**AUTHOR BIO**

**Full Name:** François-Marie Arouet  
**Pen Name:** Voltaire  
**Date of Birth:** 1694  
**Place of Birth:** Paris, France  
**Date of Death:** 1778

**Brief Life Story:** François-Marie Arouet was born in 1694 to an elite family well placed in the French royal bureaucracy. Though his father wanted him to find a position of power in public life, Voltaire defied him by becoming a writer. Establishing himself in literary circles, he debuted in 1718 with the publication of the tragedy *Oedipe*. Voltaire’s writing got him into trouble many times in his life. For one long period starting in 1726, he exiled himself to England to escape prosecution for defamation. There, he stayed at the estate of Lord Bolingbroke, in whose circle he met the writers Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope, John Gay, and others. Voltaire’s time in England introduced him to Newtonian science and other radical intellectual ideas of the time. When he returned to France, he dedicated himself to fighting “hydras and superstition,” with his philosophical and satirical writings. This earned him many enemies, especially in the government as well as in the religious establishment, which was dominated by the Jesuits. By the time of his death in 1778, France had embraced Voltaire as a national hero. The French Revolution, still to come, was the ultimate culmination of the Enlightenment thinking of which Voltaire was a part. Since then, his popularity has only increased. Voltaire’s writing got him into trouble many times in his life. For one long period starting in 1726, he exiled himself to England to escape prosecution for defamation. There, he stayed at the estate of Lord Bolingbroke, in whose circle he met the writers Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope, John Gay, and others. Voltaire’s time in England introduced him to Newtonian science and other radical intellectual ideas of the time. When he returned to France, he dedicated himself to fighting “hydras and superstition,” with his philosophical and satirical writings. This earned him many enemies, especially in the government as well as in the religious establishment, which was dominated by the Jesuits. By the time of his death in 1778, France had embraced Voltaire as a national hero. The French Revolution, still to come, was the ultimate culmination of the Enlightenment thinking of which Voltaire was a part. Since then, his popularity has only increased.

**KEY FACTS**

**Full Title:** Candide: or, Optimism  
**Genre:** Satirical Novel / Philosophical Novel / Coming-of-Age Novel / Picaresque  
**Setting:** Germany, Portugal, Spain, Buenos Aires, Paraguay, France, Venice, and Constantinople.  
**Climax:** Candide, Cunégonde, and the other characters are reunited in Turkey, where they plan to live out the rest of their lives cultivating their garden.  
**Antagonists:** The Baron of Thunder-ton-tronckh, Pangloss, Governor Don Fernando, The Bulgarian Army, the Perigordian Abbé, The Grand Inquisitor, Don Issachar.  
**Point of View:** Third-person omniscient

**HISTORICAL AND LITERARY CONTEXT**

**When Written:** 1758-1759  
**Where Written:** Ferney, France  
**When Published:** 1759  
**Literary Period:** Lumières / Age of Enlightenment  

**Related Literary Works:** The *Bible*, especially the Book of Genesis, is one model for *Candide’s* plot. Like Adam and Eve, Candide and Cunégonde are exiled from an earthly paradise and forced, by the end, to work hard just to survive. *Candide* has a far closer relationship with contemporary books of literature and philosophy. As a philosophical novel, it is a response to Gottfried Leibniz’s writings, especially *Monodologie* (1714), from which the phrase and idea of the “best of all possible worlds,” is taken. As a satire, it is influenced by Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726). Swift, along with Alexander Pope and John Gay, were among the circle of writers who influenced Voltaire during his stay at the estate of Lord Bolingbroke. Prior to writing *Candide*, Voltaire wrote many pamphlets and polemics, as well as his Poem on the Lisbon Disaster, (1756) which deals with similar philosophical issues.

**Related Historical Events:** One of the greatest historical influences on *Candide* was the Lisbon Earthquake of 1755, a catastrophic natural disaster that caused many Europeans to doubt their faith. Another was the Seven Years War, the first real “world war,” in history. The fact that war exists throughout the world in *Candide* has a lot to do with this real-world war, the first of its kind. Voltaire was part of a group of thinkers and writers, called the *philosophes* or *encyclopedistes*, who can be described as the vanguard of the Enlightenment. The *philosophes* wanted to advance science and secular thinking, and were generally opposed to the power and influence of the Catholic Church. Voltaire was one of the contributors to Denis Diderot’s famous Encyclopedia, often seen as the epitome of Enlightenment thinking.

**EXTRA CREDIT**

**Public Intellectual.** Because of the close relationship between his political, philosophical, and literary activities, as well as his tremendous influence, Voltaire is often seen as one of the world’s first and greatest public intellectuals.

“Let us eat the Jesuit. Let us eat him up!” This phrase, from the chapter with the Orellions, became part of popular speech in France after *Candide’s* publication—just one indicator of the book’s incredible popularity.

**PLOT OVERVIEW**

*Candide* is a young man who lives in the Barony of Thunder-ten-tronckh. There, he is instructed by the philosopher Pangloss, whose doctrine is that we live in “the best of all possible worlds.” One day, the Baron’s daughter Cunégonde comes across Pangloss having sex with Paquette, her mother’s chambermaid. Inspired, she approaches Candide, intending to do the same. Unfortunately, the two are caught kissing. Furious, the Baron kicks Candide out of Thunder-ten-tronckh. Candide wanders from place to place, and is eventually tricked by two Bulgarian soldiers into joining their army. He performs well in military exercises, but flees like a coward in the first battle. Candide makes his way to Holland, because he has heard it is a rich country. There, he begs for money, generally without success. The wife of a Protestant orator dumps a chamber pot over his head after he refuses to say that the Pope is the Antichrist. Eventually, he is taken in by the altruistic Anabaptist Jacques. Shortly thereafter, he comes across Pangloss, who is ill with syphilis. Jacques takes Pangloss in, and also pays for his cure. Pangloss loses an eye and an ear to the disease, but survives. The three travel to Lisbon, debating philosophically on the voyage there.

As soon as they reach the Bay of Lisbon, there is a terrible storm. The ship sinks, and Jacques the Anabaptist dies. Pangloss and Candide float to shore, but as soon as they land, the terrible Lisbon Earthquake takes place, killing thousands. Candide and Pangloss survive, but are soon after arrested by the Inquisition, which is holding an auto-da-fé (a public festival for the punishment of heretics) in an attempt to prevent future earthquakes. Candide is publicly whipped, and Pangloss is hung. Candide despair, beginning to doubt Pangloss’s optimistic philosophy.

An old woman approaches Candide and leads him to a house in the country. There, he is reunited with Cunégonde, who is being sexually shared by the Grand Inquisitor and a Jewish merchant named Don Issachar. Don Issachar and the Grand Inquisitor both enter the house shortly thereafter, and Candide kills each one as he enters.

Candide, Cunégonde, and the old woman flee all the way to Buenos Aires in South America, where Candide is put in charge of a military company mustered for the war against the rebelling Jesuits in Paraguay. The Governor, Don Fernando, wants to keep Cunégonde as his mistress. News arrives that...
the minions of the murdered Inquisitor are about to land in Buenos Aires, and Candide flees with his valet Cacambo.

Cacambo takes Candide to the Kingdom of the Jesuits, where he discovers that the Reverend Commandant is none other than the young Baron of Thunder-ten-tronckh. Their tearful reunion takes an unexpected turn when Candide announces his intention to marry Cunégonde, the Baron's sister. Outraged, the Baron attacks Candide, who stabs him through the stomach in self-defense. Candide weeps, overcome with remorse for having now killed three men.

Candide and Cacambo flee the Jesuit Kingdom and head for the wilderness. There, a mishap results in their capture by the savage Oreillons, who take them to Jesuits and prepare to eat them. Thanks to Cacambo's charisma, the Oreillons release them.

Candide and Cacambo wander through the wilderness for a long period of time. Totally by accident, they reach El Dorado, a utopian society filled with precious metals and happy people. Candide concludes that this must be the “best of all possible worlds,” which Pangloss described. Though they are happy in El Dorado, a desire for fame and glory causes Candide and Cacambo to leave. The King of El Dorado helps them depart from the isolated place, giving them many riches and a flock of red sheep as a parting gift. A few days after leaving El Dorado, Candide and Cacambo come across an African slave who is missing his hand and left leg.

