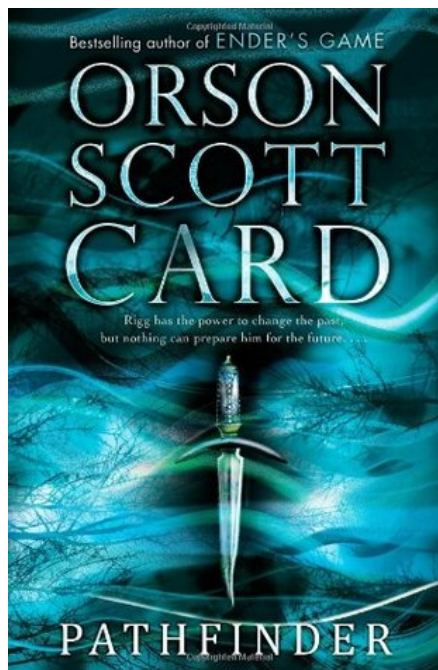




Pathfinder

Orson Scott Card

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Pathfinder Orson Scott Card

A powerful secret. A dangerous path.

Rigg is well trained at keeping secrets. Only his father knows the truth about Rigg's strange talent for seeing the paths of people's pasts. But when his father dies, Rigg is stunned to learn just how many secrets Father had kept from *him*--secrets about Rigg's own past, his identity, and his destiny. And when Rigg discovers that he has the power not only to see the past, but also to change it, his future suddenly becomes anything but certain.

Rigg's birthright sets him on a path that leaves him caught between two factions, one that wants him crowned and one that wants him dead. He will be forced to question everything he thinks he knows, choose who to trust, and push the limits of his talent...or forfeit control of his destiny.

Pathfinder Details

Date : Published November 23rd 2010 by Simon Pulse (first published September 1st 2010)

ISBN : 9781416991762

Author : Orson Scott Card

Format : Hardcover 657 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Science Fiction, Young Adult, Fiction

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From Reader Review Pathfinder for online ebook

Mike (the Paladin) says

I am AT TIMES an Orson Scott Card fan....AT TIMES. This isn't one of those times. I'm forced to a one star rating here because that's the default rating when I can't make myself finish a book without threats...."keep reading or else". What I'd do to myself I'm not sure. To keep me interested in this thing it would have to be something pretty terrible.

Mr. Card is capable of writing an excellent book. I'm waiting for him to go on with one series and picked this one up as I waited. As has happened before it's a book I just couldn't get into. I went all the way into the second chapter without skimming or skipping. The book is laid out in a way that's supposed to lead us into a story with a certain amount of mystery or some questions. The young protagonist Rigg being raised by his "father" tells us of his "special ability" as he and the "man" he knows as his father go about their business trapping.

The ideas behind the book are good, the synopsis is interesting and having gotten enough to know how and where the book went I think it could and should have interested me. It's why I picked it up and I see others who liked it. I wish the plot had been in a book that didn't make me want to scream.

What's the problem? For me it's the way it's told. Constant unnecessary monologues and really, really, really llllooonnnnggg and boooorrrriinnnggg internal dialogues. Riggs "reasoning" and "thought processes go on for ever...and ever....and ever. The book assumes you can't follow the simplest of ideas and plot lines so it goes on and on laying things out. By chapter 2 I started skimming and finally just threw in the towel and went to the end. I don't plan to follow the series.

This is sad because as I said, I like the premise, I like the idea I even like where the plot went in a way (though you've seen much of it before) I just couldn't take the slow almost pedantic story telling. If you like it I'm happy for you, I really am...just definitely not one for me.

Colleen Houck says

I love the name Rigg. Cool things should happen to people with that name. Wildly inventive. I really appreciated the author's note at the end. It really helped clarify where the story was going. Very interesting to see how the kids' powers worked together.

Ashley says

While I really liked the premise and the story of Pathfinder, I found it to be WAY too long and in desperate need of an editor.

