Reader's Guide

from CANDIDE

Background

Candide is subtitled "Optimism" and tells a tale of the woes that befall a naive simpleton who is brought up to believe that this world is the best of all possible worlds. The point of Voltaire's story is to show how Candide's optimism is foolish in a world in which people's lives are shaped for the most part by cruel and incomprehensible forces.

The plot of *Candide* takes the form of a quest: the young man's quest for union with his beloved, Cunegonde. They go through a series of separations and reunions, as Cunegonde is taken as booty by the Bulgarians, held prisoner by the Grand Inquisitor, and forcibly kept as a mistress by the Governor of Buenos Aires—in this, the best of all possible worlds. What happens to Candide himself is no better, but the two lovers somehow survive. The tale is told with great verve and hilarity, and, like all quests of this kind, the journey involves much suffering but ends in wisdom.

Writer's Response

If it were possible for you to live in the "best of all possible worlds" right here on earth, what would such a place be like? What kinds of things would you *not* find there? Write a paragraph describing your ideal world.

Literary Focus

Satire is writing that ridicules human weakness, vice, or folly in order to bring about social reform. An expert satirist like Voltaire uses a variety of tools to expose his subject to ridicule—from witty barbs to heavy bludgeons that flatten his opponent's sacred cows. As Voltaire exposes one absurdity after another, readers become convinced that they would be fools not to agree with his point of view. As you read *Candide,* look for Voltaire's outrageous exaggerations and deadpan understatements, for illogic dressed up as common sense, and for situations that are simply silly.

CHAPTER I

How Candide was brought up in a beautiful castle, and how he was driven from it.

IN THE castle of Baron Thunder-ten-tronckh in Westphalia, there once lived a youth endowed by nature with the gentlest of characters. His soul was revealed in his face. He combined rather sound judgment with great simplicity of mind; it was for this reason, I believe, that he was given the name of Candide. The old servants of the household suspected that he was the son of the baron's sister by a good and honorable gentleman of the vicinity, whom this lady would never marry because he could prove only seventy-one generations of nobility, the rest of his family tree having been lost, owing to the ravages of time.

The baron was one of the most powerful lords in Westphalia, for his castle had a door and windows. Its hall was even adorned with a tapestry. The dogs in his stable yards formed a hunting pack when necessary, his grooms were his huntsmen, and the village curate was his chaplain. They all called him "My Lord" and laughed when he told stories.

The baroness, who weighed about three hundred fifty pounds, thereby winning great esteem, did the honors of the house with a dignity that made her still more respectable. Her daughter Cunegonde, aged seventeen, was rosy-cheeked, fresh, plump and alluring. The baron's son appeared to be worthy of his father in every way. The tutor Pangloss was the oracle of the household, and young Candide listened to his teachings with all the good faith of his age and character.

Pangloss taught metaphysico-theologo-cosmonigology. He proved admirably that in this best of all possible worlds, His

Lordship's castle was the most beautiful of castles, and Her Ladyship the best of all possible baronesses.

"It is demonstrated," he said, "that things cannot be otherwise: for, since everything was made for a purpose, everything is necessarily for the best purpose. Note that noses were made to wear spectacles; we therefore have spectacles. Legs were clearly devised to wear breeches, and we have breeches. Stones were created to be hewn and made into castles; His Lordship therefore has a very beautiful castle: the greatest baron in the province must have the finest residence. And since pigs were made to be eaten, we eat pork all year round. Therefore, those who have maintained that all is well have been talking nonsense: they should have maintained that all is for the best."

Candide listened attentively and believed innocently, for he found Lady Cunegonde extremely beautiful, although he was never bold enough to tell her so. He concluded that, after the good fortune of having been born Baron Thunder-ten-tronckh, the second greatest good fortune was to be Lady Cunegonde; the third, to see her every day; and the fourth, to listen to Dr. Pangloss, the greatest philosopher in the province, and therefore in the whole world.

One day as Cunegonde was walking near the castle in the little wood known as "the park," she saw Dr. Pangloss in the bushes, giving a lesson in experimental physics to her mother's chambermaid, a very pretty and docile little brunette. Since Lady Cunegonde was deeply interested in the sciences, she breathlessly observed the repeated experiments that were performed before her eyes. She clearly saw the doctor's sufficient reason, and the operation of cause and effect. She then returned home, agitated and thoughtful, reflecting that she might be young Candide's sufficient reason, and he hers.

On her way back to the castle she met Candide. She blushed, and so did he. She greeted him in a faltering voice, and he spoke to her without knowing what he was saying. The next day, as they were leaving the table after dinner, Cunegonde and Candide found themselves behind a screen. She dropped her handkerchief, he picked it up; she innocently took his hand, and he innocently kissed hers with extraordinary

animation, ardor and grace; their lips met, their eyes flashed, their knees trembled, their hands wandered. Baron Thunder-ten-tronckh happened to pass by the screen; seeing this cause and effect, he drove Candide from the castle with vigorous kicks in the backside. Cunegonde fainted. The baroness slapped her as soon as she revived, and consternation reigned in the most beautiful and agreeable of all possible castles.

