

Book Information

Voltaire, Candide
Quiz Number: 28450
Bantam Books, 1959
ISBN 0-553-21166-8; LCCN
122 Pages
Book Level: 7.3
Interest Level: UG

A gentle man is pummeled and slapped in every direction by fate, but clings desperately to the belief that he lives in "the best of all possible worlds."

Topics: Adventure, Life Changes; Adventure, Travel; Behavior, Bravery; Classics, Classics (All); Emotions, Happiness; Recommended Reading, California Recommended Lit., English, 9-12

Main Characters

Baron Thunder-ten-tronckh the man who kicked Candide out of his home for kissing his daughter, Cunegonde

Baroness Thunder-ten-tronckh the wife of the baron

Cacambo Candide's valet, who helps Candide find Cunegonde

Candide the protagonist who witnesses and endures horrible acts while trying to remain optimistic

Cunegonde Candide's love interest, who eventually loses her youth and beauty

Dr. Pangloss Candide's tutor, who views everything as for the best

His Reverence the Commandant the son of Baron Thunder-ten-tronckh and brother of Cunegonde

James the Anabaptist a gentle man who helps Candide and Pangloss

Martin the old scholar who Candide chooses to travel with; he offers a differing philosophy from Pangloss's

Paquette the mistress of Pangloss, whom Candide meets in Venice

the old woman Cunegonde's friend who tells the horrible story of her misfortune

Vocabulary

ennui boredom

hamlet a small village

Jesuit a member of the Society of Jesus, a Roman Catholic order founded by Saint Ignatius of Loyola in 1534

polemicist a person inclined to controversy

Providence God

quoits a game in which flat rings of iron or rope are pitched at a stake

scimitar a curved sword

Synopsis

Candide is a gentle young man who lives at the estate of Baron Thunder-ten-tronckh. Dr. Pangloss, an intelligent man who views everything as for the best, is Candide's tutor. All is well until Candide falls in love and kisses Cunegonde, the baron's daughter. The baron literally kicks Candide out of his home. Soon, Candide meets Bulgar soldiers and is forced to become a soldier himself. When he tries to walk away, believing in the right to free will, the soldiers catch and almost kill him. The young man is then freed by the King of the Bulgars and flees through two destroyed villages, evidence of the war tactics of the Bulgars and the Avars. Next, Candide meets James the Anabaptist, who helps nurse him back to good health.

The next day, Candide encounters Dr. Pangloss, his former tutor from the baron's estate, and he learns that the baron, baroness, Cunegonde, and her brother are dead following a Bulgar attack. Several months after James the Anabaptist helps cure Pangloss of syphilis, the three men leave for Lisbon. Unfortunately, James drowns during a severe storm and as soon as Candide and Pangloss reach land, they suffer through an earthquake. The next day, an officer of the Inquisition is angered by the men's reactions to his questions about free will. Candide is publicly flogged, while Pangloss is hanged. As Candide leaves, an old woman comes to bring him to her home. There Candide meets Cunegonde once again, and learns how she had survived the

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Candide

by

Voltaire

attack and came into the possession of both a Grand Inquisitor and a Jew. Candide kills both men, and he, Cunegonde, and the old woman leave on horseback.

Candide becomes a captain in the Bulgar army, and the three set sail on a ship to the New World. During the trip, the old woman tells that she is the daughter of a pope and a princess and explains how she came into her current state. When the ship lands in Buenos Aires, the three meet the governor, who eventually proposes to Cunegonde. Soon ships arrive to find Candide because of the murders he committed. Candide flees with his new valet, Cacambo. On their journey, Candide meets His Reverence the Commandant, who turns out to be Cunegonde's brother, who was thought to be dead. His Reverence refuses to allow Candide to marry Cunegonde, and he strikes Candide with his sword. Candide stabs His Reverence and escapes by wearing the man's Jesuit robe.

Next Candide and Cacambo's travels bring them to Eldorado, an ideal land that has many riches. The two are allowed to take some of the riches, and Candide sends Cacambo to find Cunegonde and meet him in Venice. Candide and his new friend, Martin, meet a monk and Paquette, who was Pangloss's mistress from the Baron's home. They make a bet on the happiness of the pair, and Candide loses.

