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Music by  
**LEONARD  
BERNSTEIN**

Book Adapted from  
Voltaire by  
**HUGH WHEELER**

Lyrics by  
**RICHARD  
WILBUR**

With Additional Lyrics by  
**STEPHEN SONDHEIM and JOHN LATOUCHE**

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## About *Candide*

The Broadway musical *Candide* translates the biting satirical novel written in 1758 by the great French author, Voltaire, into a hilarious, fast-paced carnival with a powerful message. The composer Leonard Bernstein, the librettist Hugh Wheeler, and the lyricists Richard Wilbur, John Latouche, and Stephen Sondheim have created a brilliant examination of the ironies and paradoxes of eighteenth-century optimism which is as current as next week's edition of *Saturday Night Live* or tomorrow's *Doonisbury*. This timeless tale of a young man grappling with the existence of evil is as relevant to Americans of all ages and cultural groups entering the 21st century as it was to the novel's original audience.

The unfortunate hero Candide, while always yearning for the equally unfortunate heroine Cunegonde, travels at breakneck speed through a world filled with endless misery. His teacher, Dr. Pangloss, repeatedly appears to assure him that each new horror is necessary and natural to the pre-established harmony of the universe.

Voltaire and the creators of the musical manage to keep us laughing, even as catastrophe follows catastrophe. Still, *Candide* is actually one of the most bitter and melancholy tales in literary history. Its true meaning becomes apparent when the laughter ends and Candide discovers that the only road to happiness is through work. His final remark that "we must cultivate our garden" in the face of despair is a statement of immense power with deep implications for our society.

Instead of the false optimism preached by other philosophers of his time, Voltaire celebrated the simple, enduring optimism of the common man. Through Candide's journey we learn hope exists for all of us as long as we perform the rituals and fulfill the responsibilities of our individual lives as effectively as we can.

*Candide* is an often zany and stinging attack on systems of thought and attitudes that separate men from reality and reason. In *Candide*, these systems and attitudes are personified by Dr. Pangloss, who hides truth behind a mask. In our society they are personified by national leaders who gloss over our problems, and mass media which distract us from confronting the truth. As we experience *Candide*, we are reminded that each of us must judge the external world on the basis of experience and reason, come to grips with the reality we discover, and leave our own impression upon it.

## The Characters in *Candide*

DR. VOLTAIRE	}	played by one actor
DR. PANGLOSS		
GOVERNOR		
HOST		
SAGE		

CANDIDE

CUNEGONDE

PAQUETTE

MAXIMILIAN

OLD LADY

BARON

BARONESS

DON ISSACHAR

GRAND INQUISITOR

JUDGE

3 SPANISH DONS

GOVERNOR'S AIDE

SLAVE DRIVER

GERMAN BOTANIST

18TH CENTURY SERVANT; HUNTSMAN; 2 BULGARIAN ARMY RECRUITERS;  
 BULGARIAN SOLDIERS; 2 WESTPHALIAN SOLDIERS; AGENTS OF THE  
 INQUISITION; TOWNSPEOPLE OF LISBON; EXECUTIONERS; PRIESTS;  
 PENITENTS; TOWNSPEOPLE OF CARTAGENA; SAILORS; PIRATES; 2 SHEEP;  
 LION; PYGMY; TURKISH BANQUET GUESTS; SLAVES; ODALISQUES; COW



## Plot Synopsis

As the Overture concludes, Voltaire, a very old man, begins to relate the tale of four young people, Candide, Paquette, Maximilian, and Cunegonde, who live in Westphalia in the castle of the Baron Thunder-Ten-Tronck. The noble Candide is a bastard cousin of the the Baron's, the sexy Paquette serves as a maid to the Baroness, the beautiful Cunegonde is the Baron's virgin daughter, and the handsome Maximilian is her self-centered brother. The four, with the Baron and Baroness, describe their perfect existence ("Life is Happiness Indeed").

Voltaire explains that the four young people are introduced to the realities of Life by the wise Dr. Pangloss. Voltaire transforms himself into Dr. Pangloss by putting on an academic cap and gown. He leads his students into the castle schoolroom where he lectures them on the fact they are living in "The Best of All Possible Worlds." He dismisses everyone but Paquette, insisting she must stay for an advanced physics lesson. As Cunegonde runs off, she observes Pangloss making romantic overtures to Paquette. Pangloss explains he is giving Paquette a lesson in gravity.