CHAPTER II

What happened to Candide among the Bulgars.

AFTER BEING driven from his earthly paradise, Candide walked for a long time without knowing where he was going, weeping, raising his eyes to heaven, looking back often toward the most beautiful of castles, which contained the most beautiful of young baronesses. He lay down without eating supper, between two furrows in an open field; it was snowing in large flakes. The next day, chilled to the bone, he dragged himself to the nearest town, whose name was Waldberghofftrarbkdikdorff. Penniless, dying of hunger and fatigue, he stopped sadly in front of an inn. Two men dressed in blue' noticed him.

"Comrade," said one of them, "there's a well-built young man who's just the right height."

They went up to Candide and politely asked him to dine with them.

"Gentlemen," said Candide with charming modesty, "I'm deeply honored, but I have no money to pay my share."

"Ah, sir," said one of the men in blue, "people of your appearance and merit never pay anything: aren't you five feet five?"

"Yes, gentlemen, that's my height," he said, bowing.

"Come, sir, sit down. We'll not only pay for your dinner, but we'll never let a man like you be short of money. Men were made only to help each other."

"You're right," said Candide, "that's what Dr. Pangloss always told me, and I see that all is for the best."

They begged him to accept a little money; he took it and offered to sign a note for it, but they would not let him. They all sat down to table.

"Don't you dearly love—"

"Oh, yes!" answered Candide. "I dearly love Lady Cunegonde."

"No," said one of the men, "we want to know if you dearly love the King of the Bulgars."

"Not at all," said Candide, "because I've never seen him."

"What! He's the most charming of kings, and we must drink to his health."

"Oh, I'll be glad to, gentlemen!"

And he drank.

"That's enough," he was told, "you're now the support, the upholder, the defender and the hero of the Bulgars: your fortune is made and your glory is assured."

They immediately put irons on his legs and took him to a regiment. He was taught to make right and left turns, raise and lower the ramrod, take aim, fire, and march double time, and he was beaten thirty times with a stick. The next day he performed his drills a little less badly and was given only twenty strokes; the following day he was given only ten, and his fellow soldiers regarded him as a prodigy.

Candide, utterly bewildered, still could not make out very clearly how he was a hero. One fine spring day he decided to take a stroll; he walked straight ahead, believing that the free use of the legs was a privilege of both mankind and the animals. He had not gone five miles when four other heroes, all six feet tall, overtook him, bound him, brought him back and put him in a dungeon. With proper legal procedure, he was asked which he would prefer, to be beaten thirty-six times by the whole regiment, or to receive twelve bullets in his brain. It did him no good to maintain that man's will is free and that he wanted neither: he had to make a choice. Using the gift of God known as freedom, he decided to run the gauntlet thirty-six times, and did so twice. The regiment was composed of two thousand men, so his punishment was so far composed of four

thousand strokes, which had laid bare every muscle and nerve from his neck to his backside. As they were preparing for a third run, Candide, unable to go on, begged them to blow his brains out instead. The favor was granted; he was blindfolded and made to kneel. Just then the King of the Bulgars came by and inquired about the condemned man's crime. Being a highly intelligent king, he realized from what he was told that Candide was a young metaphysician, utterly ignorant of worldly matters, and pardoned him with a clemency that will be praised in all newspapers and all ages. A worthy surgeon healed Candide in three weeks with the emollients prescribed by Dioscorides. He already had a little skin, and was able to walk, when the King of the Bulgars joined battle with the King of the Avars.

CHAPTER III

How Candide escaped from the Bulgars, and what happened to him.

NOTHING COULD have been more splendid, brilliant, smart or orderly than the two armies. The trumpets, fifes, oboes, drums and cannons produced a harmony whose equal was never heard in hell. First the cannons laid low about six thousand men on each side, then rifle fire removed from the best of worlds about nine or ten thousand scoundrels who had been infesting its surface. The bayonet was also the sufficient reason for the death of several thousand men. The total may well have risen to thirty thousand souls. Candide, trembling like a philosopher, hid himself as best he could during this heroic carnage.

Finally, while the two kings were having Te Deums sung, each in his own camp, Candide decided to go elsewhere to reason about cause and effect. He made his way over heaps of dead and dying men until he came to a nearby village. It was in ashes,

for it was an Avar village which the Bulgars had burned in accordance with international law. Old men with wounds all over their bodies were watching the death throes of butchered women who clutched their children to their bloody breasts; girls who had been disemboweled after satisfying the natural needs of several heroes were breathing their last sighs; others, mortally burned, were shrieking for someone to hasten their death. The ground was strewn with brains and severed arms and legs.