After several weeks, Candide meets Cacambo again and learns that his valet has become a slave. Cacambo tells Candide that Cunegonde is in Constantinople. While sailing to Constantinople, Martin and Candide find two slaves on the ship that resemble Pangloss and His Reverence. When Candide approaches the men, he finds they are indeed the men he thought were dead. Candide buys their freedom.

The ship lands at the home of the Prince of Transylvania. In their time apart, Cunegonde has become ugly and shrewish. Candide is reluctant to marry her, but he feels he has a moral responsibility to do so. After the still-disapproving brother is sent

off to be a slave, the two marry. Their group resides at a farm and all seem to be unhappy, though eventually the farm inhabitants use their talents to run the farm instead of philosophizing. Candide ends the story by saying, "...we must cultivate our garden."

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

When Dr. Pangloss meets Candide with James the Anabaptist, Candide is appalled by his tutor's appearance. What terrible affliction does Dr. Pangloss explain he has? How is Pangloss's optimism still evident despite his disease?

Pangloss suffers from the sexually transmitted infection called syphilis. He claims to have caught the disease from Paquette, the baroness's chambermaid. Optimism is evident in several statements: he will not give it to anyone; Europe would not have chocolate or cochineal if it were not for Columbus's travels; and Pangloss "only" lost an eye and an ear.

Literary Analysis

Candide and Cacambo travel to the rich city Eldorado. In this city, they find jewels in abundance, and none of the citizens seem to recognize their worth. Why are the people of Eldorado confused and amused by Cacambo and Candide's method of payment?

This chapter deals with differences in perception. The items that Candide and Cacambo view as jewels are seen as common rocks by the people of Eldorado. Most jewels are deemed as such because of their rarity. To these people, the stones are not rare.

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Candide

by

Voltaire

Inferential Comprehension

Many of the characters in this novel describe their philosophy of life. In your opinion, which character or characters most represent Voltaire's philosophy on life?

Many students may answer that Martin, Candide's companion, seems to think like Voltaire. Martin is a dualist who discredits Pangloss and Candide's optimism. Other students may feel that Signor Pococurante's pessimistic views may represent the author's views.

Constructing Meaning

After Candide and his group settle into their new life on their farm, Candide states, "...we must cultivate our garden." In your opinion, what does Candide mean by this?

According to The Sage of Ferney, by Andre Maurois, this phrase means "...the world is mad and cruel; the earth trembles and the sky hurls thunderbolts; kings fight and Churches rend each other. Let us limit our activities and try to do as well as we can the small task that seems to be within our powers." In other words, Candide means we should concentrate on smaller matters that are of direct consequence to us. In his opinion, philosophy has its place, but people should concentrate on more tangible matters.

Teachable Skills

Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors In the old woman's tale of her tortured life, she tells of a man who cared for her. The man told her that he was born in Naples, where they castrated two or three thousand boys every year. He explained the reason for the castration was to help the boys maintain beautiful singing voices. Have your students research the castrati of this time period. Then ask them to write a short report on the subject.

Extending Meaning Candide and Cacambo travel to the city of Eldorado and discover the citizens do not find their jewels valuable. Ask your students to consider why these jewels may not be valuable to the citizens. Have the students create

a short legend or myth that explains and confirms this belief.

Understanding Sequence Candide and his friends travel to many places over the course of the novel. Ask your students to create a map that details Candide's adventures. The map should include: Westphalia, Venice, Buenos Aires, Paris, etc. Have them number the places in the order that he traveled.

Responding to Literature When Cunegonde and Candide travel by boat with the old woman, she tells them the tale of her horrible youth. She explains that she is the daughter of a pope and a princess who was raped and sold into slavery. When she finishes her story, she says that almost every person has believed that he or she has had a terrible time in life. Ask your students to consider how they felt when they read the old woman's story. Explain the elements of tragedy to your students. Then, have them create their own short fictional tragedy. Their story could be about themselves, or they could create a protagonist.