Candide appears, chinning himself on a tree branch. Cunegonde joins him. He is madly in love with her. She proceeds to give him an advanced physics lesson and they kiss, happily making plans for their future together ("Oh, Happy We"). They are suddenly interrupted by Maximilian, the Baron, the Baroness, Dr. Pangloss, and Paquette. When Candide and Cunegonde state their intention to marry, the Baron says his daughter cannot marry a bastard and Candide is exiled.

Candide, sorely grieved, sings of his certainty that this awful turn of events is for the best. ("It Must Be So"). Two men trick him into drinking to the health of the King of Bulgaria, stuff him in a sack, and drag him off to the Bulgarian Army.

Bulgarian soldiers enter and rapidly slaughter the Baron, Baroness, and Maximilian. They carry Cunegonde off, kicking. They plan to sell her to the men of their regiment ("O Miserere").

Candide's captors have stopped to rest. He is still in the sack. His captors are shot to death by two Westphalian soldiers.

A Bulgarian soldier brings an abused Cunegonde onstage and leaves her for dead. Cunegonde and Candide (who is still inside the sack), sing of their lost innocence, united in spirit, although many miles apart. (Reprise: "Oh, Happy We").

Dr. Voltaire explains that Candide was next released from the sack by a band of strolling players and abandoned in Holland. Cunegonde moved from brothel to brothel until she caught the attention of Issachar, a very wealthy man in Lisbon, and the Grand Inquisitor who now share her pleasures. Cunegonde sings of her sordid role in life ("Glitter and be Gay").

A volcano erupts near Lisbon at the same time an earthquake shakes the city. Candide is washed up on the shore of a fishing village. When he suggests that this turn in events casts doubt on the "best of all possible worlds" theory, he is scolded by Dr. Voltaire. Dr. Pangloss appears as a beggar who has lost his nose and several fingers.

He tells Candide of the demise of everyone at the castle and informs him that Cunegonde is raped and dead. Candide is distraught. Pangloss assures him everything that has happened is for best. His words are overheard by an agent of the Inquisition. Pangloss and Candide are arrested as heretics. The Inquisition plans to purge the city of heretics to prevent future earthquakes.

A crowd of happy, excited citizens gather to witness the trials and executions of the heretics. A splendidly attired Cunegonde, and her companion, the Old Lady, watch from a box as the crowd celebrates (“Auto Da Fé”). Candide and Pangloss are tried by the Inquisitor and recognized by Cunegonde. Pangloss is hung and Cunegonde faints as Candide is flogged. The voice of Dr. Voltaire assures him that “from what is worse, what can come but something better?”

The Old Lady blindfolds Candide and leads him to Cunegonde. On the way, he mourns his state (“This World”). The blindfold is removed and he sees Cunegonde (“You Were Dead, You Know”). Both of Cunegonde’s lover visit her while Candide is there. Candide accidentally kills both men. The Old Lady insists that they must flee to Cadiz. She grabs the box of jewels and they escape.

When the jewels are stolen, the Old Lady decides to raise funds by seducing three Old Dons (“I Am Easily Assimilated”). However, they resist her charms and totter away. The gullible Candide is tricked into leading a relief party to rescue the Holy Jesuits of Montevideo from heathen attackers. He is told he will be the captain of a ship that leaves in three hours. Candide, Cunegonde, and the Old Lady celebrate their coming journey to the New World (Reprise: “I Am Easily Assimilated”).

In the New World, the swaggering hot-blooded Governor of Cartagena, Colombia, is considering the purchase of two new concubines. The concubines turn out to be Paquette and Maximilian, now dressed as a female. The Governor rejects Paquette and selects Maximilian, for whom he expresses a strong attraction (“My Love”). Over Maximilian’s objections the Governor summons a priest to marry them. During the vows he discovers his “bride” has two pineapples stuffed in his shirt. The Governor orders him hung, but the priest offers to buy Maximilian for his Holy Fraternity.

On board ship, Cunegonde confesses her growing doubt in the teachings of Dr. Pangloss shortly before the ship is boarded by pirates. They knock Candide unconscious and carry Cunegonde and the Old Lady away. When Candide questions man’s need to massacre, cheat, and murder, Dr. Voltaire’s voice again scolds him.

Candide arrives at the Jesuit’s stronghold where he is joyfully reunited with Paquette and Maximilian who are dressed as monks. When Maximilian learns of Candide’s intention to marry Cunegonde, he assaults Candide, who accidentally kills him. Paquette disguises Candide as a monk and they escape into the jungle.