Candide fled to another village as fast as he could: it belonged to the Bulgars, and the Avar heroes had treated it in the same manner. Still walking over quivering limbs, or through ruins, he finally emerged from the theater of war, carrying a little food in his sack and never forgetting Lady Cunegonde. His food ran out when he reached Holland, but since he had heard that everyone was rich in that country, and that the people were Christians, he did not doubt that he would be treated as well there as he had been in the baron's castle before he had been driven away from it because of Lady Cunegonde's lovely eyes.

He asked alms of several solemn individuals who all replied that if he continued to ply that trade he would be shut up in a house of correction to teach him better manners.

Next he approached a man who had just spoken about charity for a whole hour in front of a large assembly. This orator scowled at him and said, "What are you doing here? Are you for the good cause?"

"There is no effect without a cause," replied Candide modestly. "All things are necessarily connected and arranged for the best. I had to be driven away from Lady Cunegonde, I had to run the gauntlet, and I have to beg my bread until I can earn it; all that could not have been otherwise."

"My friend," said the orator, "do you believe that the Pope is the Antichrist?"

"I've never heard anyone say so," answered Candide, "but whether he is or not, I still have nothing to eat."

"You don't deserve to eat," said the orator. "Go, you scoundrel, you wretch, and never come near me again!"

The orator's wife, having looked out the window and seen a man who doubted that the Pope was the Antichrist, poured on

CHAPTER XVII

How Candide and his valet came to the land of Eldorado.

WHEN THEY reached the border of the Oreillons' territory, Cacambo said to Candide, "You see: this hemisphere is no better than the other one; believe me, the best thing we can do is go back to Europe by the shortest route possible."

"How can we?" said Candide. "And where could I go? If I go back to my country, I'll find the Bulgars and the Avars slaughtering everyone in sight; if I return to Portugal, I'll be burned; if we stay here, we're in constant danger of being put on a spit. But how can I bring myself to leave the part of the world Lady Cunegonde is living in?"

"Let's head for Cayenne," said Cacambo. "We'll find some Frenchmen there who travel all over the world, and they'll be able to help us. Perhaps God will take pity on us."

It was not easy to get to Cayenne; they knew approximately what direction to take, but there were terrible obstacles everywhere: mountains, rivers, precipices, bandits and savages. Their horses died of fatigue, and they used up all their provisions. After eating nothing but wild fruits for a whole month, they came at last to a stream whose banks were lined with coconut trees which sustained their lives and their hopes.

Cacambo, whose advice was always as good as the old woman's, said to Candide, "We can't go on like this, we've walked enough. I see an empty boat on the bank: let's fill it with coconuts, get into it and drift with the current—a river al-

ways leads to some inhabited spot. If we don't find anything pleasant, we'll at least find something new."

"Let's go," said Candide. "We'll place ourselves in the hands of Providence."

They drifted for several miles between banks that were sometimes covered with flowers, sometimes arid, sometimes flat, and sometimes steep. The river grew steadily wider, until at last it vanished into a vault of awe-inspiring rocks that rose up to the sky. The two travelers had the courage to abandon themselves to the stream as it flowed under this vault. The river narrowed at this spot and bore them along with terrible speed and noise. After twenty-four hours they saw daylight again, but their boat was smashed against a reef. They had to crawl from rock to rock for nearly three miles, until finally they saw a vast horizon bordered by unscalable mountains. The land here was cultivated for pleasure as well as from necessity; everywhere the useful had been made pleasant. The roads were covered, or rather adorned, with beautifully formed carriages made of lustrous material, carrying men and women of extraordinary beauty and swiftly drawn by large red sheep whose speed surpassed that of the finest horses of Andalusia, Tetuán or Meknes.

"Here's a better country than Westphalia!" said Candide.

He and Cacambo entered the first village they came to. Several children, wearing tattered gold brocade, were playing quoits at the edge of this village. Our two men from the other world stopped to watch them. Their quoits were rather large round objects, yellow, red or green, which shone with extraordinary brilliance. Our travelers picked up a few of them and found that some were made of gold, while others were emeralds or rubies; the smallest one of them would have been the greatest ornament of a Mogul's throne.

"These children playing quoits," said Cacambo, "must be the sons of the king of this country."

Just then the village schoolmaster came out to call the children back to school.

"There's the tutor of the royal family," said Candide.

The little urchins immediately stopped playing, leaving their quoits and other playthings on the ground. Candide picked

them up, ran to the tutor and humbly presented them to him, making signs to point out to him that Their Royal Highnesses had forgotten their gold and jewels. The village schoolmaster smiled, dropped them on the ground, looked at Candide for a moment in great surprise, then turned and went on his way.

The travelers did not fail to pick up the gold, rubies and emeralds.

"Where are we?" cried Candide. "The children of the kings of this country must be well brought up, since they're taught to despise gold and jewels."

Cacambo was as surprised as Candide. Finally they came to the first house of the village. It was built like a European palace. Large numbers of people were crowding around the door, and there were even more inside. They could hear delightful music, and smell a delicious odor of cooking. Cacambo walked up to the door and heard that the people were speaking Peruvian, his native tongue, for, as everyone knows, Cacambo was born in Tucumán, in a village where that was the only language known.