I don't need gigantic explanations about how the banking system works. I don't need to be told time and time again the rules of the special powers. And I especially don't want to sit through these lengthy, logical reasons for each of the characters' actions every time they do something.

Orson Scott Card has this obsession with creating characters who can navigate through social conflicts with a

kind of godlike logic and power over emotion. It's, quite frankly, a bore to sit through. "If I say this with a certain tone, then the people of the city will most definitely react this way, which is to my advantage," or "I'm going to tell the truth, which since someone is expecting the lie, they will have no idea that the truth is what's true."

I guess those bits just took me completely out of the story, because nobody in real life has that kind of power over their own emotions. Card's main characters, being so powerful, are only ever forced to confront conflicts that feel inorganic and contrived in their complexity.

Still, I was quite proud that I figured out the "plot twist" of this particular book long before it was revealed, and found myself excited about reading the next book in the series. So while Pathfinder is certainly not one of Card's best books, it did its job.

Marsha Ramnanan says

Started off wondering what the voice of the astronaut and the story of Rigg had to do with each other...then wow!

This was such an excellent, well-written and totally original feeling book! Totally loved it!

Stefan says

Rigg is a 13-year-old boy who lives in seclusion with his father, surviving as a trapper and only occasionally going to the nearest town to sell animals' pelts. He is successful as a trapper in part because he has a unique ability: he can see the "paths" people and animals have taken, in the form of a colored trail that stretches behind them, showing where they've been. This way, he can track almost anything — "almost" because the only person who doesn't have a trail is his father...

Of course, many readers will be able to predict where the story is going when they encounter a young boy with a mysterious ability being raised in relatively poor circumstances... and while Orson Scott Card does take a page out of the standard fantasy rulebook here, he also adds enough unique and surprising elements to the story to make Pathfinder a successful YA novel.

The first indication that this is not your standard Ugly Duckling fantasy are the short scenes that open every chapter, telling the story of a spaceship leaving a doomed Earth to try and start a human colony on a new planet, thirty-one lightyears away. There are enough hints scattered throughout the novel to show that there's a connection between these science fiction scenes and the main story, but a large part of the fun of reading Pathfinder is discovering exactly how the two narratives relate to each other, so I won't reveal more about this here and let you discover the surprising nature of the Pathfinder's SF/fantasy universe and its magic system by yourself. Let's just say that Orson Scott Card introduces some really neat concepts here, especially given that this a YA novel.

When Rigg inevitably leaves his humble beginnings to find his destiny, he is accompanied by his friend Umbo, who also has a unique skill: he is seemingly able to slow down time. When Umbo combines this ability with Rigg's, they discover that they are able to travel back in time and that their actions in the past affect the present. This leads to some nifty twists and turns in Pathfinder's plot, but also to some overly convoluted attempts to explain causality and time travel paradoxes, e.g. Umbo saying things like this: "I have

to do it because I know I already did, only when I did it, it was the future, so I have to get to the future in order to come back and do what I already did.” While this was probably necessary early on to help YA readers with this relatively challenging concept, it happens a few times too often and starts to get annoying after a while.

Aside from this, the novel is fortunately a fast-moving and entertaining story that’s simply hard to put down. Orson Scott Card gradually reveals more of the fantasy world (and, as mentioned before, how it connects to the SF chapter openings), and a large part of the fun is the slow trickle of information that leads to a complete picture by the end of the book. The cast of characters is mostly engaging and easy to empathize with (although you may have to suspend disbelief quite a bit when you see Rigg’s transformation early on in the novel). There’s occasionally some repetitiveness in the dialogue, especially the ongoing friendly bickering between Umbo, Rigg and their companion Loaf, but all in all this story rarely gets boring and should keep you eager to find out how it all ends.

However, be warned: despite there being no indication of this on the cover, the ending of the book and the author’s afterword make it clear that Pathfinder is actually the opening volume in a series. While the novel has a solid resolution, by the end it’s clear that there’s more to the story. It would certainly have been nice to know that this is not a standalone! Let’s hope the next volume will remain as engaging as this one, now the mystery of some of the world-building has been revealed and the book will have to rely more on plot and characters.