After weeks of travel, they come upon the utopian city of Eldorado where everything is truly for the best. There is no war, no hunger, and no greed. The people and the

animals are all wise, gentle and articulate. Two talkative pink sheep converse with a peaceful lion to prove the point ("Eldorado"). Candide and Paquette who are dressed in golden robes soon realize they hate peace and solitude. Candide misses Cunegonde. They pack the sheep with gold and jewels and leave.

In the meantime, the Old Lady is abandoned by the pirates and carried off by a Pygmy. The Pygmy sells her to a German botanist who sells her as a Madam of a brothel.

Paquette and Candide travel to Cartagena where they find the Old Lady on the street. They buy her freedom and she tells them Cunegonde is in Constantinople. Spying their riches, the Governor offers to sail them to Constantinople on the frigate Santa Rosalia. He rows them to the frigate on a shaky-looking skiff ("Bon Voyage"). The skiff capsizes; Candide, Paquette, and the Old Lady end up on a tiny desert island with a single palm tree. They have lost their sheep and their new fortune. The sheep find them and they all rejoice (Reprise: "Best of All Possible Worlds"). They see a sail in the distance and know they are saved.

They arrive in Constantinople in time to see Cunegonde jump out of a cake dressed as a Muslim slave. Candide and Cunegonde reunite again (Reprise: "You Were Dead, You Know"). He buys her, reserving one bag of gold on Paquette's advice. Then Maximilian, who reappears as a slave, convinces Candide to buy his freedom with the last bag of gold. The Old Lady offers to solve the future for the weary band by leading them to the Cave of a Wise Man.

The Sage turns out to be Dr. Pangloss who prattles on about the meaning of Life. While Pangloss babbles, a stray piece of paper floats into Candide's hand. The paper states that the natural function of man is "to dig, spin, work without regret for yesterday or hope for tomorrow. For Man it is only work that makes life endurable."

Candide says they will buy a farm and cast aside wondering about the meaning of a meaningless world. They will fulfill their natural function working God's earth from dawn to dusk ("Make Our Garden Grow").

A cow appears, as Candide, Cunegonde, and the company in rustic clothes pick up pitchforks, buckets, and other farm implements. The company sings that Eden can't be found; the sweetest flowers and the fairest trees are grown in solid ground. They explain:

We're neither pure nor wise nor good.  
We'll do the best we know.  
We'll build our house and chop our wood.  
And make our garden grow.

As they lift their grateful eyes to God, the cow drops dead of the pox and Dr. Voltaire, back in nightshirt, draws the curtain.



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## **Themes and Topics to Explore**

### **Questions and Assignments**

Our study guide includes a wide-ranging list of themes and topics which are suggested by issues raised in *Candide*..

Avenues for exploring each theme and topic are suggested in the form of:

**QUESTIONS** : Designed to prompt in-class discussions before and after viewing or reading the shows.

**ASSIGNMENTS** : Designed to be researched and written out of class.

## Use of Literary Devices in *Candide*: Satire

The term “satire” refers to a literary work that uses wit to ridicule and expose human folly. When writing satirically, an author tries to improve Man and his institutions by assuming a critical attitude and presenting comments in a clever and humorous context.

The satirist employs a variety of stylistic techniques to create this context. In *Candide*, Voltaire often bypasses logic and appeals to our imaginations by using words in unexpected ways. He uses language ironically, that is, he states something one way, but intends that statement to be understood in an opposite way.

Some of the other literary devices employed in *Candide* include:

**Paradox** – a statement that seems to contradict itself, but in reality expresses possible truth.

**Parody** – something created in a specific style which employs the elements of that style in an exaggerated way to poke fun at that style.

**Understatement** – makes statements less strongly than the facts would bear out.

**Exaggeration** – magnifies beyond the limits of the truth.

**Caricature** – to ludicrously describe a person or circumstance.

**Euphemism** – a figure of speech in which an indirect statement is substituted for a direct one.

### Questions and Discussion Ideas

- In *Candide*, Voltaire employs both mild, good-natured satire and biting, angry, anti-social satire. Identify some of the targets of each type of satire.
- Find examples of irony, paradox, parody, understatement, exaggeration, caricature, and euphemism in *Candide*.
- Who are some of most important satirists of our day?

### Assignments: Research and Writing Projects

- Find examples of irony, paradox, parody, understatement, exaggeration, caricature, and euphemism in the work of contemporary writers.
- Find examples of irony, paradox, parody, understatement, exaggeration, caricature, and euphemism in contemporary films, and print or broadcast media.
- Write about an incident in your life using irony, understatement, and paradox.
- Write a parody of a serious piece of literature or music.
- Write a satirical essay about a social situation which concerns you.