"I'll be your interpreter," he said to Candide. "Let's go inside: this is an inn."

Two waiters and two waitresses, dressed in gold cloth, with their hair tied in ribbons, immediately invited them to sit down to table. They were served four tureens of soup, each garnished with two parrots, a boiled condor weighing two hundred pounds, two roasted monkeys of excellent flavor, three hundred colibris in one dish and six hundred hummingbirds in another; there were also exquisite stews and delicious pastries, and everything was served in dishes made of a kind of rock crystal. The waiters and waitresses poured out various liqueurs made from sugar cane.

The other guests were mostly merchants and carters, all extremely polite. They asked Cacambo a few questions with the most delicate discretion, and gave satisfactory answers to the questions he asked them.

When the meal was over, Cacambo and Candide thought they had amply paid their bill when they left on the table two of the big pieces of gold they had picked up, but the host and hostess burst out laughing and held their sides for a long time.

"Gentlemen," said the host, "it's easy to see you're not from our country, and we're not used to foreigners. Excuse us for laughing when you offered to pay us with two stones from our roads. You probably have none of our money, but you don't need any to dine here. All inns run for the convenience of people engaged in commerce are paid for by the government. You've fared badly here, because this is a poor village, but everywhere else you'll be given the reception you deserve."

Cacambo explained the host's remarks to Candide, who listened to them with the same wonder and bewilderment his friend felt as he translated them.

"What country can this be," said one to the other, "unknown to the rest of the world and so different in every way from anything we've ever seen before? It's probably the country where everything goes well, because there must be one like that somewhere. And, despite what Dr. Pangloss used to say, I often noticed that everything went rather badly in Westphalia."

CHAPTER XVIII

What they saw in the land of Eldorado.

CACAMBO EXPRESSED his extreme curiosity to the host, who said to him, "I'm very ignorant, and quite happy to stay that way, but we have here an old man who's retired from the court: he's the most learned man in the kingdom, and the most communicative."

He immediately took Cacambo to the old man's house. Candide, relegated to a secondary role, accompanied his valet. The house they entered was a very simple one, for its door was made only of silver, and the rooms were paneled only with gold, although the workmanship was in such good taste that the richest paneling was not superior. The antechamber was incrusted only with rubies and emeralds, it is true, but the order

in which everything was arranged made up for this extreme simplicity.

The old man received the two strangers sitting on a sofa stuffed with colibri feathers and had them served liqueurs in diamond goblets. He then satisfied their curiosity as follows:

"I'm a hundred seventy-two years old, and my father, the king's equerry, told me about the amazing Peruvian revolutions he witnessed. This kingdom is the former land of the Incas, who rashly left it to go off and subjugate another part of the world, and who were finally destroyed by the Spaniards.

"The princes of their royal family who remained in their native land showed greater wisdom: with the consent of the nation, they ordained that no inhabitant of our little kingdom should ever leave it, and that's what has preserved our innocence and our happiness. The Spaniards had a confused knowledge of this country, which they called Eldorado, and an Englishman named Raleigh came quite close to it about a hundred years ago. But since we're surrounded by unscalable mountains and cliffs, so far we've been safe from the rapacity of European nations, who have an incredible lust for the pebbles and dirt of our land, and would kill every one of us to get them."

The conversation was long; it touched on the form of government, customs and morals, women, public spectacles and the arts. Finally Candide, who was always interested in metaphysics, told Cacambo to ask whether the country had a religion.

The old man blushed slightly. "What!" he exclaimed. "Can you doubt that we have a religion? Do you think we're ingrates?"

Cacambo humbly asked him what the religion of Eldorado was. The old man blushed again and said, "Can there be two religions? We have, I believe, the same religion as everyone else: we worship God, morning and night."

"Do you worship only one God?" asked Cacambo, still serving as the interpreter of Candide's doubts.

"Of course!" said the old man. "There aren't two Gods, or three, or four. I must say that people from your world ask very strange questions!"

Candide continued to press the kindly old man with questions. He wanted to know how people prayed in Eldorado.

"We don't pray," said the venerable sage. "We have nothing to ask of God: He's given us everything we need. We constantly thank him."

Candide was curious to see some of their priests; he asked where they were. The kindly old man smiled and said, "My friends, we're all priests. The king and all heads of families solemnly sing hymns of thanksgiving every morning, accompanied by an orchestra of five or six thousand musicians."

"What! You have no monks who teach, argue, rule, plot, and burn people who don't agree with them?"

"We'd be mad if we did," said the old man. "We all agree with each other here, and we don't know what you mean when you talk about your monks."

Candide was enraptured as he listened to all this, and he said to himself, "This is quite different from Westphalia and the baron's castle. If our friend Pangloss had seen Eldorado, he wouldn't have said that the castle of Thunder-ten-tronckh was the finest thing on earth. It's obvious that everyone ought to travel."

After this long conversation, the kindly old man had six sheep harnessed to a carriage and assigned twelve of his servants to take the two travelers to court.