Knowing that he will be arrested if he returns to Buenos Aires, Candide sends Cacambo to search for Cunégonde, promising to meet him in Venice. Candide himself heads to Suriname, where he tries to arrange passage back to Europe. He is tricked by the ship owner Mynheer Vanderdendriek, who steals his flock of sheep and abandons him. At this point, Candide is almost ready to abandon his optimism completely.

Nevertheless, Candide manages to arrange a journey to Bordeaux with Martin, an impoverished scholar and pessimist whom he chooses as his traveling companion. On the way there, a battle takes place between two ships, and one of Candide’s red sheep floats up from the wreckage, alive—he takes this as a good omen.

Candide and Martin arrive in Bordeaux, and then head to Paris. In Paris, Candide is tricked and robbed by the devious and superficial Abbé of Perigord and Marchioness of Parolignac, along with many other minor characters.

Candide and Martin briefly go to England, and then move on to Venice. There, Candide finds Paquette in the arms of Friar Giroflée—he has become a prostitute. Candide and Martin visit the home of Pococuranté, a wealthy Venetian Senator who is dissatisfied with everything he has. Soon after, they have dinner with six kings who have been deposed. At the dinner, Candide finds Cacambo, who informs him that Cunégonde is working as a servant in Turkey.

Candide, Cacambo and Martin travel to Turkey. On the ship which takes them there, they find Pangloss and the Young Baron, both of whom have been enslaved. Candide pays to have them both freed. When he arrives in Turkey, he does the same for Cunégonde and the old woman. By now, after lengthy journeys and countless misfortunes, all of the major characters have been reunited.

Cunégonde has become ugly, but Candide still wishes to marry her. When the Baron, her brother, opposes it, they send him back to Rome—by force. The two marry, and all of the remaining characters move to a small farm. There, they complain about their misfortunes and discuss philosophy endlessly.

One day, Candide comes across an old Turkish farmer, with a garden he takes care of with his children. The man seems to be happier with his lot than Candide and the other characters. Because of him, Candide is inspired to abandon the endless questions of philosophy for the solace of practical work. He concludes that while we are alive, “we must cultivate our garden.”

Characters

Candide – The protagonist of Candide. He is a simple man with good judgment and a pure heart, who spends the novel in search of his beloved Cunégonde. During his journey, he goes back and forth between the optimism taught to him by Pangloss, and the pessimism which his experiences—and Martin—teach him. His name means “white,” or “shining,” and indicates his innocence and purity of heart.

Cunégonde – A beautiful young woman, daughter of the Baron of Thunder-ten-tronckh. She is pursued by Candide throughout the novel, during which time she passes into the possession of a long sequence of men: the Bulgarian Captain, Don Issachar, the Grand Inquisitor, Don Fernando, and others. Cunégonde is a symbol for the fulility of human desires: she is always out of Candide’s reach, and once she is no longer, her beauty is gone. Her name is considered, by some scholars, to be a pun on the words for female genitals in French and Latin.

Pangloss – Candide’s teacher, a philosopher who follows the teachings of the philosopher Leibniz. Pangloss argues that this world is “the best of all possible worlds,” and none of his many misfortunes—including enslavement, hanging, and losing an eye and an ear to syphilis—can convince him otherwise. His name means “all-tongue,” reflecting his tendency to speak at length about philosophy no matter what is going on.

Martin – An impoverished scholar whom Candide meets in Surinam and takes on as a traveling companion. The polar opposite of Pangloss, Martin is a pessimist, who believes that everything in this world is for the worst.

The Old Woman – A servant to Don Issachar who helps reunite Candide and Cunégonde, and who afterwards becomes Cunégonde’s constant companion. The Old Woman is wise from a long and difficult experience of life: she was born a Princess, but became a servant.

The Young Baron – Cunégonde’s brother, and the heir to the Baron of Thunder-ten-tronckh. Almost killed by the Bulgarians, he revives and becomes the Jesuit Reverend-Commander in Paraguay. Though Candide rescues him and his sister several times, he fanatically opposes Candide’s marriage to Cunégonde, because Candide is not noble. The Young Baron represents the aristocracy and its stubborn privileges.

Cacambo – He is Candide’s valet, a native Peruvian who ends up in Spain. Cacambo is worldly, and knows something about everywhere and everything. He goes with Candide to El Dorado, where he acts as a translator. He also locates Cunégonde at the very end of the novel.

Paquette – She is a chambermaid in the castle of Thunder-ten-tronckh. During a lesson in “experimental natural philosophy”—i.e. sex—she gives Pangloss syphilis. She reappears in the novel in Venice, where she is working as a prostitute and is seen by Candide and Martin with Giroflée.

Friar Giroflée – He is a Venetian friar of the Theatin Order, who hires Jacques the Anabaptist and Paquette to travel with him. Jacques the Anabaptist – An altruistic character, who takes in Candide and Pangloss when they are impoverished in Holland. He dies on the trip to Lisbon, left to drown by a sailor he has just rescued.

Pococuranté – A rich Venetian Senator invited by Candide and Martin. Though he is incredibly wealthy, he is indifferent to all of his possessions, and seems unhappy. His name means “cares little,” reflecting his blasé attitude and indifference.

Governor Don Fernando d’Ibarra, y Figueora, y Mascarenes, y Lampourdos, y Souza – He is the Governor of Buenos Aires. When Candide and Cunégonde arrive there, he takes Cunégonde as his mistress.

The Abbé of Perigord – The Parisian companion of Candide and Martin when they are visiting the city. The Abbé tricks Candide out of some money by writing fake letters from Cunégonde, as well as arranging a fake reunion.

The Marchioness of Parolignac – A Parisian woman who seduces Candide and takes two of his diamond rings in the process.

The King of El Dorado – A wise and kind ruler who is puzzled when Candide and Cacambo want to leave his perfect and happy kingdom. Nevertheless, he helps them depart.

The Old Man of El Dorado – An old man who teaches Candide and Cacambo about the laws and customs in El Dorado.

The Grand Inquisitor – Along with Don Issachar, one of the two men who share Cunégonde while she is in Portugal. He organizes the auto-da-fé in
which Candide is whipped and Pangloss is hung. He is murdered by Candide when he comes to see Cunégonde.

Don Issachar  – A Jewish merchant, one of the two men who share Cunégonde while she is in Portugal. He is killed by Candide when he comes back to his house to see Cunégonde.

The Six Kings – A group of six exiled or deposed kings who Candide and Martin meet in Venice at an inn.

The Dervish – A wise Turkish mystic and philosopher. When Pangloss and the others come to ask him about the meaning of life, he slams his door in their faces.

The Old Turkish Man – An old farmer who inspires Candide and the others to find meaning to life in their work.

The Baron of Thunder-ten-tronckh – He is Cunégonde's father, and the ruler of Thunder-ten-tronckh. When he finds Candide kissing his daughter, he literally kicks him out of the Barony. He is killed by the Bulgarians.

The Bulgarian Captain – He kills the soldier raping Cunégonde, and then takes possession of her. He sells Cunégonde to Don Issachar.

The Bulgarian King – He pardons Candide for deserting from the army.

The Protestant Orator – He asks Candide if he believes the Pope is the antichrist. When Candide says that he does not know, he curses him.

Myneer Vanderdendur – A Dutch merchant and slave owner who steals Candide's sheep in Suriname and then sails away. He is killed, later, in a battle with a French warship.

The African Slave – He is Vanderdendur's slave. Candide and Cacambo come across him while traveling to Suriname. When he tells them about slavery, Candide is horrified.

THEMES

In LitCharts each theme gets its own color. Our color-coded theme boxes make it easy to track where the themes occur throughout the work.

