

Major work data sheet: candide essay sample

[Literature](#), [Fiction](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Genre: Satire, 'Conte Philosophique' (Philosophical Fiction) Biographical information about the author: Francois-Marie Arouet, better known as Voltaire, was born in 1694 in Paris, France. Though his father wanted him to become a lawyer, Voltaire long held a great passion for writing, and rather than going to law school, spent his time extensively composing poetry, essays, and historical studies. His widespread recognition as an author was established with the publication of the play "Oedipus", a variation on the original Greek tragedy, in 1718. In 1726, after a fight with a French nobleman, Voltaire was exiled to England. There, he was exposed to a vast array of new philosophical ideas, specifically the concept of a constitutional monarchy and support for the freedoms of speech and religion, as well as the works of Shakespeare and Isaac Newton. He later returned to France, moving into a new home, Chateau de Cirey, with his wife, Emilie du Chatelet. The relationship between the two was highly intellectual, as they were both deeply intrigued by history, philosophy, and Newtonian physics. Greatly influenced by his earlier stay in England, Voltaire began to develop some of the ideas for which he is best known during this time, including his support for the separation of church and state and criticisms of both religious intolerance and certain religious practices. In 1736, Voltaire came in contact with Frederick the Great of Prussia, one of his admirers, and worked alongside him for several years in Prussia, until being exiled after a political dispute in 1752. Returning to France, Voltaire tied together his various experiences with philosophy, religion, and politics in writing his magnum opus, "Candide", published in 1759. Having undergone a lengthy exile, Voltaire did not return to his city of origin, Paris, until 1778, shortly before his

death. Voltaire's diverse and highly influential writings have solidified him as one of the most significant figures in the history of the Enlightenment and the Western world in general.

Historical information about the period of publication: "Candide" was published in the mid-18th century, during the "Age of Enlightenment", a rich period in the cultural history of France and Europe as a whole. The Enlightenment was marked by great advances in science and philosophy, as well as an emphasis upon reason and rational thought amongst intellectuals. Politically speaking, the Enlightenment was an era of rebellious social reform, as indicated by frequent, open criticisms of church authority and the European aristocracy, culminating in the French Revolution. In writing "Candide", Voltaire, being a philosopher himself, was heavily influenced by the philosophy of the Enlightenment, as well as actual historical events, which were contemporary at the time of publication, such as the Seven Year's War and the Lisbon earthquake of 1755. Voltaire perhaps alludes most directly to the philosophy of Leibniz, who championed classical optimism, or the belief that, because God is benevolent, "all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds", with treachery and terror simply being part of the best existence that can possibly be experienced.

Voltaire, in vehement opposition to this philosophy, sought to expose its errors by placing it within the context of his own "enlightened" surroundings. Thus, in "Candide", Voltaire combines these elements—political, religious, philosophical—into a unified piece of absurd satire which, despite being considered a landmark in Enlightenment literature, is

relentlessly critical of the age in which it was conceived. Characteristics of the genre: Satires typically use sarcasm and ironic or overly dramatic events to expose or criticize someone or something, and Voltaire's "Candide" is no exception. Throughout the book Voltaire criticizes other philosophers from Rousseau to Leibniz. Leibniz in particular is mocked constantly in "Candide", forming the basis of the satirical elements. Voltaire's satire contains a strong sense of witful irony and parodies meant to elicit disgust at the topics he is criticizing. "Candide's" sense of satire is largely derived from the Juvenalian satire which was created by the Roman satirist Juvenal. By using absurdist and ironic images of characters, satirists intend to invoke disgust or laughter at a topic to the point where it is rejected a legitimate. Thi is the point with Voltaire's mockery of optimism in "Candide".