"Forgive me," he said to them, "for not accompanying you: my age deprives me of that honor. The king will give you a reception with which you won't be dissatisfied, and I'm sure you'll excuse the customs of our country if some of them displease you."

Candide and Cacambo got into the carriage, the six sheep set off at great speed, and in less than four hours they reached the king's palace, which stood at one end of the capital. Its portal was two hundred twenty feet high and a hundred feet wide. It would be impossible to describe the material it was made of, but it is easy to understand how enormously superior it must have been to the pebbles and sand we call precious stones and gold.

When Candide and Cacambo alighted from the carriage,

they were received by twenty beautiful girls attached to the palace; they took the visitors to the baths and dressed them in robes made of humming-bird down. The great lords and ladies of the court then led them to His Majesty's apartments, passing between two ranks of a thousand musicians each, according to custom. As they were approaching the throne room, Cacambo asked a great lord how they should behave when they were brought into His Majesty's presence: whether they should fall to their knees or flat on their faces, whether they should put their hands on their heads or on their behinds, whether they should lick the dust on the floor—in short, what the proper procedure was.

"The custom," said the lord, "is to embrace the king and kiss him on both cheeks."

Candide and Cacambo threw their arms around His Majesty's neck; he gave them an extremely gracious welcome and courteously invited them to supper.

In the meantime, they were shown around the city; they saw public buildings that rose up to the clouds, market places adorned with countless columns, fountains of clear water, pink water or sugar-cane liqueurs which flowed continuously in broad public squares paved with a kind of precious stone that gave off an odor like that of cloves and cinnamon. Candide asked to see the law courts; he was told that there were none, that lawsuits were unknown. He asked if there were prisons; the answer was no. What surprised and delighted him most of all was the Palace of Science, where he saw a gallery two thousand paces long filled with instruments of mathematics and physics.

After they had spent the whole afternoon covering about a thousandth of the city, they were taken back to the royal palace. Candide sat down to table with His Majesty, his valet Cacambo and several ladies. No better meal was ever served, and no supper conversation was ever more sparkling than His Majesty's. Cacambo explained his witty remarks to Candide, and they seemed witty even in translation. Of all the things that amazed Candide, this was by no means the least amazing.

They spent a month in the palace. Candide kept saying to

Cacambo, "Once again, my friend, I admit that there's no comparison between this country and the castle where I was born; but it's still true that Lady Cunegonde isn't here, and you must have some mistress in Europe too. If we stay here, we'll only be like everyone else, but if we go back to our world with no more than twelve sheep laden with stones from Eldorado, we'll be richer than all the kings of Europe put together, we'll have no more Inquisitors to fear, and we can easily rescue Lady Cunegonde."

Cacambo was pleased to hear this; a man who has traveled always enjoys coming home to show off and tell impressive stories about the things he has seen abroad. So the two fortunate men decided to be fortunate no longer: they asked His Majesty for permission to leave.

"It's a foolish thing to do," said the king. "I know my country doesn't amount to much, but when a man is fairly well off somewhere, he ought to stay there. I certainly have no right to prevent foreigners from leaving: that kind of tyranny is sanctioned by neither our customs nor our laws. All men are free. You may leave whenever you like, but you'll have a very difficult journey. It's impossible to sail against the current of the river that miraculously brought you here, and which flows through vaults of rock. The mountains surrounding my kingdom are ten thousand feet high and as steep as a wall; they're all over twenty-five miles wide, and they drop straight down on the other side. However, since you're determined to leave, I'll order my mechanical engineers to construct a machine that will carry you in comfort. When you've been taken over the mountains, no one can go with you any further, because my subjects have all sworn never to go beyond them, and they're too wise to break their word. But you may ask me for anything else you wish."

"All we ask of Your Majesty," said Cacambo, "is a few sheep laden with food and some of the pebbles and mud of your country."

The king laughed and said, "I can't understand why you people from Europe are so fond of our yellow mud, but take as much as you like, you're welcome to it."

He immediately ordered his engineers to make a machine to

hoist the two extraordinary men out of the kingdom. Three thousand learned scientists worked on it; it was finished in two weeks and cost no more than twenty thousand pounds sterling in the currency of the country. Candide and Cacambo were placed on the machine. There were two large red sheep, saddled and bridled, for them to ride after they had crossed the mountains, twenty pack-sheep laden with food, thirty bearing gifts consisting of some of the country's most remarkable products, and fifty laden with gold, diamonds and other precious stones. The king affectionately embraced the two wanderers.

Their departure was a wonderful sight, and so was the ingenious way in which they and their sheep were lifted over the mountains. The scientists took leave of them after placing them in safety. Candide had no other desire and aim than to go and present his sheep to Lady Cunegonde.

"We now have enough to pay the Governor of Buenos Aires," he said, "if Lady Cunegonde's freedom can be bought. Let's go to Cayenne and set sail from there, then we'll see what kingdom we can buy."

CHAPTER XIX

What happened to them at Surinam, and how Candide became acquainted with Martin.