Pathfinder is the kind of book that would have blown my mind when I was 13 or so, and as such, it’s a very successful YA novel that may just lead some younger readers to explore more SF and fantasy. As an adult reader, you’ll probably still have a great time with this book if you’re willing to suspend some disbelief and forgive some repetitiveness, but with its neat world-building and fast-paced, engaging plot, Pathfinder makes a great holiday gift if you want to steer your YA readers towards SF and fantasy.

(This review was also published at www.fantasyliterature.com)

Jenelle says

Hadn't even heard of it till I saw it at Costco and luckily this spontaneous purchase paid off. It was the perfect rebound book after the ultra disappointing end to the hunger games series. Pathfinder starts off feeling very similar, in fact, with a kind of futuristic/post-apocalyptic vibe. It wasn't as nail-biting or gruesome as hunger games, but the political intrigue is there and quite a bit of mystery--very much like Ender's Game. I read it just as fast those, too-- little more than a day. Really, it's a good blend of H.G. and E.G. with a little Psych, a bit of the Westmark trilogy, and maybe even a smidge of LOTR. The bummer is, this is the first book in the series, which I didnt know until the end, and I usually avoid a series until it's all published so I don't have to wait around. However, Card freely admits in the acknowledgements at the end (which contains important info about the story, btw, so don't skip it!) he writes his books in only a few weeks, so I'm expecting at least 2 more books this year. And I need them soon, so I can continue to get over HG.

Morgan F says

Pathfinder is centered on Rigg, a thirteen year old boy who lives an isolated life hunting and poaching with his enigmatic father. Rigg has a strange ability; he can see paths, tracks in time that are remnants of every

living thing ever to have lived. The only person whose path he cannot see is his father's, who dies one day in an accident. His father's last wish is for Rigg to find the sister he never knew he had. This leads Rigg to undergo a fascinating journey, with every step of the way leading him to uncover more secrets about his father and his own special abilities. Meanwhile, in a parallel story, there is Ram, another young man with mysterious abilities, who is responsible for a time-traveling ship searching for a new home in the universe.

Owww. This book made my brain hurt. There is time-traveling, parallel time lines, paradoxes, and all other sorts of sci-fi fun. In order to get the full effect of the story, you have to work with it, actively putting pieces together as you go along. I loved that. I was able to crack the mystery about how the two stories come together half-way through the book, but it took a lot of deduction on my part. Also, nothing is ever as simple as "magic". There is a specific convoluted scientific reasons for all the special abilities in the book, which Card does not hesitate to dive into. Dude, books like this make me feel stupid. How do people *think* of this stuff! It did not help that the main characters were geniuses in their own right. My favorite part of this book was easily the story itself. It was well-concieved and quite epic. Although the book is over 600 pages long, the pages flip by relatively quickly if you don't get too hung up on trying to figure out the finer point of the space-time continuum.

I've only read one other book by Orson Scott Card, the famous Ender's Game, and I saw some definite similarities. They both had adolescent main characters with a genius IQ and intense responsibilities, and the writing was quite the same. The dialogue was witty, and the characters were fun, but I never really felt connected with the story. This happens to me often with third-person narration. The characters can be perfectly well-developed and complex, but if its in 3rd-person, I just don't feel emotionally invested. Card's writing was also cool and calculating, much like his characters, and didn't lend much to descriptions. I still don't have any idea what the characters look like except for the vaguest notions, and the scenery was pretty much left entirely to the imagination.

Overall, this was a great read for lovers of YA sci-fi, and while this novel had some sense of closure, I can't wait to see what is next in the trilogy. Hopefully, Card remains in good enough health to finish it.

Maicie says

group read for Erodorks.

Geez, this book is listed as young adult. Kind of humiliating to admit how I struggled with the time-folding, space-traveling, and quantum physics involved. And I mean really, really struggled. I skimmed some parts because no matter how many times I read and reread certain chapters, I never did get clarity.