OPTIMISM AND DISILLUSION

Candide pits the optimistic doctrine of Pangloss— that we live in the “best of all possible worlds”— against the long and senseless series of misfortunes endured by Candide and the other characters. Candide begins the novel as a faithful student of Pangloss, but painful experience prompts him to reconsider his views. Candide’s disillusionment is gradual. As he sees more of life and the world, he becomes less and less convinced that suffering and evil exist as part of a larger divine harmony. By the end, Candide comes to know that good is not always rewarded with good, that the New World is as filled with war and religious confusion as the Old, and that the best of intentions are no protection against the worst of outcomes. Even so, Candide suggests that the struggle of human life—an endless cycle of optimism and disillusionment—might in fact be preferable to a static faith in the “best of all possible worlds.” As Pangloss concludes at the novel’s conclusion, “man is not born to be idle.”

The disillusionment of Candide mirrors that of many Europeans in Voltaire’s era. Scientific discoveries and natural disasters— especially the Lisbon Earthquake of 1755— made many people begin to doubt the existence of an all-powerful and infinitely good God. If there were such a God, why would he let such awful things happen? The branch of philosophy which tried to respond to this question was called theodicy, and its most famous proponent was Gottfried Leibniz, the historically real philosopher and mathematician whose teachings of Pangloss are modeled. Leibniz argued that evil existed because it was necessary to bring about an ultimate good, as part of a “pre-established harmony,” created by God.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND SOCIAL CRITICISM

Candide is a central text of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment was an intellectual movement in Europe which flourished during the 17th and 18th centuries. It questioned, and often harshly criticized, traditional views of religion, science, and the state. Enlightenment thinkers believed in using reason and scientific experiment, rather than doctrine and custom, as a guide in the remaking and improvement of life and society. They also advocated for greater legal and social equality between men.

As a novel of the Enlightenment, Candide satirizes and critiques almost every powerful institution of its era. Churches, the aristocracy, and the military are viciously lampooned. Characters like the Grand Inquisitor, the Bulgarian Captain, and the haughty Young Baron showcase the prejudice and irrationality of 18th century institutions. This direct, unreverent criticism of subjects considered sacred for centuries is central both to the Enlightenment, and to Voltaire’s work. So, too, is the faith in the power of human reason and equality between men, best represented by the garden at the end of the novel.

RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY VS. THE WORLD

Candide satirizes the huge gap between the world and the way it is philosophically and religiously explained. The doctrines of religious groups and philosophers active during Voltaire’s life are made to look ridiculous and out of touch with reality when juxtaposed with the events of the novel. Pangloss’ philosophy of optimism appears foolish— even inisicere— when set beside the misfortunes of his life: exile, enslavement, execution, sickness, syphilis, and academic obscurity. His explanations also become more circutious and outlandish as the narrative proceeds. By the very end, Pangloss is suggesting that all of the miseries the characters endured were necessary to bring them to the present moment; enjoying candied pistachios in the garden.

Candide also criticizes religion as a means of making judgments about the world. Despite his good character and judgment, Candide is unfairly mistreated by religious zealots of all kinds, who take him to be an enemy because of his ignorance of their beliefs and doctrines. In the end, Candide rejects the dogma and sophistication of religion and philosophy. Refusing to enter any further into the debates of Martin and Pangloss, he comes to the pragmatic conclusion that “we must cultivate our garden”— in other words, that practical reason and hard work are more useful than theology and philosophy in making sense of the world. Like many of the conclusions reached by Candide, this reflects a trend in the Europe of Voltaire’s era: science and more politically focused philosophy were taking the place of theology, which since medieval times had been known as “the Queen of the Sciences.”

LOVE AND WOMEN

Candide’s search for Cunégonde is what threads together the novel’s otherwise senseless sequence of adventures. The pursuit of Cunégonde, and of other women, is also the reason for the most of the characters’ misfortunes— from the Cunégonde’s expulsion from Westphalia, to Pangloss’ syphilis, contracted from Paquette. Candide uses women as a symbol of insatiable human desire (or perhaps, more specifically, male desire), a force which causes pain and conflict in the world. Women in the novel are almost always a cause for conflict and violence: there is violence between men over women, as well as violence committed upon women by men. Women are also used by the novel to illustrate the futility of human desire: by the time Candide reaches Cunégonde, she has lost her youth and beauty, and he no longer desires her (though he still marries her).

The use of women as symbols and plot devices in Candide should not distract from the novel’s serious consideration of the suffering and oppression of women. In a novel filled with characters who suffer great misfortunes, it is worth noting that female characters are arguably the worst off: not even Pangloss endures as much misery as the old woman in the captivity of the Moroccan pirates.

WEALTH

Candide is a subtle critique of wealth and its pursuit. When Candide leaves El Dorado, laden with riches, it seems plausible that this newfound wealth will help him to find Cunégonde. Instead, it attracts no end of tricksters and hangers-on, from the Dutch merchant Vanderdendur who robs and abandons Candide in Suriname, to the imposter Cunégonde in Paris. Candide’s vast riches (and their gradual disappearance) are one of the great ironies of the novel. Not only do his riches not help him— they hold him back, slowing down...
his journey as thieves and flatterers—like the Abbé of Perigord and the Marchioness of Parolignac—gather around him. In the world of this novel, the pursuit of wealth is not just immoral, but useless. The rich Venetian Pococuranté has everything he could ever need, but remains unhappy. Tellingly, in El Dorado, the one place in the novel which comes close to resembling "the best of all possible worlds," wealth and valuables are treated as useless trifles. Candide himself takes the same attitude, never haggling with the characters who offer him outrageous prices.

**SYMBOLS**

Symbols appear in red text throughout the Summary & Analysis sections of this LitChart.

**EL DORADO**

El Dorado represents the kind of world imagined by utopian philosophers. El Dorado might be the "best of all possible worlds," but at the same time, it is made to seem unbelievable. Even more importantly, El Dorado is inhuman. As we see throughout Candide, and learn explicitly by the end, "man is not born to be idle," and the happiness of the El Doradans is based on their idleness: they always stay put. El Dorado symbolizes the impossibility of utopian dreams. The novel suggests that the same desires which cause Candide and Cacambo to leave El Dorado would make any utopian society impossible—mankind is too restless.

**THE GARDEN**

The garden where Candide and the other remaining characters live at the end of the novel is a symbol for the world as it might be if improved by reason and the philosophy of the Enlightenment. Like Westphalia in the beginning of the novel, it resembles the Garden of Eden, but with some important differences. First of all, the characters are all on equal footing—the Baron is the only character who insists on aristocratic privileges, and he has been sent back to Rome by force. Second of all, practical work and reasoning have become more important than abstract philosophy. This is what Candide communicates when he ignores Pangloss' long rant at the very end of the novel and responds that "we must cultivate our garden." The egalitarianism and practicality of the garden make it a symbol for a secular, Enlightenment Eden.

**THE RED SHEEP**

A single red sheep—the last remaining from Candide's El Doradan flock—floats up from the ocean after a battle. Candide rescues it, and sees it as a sign that he will eventually be reunited with Cunegonde. The single red sheep represents Candide's last shred of optimism, which he manages to hold on to even after all the bad things he has experienced.

**QUOTES**

The color-coded boxes under each quote below make it easy to track the themes related to each quote. Each color corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

**CHAPTER 1**

"It is demonstrable," said he, "that things cannot be otherwise than as they are; for all being created for an end, all is necessarily for the best end. Observe that the nose has been formed to bear spectacles—thus we have spectacles. Legs are visibly designed for stockings—and we have stockings. Stones were made to be hewn, and to construct castles—therefore my lord has a magnificent castle; for the greatest baron in the province ought to be the best lodged. Pigs were made to be eaten—therefore we eat pork all the year round. Consequently they who assert that all is well have said a foolish thing, they should have said all is for the best."

—Pangloss

**CHAPTER 2**

Candide, all stupefied, could not yet very well realize how he was a hero. He resolved one fine day in spring to go for a walk, marching straight before him, believing that it was a privilege of the human as well as of the animal species to make use of their legs as they pleased.

―Narrator

**CHAPTER 3**

“My friend,” said the orator to him, “do you believe the Pope to be Anti-Christ?” “I have not heard it,” answered Candide; “but whether he be, or whether he be not, I want bread.”