Plot Summary: "Candide" is a tale told in a fast-paced series of episodic adventures. The opening chapter establishes the Edenic innocence of the background in which the protagonist, Candide, is raised. Leading a privileged, isolated existence in a Westphalian castle, Candide finds himself in love with Cunegonde, daughter of the Baron of the castle. He is also eagerly indoctrinated with Leibnizian optimism by his tutor, Pangloss, who, in turn, is in love with Paquette, the chambermaid of the castle. After openly showing his affection for Cunegonde, Candide, not being of noble enough blood, is promptly expelled by the Baron, and involuntarily sets out upon his own into the world. Candide's first major adventure is his unintentional recruitment into the Bulgar army, which exposes him to the terrors of physical and sexual abuse, as well as the shocking violence of warfare. After managing to escape the army, Candide comes across a kind Anabaptist,

Jacques, as well as Pangloss, who has been rendered syphilitic due to an earlier encounter with Paquette.

The three sail to Lisbon, where a sudden storm, earthquake, tsunami, and fire result in the death of tens of thousands, including the good-natured Jacques. The next day, Pangloss and Candide are arrested and tortured by the Inquisition for heresy in an "auto-da-fe". Candide witnesses the hanging of Pangloss, but is saved from a similar fate by another sudden earthquake, after which he escapes to the home of a welcoming old woman. Candide discovers, much to his surprise, that Cunegonde is living in the same home, but has now become the sexual property of a Jewish merchant and a Grand Inquisitor. Shortly thereafter, Candide ends up quite unexpectedly murdering both men. The old woman, Cunegonde, and Candide then flee to Buenos Aires. There, Candide discovers that he is being pursued for the murder of the Grand Inquisitor. He makes an escape to Paraguay with his servant, Cacambo, leaving the old woman and Cunegonde behind. After a further series of absurd adventures in rapid succession, Candide and Cacambo accidentally find themselves in the land of El Dorado, a hidden utopia of immense wealth and happiness.

Though the two are safe and provided with great luxuries, Candide still views himself as incomplete without Cunegonde, and leaves with Cacambo one month later. The two make their way to Suriname, where they part ways. Candide asks Cacambo to retrieve Cunegonde in Buenos Aires, while he makes his way to Venice to await the two. For his voyage, Candide hires a scholar, Martin, to be his companion. Martin, a Manichaeian, discusses

philosophy during the journey with Candide, who still remains an optimist at heart. After several satirical European adventures, the two arrive in Venice, where they happen to discover Paquette, who has now become a prostitute, with a monk, Brother Giroflee. Both are miserable with their lives. While Candide and Martin dine with the two of them, Cacambo makes his return, revealing that Cunegonde and the old woman have become enslaved, and now reside in Constantinople. Furthermore, he states that Cunegonde has become dreadfully ugly.

Unshaken, Candide and his companions make their way to Constantinople, where they find the old woman and the ugly Cunegonde. Candide buys their freedom, and marries Cunegonde, though he is quite disappointed by her new appearance. Candide and Pangloss later ask a Turkish dervish, considered the greatest philosopher in the land, why mankind suffers so greatly. The dervish scoffs at what he considers to be a foolish question, and compares mankind to mice on a ship, whose comfort is of no importance. Candide, Pangloss, Cunegonde, Martin, Paquette, Brother Giroflee, Cacambo, and the old woman then purchase a small farm, upon which each works at a specific task. While Pangloss stubbornly maintains his belief in optimism, Candide declares the famous final statement of the novel, “ we must cultivate our garden”.

Describe the author’s style:

In *Candide*, Voltaire uses a quick narrative pace that transitions swiftly from scene to scene, dialogue to action, and from location to location as the story progresses. He also uses allusions to the historical context in which the book

was written, like Christopher Columbus and the new world, plagues and diseases, and El Dorado and alludes to the 7 Year's War, providing not only a political but also social background to the story. This adds to his voice and opinions which are presented through some of the philosophies that the characters claim they adhere to. Through dialogue and some of the actions that the characters take, he is able to incorporate hyperbole and dark humor.

This lends itself to the satire that this novel is, as Voltaire can be very sarcastic and ironic at times when he places characters in absurd situations and makes them react in an unconventional and unorthodox way. His portrayals of religion and philosophy mock the very tenets that they are established upon through the characters that he creates who conventionally are associated with these two areas. His terse statements coupled with the inclusion dialect support the diversity, in terms of geography and culture, present in the book. However, Voltaire presents this diversity more as exotic and foreign. Additionally, through nonsensical statements and logic statements that make little sense, Voltaire adds humor to *Candide*.