Still, I'm giving this 4 big stars. The verbal swordplay is hysterical, the characters are likeable and, for me, the story line is fresh.

Rigg can see the paths others leave behind. This power allows him to interact with the past. When Rigg's father dies, he makes his son promise he will seek out the sister he never knew he had. Other companions who have special gifts of their own join Young Rigg. At the same time....or maybe before....or maybe after (????), Ram is traveling in a space ship with the expendables on a quest to ensure human survival.

Confusing? Yes. Worth reading? Oh, yes!

One of my favorite quotes:

Ram is feeling hurt because the expendables made some decisions without his consent.
Expendable: "First, we have no record of any human being ever dying directly from ego-depletion..."

Jeffrey says

3.5 but I rounded up. Time travel gives me a headache though and Rigg is more like a 50 year old with a degree in astrophysics than a 14 year old boy, but I care enough about the characters to see what happens next. I have always been a fan of Card's work. This book is a little dry for my tastes. I'm also not sure that even though the main characters are children that this book is actually a young adult novel. I don't think Card's best work, Ender's Game, was originally meant to be a young adult book either, but it works in that genre. This novel has more in common with Contact or some other work of Carl Sagan than what you would normally find in the teen literature section. I mean "My God!" there are no vampires, werewolves, zombies, fairies, etc..... If one of my students reads this book I will have to try to explain about quantum physics and since I have a degree in English literature I am not sure how successful I will be. Just remember that space and time are the same thing. We are just too stupid to perceive the difference. Some objects in space have mass which creates gravity. Objects with really large mass create gravity fields which warp time and the circle goes around and around like a cosmic game of rock, paper, scissors. The characters in this novel though can somehow perceive time and space in ways that allow them to manipulate it. This allows the colonists to travel vast distances and Rigg and his friends to slip in and out of the past, skip into the future so quickly that they are invisible, and see the paths all living things have travelled up to the present. Like I said "headache" but a good one.

Cori Reed says

My reading year has had a very weird start! Luckily I have already read a few books I really enjoyed as well.

Pathfinder wasn't for me. It was so overly confusing and had a weird sci-fi thing going on. I like long books, but this time I just wanted it to end.

Also, I knew before reading this that Orson Scott Card is a bigot, but I looked into it more and WOW. Dude's an ass.

Eva Mitnick says

This is the sort of science fiction that will satisfy fantasy readers who particularly crave books that take place in pre-industrial societies. The main characters in Pathfinder - young teenagers Rigg and Umbo, plus their adult friend and protector Loaf - have adventures as they journey from village to town, occasionally eating or staying in smoky, atmospheric, dangerous inns. There are magical abilities galore, and even a plot involving a dethroned royal family and a long-lost prince.

But wait - this is Orson Scott Card. Therefore, the reader finds out fairly quickly that the world Rigg and his friends inhabit was colonized more than 11,000 years ago by 19 spaceships from Earth. And those magical abilities? They are all variations of a genetic mutation one of the colonists passed on to his descendants.

And that genetic mutation involves the ability (voluntarily or involuntarily) to manipulate time. Various characters possess different versions of the talent - Rigg can see the paths of all people past and present; Umbo can speed people up (or slow time down), and can also go back in time; and so on.

Card loves to mull over concepts, and so his characters do this quite a bit in Pathfinder, especially concerning the nature of time and paradox. This no doubt interferes with plot momentum (and makes for a VERY long book), but I found it fascinating. Those for whom *When You Reach Me* by Rebecca Stead provided much fodder for thought will feel the same about Pathfinder.

Could have had more action, less pondering, and more believable characters (they are all archetypes without much depth) - but I liked Pathfinder very much.

