

Candide: Chapter Reading Guide and Questions

Candide Background Information

1. What was the Enlightenment? When did it occur?
2. What is a satire? What kind of literary devices are used in satire?
3. Which powerful institutions were satirized by Voltaire?
4. What was the philosophy of Optimism? Why do you think Voltaire was critical of this belief system?
5. Which two catastrophic events triggered Voltaire's critique of the philosophy of Optimism?
6. Besides the philosophy of Optimism, what are three other institutions or systems that Voltaire questioned and/or criticized in *Candide*?

Chapter 1

1. From what narrative point of view is the story told?
2. How does Voltaire design the opening chapter to be recognized as a parody of the Biblical story of the Fall?
 - A. What elements parallel the Biblical story of Paradise and the Fall of Adam of Eve from it?
 - B. Why would Voltaire be doing this?
3. Are there any topics of satire introduced into this first chapter?
4. What happens to Candide at the end of the chapter?

Chapter 2

1. How does Voltaire's portrayal of the soldiers reveal the text's distrust of the military?
2. Why was Candide whipped? Why was he pardoned?

Chapter 3

1. Chapter 3 is often thought to be a critique of war. How does Voltaire display his anti-war sentiment?
2. How does Voltaire's description of the war attack the philosophy of Optimism?
3. What reaction does Candide get to his plea for alms from several serious-minded citizens of Holland? How is the scene with the Orator a satire of religious hypocrisy and intolerance?

Chapter 4

1. When Candide meets up with his old tutor Pangloss, the latter is in a pitiable condition. How does he explain the cause of his woes? Have the experiences of Pangloss demonstrated the guiding principle of Optimism, that all works out for the best?
2. What are we supposed to notice about the Anabaptist Jacques, in relation to charity? What do you think is Voltaire's point in including him in the story?
3. How does the Anabaptist Jacques argue against Optimism?

Chapter 5

1. What does the reaction of each man (Jacques, Candide, and Pangloss) to the storm say about Optimism as a philosophy?
2. Where did the earthquake take place?
3. Why does the agent of the Inquisition argue with Pangloss? Consider the concept of Original Sin and free will.

Chapter 6

-- On Sunday, the first of November 1755, around 11 o'clock in the morning Lisbon (the capital of Portugal) was struck by a horrendous earthquake. Buildings were leveled all over the city. Death was massive, particularly because much of the population was at the moment attending church and was buried in the rubble of their collapse. News of the disaster spread rapidly all over Europe.

-- The term **auto-da-fé** means "act of faith." During this ceremony, charges of heresy against the Catholic Church were brought by the Inquisition and read out to the accused and the crowd. If the accused did not make an 'act of faith', they would be executed by the secular authority. **The implication was the sins of the accused brought about the horrific earthquake in Lisbon in 1755.**

1. How does the description of the people's reaction to the earthquake illustrate Voltaire's antireligious sentiment?
2. How does this chapter serve as an introduction to a central conflict of the story?
3. What is ironic about Candide's three companions' deaths? Did their deaths help to create "the best of all possible worlds"?

Chapter 7

1. How does the author juxtapose Candide's experience with the old woman with his previous experience (in Chapter 3) with the religious orator in Holland? What might this juxtaposition reveal about Voltaire's attitude toward religious officials?
2. How does Candide come to be reunited with Cunegonde?
3. How is Candide portrayed in this chapter?

Chapter 8

1. What is Cunegonde's tone in telling her story? What does this suggest about how women were treated in Voltaire's time?
2. What are the chief episodes in her story of her experiences since the "Fall," when Candid kissed her in Chapter 1? What points is Voltaire making about military honor and religious authorities?

Chapter 9

1. Why does Candide have to escape from Lisbon?
2. What kind of advice does he get from the Old Woman? How does her use of Reason differ from that of Pangloss, who is absent?
3. How does Candide reason through his murder of the Inquisitor?

Chapter 10

1. What is ironic about the Franciscan Friar stealing Cunegonde's jewels?
2. What does the journey across the sea represent to the travelers, and what are their attitudes toward it?

Chapter 11

1. How does this chapter reinforce the idea that society views women primarily as sexual objects?

Chapter 12

1. What are the main themes of the history of the Old Woman (Chapters 11 and 12)? What does this catalogue of disasters have to do with the overall theme of Candide?
2. What attitude does the Old Woman adopt towards what has happened to her? What counsel does she give her companions based on her experience?

Chapter 13

1. How does the old woman's history challenge Pangloss's philosophy of Optimism? Why?
2. What kind of fellow is the Governor of Buenos Aires? What is Voltaire's point in giving him the name that he does?
3. What is the Old Woman's advice to Cunegonde?