THE FIRST day of their journey was rather pleasant. They were heartened by the thought that they now possessed more treasure than all of Asia, Europe and Africa could assemble. Candide, elated, wrote Cunegonde's name on the trees. On the second day, two of their sheep sank in a bog and were swallowed up with their loads; two more sheep died of fatigue a few days later; then seven or eight of them perished from hunger in a desert; still others fell off cliffs. Finally, after they had traveled for a hundred days, only two sheep were left.

Candide said to Cacambo, "Now you see, my friend, how perishable are the riches of this world. There's nothing solid but virtue, and the happiness of seeing Lady Cunegonde again."

"I agree," said Cacambo, "but we still have two sheep carrying more treasure than the King of Spain will ever have, and in the distance I see a town which I surmise to be Surinam, a Dutch possession. Our troubles are over, our happiness is about to begin."

As they were approaching the town they saw a Negro lying on the ground. His only garment was a pair of short blue trousers, and they had been half torn away. The poor man's left leg and right hand were missing.

"Good heavens!" Candide said to him in Dutch. "What are you doing here in such a terrible state?"

"I'm waiting for my master, Mynheer Vanderdendur the famous merchant," replied the Negro.

"Was it Mynheer Vanderdendur who put you in that condition?" asked Candide.

"Yes, sir," said the Negro, "it's the custom. We're given a pair of short trousers twice a year as our only clothing. If we get a finger caught under the millstone while we're working in the sugar mills, they cut off the whole hand; and if we try to run away, they cut off one of our legs. I've been in both those situations. That's the price of the sugar you eat in Europe. However when my mother sold me on the Guinea coast for ten patagons, she said to me, 'My dear child, always glorify and worship our fetishes, they'll make you live happily. You now have the honor of being a slave of our lords the white men, and in acquiring that honor you've made your parents' fortune.' I may have made their fortune, but they didn't make mine. Dogs, monkeys and parrots are a thousand times less miserable than we are. The Dutch fetishes, who converted me, tell me every Sunday that we're all children of Adam, black and white alike. I'm no genealogist, but if those preachers are telling the truth, we're all cousins, and you must admit that no one could treat his relatives more horribly."

"Oh, Pangloss!" cried Candide. "This is an abomination you never dreamed of! It's too much: I'll have to give up your optimism at last."

"What's optimism?" asked Cacambo.

"Alas," said Candide, "it's a mania for insisting that everything is all right when everything is going wrong."

He wept as he looked at the Negro, and there were still tears in his eyes when he entered Surinam.

The first thing they asked was whether there was any ship in the harbor that could be sent to Buenos Aires. The man they spoke to happened to be a Spanish captain. He offered to strike an honest bargain with them, and told them to meet him later at an inn. Candide and the faithful Cacambo went there with their two sheep to wait for him.

Candide, who never concealed what was in his heart, related all his adventures to the Spaniard and admitted that he wanted to rescue Lady Cunegonde.

"Then I certainly won't take you to Buenos Aires," said the captain. "I'd be hanged, and so would you. The fair Cunegonde is the governor's favorite mistress."

This was a terrible blow to Candide, and he wept for a long time. Finally he drew Cacambo aside and said to him, "Here's what you must do, my dear friend. We each have diamonds worth five or six million in our pockets. You're more resourceful than I am: go to Buenos Aires and get Lady Cunegonde. If the governor makes any difficulties, give him a million; if he still refuses, give him two million. You've never killed an Inquisitor, so they won't mistrust you. I'll fit out another ship and go to Venice to wait for you. Venice is a free state where there's nothing to fear from Bulgars, Avars, Jews or Inquisitors."

Cacambo praised this wise plan. He was in despair at having to be separated from a good master who had become his close friend, but the pleasure of being useful to him overcame the sorrow of leaving him. They embraced each other with tears in their eyes. Candide urged him not to forget the good old woman. Cacambo left the same day. A fine man, that Cacambo!

Candide stayed on a while longer in Surinam, waiting for another captain to take him to Italy with the two sheep he had left. He hired servants and bought everything he would need

for a long voyage. Finally Mynheer Vanderdendur, the master of a large ship, came to him and introduced himself.

"How much would you charge," Candide asked him, "to take me straight to Venice, along with my servants, my baggage and these two sheep?"

The captain asked for ten thousand piasters. Candide agreed without hesitation.

"Aha!" thought the prudent Vanderdendur. "This foreigner is ready to give ten thousand piasters all at once! He must be very rich." He came back a short time later and announced that he could not sail for less than twenty thousand.

"All right, then," said Candide, "you'll have twenty thousand."

"Good heavens!" the captain said to himself. "This man gives twenty thousand piasters as easily as ten thousand!" He came back again and said he could not take him to Venice for less than thirty thousand piasters.

"Then you'll have thirty thousand," replied Candide.

"Aha!" the Dutch captain said to himself again. "Thirty thousand piasters mean nothing to this man. His two sheep must be laden with immense treasures. I won't press him any further; first I'll make him pay the thirty thousand, then we'll see."