Aaron Vincent says

Originally posted here

I had to distance myself away from this book before I wrote this review. If I did not, I would have just hit the caps lock and type, THIS IS THE COOLEST YA BOOK EVER!! Shift 1. Shift 1. I just did exactly that, didn't I? Oops. After being blown away by *Ender's Game* last year, you think I've learned my lesson and expect nothing less from Orson Scott Card? I didn't, but I know a lot better now.

Rigg can see path human and animals made whether it's from the distance past or the near present. He has been living most of his life isolated in the woods with only Father as his companion. Father taught him a lot things, most of which Rigg believes he will never need. That changed when Father suddenly died leaving him a task to find his sister, 19 jewels and his name. A name that could also be his death sentence. Rigg soon realized that Father prepared him for something bigger than what he can ever fathom and there's more to his ability than just seeing people's path. At the beginning of each chapter, we follow the character of young Ram as he command a ship journeying from Earth to a distant planet for human to colonize. It will only take you half-way through the book before you can put two and two together and see the larger picture.

Orson Scott Card combines tropes commonly found from young adult fantasy and science-fiction and produced a book that proves his mastery of both genre. Although marketed as a young adult novel, Pathfinder possess a very complex and sophisticated narrative involving space and time-travel and filled with secrets and intrigues that will keep the reader turning the pages. At the acknowledgement page, the author stated that he started writing the book knowing that he'll challenge common rules of time travel, and he did. I don't consider myself an expert on time-travel but neither am I a novice. I started reading Pathfinder with my preconceptions on how time-travel works. I had a hard time wrapping my head around the rules Card set for this novel. But after I suspend my preconceptions, everything made sense and needless to say, I love every bit of it. I guess it would not be an empty statement if I say that Pathfinder has a very intelligent plot the we rarely get to see in young adult novels. Pathfinder doesn't force you to think so you can follow the narrative or else you'll get left behind. It dares you to and that's one of the many the beauties of it.

Space time travel plays a huge part in this book but it is not the only thing this book can offer. The main storyline(Rigg's) was set in a land called Aressa Sessamo. This land was previously ruled by a monarchy that was decreed to be ruled only by the females until an uprising came that turned the government into

People's Revolution. Fast forward to present time, there are factions who want to maintain the Revolution but there are some that wants the female-ruling monarchy back and a few in favor for a male-ruling monarchy. The political intrigue in this novel is very complicated and for an unfortunate reason, Rigg is in the centre of all of it. For some this could mean that Card has got into his political babble once again. Not for me. The political situation of Aressa Sessamo is a consequence of what happened in the land's past therefore will play a vital part on our heroes future.(Excuse the vagueness of that statement. I am carefully treading on a spoiler-mined land here.) And I'll be honest, it was really fun figuring out whose on which side of the fence.

Genius is what Pathfinder is. The only reason I can think of for you not to enjoy this is if you hold bias over the author's opinion on certain topics before reading the book. I am also in opposition with some of the author's perspectives. He can have his opinion and I can have mine, but this won't stop me from enjoying his books. It's not like he is exploiting his fans like other ~~fan-fiction-writer~~ authors do. Having an opinion is not a crime, is it? A great storyteller is a great storyteller no matter what. There's a reason why Orson Scott Card has been in this business for a very long time and Pathfinder is definitely one of those. If you haven't tried any Orson Scott Card novel yet(my god, what's wrong with you?), this is a good place to start.

Shane says

This book was not terrible, but, frankly, it just didn't quite work for me. Nothing was quite as good as it could have been.

The characters were sometimes interesting, but sometimes unbelievable; as for example, Rigg seemed to know everything about everything, even at 13; or Umbo would randomly switch from jovial to jealous to insecure.

The plot sometimes moved well and kept my interest, but sometimes nothing would happen but them debating what to do for 50 pages.

The mystery of this world, what exactly is going on, was, as a whole, clever and interesting, but Card took way too long to reveal that information. I felt like Card didn't even start giving solid hints until around page 250 or so.

Another aspect that could have been better was how Card tries really, really hard to make their time-traveling make sense scientifically, but ironically in the end his over-emphasis on explaining it just makes things more confusing. A good suspension of disbelief will cover more ground than constantly pausing to have the characters ponder how time-travel works.