—The Protestant Orator, Candide

**CHAPTER 4**

“Alas!” said the other, “it was love; love, the comfort of the human species, the preserver of the universe, the soul of all sensible beings, love, tender love.”

—Pangloss

**CHAPTER 5**

“‘What can be the sufficient reason of this phenomenon?’ said Pangloss. ‘This is the Last Day!’ cried Candide.”

—Pangloss, Candide

**CHAPTER 6**

“If this is the best of possible worlds, what then are the others?”

—Candide

**CHAPTER 8**

“For my part, I have so far held out against both, and I verily believe that this is the reason why I am still beloved.”

—Candide
CHAPTER 11
“Our men defended themselves like the Pope’s soldiers; they flung themselves upon their knees, and threw down their arms, begging of the corsair an absolution in articulo mortis.”
—The Old Woman

CHAPTER 12
“A hundred times I was upon the point of killing myself; but still I loved life. This ridiculous foible is perhaps one of our most fatal characteristics; for is there anything more absurd than to wish to carry continually a burden which one can always throw down? to detest existence and yet to cling to one’s existence? In brief, to caress the serpent which devours us, till he has eaten our very heart?”
—The Old Woman

CHAPTER 13
They landed at Buenos Ayres. Cunégonde, Captain Candide, and the old woman, waited on the Governor, Don Fernando d’Ibaraa, y Figueora, y Mascarenes, y Lampourdos, y Souza. This nobleman had a stateliness becoming a person who bore so many names. He spoke to men with so noble a disdain, carried his nose so loftily, raised his voice so unmercifully, assumed so imperious an air, and stalked with such intolerable pride, that those who salute him were strongly inclined to give him a good drubbing.
—Narrator

CHAPTER 14
“You’ll make a prodigious fortune; if we cannot find our account in one world we shall in another. It is a great pleasure to see and do new things.”
—Cacambo

“It is an admirable government. The kingdom is upwards of three hundred leagues in diameter, and divided into thirty provinces; there the Fathers possess all, and the people nothing; it is a masterpiece of reason and justice.”
—Cacambo

CHAPTER 15
“Reverend Father, all the quarterings in the world signify nothing; I rescued your sister from the arms of a Jew and of an Inquisitor; she has great obligations to me, she wishes to marry me; Master Pangloss always told me that all men are equal, and certainly I will marry her.”
—Candide

CHAPTER 16
“A Jesuit! a Jesuit! we shall be revenged, we shall have excellent cheer, let us eat the Jesuit, let us eat him up!”
—The Oreillons

CHAPTER 18
“...but being surrounded by inaccessible rocks and precipices, we have hitherto been sheltered from the rapaciousness of European nations, who have an inconceivable passion for the pebbles and dirt of our land, for the sake of which they would murder us to the last man.”
—The Wise Man of El Dorado

CHAPTER 19
“What is this optimism?” said Cacambo. “Alas!” said Candide, “it is the madness of maintaining that everything is right when it is wrong.”
—Cacambo, Candide

CHAPTER 20
“...but I own to you that when I cast an eye on this globe, or rather on this little ball, I cannot help thinking that God has abandoned it to some malignant being.”
—Martin

CHAPTER 22
“I have seen the worst,” Candide replied. “But a wise man, who since has had the misfortune to be hanged, taught me that all is marvelously well; these are but the shadows on a beautiful picture.”
—Candide

CHAPTER 25
“But is there not a pleasure,” said Candide, “in criticizing everything, in pointing out faults where others see nothing but beauties?” That is to say,” replied Martin, “that there is some pleasure in having no pleasure.”
—Candide, Martin

CHAPTER 30
“What signifies it,” said the Dervish, “whether there be evil or good? When his highness sends a ship to Egypt, does he trouble his head whether the mice on board are at their ease or not?”
—The Dervish

“I have only twenty acres,” replied the old man; “I and my children cultivate them; our labour preserves us from three great evils—weariness, vice, and want.”
—The Old Turkish Man
“You are right,” said Pangloss, “for when man was first placed in the Garden of Eden, he was put there ut operaret eum, that he might cultivate it; which shows that man was not born to be idle.”

—Pangloss

“Let us work,” said Martin, “without disputing; it is the only way to render life tolerable.”

—Martin

“All that is very well,” answered Candide, “but let us cultivate our garden.”

—Candide

CHAPTER 1

Candide is raised in Westphalia, in the castle of the Baron of Thunder-ten-tronckh. He is suspected of being the illegitimate nephew of the Baron, but nobody knows for certain. He studies metaphysico-theologico-cosmolo-nigology under Professor Pangloss, who teaches that we live in the best of all possible worlds, and further, that Thunder-ten-tronckh is the greatest barony in the world.

One day Cunégonde, daughter of the Baron, happens upon Pangloss having sex with Paquette, a chambermaid. Intrigued, she determines to do the same with Candide. Finding Candide behind a screen in the castle, she drops her handkerchief and lets him pick it up. They begin to kiss and caress one another, but are discovered by the Baron, who chases Candide from the “paradise,” of the castle by kicking him repeatedly in the rear end.

Candide’s ejection from the “paradise,” of Thunder-ten-tronckh parodies the Biblical Fall. Like Eve, Cunégonde comes across forbidden knowledge (in this case, sex) and shares it, leading to exile. The dropped handkerchief is a parody of courtly romance: it is humorous that this usually polite and chivalrous gesture leads so quickly to kissing and touching.

The color-coded boxes under “Analysis & Themes” below make it easy to track the themes throughout the work. Each color corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 2

Candide, distraught, makes his way to an inn in a neighboring town. There, he is tricked by two Bulgarian soldiers into joining their army. He is dragged off in chains, beaten, and forced to learn military exercises. He excels at these exercises, and is treated well for a while. However, he then makes the mistake of going for a walk, and is accused of desertion. He is asked if he would rather be whipped several thousand times or shot in the head. Choosing the first, he ends up being whipped for the second once the whipping begins. He is almost shot, but the King of the Bulgarians pardons him after learning that he is a philosophy student, and therefore ignorant about the world.

One of the institutional objects of Voltaire’s scorn and criticism is the military. Rather than depicting soldiers as courageous and heroic, Voltaire depicts them as tricksters and bandits. And army life is so regimented and full of top-down control that even going for a walk can result in severe punishment. Voltaire also takes a swipe at philosophy here—often a knowledge of philosophy is treated as wisdom, but the Bulgarian king sees it as a reason to pity Candide for ignorance. The king sees philosophy as the opposite of wisdom and worldly understanding.

CHAPTER 3

Candide goes into battle with the Bulgarians against the Abaras. While the army band plays fifes, tambourines, and oboes, cannons blast. He hides the entire battle. When the fighting is over, he walks alone across the field, lost in contemplation, surveying the dead. He visits two villages: one destroyed by the Bulgarians, the other by the Abaras, both filled with the slain, the dying, the dismembered, the raped, and the otherwise miserable.

Having nothing, Candide makes his way to Holland, because he’s heard that it is a rich country. He begs for food, but receives only threats in return. Finally, he speaks to a Protestant Orator, in the middle of giving a speech on charity, who asks if he believes that the Pope is the Antichrist. When Candide says that he does not know, and that it has nothing to do with his lack of food, the orator’s wife empties a chamber pot on his head.

The music of the army band contrasts with the awful noise of cannons, symbolically undermining the idea of war as beautiful and glorious. The destruction wrought by the enemy armies, whatever their reasons for fighting, are indistinguishable: the novel suggests that war is the real problem, not one side or the other.

Because of the sharp divide between Catholics and Protestants, the hypocritical orator refuses to help Candide without a denunciation of the Pope—even though he’s giving a speech on charity!

Jacques the Anabaptist is one of the only sympathetic religious figures in Candide. Unlike Protestants and Catholics of the time, Anabaptists had few powerful supporters, suggesting that religion is corrupted by power. Despite all he has seen of war and casual cruelty, Candide still believes in Pangloss’s optimistic teaching that everything in the world is for the best.
CHAPTER 4

When Candide goes for a walk, he comes across a man with syphilis. The man turns out to be Pangloss, and the two have a tearful reunion. Pangloss informs Candide that Bulgarians invaded Thunder-ten-tronch, raping Cunégonde, destroying the castle, and killing everyone. Candide begins to doubt that he lives in the “best of all possible worlds,” after all.

