

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

Candide

by Voltaire

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Candide

Note to Teacher

Voltaire is the pen name of Francois-Marie Arouet (1694 – 1778), a French author and philosopher. His style, wit, intelligence, and strong sense of justice make him one of France's most famous writers.

Candide (1759), Voltaire's best-known work, is a brilliant philosophical tale. It describes the adventures of an inexperienced young man as he wanders around the world, but there is much beneath the surface. On one level, it is a satire that attacks the intolerance and abuse seen in the church, government, and society. On a deeper level, it is a complex look at the meaning of life and the nature of evil, as it exists in the world.

The time in which Voltaire lived is known as the Age of Reason, and Voltaire is one of the preeminent practitioners of reason. Because of his passion for justice and his attachment to reason, he also attacks superstition, intolerance, fanaticism, and injustice.

All references come from the *Prestwick House Literary Touchstone Classics™* edition of *Candide*, published 2006.

Candide

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, students will be able to:

1. state and define the problem of evil as it appears in the novel, and support their assertions by citing incidents or comments from the book.
2. write an essay discussing Voltaire's view on the importance of work in one's life.
3. debate the following point: Voltaire is not opposed to religion itself, but he is against the excesses and abuses in organized religion.
4. discuss the terms *divine providence* (also known as *determinism*) and *free will*, and indicate what role these two concepts play in the story.
5. understand how philosophical optimism applies to *Candide* and how Voltaire satirizes it in the novel.
6. identify and discuss three other major targets of Voltaire's satire, in addition to philosophical optimism.
7. write a character analysis for the following major characters, and indicate to what extent, if at all, these characters change over the course of the novel: Candide, Pangloss, Cunegonde, the old woman.
8. identify the role or function in the novel of the following characters: Cacambo, Martin, the young Baron, Paquette, Brother Giroflée, James, Pococurante.
9. discuss the ways in which *Candide* is both a coming-of-age novel and an adventure-romance novel.
10. define the term *satire*, and explain how Voltaire uses it to expose the social and political injustices he witnessed during his lifetime.

Candide

Questions For Essay and Discussion

1. State what the problem of evil involves and how it is manifested in *Candide*. Describe how Pangloss explains the presence of evil in the world. Does his explanation make sense, in your opinion? Make an argument for what you believe is Voltaire's opinion on the existence of evil.
2. If Voltaire were asked if human beings have free will, how do you suppose he would respond? Use passages or incidents from the novel to support your answer.
3. Prove or disprove the following assertion by citing passages or comments from the novel: Voltaire is a passionate believer in independent thought, and he vigorously opposes the idea that anyone should dictate how others should think.
4. Consider the significance of the garden that figures prominently in the final chapter of the novel. What does the garden seem to symbolize? Explain how the term "to cultivate one's garden" relates to some of the novel's major concepts and/or themes.
5. Define philosophical optimism. What are some major principles of the philosophy? What are some logical problems and/or inconsistencies within the philosophy of optimism? Which character(s) embody this philosophy? Support your response with information from the text.
6. Define *satire*, and identify at least one of Voltaire's targets.
7. Define *irony*, and give examples of where and how it is used in the novel.
8. Write a one-paragraph sketch for each of the following characters: Pangloss, Paquette, the old woman, Cacambo, Martin, the young Baron, Cunegonde. Then, point out salient features of each character, and identify the role he or she plays in the story.
9. Trace the journey Candide makes from innocence to maturity. Be sure to support generalizations about his character at the beginning, and identify the influences on him that bring about change. Be specific regarding how and why he changes.
10. Point out the ways in which *Candide* can be considered an adventure-romance novel. Identify at least two conventions of the adventure-romance genre that Voltaire parodies.
11. Using examples from the novel, explain Voltaire's view on the treatment of women. Compare the experiences of Cunegonde, Paquette, and the old woman. What do they all have in common? What major motif is exemplified by their stories?

Candide

Chapter I

Vocabulary

almoner – one who officially distributes charity for someone else (an individual, a monarch, or a religious organization)
consternation – astonishment; dismay
curate – a member of the clergy who is in charge of a parish; one who oversees
vivacity – liveliness, spirit

1. List and briefly identify the major characters introduced in this chapter.

2. Why does the narrator tell the reader that the Baron's castle has "not only a gate, but windows"?

3. Voltaire invents a word to describe the subject of Pangloss's instruction. Identify this word. How does Voltaire use it to satirize Pangloss and other philosophers like him?

4. The narrator expands upon Pangloss's major philosophical belief that this world is the best of all possible worlds and that all things have been created for a reason: "...things cannot be otherwise than as they are; for all being created for an end, all is necessarily for the best end." List a few of the examples that Pangloss uses to support this principle. What is silly and/or illogical about many of his examples?

Chapter VI

Vocabulary

accosted – confronted

approbation – an expression of approval or praise; commendation

cadence – rhythm or the beat of music

habited – dressed

incommoded – disturbed, bothered; inconvenienced

infallible – perfect, flawless, unable to fail

mitres – headdresses worn by bishops for ceremonial purposes

sages – wise and experienced individuals

1. As the chapter begins, the narrator says that the sages of Lisbon “could think of no means more effectual to prevent utter ruin than to give the people a beautiful *auto-da-fé*.” Considering its context within the paragraph, what do you think an *auto-da-fé* is?

2. Give a brief summary of what occurs at the *auto-da-fé*. What are Candide and Pangloss charged with? What happens to them?

3. The charges against Pangloss reflect one of Voltaire’s criticisms of the Catholic Church. Specifically, what is Voltaire criticizing?

4. Candide and Cacambo ask, “What! have you no monks who teach, who dispute, who govern, who cabal, and who burn people that are not of their opinion?” What is the old man’s answer?

5. List two examples of satire in this chapter, using quotes from the text.

6. Why do Candide and Cacambo decide to leave El Dorado? How might the old man’s words from the beginning of the chapter foreshadow trouble for them upon their departure from the country?