The best aspects of the book were the short snippets at the beginnings of each chapter describing the secondary story line, that of Ram and the expendable in space. These were my favorite parts and always entertaining, although, unfortunately, the downside here is they made me wish the book was primarily about Ram, not Rigg.

Ryan Lawler says

Pathfinder is the first book in Orson Scott Cards Serpent World series published by Simon & Schuster in 2010. Well known in the Sci-fi world for the Ender Saga (notably Ender's Game), and the Homecoming Saga, Card seems to be branching more and more into the fantasy genre with better results each time. With Pathfinder, Card has taken a number of the more complex sci-fi elements and used them to create a quality YA fantasy story that is original, easy to understand, and fun to read.

The story centers around a young boy named Rigg who has the ability to see the paths left behind by every

living creature, an ability that essentially allows him to see into the past. Growing up in the wilderness with only his father, Rigg shows he is also a gifted scholar and with the help of his father he is able to learn about science of the world and gain control of his ability. After falling victim to a fatal accident, Rigg's father tells Rigg that he must seek out his mother and sister who are in fact both alive and living the capital. As he journeys to the capital, Rigg and his companions start to realise that the world they thought they knew is not what it seems as they start to uncover secrets about both Rigg's life and the history of the world.

Within this story there is a second story about a man named Ram, pilot of a spaceship which is using experimental space folding technology to transport a human colony from Earth to a new habitable planet 32 light years away. As is the case with Sci-fi stories that make use of experimental technology, nothing seems to go to plan for Ram but the unintended consequences appear to be a blessing in disguise. As the story progresses, Ram becomes more familiar with the experimental technology and it seems certain that he will be able to pilot the ship to its intended destination, but at what cost?

Pathfinder is a well rounded original story with solid characters and complex plot devices all set in a world that continues to grow in size as Ender, I mean Rigg *TIC*, uncovers more and more secrets. About halfway through this book stops being about Rigg and starts focusing its efforts on world building and by the of the book I was blown away by just how big, complex and intricate this world is. Because of the change in focus the plot starts to stutter due to a lack of direction, however, it all comes together for an ending that somehow manages to be satisfying despite asking more questions than it answers.

Time-travel can be very confusing and Card has taken a big risk by taking traditional time-travel elements and giving them a twist, but I think he has managed to make it work and in the process he has constructed a solid foundation to really build on in future books. While I appreciate that these books are written for the YA audience and that some of the complex plot devices can be confusing, I think Card goes a little too far as he provides an explanation for just about everything which at times felt like he just didn't trust us to come up with the right conclusion. Because of this, I feel that there is a fair bit of fat that could have either been trimmed from the story altogether, or replaced with a bit more interaction between Rigg and his father.

I am a big fan of the "story within a story" format as it allows the author to give the reader plenty of background information through the secondary story to enhance the experience of the primary story without disrupting its flow. In Pathfinder, I thought the pacing and interaction between both stories was just right with the subtle hints given by each story as helpful as they were misleading. Having thought I had figured the whole story out early on, I continued to be surprised as both stories made unexpected twists and turns right up until the last few chapters where I finally had that lightbulb moment and everything fell into place. I think this says a lot about the quality of foreshadowing in this book, but i shouldn't be surprised by this as quality foreshadowing seems to be a feature of all books by Orson Scott Card.

There seems to be a massive focus on the YA market at the moment and with books like Pathfinder, Leviathan, and The Spook's Apprentice, it is easy to see why. While the constant explanation of plot devices can be belittling at times, especially for adult readers, it does make the more complex plot devices easier to understand without too much disruption to the flow of the story. While this book works on its own, it is obvious that this book has been written with the rest of the series in mind and I am really looking forwards to seeing the direction that Card chooses to take.