The conversation turns to Pangloss’ syphilis. When Candide asks what the “sufficient cause,” of his illness was, Pangloss explains that he received the disease from Paquette. He then goes on to list all the people the disease passed through before reaching him, beginning with companions of Christopher Columbus. Pangloss explains that syphilis, which comes from America, was necessary so that luxury goods like chocolate and cochineal—an insect dye—could be brought to Europe.

Candide convinces Jacques the Anabaptist to pay for Pangloss’ cure. Pangloss loses an eye and an ear to syphilis, but recovers. After two months, Jacques brings Pangloss and Candide to Lisbon. On the way there, they argue over whether or not everything in nature is good. Jacques argues that men have corrupted nature by creating such awful things as cannons, bayonets, and bankruptcy—which God did not place on Earth. Pangloss maintains that “private misfortunes make the general good.”

CHAPTER 5

A storm overtakes the ship as it arrives in the Bay of Lisbon. Jacques tries to take command of the ship, but is hit by a soldier, who falls into the water by the force of his own punch. Jacques rescues the soldier who has hit him, but falls into the water as he does so. The soldier lets him drown, and when Candide attempts a rescue, Pangloss explains that he must not: he explains that the Bay of Lisbon was created specifically to drown Jacques. The ship breaks apart, and Pangloss and Candide float on a plank to Lisbon. As soon as they arrive, the Lisbon Earthquake takes place, and more than thirty thousand people die.

This is the first of many times in the novel that a character returns and is not immediately recognized, usually because unfortunate circumstances have changed them. The tragedy of what has happened in Thunder-ten-tronch is made comic by irony and exaggeration: everything has gone suddenly and horribly wrong in the “best of all possible baronies.”

Pangloss’ loss of an eye and an ear represents his detachment from the real world. Since nothing he hears, sees, or experiences can shake him from his doctrine of optimism, his senses come to seem unnecessary. Pangloss’ argument with Jacques further emphasizes this detachment: while Jacques speaks about specific evils in the world, Pangloss responds by appealing to a “general good,” which he never defines.

Jacques the Anabaptist is allowed to die by a man he has just rescued. Tens of thousands of innocent people die in the earthquake. Both of these events challenge the idea of divine justice: that God has created a fair world, where the good are rewarded and the innocent are safe. Pangloss’ ridiculous attempt to explain that the Bay Of Lisbon was created precisely to cause Jacques’ drowning is a further example of his philosophy’s inability to convincingly connect the world’s chaos to a harmonious divine plan.

Candide lies buried underneath the rubble of a building which has collapsed during the earthquake. He cries out for Pangloss to help him. Instead of going to get help immediately, Pangloss argues with him about the causes of the “concussion of the earth,” which has just occurred.

Pangloss consoles the victims of the earthquake by explaining that “it is impossible that things should be other than they are; for everything is right.” He is overheard by a servant of the Spanish Inquisition, who accuses him of denying original sin and free will, important elements of Catholic doctrine.

This bit of slapstick humor further emphasizes Pangloss’ (and philosophy’s) detachment from the world: he would rather argue and reason about the earthquake than deal with its dire and immediate consequences and help a friend.

Pangloss’ “consolation,” consists mostly in repeating what has happened. This is another jab at Pangloss’ philosophy: it is not only useless in determining the truth, but also in offering sympathy and comfort. Worse, this reasoning gets Pangloss into serious trouble with religious powers that have a different interpretation of the world.

CHAPTER 6

The religious scholars of Lisbon determine that an auto-da-fé (a contemporary ritual for the punishment of sinners and heretics) is the best way to prevent further earthquakes. Pangloss is lead off to be hung for his heresy, and Candide, to be whipped for having listened with approval. The auto-da-fé takes place amid sermons and beautiful church music. At the end of the day, an aftershock of the earthquake takes place. After his whipping, Candide expresses anguish for the loss of Pangloss and Cunégonde, as well as further doubts about the intrinsic goodness of the world.

The auto-da-fé and the aftershock that follows it mock the idea that religious faith might impact events in the world. Clearly, the “sins” of Candide and Pangloss had nothing to do with the earthquake; another happens just after they’ve been punished. The juxtaposition of beautiful religious music with horrifying punishments emphasizes the disparity between the church’s aura of holiness, and the senseless violence it causes.

CHAPTER 7

An old woman comes across Candide and convinces him to come home with her. She takes care of him, but does not reveal why she is doing so. After several days, she leads him to a house in the country, and then brings a veiled woman to him from the upstairs room. When Candide removes the veil, he finds Cunégonde is under it: the two faint with joy and surprise. Cunégonde explains that she survived the attack, and asks to hear what has happened to Candide in the time since their fateful kiss.

For the second time, a character thought to be dead returns in disguise. These surprise returns are part of the novel’s back-and-forth between disillusionment and optimism. The synchronized fainting satirizes the gestures and conventions of traditional romance.
CHAPTER 8

After Candide finishes telling his story, Cunégonde tells Candide what has happened to her. When the attack on Thunder-ten-tronckh took place, she was asleep in bed. A Bulgarian soldier began raping her, and cut her on the left side when she resisted. While this was happening, the soldier’s superior officer entered the room and killed him, not for raping Cunégonde, but for failing to properly salute. After that, the Bulgarian Captain took Cunégonde into captivity.

The Bulgarian Captain sold Cunégonde to Don Issachar, a Jew, who took her to live in his country house—the very house where Cunégonde is telling this story to Candide. One day at mass, the Grand Inquisitor took a liking to Cunégonde, and attempted to bargain with Don Issachar for her. When he refused to trade her, the Inquisitor threatened him with an auto-da-fé. Eventually, they came to an agreement to share her.

On the day of the auto-da-fé, the Grand Inquisitor brought Cunégonde to watch. When she saw Pangloss executed and Candide whipped, she cried out in horror. Later, she arranged for the old woman to look after Cunégonde. Cunégonde concludes her story, and just as she does, Don Issachar arrives.

CHAPTER 9

Cursing aloud at Cunégonde, Don Issachar draws his knife and throws himself at Candide, who quickly kills him. Two minutes later, the Grand Inquisitor arrives at the house for his appointed evening with Cunégonde. Reasoning that the Inquisitor will likely take away Candide and have him burnt at the stake, Candide kills him as well. Candide, Cunégonde, and the old woman flee the house for a village in the Sierra-Morena mountains.

The ridiculous ease with which Candide kills his two rivals and frees Cunégonde makes him a parody of the traditional epic hero, who might have a much more difficult and dramatic time freeing his lover from the clutches of his enemies. The juxtaposition of these two “lovers” of Cunégonde shows how meaningless the distinctions of religion and class can be, and how little role it plays in making people act morally: one is a powerful Grand Inquisitor, the other a Jewish merchant, but both end up killed by Candide in exactly the same way for exactly the same reason—their desire for and enslavement of Cunégonde.

CHAPTER 10

During his escape, Candide learns that Cunégonde’s jewels and money—given to her by the Grand Inquisitor—have been stolen by a friar. Though he is upset that the friar left them insufficient money to travel with, he accepts that everything on earth belongs to everyone, as Pangloss taught him, and that the friar had as much right to the money as anyone else.

Candide, Cunégonde, and the old woman arrive at Cadiz, where a military company is being mustered by the Spanish and Portuguese to put down a rebellion of Jesuits and Indians in Paraguay. Candide impresses the recruiters so much with his military exercises (learned from the Bulgarians) that they make him a captain, and give him command over an entire company. With Cunégonde and the old woman, he embarks on a ship for the New World. Candide expresses the opinion that perhaps the New World is the “best of all possible worlds,” described by Pangloss.

This is the first example of Candide’s indifferent attitude toward money. Rather than helping him, money and wealth only create problems for Candide, and how exactly the Inquisitor’s jewels fit this pattern can be seen in Chapter 13.