Candide sold two little diamonds, the smaller of which was worth more than all the money the captain asked. He paid him in advance. The two sheep were put on board. Candide followed in a small boat to join the ship in the harbor. The captain seized his opportunity: he set his sails and weighed anchor. The wind favored him. Candide, frantic and bewildered, soon lost sight of him. "Alas!" he cried. "That's a trick worthy of the Old World!" He turned back to shore, overwhelmed with sorrow, for he had lost enough to make the fortune of twenty monarchs.

He went to see the Dutch judge, and since he was rather agitated he pounded loudly on the door. He went in, explained what had happened and shouted a little more loudly than was proper. The judge began by fining him ten thousand piasters for the noise he had made. Then he listened patiently, promised to investigate his case as soon as the captain returned, and

charged him another ten thousand piasters for the expenses of the hearing.

This behavior was the last straw: it drove Candide to despair. He had experienced misfortunes that were actually a thousand times more painful, but the cold-bloodedness of the judge, and of the captain who had robbed him, inflamed his resentment and plunged him into black melancholy. The wickedness of men appeared to him in all its ugliness and his mind was filled with gloomy thoughts. Finally he found a French ship ready to leave for Bordeaux. Since he had no more sheep laden with diamonds to take on board, he rented a cabin on the ship for a fair price and had it announced in the town that he would give passage, food and two thousand piasters to an honest man willing to make the voyage with him, provided he was the most unfortunate man in the province, and the one most disgusted with his situation.

Applicants came to him in such great numbers that a whole fleet of ships could not have held them all. Candide, wishing to make his choice from among the most likely-looking ones, picked out about twenty who appeared to be rather sociable, and who all claimed to deserve his preference. He assembled them at his inn and gave them supper on condition that each one of them swear to relate his story faithfully. He told them he would choose the one who seemed to be the most deserving of pity and to have the best reasons for being dissatisfied with his lot, and he promised to give the others a small gratification.

The session lasted till four in the morning. As he listened to all their adventures, Candide recalled what the old woman had told him on the way to Buenos Aires, and how she had wagered that there was no one on the ship who had not suffered grave misfortunes. He thought of Pangloss with each story he heard. "That Pangloss," he said to himself, "would have a hard time defending his system. I wish he were here. If all goes well, it's in Eldorado, not in the rest of the world." He finally decided in favor of a poor scholar who had spent ten years working for the Amsterdam publishers. He judged that there was no profession on earth with which a man could be more thoroughly disgusted.

Furthermore, this scholar, who was a good man, had been

robbed by his wife, beaten by his son and abandoned by his daughter, who had eloped with a Portuguese. He had just lost the minor post that had been his only means of support, and he was persecuted by the preachers of Surinam because they believed him to be a Socinian.[c] It must be admitted that the others were at least equally unfortunate, but Candide hoped that the scholar would help him while away the time during his voyage. His rivals all felt that Candide had done them a great injustice, but he appeased them by giving each of them a hundred piasters.

CHAPTER XX

What happened to Candide and Martin at sea.

AND SO the old scholar, whose name was Martin, set out for Bordeaux with Candide. They had both seen and suffered much; if the ship had been sailing for Japan by way of the Cape of Good Hope, they would have been able to discuss moral and physical evil during the entire voyage.

Candide had one great advantage over Martin, however: he still hoped to see Lady Cunegonde again, while Martin had nothing to hope for. Furthermore, Candide still had some gold and diamonds; and, although he had lost a hundred red sheep laden with the greatest treasures on earth, and although he was still incensed over the Dutch captain's treachery, when he thought about what he still had in his pockets, and when he spoke about Cunegonde, especially at the end of a meal, he still inclined toward Pangloss's doctrine.

"But tell me," he said to the scholar, "what do *you* think about all that? What are your views on moral and physical evil?"

"Sir," replied Martin, "my priests accused me of being a Socinian, but the truth of the matter is that I'm a Manichean."

"You're joking," said Candide, "there are no more Manicheans in the world."

"I'm one," said Martin. "I don't know what to do about it, but I can't think otherwise."

"You must be possessed by the devil," said Candide.

"He meddles so much in the affairs of this world," said Martin, "that he may well be inside me, and everywhere else too. But I confess that when I consider this globe, or rather this globule, I think that God has abandoned it to some malevolent being—with the exception of Eldorado. I've almost never seen a town that didn't desire the ruin of some neighboring town, or a family that didn't want to exterminate some other family. Everywhere in the world, the weak detest the strong and grovel before them, and the strong treat them like flocks of sheep to be sold for their meat and wool. A million regimented assassins sweep over Europe from one end to the other, murdering and robbing with discipline to earn their bread, because there's no more honorable occupation. And in towns that seem to enjoy peace, and where the arts flourish, the envies, cares and anxieties that assail the people are more numerous than the afflictions of a besieged town. Secret torments are even more agonizing than public miseries. In short, I've seen and experienced so much that I'm a Manichean."