Ungelic_is_us says

This book was straight-up terrible. If I hadn't read it in audiobook I probably would have dropped it (although many a time did I wish that it had it in dead tree form so I could skim the endless, boringly

repetitive discussions of time-travel paradox.) The characters have the same conversations over and over again; when they're separated, they have to go through the same process of figuring out the same problems, and then talk about them again. Each time someone joins the party they have to explain it to the newbie. Meanwhile, the reader (me) is just going, I know, I know, can we just say "And then we explained everything to the guardsman and got back to the plot?!" I get that time travel paradoxes can be hard to explain, and you don't want your audience criticizing later inconsistencies--but the solution is not to explain and re-explain ad nauseam.

Combine that with thin characterization and children acting like no child has ever behaved (doing stupid things while convinced of their own genius) with banter that only occasionally manages to add a gloss of interest or camaraderie to the conversation, and you have this clunky, stupid and incomprehensible book that in spite of its interminable explanations still fails to make sense--or worse, entertain.

John Brown says

I was once in a discussion about religion with a friend who happens to be an atheist and fellow science fiction and fantasy writer. He's a great guy. The blog posts he wrote about the passing of the woman he loved who was lost to cancer were poignant and wonderful--full of beauty. I read them and wanted to be a better man. Still, he and I disagree about God.

I remember telling him that science fiction is the one genre that makes God more plausible than any other. At least, it makes my view of God more plausible. Now, I do not want to talk religion in this essay. But it's just hard for science fiction to leave the idea of creation and Adam and Eve alone. Witness the many stories over the years about these very things.

Heck, even the recent movie *Oblivion* has references—are not Jack and Victoria much like Adam and Eve? Just think about it. Their paradise together as a team, the knowledge, the fall. The echoes are simply marvelous.

Well, I just read another science fiction tale that provided a wonderful opportunity to think about these things. It's Orson Scott Card's novel *Pathfinder*. Now, the story isn't about God. It's not a biblical allegory. It's not dressed-up doctrine. It's a tale about a boy named Rigg with special abilities on a quest to find his real family and who he is. Along the way we meet some interesting people, especially one character named Loaf who leavened the whole tale. So there's an interesting adventure and speculations about faster-than-light travel. But one of the chief delights for me was the questions and ideas this story raised in my mind about the creation of our own world—"Garden," the name of the world, just begged for it.

For example, a long-time staple of science fiction is the idea of terraforming—changing face of the flora, fauna, atmosphere, and climate of the planet to be hospitable to your species. If you believe in a God that is more a being of advanced technology than one of unknowable fantasy, doesn't that present a new and interesting way of viewing the creation story? It does for me, and *Pathfinder* sparked ideas about this.

The book also led me to think about life. First, Card has these characters called "Expendables." They're robots, but not really. They're artificial intelligence. But not really. The way Card presents the expendables, you don't think of silicon and steel and gears. You think of biology.

You think of mosquitoes.

You think about the fact that if we humans use intelligent machines, surely God must use intelligent

machinery. So what kind of intelligent machinery does God employ? (Dude, that idea is just pregnant with stories!)

Are viruses and bacteria machines? Are mosquitoes and beetles (please, let there be no mosquitoes in heaven)?

The book prompts me to wonder. It prompts me to look at the life about me on our wonderful world with new eyes. It prompts me to think differently about some of my core definitions. In fact, there are some exchanges between a character and an expendable where they talk about the difference between humans and expendables and the definition of what it means to be human, especially given evolution.

This is a book about an adventure, but also a book about ideas, which is as it should be. Science fiction is the one genre, more than any other, that marries character and plot with exploration of ideas. If you're looking for an interesting tale that will make you think about our world differently, give Pathfinder a try.

Spider the Doof Warrior says

Book readers, you know that feeling of reading a book and falling in love from the first few pages, gazing lovingly at a books words. Holding the book to your chest as you exclaim: THIS IS SUCH A GOOD BOOK, IT IS ONE OF THE BEST I'VE READ, IT'S GREAT and you just want to keep reading it and devouring it?