An example that demonstrates the style:

“ ‘ Oh, Pangloss, Pangloss! Martin, Martin! Oh, my dearest Cunegonde! What sort of a world is this?’ sighed Candide on board the Dutch ship. – ‘ A very mad and very abominable one,’ replied Martin. – ‘ You have been to England,’ said Candide. ‘ Are they as mad there as in France?’ – ‘ It’s a different type of madness,’ said Martin. ‘ As you know, the two countries are at war over a few acres of snow on the Canadian border, and they are

spending rather more on their lovely war than the whole of Canada is worth. But to say precisely if there are more people in one country who should be locked up than in another is something beyond the limits of my feeble understanding. All I know is that by and large the people we are now going to see are disposed to be very gloomy ' (p. 69).

In this example, Voltaire references Canada, commenting on the colonial struggle in North America at the height of the Seven Years' War and how he considered the battled and ill-defined frontier region a waste of a war over a few square units of area. He adds some comic relief when Martin adds that they are people who ' disposed to be very gloomy', typifying the English people. He brings to light his philosophical musing through the questions that characters ask, especially the consistent ' what sort of a world is this?' type of question that Candide, the main character, has a knack for asking.

Memorable Quotes

Quote:

Significance:

" Thus expelled from the earthly paradise, Candide wandered for a long time, not knowing where he was going, weeping, raising his eyes to the heaven, then turning them frequently in the direction of the most beautiful of castles, containing the most beautiful of baron's daughters; he fell asleep finally in the middle of a field, with no supper, between two furrows; the snow fell in large flakes" (p. 5) This occurs immediately after Candide is exiled from the castle due to his small affair with Cunegonde, daughter of the Baron. This exemplifies the change of setting that is about to occur and the different

types of environments that Candide will be exposed to, as his cushioned life in the 'earthly paradise' is over. Now, he must look elsewhere 'raising his eyes to the heaven', introducing elements of religion. This begins his quest for the truth, essentially an answer to his question of what is optimism and why do humans exist. This shift emphasizes the drastic changes as his food is meager and his comfort has decreased radically, as he assimilates into the wild and is simply trying to survive. This predisposes him to the dangers and evils that he will encounter in the later part of the book.

"Candide obeyed her without question; and although he was bewildered, and his voice feeble and tremulous, and his spine still hurting a little, he described with the most artless simplicity what he had suffered since the moment of their separation. Cunegonde raised her eyes to heaven; she wept at the death of the good Anabaptist, and wept again over Pangloss; after which she spoke as follows to Candide, who did not miss a syllable, even as he devoured her with his eyes" (p. 18) Candide has just been reunited with Cunegonde whom he believed to be dead. He intensively inquires about her survival and for her to tell her tale of escape and tragedy. However, she asks that he tell his story first. He yields to her request immediately. This emphasizes his affection towards her, after being so long apart and after suffering through their own experiences at a distance. His 'voice feeble and tremulous' adds to his surprise of events as he is shaken by the recent turn of events. Again, references to heaven are made which connotes religious involvement.

Her response (i. e. her weeping) shows her good-natured side as she laments the deaths of her friends. After fulfilling his promise, she tells her story with Candide attentive as ‘ he devoured her with his eyes’. Even after telling his gloomy story, Candide cannot help but observe her beauty, lighting up the tone in this particular section. “ ‘ So you would have the effrontery to marry my sister, who has seventy-two quarterings on her coat of arms! I consider it highly presumptuous of you to dare to speak to me of so rash an intention!’ ” (p. 38): The Baron, Cunegonde’s brother, does not approve of Candide’s recent confession and request that he marry Cunegonde. Just a few lines previously, they were speaking on good terms, recounting on their past tragedies and sympathizing with each other.

