

# Candide by voltaire

Literature



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Voltaire Candide by Voltaire or optimism is representation of the idea of Voltaire related to the European enlightenment in colonization, and the pessimism many had during these chaotic invasions, where war was a means to conquer new lands. In this story, there is extensive travelling as Candide travels across the European and Asian territories being a captive, which represents the numerous numbers of captives and slaves during exploration of new lands for enrichment, while the European territories expanded rapidly. The long journeys by Candide as presented by Voltaire are symbolic of new wave of colonization that improves trade, while creating immense wealth for the colonizers. Throughout the story, Voltaire expands the theme of brutality and torture, as the European interests expanded to new grounds symbolized by the vast journeys by Candide. Voltaire's presentation of this theme is representative of the dimensions that the colonization of new territories assumed, with mass murders of civilians in these new territories. Voltaire presents the theme of brutality to both the captives and the new territories by explaining the ordeals of Candide. Candide received "twenty kicks in the rear" from Baron Thunder -Ten Tronckh, for a daring gesture to kiss her daughter (Lawall, 525). According to Voltaire, Candide had not left his home before this awakening. This was an introduction to the brutality and torture to be experienced and observed by Candide, in the entire journeys. Candide suffering was not only limited to his captors, but nature as well contributed to his ordeals in the journey. As Candide was sailing "his vessel was attacked by a horrible tempest" (Lawal, 526). The escalating armed conflicts forced Candide to travel in one direction then another to avoid being caught in the midst of the battles. However, nature was unforgiving as Candide had to wade through dangerous weather

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patterns, which could almost sink his vessel. The wealth that justified the entire conquering of new territories in colonization is observed in Candide; “he left the perfect world with enough money to retake Miss Cunegonde” (Lawall, 550). The perfect world indicates a place of plenty, with the vast wealth being observed through this relationship between Candide and Cunegonde. The horrors of war and the torture in colonization of new territories were evident in Voltaire presentation of these horrors through Candide’s eyes. Candide found himself at a village “which had been burnt to the ground in strict accordance with the laws of war” (Lawall, 523). Burning a village to the ground means the inhabitants of such a village had either freed their homes or had been massacred by the advancing forces. Surprisingly, as Voltaire expounds, such brutality was normal, legal and considered appropriate. Voltaire indicates the brutality and torture to be in accordance with the rule of war. To expound this, Candide experienced the horrors of his life in the happenings at the battle front. Old men were seriously beaten and mutilated, wives were “butchered,” young girls “who had first satisfied the natural needs of various heroes” were in addition “disemboweled,” and “scattered brains and severed limbs littered the ground” (Lawall, 523-524). This precise description of the terror in the village as witnessed by Candide represents the height of the brutality characteristic of the colonizers, in their conquering of new territories in search of raw materials and trade. The use of old men, women, and young girls represents the numerous numbers of helpless and weak people, to whom such magnitude of brutality was targeted. In addition, to the torture, rape cases were in the increase, Voltaire satirically explains how the young girls could first satisfy the natural needs of the heroes. These are the champions of the massive brutality, but being

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viewed as heroes after capturing such new territories. Whether this was in accordance with the laws of war as Voltaire satirically suggests (Lawall, 523) has not been expounded, but Voltaire presents this type of brutality to be a norm in the entire colonization escapades. This is further portrayed when Voltaire talks of “ the heroic butchery” (Lawall, 523); which is not only ironic, but also satirical. In addition to the massive brutality and massacre by the armies, or the heroes according to Voltaire, diseases were responsible for killing large numbers of people in the same magnitude as the colonizers could brutally kill the inhabitants. The actual magnitude of disease in the story is perceived in the dialogue between Candide and Pangloss. “ Isn’t the devil at the root of the whole thing [venereal disease]? Not at all, replied the great man [Pangloss]; it’s an indispensable part of the best of all possible worlds..... if Columbus had not caught it; we should have neither chocolate nor cochineal” (Lawall, 526). The diseases were responsible for wiping out populations, and even great men; Columbus died of the same causes. The diseases advanced the same torturous regimes of the colonizers, meaning that inhabitants had little chance of surviving during this colonization period. Voltaire present the theme of brutality and torture experienced by both the captives and the inhabitants of the new territories as batches of European armies advanced to acquire new territories in such of wealth. The brutality presented by Voltaire as perceived by Candide was characteristic of the entire colonization period, and resulted to increased trade and wealth, raising the need of slaves to work in the new territories. A part from the brutality of the colonizers, nature through weather patterns and diseases was also responsible for killing large population of people. Voltaire therefore presents the entire colonization period as characteristic of violence, terror

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and brutality, where communities either perished or were displaced by the colonizers who took their lands in search of raw materials. Work Cited Lawall, Sarah. Voltaire. "Candide or Optimism" Norton Anthology of World Literature Volume D. Ed. NY: Norton, 2002.