CHAPTER 11

Challenged by Cunégonde on which one of them has suffered more, the old woman tells the sorrowful story of her life. She was the daughter of the Pope and a princess, and happily engaged to a beautiful prince. On a journey with her mother, she was kidnapped by pirates and sold into slavery in Morocco. The arrival of the slaves in Morocco caused a Civil War there, from which she barely escaped. The old woman expresses the opinion that Africans, such as the Moroccans who kidnapped her, are more hot-blooded and violent than Europeans, who, by comparison, might as well have milk in their blood.

Many characters in Candide have stories of misfortune, and many of them began life in high positions. These recurring stories of misfortune suggest, pessimistically, that suffering is a universal feature of human life. The old woman’s story also parodies a narrative common in the literature of the time: a high-born person ends up in a position of lower social status. The racist stereotypes expressed by the old woman are common in Candide, in which most of the characters are caricatures or archetypes of some kind.
CHAPTER 12

The story of the old woman’s life continues. After the battle between the Moroccans, she was found by a eunuch, who had known her during her childhood as a princess. The eunuch brought her to Algiers, where she came down with the plague. After that, she was sold all around the world, from Turkey to Russia to Germany and eventually to the household of Don Issachar. Along the way, she experienced countless misfortunes: in the worst them, one of her buttocks was sliced off and eaten by starving Turkish soldiers in a besieged fort. At the end of her story, the old woman expresses wonder that no matter how awful life is, we somehow still love it, and continue in our struggles against death and pain. She tells Candide and Cunégonde that if they can find a single passenger on the ship who has lived without serious suffering, they may throw her into the sea. They cannot.

Unlike a tragedy, which makes the suffering of its hero appear profound and unique, the novel of Candide makes human suffering comic and absurd by pointing it out everywhere—not only in the life of the hero. Candide is filled with suffering that does not cause death. The old woman’s missing left buttock—like Pangloss’ missing eye or the slave’s missing left leg—is a terrible injury, but allows life to go on. This is one of the purposes of both the old woman’s story and her bet. The old woman’s philosophical reflections on human perseverance are part of a larger philosophical argument in the novel: that life is made up of constant disruption and motion, not rest.

CHAPTER 13

Upon arriving in Buenos Aires, Candide and Cunégonde are brought to meet Don Fernando, the Governor. Don Fernando takes a clear interest in Cunégonde, and when Candide asks him to officiate in their marriage, Don Fernando sends him away to review the soldiers. Don Fernando then proposes to Cunégonde, who asks for a little time to decide. She consults with the old woman, who advises her to marry Don Fernando, and use his power to help make Candide’s fortune.

The old woman learns that an Alcade (magistrate) is about to land in Buenos Aires and arrest Candide for the murder of the Grand Inquisitor. The Alcade learned of the whereabouts of Candide and Cunégonde through the friar who stole their jewels and money in Spain. The old woman advises Candide to run away, and tells Cunégonde to stay, relying on Don Fernando to protect her.

Don Fernando is yet another authority figure who uses his power to try to take possession of Cunégonde. Once again, the possession of women is central to the chaos and conflict of the novel, in the New World as in the Old. The old woman’s pragmatic, even cynical plan comes from her long experience of life and its troubles, stressed in previous chapters.

Wealth and worldly goods bring Candide nothing but trouble throughout the novel. Here, the Inquisitor’s jewels are what have lead to his discovery and second separation from Cunégonde.

CHAPTER 14

As the Inquisitor’s minions arrive, Candide flees from Buenos Aires with his valet, Cacambo. Cacambo proposes bringing him to the kingdom of the rebellious Jesuits in Paraguay, where the indigenous people own nothing and the clergy own everything, and the government is a “masterpiece of reason and justice.” Candide agrees to go, promised that he will be able to make his fortune there.

When they arrive, Candide is told that the Reverend Commandant does not speak with Spaniards. When the Reverend Commandant learns that Candide is not a Spaniard, but a German, he agrees to see him. The Commandant turns out to be the former young Baron of Thunder-ten-tronckh, Cunégonde’s brother, previously thought dead. Candide and the young baron have a tearful reunion.

The Commandant expresses the hope that he and Candide might be able to rescue Cunégonde from the clutches of Don Fernando. Candide agrees, mentioning that he wishes to marry her. Outraged, the Reverend Commandant denounces Candide for this insolence. Candide is not noble enough, in his opinion, to marry his sister. Candide objects that he has rescued Cunégonde from the Inquisitor and Don Issachar, that she wants to marry him, and that all men are equal according to Pangloss. The Reverend Commandant slaps Candide across the face with the flat of his blade. In self-defense, Candide kills him, and then bursts into tears, crying out that he has already killed three people without having intended to. Candide puts on the Reverend Commandant’s uniform, to disguise himself, and then flees with Cacambo.

CHAPTER 15

The Reverend Commandant tells the story of his survival of the Bulgarian attack. Thought to be dead, he revived while a Jesuit priest was preparing him for burial. Becoming a minister himself, he ended up in Paraguay, where he is now Colonel and Priest. This is one of two instances in the novel when a still-living “corpse,” wakes up. We will learn in Chapter 28 that the same thing happened to Pangloss. Ironically, the two characters who experience these “resurrections,” are the most unchanged in the novel—Pangloss never gives up on his philosophy, and the Baron never gives up on his aristocratic values.

The Baron’s sudden anger about Candide’s intentions seems ridiculous—Candide has rescued Cunégonde twice. The baron’s extreme outrage is meant to satirize the aristocracy’s illogical insistence on the importance of noble blood. One of the philosophical questions explored by the novel is freedom of will. Life seems to “happen” to Candide much more than he controls it; even when he kills people, it’s mostly by reflex. Because Catholic doctrine required believing in it, questioning the freedom of the will was part of the Enlightenment critique of religion.
CHAPTER 16

Cunégonde and Cacambo flee from the Jesuit camp into the unknown territory. They come across two women being chased by two monkeys. Candide shoots the two monkeys, assuming that he is rescuing the two women, and also that this is appropriate penance for having killed the Inquisitor and the Jesuit Commandant. To his great surprise, the women begin weeping over the slain monkeys, who turn out to have been their lovers—as well as a quarter of the inmates of that camp. The women, having left behind the evils of human association, are now left to eat only coconuts and wild fruit. Horses die of starvation, and they are forced to seek refreshments, women, and lead them out of the territory in good cheer.

The Oreillons are making preparations to boil Candide and Cacambo alive. Candide despairs. However, at the last moment, Cacambo makes a speech to convince the Oreillons that he and Candide are not in fact Jesuits, but rather enemies of the Jesuits. He manages to convince them, and the two are freed. The Oreillons give them refreshments, women, and lead them out of the territory in good cheer.

CHAPTER 17

Once they are out of Paraguay, Cacambo and Candide deliberate on where to go next. They decide to head to the city Cayenne, and then back to Europe. The journey is hard: their horses die of starvation, and they are left to eat only coconuts and wild fruit. At one point, they find a canoe at the edge of a river. Thinking that it might lead to civilization, they board it and float downstream for more than a day, passing through caves and, eventually, losing their canoe on the rocks.

Pulling themselves along the rocks to the end of the stream, Candide and Cacambo find themselves in a large plain enclosed by inaccessible mountains. They come upon a village and see children playing with gold and precious stones, under the supervision of a schoolmaster. When the children walk away from their game, they leave the stones behind. Candide tries to return them to the schoolmaster, who simply smiles and flings them on the ground. Candide and Cacambo are shocked by the disregard these people pay to valuable things.

Cacambo leads Candide into an inn. There, the two converse with the guests and the landlord. Before leaving, they attempt to pay for their meal and drinks with the precious stones they have gathered that the children had thrown on the ground. The landlord laughs, and explains that in this country, most things are paid for by the government. Candide concludes that he has at last arrived at the country "where everything goes well."