However, at this juncture, the baron experiences a mood change as he becomes more hostile and becomes offended at Candide’s remark. This is evident in this response, as he describes Candide as ‘ presumptuous’ and accuses him of displaying ‘ effrontery’. The reasoning behind this response is her higher status, incorporating the ideas of nobility and rank into the book. Quarterings here refer the ancestors among the nobility and this response shows how serious he takes it. This terse, scathing remark foreshadows his violent attack against Candide just a few moments later, when Candide is forced to kill him in self-defense.

“ He immediately ordered his engineers to make a machine to hoist these two extraordinary persons up and out of his kingdom. Three thousand skilled engineers worked at the problem, for two weeks, at a cost of a mere twenty million pounds in sterling silver, which is the currency of that country.

Candide and Cacambo were placed in the machine, along with two large red sheep saddled and bridled for them to ride after they had cleared the mountains, plus twenty pack-sheep laden with provisions, thirty more carrying gifts of the richest native workmanship and fifty laden with gold and diamonds and other precious stones. The king embraced the two wanderers tenderly” (50) Candide and Cacambo have requested to leave El Dorado in pursuit of Cunegonde. In response, the king immediately approves of their request and orders his subjects to create a ‘ machine’ that will lead them out of the mountains all the while being escorted with gifts and precious stones. They leave with twenty sheep that carry these lavish items.

This is when they are richest in the book. The last sentence affirms the king’s generosity as he treated them as guests and sets them up with items to be jealous for. The king’s gentility however remains in El Dorado as it is not seen anywhere else in the book. However, even with the new riches, the moment of bliss and wealth is momentary as Candide loses most of his money, with the luxurious life coming to its end once more. “ ‘ I should like to know which is worse: to be raped a hundred times by negro pirates, and have a buttock cut off, and run the gauntlet of the Bulgars, and be flogged and hanged in an auto-da-fe, and be dissected, and have to row in a galley- in short, to undergo all the miseries we have each of us suffered- or simply to sit here and do nothing?’ ” (p. 91) Towards the end of this book, the old woman, who is not given a name, expresses her inquisitives and reflects on her life experiences as a whole, incorporating particularly distressing memories that her companions have made along the way.

In each of the events that she lists, she is referring to people's traumatizing experiences, although they don't seem to have been as affected as one would expect to be. She compares the rapes, the floggings, the dissections, and slavery to lazing around and wonders which one is worse. To an outsider the answer is simple but because of the philosophies that each one contributes, it is not as surprising that she asks this question, as she is the one who has probably suffered the most and yet has found reason to be happy with herself and the world. She ultimately conveys the question that many of them already have and serves to bring it under their scrutiny as it finally has been asked. Each responds differently, with Candide finally finding peace with his work and with himself.

When she becomes lost, Candide searches for her throughout the book Pure, uncultured, victimized

Dr. Pangloss

Candide's tutor, central philosopher

His optimistic philosophy embodies Leibniz's philosophy, which Voltaire satirizes throughout the book Stubborn, unchanging, convinced

Cacambo

Candide's servant

He introduces Candide to various cultures, and accompanies him on his journeys. Loyal, honest, cultured

Martin

Accompanies Candide

Has philosophy opposite to Pangloss

Wise, pessimistic, unwavering

The Baron

Cunegonde's brother

He forbids Candide and Cunegonde to marry due to Candide's low rank in society stubborn, unchanging, amiable

James

Saves Candide and Pangloss from hunger

Being the most kind and selfless character in the book, it is ironic that he should be the only central character to die after saving Candide and

Pangloss divine, charitable, warm-hearted

Pococurante

Italian Senator

He remains unimpressed by anything, and as a philosophy similar to James.

Unimpressed, uncaring, knowing

Major Works Data Sheet Page 6 Setting

Significance of the opening scene

Westphalia: Introduced as the model for perfection in the world and home to the Baron's castle, Westphalia is proven to be susceptible to the world's evils.

El Dorado: Isolated "Garden of Eden", El Dorado is the unattainable perfection which the philosophy of optimism uses to describe the world. The streets lined with gold and jewels, the people content with a just ruler, El Dorado is utopia to the visiting Candide and Cacambo.