"But there is *some* good in the world," replied Candide.

"Perhaps so," said Martin, "but I haven't seen it."

In the middle of this argument they heard a sound of gunfire which grew louder at every moment. Everyone took out his telescope and saw two ships fighting about three miles away. The wind brought them both so close to the French ship that those on board her had the pleasure of watching the fight in comfort. Finally one of the ships fired a broadside so low and so accurately that the other ship sank. Candide and Martin distinctly saw a hundred men on the deck of the sinking ship; they all raised their hands to heaven and uttered terrible cries; a moment later they had all been swallowed up by the sea.

"You see," said Martin, "that's how men treat each other."

"It's true that there was something diabolical in what we just saw," said Candide.

First Thoughts

Do you feel sympathy for Candide, or do you think he deserves everything he gets?

Identifying Facts

1. What does Candide do to get himself expelled from the Baron's castle?
2. What happens to Candide among the Bulgarians?
3. Briefly describe the main characteristics of Eldorado. What value do the inhabitants place on gold and gems?
4. What reasons does Candide give for wanting to leave Eldorado and return to his own world?
5. Explain how "the prudent Vanderdendur" and the Dutch judge trick Candide.
6. Why does Candide ultimately select Martin—"a poor man of letters"—to be his traveling companion?

Interpreting Meanings

1. **Satire**, or writing that ridicules human shortcomings in order to improve society, relies on many elements usually associated with comedy—exaggeration, understatement, warped logic, and improbable situations. Using these four elements as headings, list as many examples of each as you can find in the selection.
2. As Chapter 2 illustrates, Candide suffers every time he exercises what he believes to be his free will. What forces does Voltaire suggest get in the way of a person's exercise of free will?
3. From Voltaire's description of Eldorado, what can you infer are his views on organized religion, on the proper role of government, and on wealth?
4. From the contrast he draws between Eldorado and Surinam, what does Voltaire imply are the causes of evil in the world?
5. The character of Candide is used to reflect Voltaire's attitudes both directly and by contrast. Which of Candide's statements do you think most closely expresses Voltaire's personal definition of optimism? Do you agree with Voltaire's view? Explain.

Applying Meanings

Voltaire wrote *Candide* more than 230 years ago. In your opinion, how well has its satire aged? What value, if any, does *Candide* hold for someone growing up in today's world?

Critical Writing Response

Analyzing an Author's Use of Humor. Few readers would deny that Voltaire's writing in *Candide* is savagely witty. But is his humor intended merely to amuse, or does it have a more serious purpose? (Why, for example, do you suppose we find ourselves laughing *at* Voltaire's characters and never *with* them?) Write an essay in which you explain how Voltaire uses humor in *Candide* and how it enables him to fulfill his purpose.

Creative Writing Response

Writing a Satire. Working alone or with a partner, write a short skit in which you satirize a public folly. First, choose a well-known subject and identify the folly that you feel needs to be reformed. Next, devise an improbable situation that will expose the folly. Use exaggeration, understatement, and warped logic to create satiric humor. Remember, your purpose is to promote social reform.

The Utopia as a Literary Genre

The word *utopia* (yōō·tō′pē·ə) is derived from Greek and means "no place." Sir Thomas More was the first to employ this word for a literary genre when he wrote his famous book *Utopia* (1516), an account of an imaginary republic. He fully intended a pun on the Greek word *eutopia*, which means "place (where all is) well."

The idea of an imaginary earthly paradise goes back to antiquity. Elements of it can be found in the Mesopotamian classic *Gilgamesh* (see page 136), as well as in Homer's descriptions of the Elysian Fields in the *Odyssey*. Plato's *Republic* was the first full-fledged description of a utopia, though of a distinctly Spartan and authoritarian type. Within medieval Christianity itself, and especially after St. Augustine, the attainment of a heavenly city was considered a perfectly reasonable objective.

The main impulse in utopian literature is to imagine a social and political order free of the cruelties and corruptions of the existing order. More's *Utopia*, for example, retains some of Plato's authoritarianism and incorporates the harsh moral codes of More's own time, but its welfare state is socialistic in character, with its abolition of private property and its free universal education, medicine, food, and the like. Voltaire's Eldorado, the city of gold where gold has no monetary value, is essentially in More's tradition.

Countless literary utopias were explored in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Much later, H. G. Wells, the author of *A Modern Utopia*, among many other books of this type, became perhaps the most interesting writer of this genre in the present century. The popularity of utopian literature has produced its opposite as well, the **dystopia**, or anti-utopia, which portrays an imaginary world of pure horror. Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-four* are examples of this counter-genre. Much of science fiction, we might note, hovers between the utopian and the anti-utopian.

If, as Candide concludes, everything is well "only in Eldorado," why do you suppose he does not try to return there? In other words, what ironic point is Voltaire making by having his hero end up with an ugly wife on a little farm where he does nothing more earth-shattering than cultivate a garden?