In almost every other place Candide has looked for hospitality, he has been tricked or robbed: by the Bulgarians at the inn in Germany, by the friar at the inn in Spain, and by Don Fernando in Buenos Aires. For the first time, there seems to be no "catch," and so, for this and other reasons, Candide concludes that El Dorado must be the best of all possible worlds that Pangloss spoke about

CHAPTER 18

The landlord leads Candide to the house of an old wise man who might be able to answer his many questions about the place. The old man explains that El Dorado is the ancient homeland of the Inca, who "imprudently," left it to build an empire, which was then destroyed by the Spanish. He explains that El Dorado's happiness comes from its isolation: it cannot be reached by conquering Europeans. Finally, he explains the religion of the country: everyone is a priest, there are no divisions or sects, and all worship consists in giving thanks to God. Candide concludes that Pangloss was wrong about the "best of all possible worlds," being in Westphalia: if he had traveled more, he might have come to El Dorado, and known better.

El Dorado, as the old man describes it, is the exact opposite of Voltaire's Europe. While Europeans traveled the world and colonized distant places, the residents of El Dorado stayed at home, safe and isolated. While Europe developed complex religious divisions and dogmas, El Dorado stuck to the simple religion of giving thanks to God. By setting up El Dorado as opposite to it, Voltaire criticizes the Europe of his time. It is ironic that Candide faults Pangloss for not having traveled more, because staying put is the great virtue of the El Doradans.

Here, Candide reaches the bottom of the ladder of "civilization" that he has been descending throughout the novel. Having started in neath, peaceful Westphalia, he has ended up in the wild with Cacambo, totally without resources. Only after this return to nature, having left behind the evils of human civilization, do Candide and Cacambo make it to El Dorado, the perfect place. Contemporary philosophers of Voltaire, such as Rousseau, believed that the "state of nature,"—a hypothetical time before civilization—was better than modern life.

A lack of concern over money and valuables (like the schoolmaster's), and a remote and inaccessible location were both considered, in Voltaire's time, to be necessary aspects of a "utopia," or perfect society. The word "utopia," was coined by Sir Thomas More in his book of the same name, and could be translated as both "no place" and "good place."

The old man sends Candide and Cacabamo to see the king of El Dorado. The king receives them like equals: no bows are required. They live, for a month, in splendor and happiness.

This lack of ceremony involved in meeting the king contrasts greatly with the elaborate rituals which surrounded contact with kings in Europe. In El Dorado, it is clear that all men are equals: egalitarianism was one of the chief values of the Enlightenment.
Eventually, however, Cacambo convinces Candide to leave by arguing that in El Dorado, they are only equal to their neighbors: with the wealth they’ve gained, they could become kings in Europe. Though he thinks that Cacambo and Candide are making a mistake, the king agrees to help them leave, giving them a flock of red sheep, and letting them take as much gold as they want.

Despite the perfectness of El Dorado, or perhaps because of it, Candide and Cacambo decide to leave. Their motivation for leaving is pride: they see the opportunity to set themselves over others. This reenacts the expelled Eden in the Bible: the serpent tempts Eve by promising equality with God. And it offers a critique of any perfect society. Namely, that no society ever could be perfect because men are so far from perfect.

CHAPTER 19

Upon his arrival in Suriname, Candide learns that Cunégonde has become Don Fernando’s favorite mistress. He is upset, but plans to get her back by sending Cacambo, with half the riches, to take him captive and enjoyed by men other than Candide, who is always just on the cusp of being able to be with her. In this way, Cunégonde is a symbol for the futility and endlessness of human desires: she is what keeps Candide moving, but also what he can never have.

Cunégonde always seems to end up held captive and enjoyed by men other than Candide, who is always just on the cusp of being able to be with her. In this way, Cunégonde is a symbol for the futility and endlessness of human desires: she is what keeps Candide moving, but also what he can never have.

Candide’s vast wealth begins to disappear as soon as he leaves El Dorado. Riches in the novel are quickly lost, and cause more trouble than good. Of all the evil institutions criticized in Candide, slavery is depicted as the very worst. Unlike almost every other episode in the novel, Candide’s conversation with the slave is completely humorless. It is also the one encounter which causes Candide—briefly—to give up his optimism.

CHAPTER 20

Throughout the voyage, Candide and Martin debate philosophically. Martin explains that he has seen so many misfortunes that he has become a Manichean: he believes that God has abandoned the world, and left it in the hands of an evil being. Martin lists examples of evil and suffering throughout the world. Nevertheless, Candide maintains that there is such a thing as good in the world.

In the midst of their debates, the ship which Candide and Martin are traveling on passes close by two ships engaged in combat. The French ship sinks the Dutch ship, and dozens of men drown. Floating in the wreckage, Candide finds one of his Doradan red sheep. The Dutch ship turns out to have been the ship of the man who had swindled him in Suriname. Triumphant, Candide declares that sometimes crime is punished. Unfazed, Martin responds that “God punished the knife, and the devil has drowned the rest.” Even so, Candide takes the recovery of the red sheep as an omen that he will be reunited with Cunégonde.

Candide sees the battle as evidence that sin is punished, while Martin argues that you can’t see divine justice in a result that involved the loss of many innocent lives. Candide’s recovery of the sheep goes along with his recovery of optimism. Sheep represent innocence and purity: traits that are associated with Candide from the narrator’s description of him in the first chapter.

CHAPTER 21

Finally, Candide and Martin come within sight of the coast of France. Candide asks Martin about France, and Martin replies that it is filled with terrible people: some too stupid, some too cunning, some slanderers, and some fanatics. Candide further questions Martin about his beliefs, asking him whether or not mankind has always been evil throughout its history, or only in recent times. Martin responds sarcastically, asking if Candide believes “that hawks have always eaten pigeons.” Candide responds that there is a difference: men have free will.

The voyage back to Europe is a mirror image of the voyage to the New World. While the first was filled with hope and optimism, the second is darkened by Martin’s low opinion of the French. Candide’s optimism begins, here, to become more refined. By asking the question of whether or not human beings have always done evil, he implies that we might be able to stop. In other words, although we do not live in “the best of all possible worlds,” we still might be able to create it. Martin does not think so: he doesn’t believe that human nature can change.

CHAPTER 22

Candide and Martin arrive in Bordeaux, France and immediately travel to Paris. There, Candide is surrounded by hangers-on who have heard about his wealth and attempt to take advantage of him by using a variety of tricks. Among them, he and Martin meet the Abbé of Perigord, who takes them to see a new tragedy at the theater. Candide is moved to tears by the tragedy, but a critic seated next to him insults the play viciously between the acts.

Wealth is more of a problem than a solution in the novel. It attracts others who want that wealth, and the tricks of those hangers-on slow Candide and Martin down in their search. Candide’s naive and heartfelt reaction to the play contrasts with the savage “good taste,” of the critic. Once again, the refinements of culture and civilization appear in a negative light when placed next to the innocence of Candide. He can enjoy and be moved by art. The critic cannot.

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The Abbé takes Candide and Martin to the house of the Marchioness of Parolignac, where a group of men are gambling and gossiping about the theater. Candide remarks that the Marchioness is much less polite than the Baroness of Thunder-ten-tronckh. Candide speaks to a wise man about art and philosophy, and considers him "another Pangloss." But the Marchioness complains that he is a nobody, a man who has never had any success. Afterward, the Marchioness takes Candide to her boudoir and seduces him, taking two of his diamonds in the process.

Leaving the home of the Marchioness, Candide speaks with the Abbé of Perigord, telling him the story of his adventures. The Abbé asks if Candide has received any letters from Cunégonde, and he replies that he has not. The very next day, a letter arrives from Cunégonde, saying that she is staying in a Parisian hotel. Candide goes to see her, but is told by a servant that she must remain behind a curtain because the light hurts her eyes. Candide gives this "Cunégonde" diamonds and a bag of gold, but she turns out to be an impostor: the whole thing has been set up by the Abbé. Candide and Martin are arrested for being foreigners and brought to northern France, where they are forced to board a ship for England.

CHAPTER 23
Disgusted with France, Candide expresses to Martin his hope that England will be a better country. But as soon as they arrive at Portsmouth, they witness a blindfolded man being executed by firing squad on a warship. Candide asks why this man is being executed by firing squad on a warship. They witness a blindfolded man being executed, and are told that the man is a foreigner and brought to England. Candide and Martin are arrested for the crime of being foreigners and brought to northern France, where they are forced to board a ship for England.