Lisbon: Ravaged by an earthquake as soon as Candide arrives, Lisbon is hell for Candide as he is nearly roasted and Pangloss hanged. Lisbon serves as Candide's driving force towards the New World.

Holland: The place where Candide recovers from his troubles as a conscript at war, Holland reunites Candide with Pangloss and is generally a good place for Candide, despite the bad news of Cunegonde that he receives there.

Venice: Described as a "free state" by Candide, Venice is the vacation spot for deposed kings and is yet another place where aristocracy is worthless.

Paris: A cruel and bewildering place, Paris swindles Candide out of part of his treasure and is the place he hates the most, despite not being in direct mortal danger.

New World: The New World is anticipated as being a place of grand opportunity, as a haven for people escaping less-than-ideal pasts, but ends up being just as brutal and unforgiving as the 'old world', and far more strange. Candide can't escape his past wherever he goes-when he volunteers for the Jesuit army in the New World, he encounters Cunegonde's brother, who he kills for ridiculing his dream of marrying Cunegonde.

Constantinople: The location where Candide is reunited with Cunegonde, Constantinople is Candide's finish line both in his quest and his philosophical dealings. It is here he decides to cultivate his garden and take life into his own hands.

The opening scene introduces the characters of the Baron, Candide, Pangloss, and Cunegonde. Apart from introducing these characters as residents of the Baron's castle in Westphalia, the opening scene also introduces the absurd philosophy of optimism by describing how Pangloss teaches Candide that everything was made for the best; noses being made for glasses and legs for pants. This philosophy will stick with Candide as he is promptly kicked out of the castle for kissing Cunegonde, an act which was preempted by Pangloss' "experiments" on Paquette, the chambermaid. These actions will lead directly to the twists and turns, along with the shocks, that Candide will encounter in his journey to re-embrace Cunegonde. Old AP Questions

Significance of the ending/closing scene

80, 86, 87, 91, 95, 96, 04, 06, 10

In the final scene, Candide is reunited with Cunegonde and the old woman, only to find that Cunegonde has turned ugly but still intends to marry her but only to spite her brother. Her brother, the Baron, refuses to consent to their marriage so Candide, with the approval of all his companions, sends him back to the galleys from where Candide recently bought his liberty. At this point, his life becomes calm and more philosophical musings take place in his garden. He seeks out the opinion of a dervish, a great philosopher from Turkey whose response to the question about why was man created is to "keep your mouth shut", promptly shutting the door in their faces. He receives more opinions from another Turk who claims that the three greatest evils are "boredom, vice, and necessity". Candide and Pangloss are left to contemplate these answers. The ending scene shows that the characters,

<https://assignbuster.com/major-work-data-sheet-candide-essay-sample/>

mainly Pangloss and the old woman, still remain philosophical and question life. The old woman asks whether boredom is worse than the terrible things that have occurred to them.

Pangloss reflects on their happenings and maintains his optimistic mood by claiming that if Candide hadn't gone through all of that he wouldn't be "sitting here no eating candied citron and pistachios" to which Candide replies "but we must cultivate our garden". This last line of the play reflects Candide's change to a more apathetic state of mind, as he focuses on himself and doesn't try to uphold optimism. This ending brings everything back to the beginning, as Candide spent time in the garden and in the end, he still remains in one. His journey has made him a more knowledgeable person, as his experiences change his attitude towards philosophies and now focuses on the present and his work. Themes

Symbols/Motifs

Imperfection of life: Candide's belief in the philosophy of optimism quickly fades with each horrible event which occurs around him, leading to his belief that utopia is unattainable. This realization of life's true nature will lead to his cultivation of his garden at the end of the novel as a way of doing the best with what he has.

Worthlessness of aristocracy: Aristocracy is mocked throughout "Candide" as worthless. The Baron's nobility is unable to save his family from a grotesque rape and slaughter at the hands of the Bulgars and the 6 kings whom Candide runs into in Venice all being deposed. That Candide was able

to give more money to one of the kings than the other five combined shows their true worth.

