asked Noxon.

"If we slice time thin enough, and we jump backward two nanoseconds, stay there for one nanosecond, and then jump backward another two nanoseconds, the effect is that we move backward in time at the rate of one nanosecond per nanosecond, which is the same rate that the back-traveling ship will be moving backward through time." "But when we're in existence, we're going forward," Rigg-the-killer insisted.

"No matter how fine you chop the time." "Maybe you're right," said Noxon. "But you're forgetting the very first thing we ever did. We saw a path, Umbo slowed it down for us, and we latched on. That was how we jumped, by latching on to a person. If we can at least detect a backward-moving person's path, we can attach and it will change our direction." "Or maybe not," said Rigg.

"Maybe forward-time and backward-time annihilate each other when they touch, like matter and anti-matter." "So I'll do it alone," said Noxon.

"I'll get the extra copy, right? So if I get annihilated, we're back to the right number of Riggs, that's all." "And then," said Ram, "you can take hold of the backward-moving version of me and pull me back into the normal timestream again." "Just what we need," said Rigg.

"More Ram Odins." "I've shepherded nineteen wallfolds for eleven thousand years," said Ram. "What have you done?" "You hurt his feelings," said Noxon. "He's too sensitive," said Rigg. "You do realize that there was a time-jump of 11,191 years. Not to mention a leap of several lightyears through folded space. Do you think you can hang on through that much time and space and a change in direction?" "It'll be interesting to see," said Rigg.

"We'll find out by trying it." "We'll find out," said Noxon, "but I'll do the trying." "You get all the fun with physics?" asked Rigg. "I'll get the extra. We can afford to lose me." "Well, I can," said Rigg. "But you can't." "I won't be around to miss me when I'm gone," said Noxon.

"I'm not sure how your brains even function," said Ram.

"Everything you say makes no sense. And it's perfectly sensible." "We can both go back, but on different ships," said Noxon to Rigg, ignoring Ram.

"I'll latch on to the backward ship and ride it to Earth, and you hide on the original ship and jump back to the beginning of the voyage." "You both get there at exactly

the same time, Æ said Ram. Æ “The beginning of my voyage. Æ Æ “Not really, Æ said Rigg. Æ “When I get there, if I do it, I have to deal with the fact that I Æ,çm in the same timeflow. If I don Æ,çt slice time or jump, I Æ,çm visible. But Noxon, he arrives there completely invisible. And in an invisible ship. I Æ,çll be there without any friends, because I can never show myself during the voyage. Æ Æ “Why not? Æ asked Ram. Æ “Because I didn Æ,çt, Æ said Rigg. Æ “It was you on that voyage. Did you see me? If you had seen me, there Æ,çs a good chance it would have derailed the entire sequence of events. Leading to the nonexistence of nineteen colonies on Garden. Æ He turned to Noxon. Æ “You see the danger? One slip, and you might undo everything. Æ Æ “But I won Æ,çt have to hide from the Ram on my backward Æ Æ-voyage, because he Æ,çs a post-voyage Ram, Æ said Noxon. Æ “He Æ,çs not causally connected to this universe, so I won Æ,çt change anything at all. And I Æ,çll have a ship that isn Æ,çt buried under a million tons of rock. Æ Æ “Moving backward in time, Æ said Ram. Æ “If I can pull myself and the backward Ram Odin into the forward-flowing timestream, I should be able to pull the ship with us. Material objects can be dragged along. Æ Æ “If your venture succeeds, Æ said Rigg, Æ “then I won Æ,çt need to go back with the Visitors. For all I know, the Visitors will never come at all. Æ Æ “So while I go to Earth, you Æ,çll stay here? Æ Æ “If you succeed, then the world of Garden won Æ,çt be destroyed, Æ said Rigg. Æ “So while you Æ,çre playing God back on Earth Æ Æ Æ “You Æ,çll play God here, Æ said Noxon. Æ “Visit all the wallfolds, Æ said Rigg, Æ “and decide whether to bring the Walls down. Æ Æ “Or some of them, anyway. Keep the dangerous ones quarantined, Æ said Noxon. Æ “Keep the technologies of Odinfold and the facemasks of Vadeshfold and the power of the expendables out of the hands of Mother and General Citizen, Æ said Rigg. Æ “So you Æ,çre going to make a play to be King-in-the-Tent? Æ asked Noxon. Æ “They Æ,çll be eager to follow you, with your pretty face. Æ Æ “I Æ,çll set up Param as Queen-in-the-Tent. Or abolish the monarchy and the People Æ,çs Revolutionary Council, Æ said Rigg. Æ “I have no plan. Æ Æ “Yet, Æ said Ram Odin. Æ “I Æ,çll have a plan when I need one, Æ said Rigg. Æ “In a pinch, plans kind of make themselves, mostly because you don Æ,çt have a lot of choices, Æ said Noxon. Æ “Aren Æ,çt you going to ask the advice of someone older and wiser? Æ asked Ram Odin. Æ “When we find somebody wiser, Æ said Noxon, Æ “we Æ,çll ask him for advice. Æ Æ --This text

refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I really enjoyed the first two Pathfinder books. Great story, great characters. But the third installment was just too much. Too many characters (including duplicates!), too many storylines, too many planets. It was like cramming 19 Back to the Future storylines in one book. There were so many timelines going on, it felt like the one that was chosen was almost arbitrary. I plowed through to the end, but overall, I was disappointed. Card is a great storyteller, and I am a huge fan of most of his stories, but not this one. It was just too hard to care about the million different story lines and characters.

I need help understanding the ending, so yes, there are spoilers. First, I'll say I love everything OSC writes! His stories, themes, and political-religious-scientific ideas are compelling, and the Pathfinder series is in many ways a Opus Magnus compilation of all the various themes and ideas of his other works. (Plus I love time-travel). Of course he falls into his usual bad habit over explaining the "science" of something he just made up (do we need to know how a snarful interacts with a grundfel at the sub-sub atomic level?) but I'm used to that. So of course my question is related to the pseudo-scientific explanation he gives for temporal paradoxes, namely how the agents of causal change are unaffected by whatever change they make in a time stream. But whoever is NOT the agent of change (or traveling with that person) will experience a completely different time stream and will have no recollection of any change being made. I am ok with that, it is a common enough theory of time travel fiction and non-fiction. What confuses me is the ending of Visitors - did Card just throw his on rule, the one he went on and on about, right out the window so he could wrap this up? I mean the very reason Rigg, Param, and Umbo were created was to stop the Destroyers (according to the mice). Back up, the very reason the Future Books, and thus mice, were created was to stop the Destroyers. Well guess what!? - Backward time flow Ram and Irradiated Noxon succeeded in stopping the Destroyers before they ever attacked!! So, yes those 2 and the rest of the group at Treble and Bass planets would remember it the way we read it, because they were the agents of change. But EVERY other character would have no idea. Even if we assume that our heroes (and the mice) were still created despite the fact that the Destroyers NEVER attacked (seems unlikely, but ok) they certainly would not be sitting around and talking about how their plan worked to stop the Destroyers! Sorry, but am I missing something here, or is that the sloppiest ending he has ever written? No really- someone please help me out here.

I am sorry to say that I finally found an Orson Scott Card Book I didn't enjoy. The first book of this series was great, and the second was nearly as good, but this third...failed. Card gets lost in the possibilities of time travel and for the first time (I have seen) gets shallow with his characters. Things just happen for no real reason, and without developing the plot established in the first two books. The characters stop maturing and just kind of do things. Things happen, but without any explanation of why the characters would do this. Subplots emerge, and then are dropped. This seems like he intended to write two or three more books but then condensed them into one hollow book. That may have been a good decision, because the direction this book goes in is just dull, and seems like Card was grasping at a plot twist that didn't fit. I am glad that it mercifully ends here. I can only hope that Card regains his talent in other series.

The first two books in this series were excellent. I couldn't put them down. This book does lack something in the middle portion and is more on the confusing time travel side. There are some great time travel books out there and this one is fairly good. "The Time Ships" and "The Minervan Experiment" are excellent time travel books. When taken as a complete series even though this one is the weakest the series deserves 4 stars. The characters are well written and the plot line holds up well even if the ending is a "Happily Ever After" deal. Some have commented on Orson Scott Card as a writer. He is an excellent writer as anyone who has read "Ender's Game" can attest to. If he had stopped after writing, "Ender's Games," "Speaker for the Dead," and "Ender's Shadow" maybe he would have achieved Tolkien status. You can pick his "Hobbit" book from many other of his well written books. But the fact that he continues to write and to write quality work is a testament to how good a writer he actually is. There are some so so books like "Visitors" here but all in all Card is a premier writer. While I am on the subject of writers who should have stopped sooner, Frank Herbert would be a science fiction icon if he only penned "Dune" and stopped...

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