Yeah, this isn't that book. I'm trying, but I just can't do it. It's too dull. The characters are not interesting. They are flat, 2 dimensional. All they do is banter. OSC goes on about bodily functions you don't need the details of and includes heaps of other stuff you're better off not knowing.

And just when you think he can get through ONE BOOK without ranting about marriages and babies, you realize he can't, because a character expresses his desire to get married and have babies.

You realize you could be with another book, laughing and clapping with glee.

I must try to give up.

But I really want it to get better!

The problem with OSC is I suspect he's not so much writing for the sheer love and passion of writing but to ca\$h another cheque and to send 10% of the LDS church.

Alias Pending says

SHORT REVIEW: A two star rating cannot be quibbled with.

LESS SHORT REVIEW: What is this story about? Quibbling. Lots of quibbling from every character in every scene. Not debating, not hypothesizing, not conflicting, just quibbling over every issue that is in front of them, large or small. Which leads to problem 2. All the characters are exactly the same. They may be described differently, but they all quibble exactly the same.

What else? This is where I can quibble with myself because there is still some good stuff in here. Mysterious madness inducing walls, quests, chases, space travel, time travel. The time travel stuff alone almost, almost, makes me want to give this another star.

MORE LESS SHORT REVIEWING: Two stars. That is my final answer, in all possible forwardly linear parallel time-streams. And here is why. Despite the neat concepts on time travel, the story doesn't work. Its beats are the same as Ender's Game – young prodigy advised by authoritarian father-figure goes on a quest, children are killed, quibbling happens – but the stakes are never presented. None of the main characters knows why they are doing what they are doing, nor do they really care once they accidentally complete their quest. Neither does the audience. None of the characters change, emotionally or intellectually, from start to end and none of their random adventures are particularly gripping.

ADDITIONAL FUN READING TIP: I found it more entertaining/palatable to think of all the characters as Vulcans from a pre-warp powered Star Trek universe. Wow... I really wanted to like this story more.

Virginia says

Sometimes, the cleverness and incredible adeptness and genius of the main character, Rigg, surpasses my ability to suspend disbelief. Not the spaceships and spacetime-jumping folds creating duplicate persons. Not the ability to become invisible or see the paths of all beings or slowing down time. Not even a ridiculous confluence of events. However, if I were to be trained since birth on game theory, different languages, etc. I could be half as able. Ok, no joke. One third. I do so wish that I could be as witty and clever as Rigg (although, not necessarily his situation).

My one minor gripe about the book is when the characters talk about the paradoxes of time travel. I understand why they do it (since they're figuring out how it works), but man, it can get confusing real quick. (As is the point, I suppose.)

This book is another great start of a trilogy by Card. He's promised to pump out a Pathfinder book a year until it's done (along with a Mithermage book a year until *that* series is done) but I'll believe it when I see it. Plus, he just had a mild stroke on New Year's day, and I wish him a speedy recovery. I'd rather the books be delayed than Card no longer be able to write - that's for sure. Besides, he's promised not to die until he's done with both trilogies. So there. HE PROMISED.

I loved this book and the two separate stories. I particularly found the Ram story line distinctly intriguing - especially in how it fits together with Rigg's. But I suppose that's because Ram's part is so much shorter and always ends with cliffhangers. It's hard not to like that one more. I thoroughly enjoyed figuring this story out and trying to grasp at all the goodies and clues Card throws in to help the reader along. He does not disappoint. Plus, if you're totally confused at the end, Card does explain what happens in the acknowledgments.

I can't wait for the others in the series. Awesome book. Oh, and the book broke my brain.

Derek says

A fantastic sci-fi/fantasy time travelling romp. I loved it, and was engrossed by the disparate ideas and eager to learn how the two collided. It managed to be mysterious without being formulaic, have interesting insights into science and human nature, and a good set up for an epic series. I was heartbroken when I learned the second book isn't out yet. In addition to all of this, it seems that Card is revisiting the "genius child" that he explored in Ender's Game. Highly recommended.