In Paris, Candide seems to think that he might find replacements for what he had in Westphalia. But nothing is as it appears: the noblewoman sleeps with Candide for his diamonds (nothing like the beautiful and pure Cunégonde), the wise man is not respected by anyone (unlike Pangloss), and everyone spends their time gambling and gossiping about the theater.

CHAPTER 24
Arriving with Martin in Venice, Candide is disappointed not to immediately find Cunégonde. Martin believes that Cacambo has run off with the money, and that Candide has been a fool. Candide despairs. They begin to debate philosophically about whether or not there is happiness on earth, but are interrupted when Candide notices a young friar and his mistress, speaking affectionately. Candide lays a bet with Martin that these two people are happy. Martin accepts, and they invite the two for dinner in order to find out the truth.

It turns out that the woman is Paquette from Thunder-ten-tronckh, and also, that she is working as a prostitute—her apparent happiness is just part of her job. Even the friar, Giroflée, is not happy: he hates his profession, and was forced to become a monk by his parents. Martin wins the bet, but Candide prolongs it by giving Paquette and Giroflée a large sum of money. With money, he promises, they will be happy. Martin agrees. Continuing their philosophical debate, they decide to go see the Senator Pococuranté, who supposedly has everything he needs and is a very happy man.

CHAPTER 25
Candide and Martin travel to the house of Senator Pococuranté. The Senator lives in a house surrounded by beautiful gardens, filled with great books and rare paintings, and with women and musicians to entertain him whenever he likes. Nevertheless, he is disgusted by or indifferent to everything he owns. As they leave, Martin and Candide argue over whether or not this makes the Senator an unhappy man. Martin argues that Pococuranté is unhappy with everything, while Candide argues that there must be some pleasure in criticizing everything.

CHAPTER 26
At a Venetian inn, Candide and Martin sit down for dinner with six strangers. There, a slave approaches Candide privately and reveals himself to be Cacambo. Cacambo tells Candide that Cunégonde is in Constantinople, and reassures him that they will set out to free her just as soon as dinner is done.
The six strangers introduce themselves. All of them claim to be deposed or exiled kings who have fallen on hard times, and who have come to enjoy the carnival in Venice. Candide and Martin suspect that this must be one of the masquerades of the carnival.

CHAPTER 27

The next day, Cacambo arranges for Candide and Martin to be taken on a ship headed for Constantinople, where Cunégonde is a dishwasher and has lost her beauty. Candide and Martin debate whether or not it is possible to measure the relative unhappiness of individuals. Halfway through the voyage, Candide discovers that Pangloss and the Young Baron—thought dead—are slaves on the galley. As soon as they reach the shore, Candide pays the captain to release them. From there, Candide, Martin, Pangloss and the Baron set off to free Cunégonde.

CHAPTER 28

The Young Baron and Pangloss tell Candide and Martin how they each ended up enslaved. Soon after recovering from the wounds from his fight with Candide, the Baron was kidnapped by Spaniards. After that, he was ransomed by the Church, which sent him to work in Constantinople. There, he was enslaved and sent to the galleys as punishment for bathing naked with a slave boy, in violation of a religious rule. The Baron looks like a hypocrite, and this irony is part of Candide's criticism of religion in general and the Jesuits in particular: the Jesuits were considered the greatest enemies of the Enlightenment.

For the second time, both Pangloss and the Baron are found alive after being thought dead. This happens as though in response to Candide and Martin's argument about relative unhappiness. As always, an event in the story comes along just in time to resolve a philosophical debate: in the next chapter, the misfortunes and unhappiness of the Baron and Pangloss will be compared.

There is extreme irony in the fact that the Baron—a Jesuit priest—is punished for violating an obscure religious rule. The Jesuit Order was founded to combat heresies and challenges to (often obscure) religious rules. The Baron looks like a hypocrite, and this irony is part of Candide's criticism of religion in general and the Jesuits in particular: the Jesuits were considered the greatest enemies of the Enlightenment.

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CHAPTER 29

Finally, Candide, Martin, Pangloss, Cacambo and the Young Baron arrive at the palace where Cunégonde and the old woman work as servants. As Cacambo claimed, Cunégonde has lost all of her beauty. Nevertheless, Candide pays to have both of them freed. When he expresses his intention to marry Candide, the Baron becomes angry yet again, insisting that his sister will not marry a non-noble Candide while he is still living.

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Pangloss then begins to tell his own story. Though he was hung at the auto-da-fé, this punishment failed to kill him: it was too rainy to burn him after the hanging, and nobody noticed that he was still alive. He revived a day later while a doctor was attempting to dissect his “corpse.” After, he traveled to Constantinople, where he was enslaved for indecently picking up and returning flowers dropped by a woman in a mosque. He was assigned to the same galley as the Young Baron, and by the time Candide found him, the two had been arguing endlessly over whose misfortunes were worse. When asked by Candide if his experiences have changed his philosophy, Pangloss responds that his faith in the harmony of the world is unshaken.

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In Candide, almost everyone is an unfortunate “nobody,” who was once a “somebody.” This theme, common to literature of the time, is mocked in this scene: it is ridiculous that six exiled kings should all end up together, by accident, in a Venetian inn.

In the first chapter, the old Baron sends Candide away. In this chapter, Candide sends the new Baron away. This symbolizes the eventual triumph of the Enlightenment and reason over traditional customs and structures of power. By surrounding the characters with other unfortunate—like the exiled royals—the novel makes the point that misfortune is not unique, but is in fact a common feature of human life.

CONCLUSION

Though he no longer wants to marry Cunégonde, the stubbornness of the Young Baron’s opposition causes Candide to do it anyway. He has the Baron sent back to the Jesuits in Rome. Afterwards, he purchases and lives on a small farm with Cunégonde, Cacambo, Pangloss, Martin, and the old woman. Though they are at last reunited, they are all unhappy: their dreams and desires for life have been dashed. Day after day, they watch boats filled with exiled royalty passing by their window.

Candide, Martin, Pangloss, Cacambo, Cunégonde and the old woman spend their days arguing about the meaning of life. Martin concludes that there are only two possible destinies for human beings: to sit around doing nothing, filled with disgust, or to live with unsettling and constant change.

Paquette and Giroflée arrive at the farm. They have wasted all the money Candide gave them, and are no happier than they were before: once again, Martin has been proven correct.

Hoping to resolve their endless philosophical debates, Candide and the other remaining characters visit a wise Dervish. Using Pangloss as a spokesperson, they ask the Dervish why man was made, and why there is evil in the world. The Dervish asks them why such questions are their business, and makes an enigmatic analogy to the discomfort of mice on a royal ship: what does the King care about how the mice are feeling? With that, he shuts the door in their faces.

This is the novel’s final dismissal of wealth as a means of achieving happiness, a recurrent theme in previous chapters.

The refusal of the Dervish to debate with Pangloss and the others suggests the uselessness of philosophy. His analogy about the mice implies that God is indifferent to the happiness of mankind, just as the King is indifferent to the happiness of the mice on his ship.
Later, Candide, Martin and Pangloss meet a local farmer, who invites them into his house for a meal. They start talking to him about the execution of a few Viziers in Constantinople, but he has not heard: his only concern is maintaining his farm, which he claims saves his family from “weariness, vice, and want.” Pangloss, Martin and Candide all come to the conclusion that working hard is the only way to make life tolerable. They agree that man is not born for idleness. Pangloss continues to philosophize about the “best of all possible worlds,” but Candide is no longer interested. “All that is very well,” he answers, “but let us cultivate our garden.”

The example of the local farmer, voluntarily withdrawn from the world and hard at work with his family, is a powerful counter image to the dozens of nobles and “great,” people in the novel who have fallen on hard times and cannot stop complaining about it. In the end, Candide concludes that using reason and hard work to improve the world and our lives—what is meant by cultivating our garden—is more useful and fulfilling than dreaming or arguing about what makes up the “best of all possible worlds,” and pursuing the endless questions of theology and philosophy.