Corruption of Money: Money is a corrupting factor in “Candide”, Candide is constantly being swindled by captains, people claiming to be Cunegonde, and even taken advantage of by people he believes he can trust. It is this presence of greed, where anyone can be bought off, that makes Cacambo’s loyalty so important.

Hypocrisy of Religion: Religion and religious figures in “Candide” are shown to be extremely hypocritical and downright evil. Whether it’s the Grand Inquisitor who intends to kill Candide and exploit Cunegonde or the Franciscan priest who picks up prostitutes on the side, religious figures in Candide lack any morals in their worldly dealings.

Shortcomings of philosophy: The philosophy of optimism and philosophy in general are shown to be unhelpful in dealing with the problems of Candide’s world. Philosophy is unable to stop or explain the earthquakes, murder, and suffering of the world. Candide’s realization of this will lead to the cultivation of his garden at the end of the book in order to do something for himself.

Wastefulness of War: War is described as brute raping and pillaging, having no redeeming qualities and only leaving pain and suffering in its wake. It is thus a wasteful folly which has no upsides as the destruction of an Abhar castle by Bulgars only leads to a retaliatory strike which only leaves all sides in an immoral mess. **El Dorado:** The utopia which the philosophy of optimism strives for, El Dorado is perfect to outsiders but a simple society to its

residents. That El Dorado's circumstances are only achievable in complete isolation shows the unachievableness of such a utopia in the modern world. A physical throwback to the Garden of Eden.

Paris: The embodiment of vice and greed, Candide and Martin only find swindlers and corruption in their visit to Paris. Candide is vocal about his distaste for the city.

Baron's Castle/Westphalia: A representation of what Candide and philosophers like Pangloss would deem their Garden of Eden, nothing more than a result of the ignorance to the outside world while also being susceptible to the world's dangers.

Candide: A young rosy chap, Candide is ignorance and bliss in one. His willful submission to optimism and his disenchantment with it represent the perils of the everyday man.

Pangloss: A caricature of Voltaire's contemporaries, Pangloss is used as a strawman to which Voltaire can attack in a satirical manner and mock the philosophical belief of optimism.

The Garden: Actual garden in which Candide and the main characters find themselves in at the end of the novel, represents the real world and the middle ground between the impossible El Dorado and the mirage-like Westphalia. The characters choose to work and embrace life in the garden, as opposed to the bountiful utopia presented in the Garden of Eden.

The Red Sheep: A sign of Candide's optimism after losing most of his fortune, the red sheep is a symbol of his belief that he still has enough left in him to reunite with Cunegonde.

Lisbon Earthquake: A natural disaster of great philosophical importance, the earthquake acts as a challenge to Candide and Pangloss' belief in cause and effect. Their near deaths as a sacrifice to God to prevent another tremor shows the lack of rationalism in the universe which they so ascribe to.

Paquette: A transmitter of syphilis, Paquette acts as a contrasting figure to Cunegonde due to her looseness and keeping of her beauty, not to mention her perceived greed by Candide.

Old Woman: The daughter of a Pope, the old woman acts as a vessel of suffering in "Candide" and opens the eyes of Candide to the suffering of the world, or as Michael Wood puts it "the worst of all personal worlds".

Cunegonde: The "pure" maiden whom Candide strives for, she is only pure in personality and her ugly looks at the end of the novel put her opposite the character of Paquette.

Deposed Kings in Venice: The 6 deposed kings whom Candide and Martin dine with in Venice symbolize the near worthlessness of the title given to aristocrats.

Venice: The graveyard of deposed royalty.

Sexual exploitation: A recurring image in “Candide”, sexual exploitation is brought up a number of times whether it be the rape and sex slavery of Cunegonde or the prostitution of Paquette.

Suffering: Suffering is a focal image of the novel, brought up time and time again by Candide and other characters, with entire chapters dedicated to the description of a character’s suffering and arguments of who has suffered more.

Disfigured slave: Symbolizes the effects of the needs and carelessness of the Europeans, along with the suffering they bring to the New World.

Pocourante: A man who “cares for little”, the senator seems to represent Voltaire’s embodiment in the novel and takes on a strong distaste of Voltaire’s rivals.