Chapters 14-15

1. What kind of a fellow is Cacambo? How is he like the Old Woman? Consider how they use of their faculty of Reason. What advice does he give his master Candide in Ch.14?
2. What are the outstanding features of the "Jesuit kingdom" Candide and Cacambo visit in Paraguay (Chapters 14-15)? Why do you think Voltaire is so hostile to this community?
3. Whom does Candide meet there, to his great surprise?
4. Why does Candide think he should be allowed to marry Cunegonde?
5. Why does the encounter between the Jesuit Reverend Father Colonel and Candide end as it does? What advice does Cacambo give his master? How does his presence of mind here contrast with that of "the young philosopher"?

Chapter 16

1. How is it that Candide and Cacambo do not end up on a spit to be eaten by the Oreillons? What is the fun Voltaire is having with the idea of "natural reason"?

Chapter 17

1. How does the despairing pair get to Eldorado?
2. What mistakes of interpretation do they make during their first encounters with the people of Eldorado? Why does Voltaire want the reader to reflect on these mistaken assumptions of Candide and Cacambo?
3. What is the primary purpose of the chapter's final paragraph? How does the reader see Candide's development as a character?

Chapter 18

1. What are the important points of the history of El Dorado that are conveyed by the old sage?
2. What is striking about the religion of El Dorado? How does the religion of Eldorado compare to that of Europeans?
3. What is striking about the reception Candide and Cacambo receive from the King of El Dorado? How is this a criticism of Voltaire of European royalty and power?
4. What features of European civilization are absent from El Dorado? What does this tell us about El Dorado and Europe?
5. Why does Candide resolve to leave El Dorado? How would his life be different if he stayed in Eldorado? If he moved back to Europe?

Chapter 19

1. What point is Voltaire making in the encounter Cacambo and Candide have with the enslaved man they find on the way into Dutch Surinam? What implicit argument does the text make concerning European society and the slave trade?
2. Why does the encounter cause Candide to renounce Optimism?
3. How does Candide come to take on the company of Martin?

Chapter 20-21

1. What does Martin mean by describing himself as a Manichean?
2. What is Martin's view of the world and human nature?
3. Explain the differences between Martin's philosophical outlook and Optimism.
4. How does the long list Candide employs near the end of Chapter 21 criticize free will?

Chapter 22

1. In what city does the novel take place in Chapter 22?
2. How are people trying to take advantage of Candide in this chapter? How does Candide lose most of his wealth in this chapter? List the different episodes.
3. On page 68, what does Candide mean when he says, "I have seen no bears in my country, but *men* I have beheld nowhere except in El Dorado?"

Chapter 23

1. Why have the English executed one of their own Admirals? What is the point of the episode in which Candide and Martin witness the execution of Admiral Byng?
2. How does Candide's response expose the absurdities of the "rules" of war?

Chapter 24

1. Why is Candide inconsolably depressed upon their arrival in Venice? What is Martin's advice to Candide?
2. What do we learn from the stories of Paquette (on the life of a prostitute)? What attitude toward authority figures and power is reflected in Paquette's story? What does her story reveal about the criteria by which women are judged in a society dominated by male authorities?

Chapter 25

1. What does the name “Pocourante” mean? Explain why Voltaire chose this name for Signor Pocourante.
2. What is Pocourante’s attitude toward art and literature?
3. How does Candide’s interpretation on page 79 “you will agree that here is the happiest of men, for he is superior to all he possesses” compare to Martin’s reaction “that there is pleasure to be had in not taking pleasure”?

Chapter 26

1. What do all the kings have in common? Are the kings sympathetic or unsympathetic characters? Explain.

Chapter 27

1. In the beginning of the chapter (page 82) Candide reflects on the losses of the 6 kings and compares his life to them saying “...all I have lost is a hundred sheep, and here I am flying to the arms of Cunegonde. My dear Martin, once again I see that Pangloss was right: all is well.” How does this statement reveal that Candide has learned nothing from his experiences in Surinam (Chapter 19)?
2. What does Candide learn about what has happened to Cunegonde?
3. Who does Candide discover down in the galley rowing on the ship to Constantinople?

Chapter 28

1. What does the final paragraph of the chapter indicate about Pangloss’s character development? Why do you think Pangloss still clings to his belief in optimism?
2. What is Voltaire’s critique of this blind faith of Pangloss, despite the reality of his suffering and loss?

Chapter 29

1. Why does the Baron refuse to allow Candide to marry his sister, Cunegonde? What is Candide’s response?

Chapter 30

1. List the ways that Candide has changed by the end of the story.
2. On the way back home to the farm after visiting with the dervish, the group encounters an old man. What is the source of happiness, according to the old man?
3. What does "cultivating his garden" imply when searching for happiness?
4. This chapter intends to provide an answer to the eternal question: How should one lead one's life? What is the answer, do you think?