## The Disillusionment of Candide

The disillusionment of Candide is the central theme of the musical.

### Questions and Discussion Ideas

- What is Candide's view of life when we meet him?
- Trace the events in Candide's life that lead to his disillusionment.
- At what point in the story does Candide begin to express doubts about the philosophy Dr. Pangloss has taught him? Does this happen more than once? What is his teacher's response?
- At what point in the story does Candide finally confront reality? Why does it take him so long to do this?

### Assignments: Research and Writing Projects

- Choose a time in your life when you have experienced a sense of disillusionment. Describe how you felt and what you believed before you experienced this disillusionment. Relate the events and circumstances that led to your becoming disillusioned. Describe how you felt and what you did to deal with those feelings. How did the experience change your actions and attitudes?

## Candide as a Novel of Initiation

*Candide* traces a young person's initiation into adulthood.

### Questions and Discussion Ideas

- What does initiation mean?
- Describe the events that initiate Candide into adulthood.

### Assignments: Research and Writing Projects

- Read another novel that describes a young person's initiation such as Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, Salinger's *The Catcher In The Rye*, Conrad's *Lord Jim* or *The Secret Sharer*, Crane's *The Red Badge Of Courage*, Faulkner's *The Bear*, Hemingway's *In Our Time*, or Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*. Compare the initiation undergone by the main character in this novel with Candide's initiation.
- Write about an incident in your life that marked a step in your initiation into adulthood.
- What are some of the formal rituals in cultures and religions around the world that signal a young person's initiation into adulthood? Describe one

of these rituals in detail and explain what each element symbolizes in the young person's journey.

## Images

In *Candide*, Voltaire is concerned with societal leaders who substitute words for facts and images for realities.

### Questions and Discussion Ideas

- What is an image?
- What is a fact? How can we test its validity? Is there such a thing as an absolute fact?
- What are some examples of images we confront every day?
- What are some of the dangers of mistaking images for the realities they represent?
- Many young people in our culture who contemplate suicide report being disappointed with reality. What may cause this? Can you think of a way in which images may play a role?
- Where do our ideas of what is "worth having" in life come from? Where do our standards of "success" come from? How do we determine what a "meaningful" life is?

### Assignments: Research and Writing Projects

- Read Daniel Boorstin's classic work *The Image*. What is Boorstin's definition of an image? What are some of the consequences of our new ability to technologically "reproduce" reality?
- Read Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves To Death*. How does the view of life delivered by our image-dominated media compare with the view of life depicted by the 18th century optimists? How does Postman say we are being endangered by the distractions of the mass media?
- Describe how a national or local leader can gloss over a problem and present a false view of reality to the public. What are the consequences of this action? (i.e. a President denying the existence of a national economic crisis to the public who is enduring it)
- Describe a current film or television program you believe misrepresents reality and paints a falsely positive image or view of a situation with which you are well acquainted.



## Eldorado

Candide finds the Heavenly City of Eldorado. Eldorado is a utopia, a part of the world where everything is supposed to be perfect.

### Questions and Discussion Ideas

- What is Candide's initial response to finding himself in a utopia?
- Why does he decide to leave?
- Do you think Candide is ready to understand the value of a perfect world?
- Do you think anyone can create a perfect world?
- Discuss the possibility that a perfect world would leave no room for any kind of activity and offer only an idle, sterile life. If all human wants and needs were satisfied, would life be at a standstill?
- In a perfect world, what is left to hope for or work towards? Without work, can life have meaning?

### Assignments: Research and Writing Projects

- Research concepts of utopias throughout history.
- Research utopian communities that were established in America in the past. What happened to them?
- Are there any utopian communities in existence today?
- Create your personal vision of a utopia. If you could design the perfect world, what it would be like?
- Read a utopian work such as Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, Plato's *Republic*, Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*, Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backwards*, H.G. Wells's *Modern Utopia*, or B.F. Skinner's *Walden Two*. Describe and critique the nature of the ideal society portrayed in the book.
- Read an anti-utopian novel such as Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* or George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Describe the way the author uses the concept of a new society to expose contemporary problems.

## Voltaire and the Ideas of the Enlightenment

Voltaire was greatly influenced by the major thinkers of the 17th and 18th century.

### Assignments: Research and Writing Projects

- Research the life and ideas of the "fathers" of the Enlightenment, René Descartes, Sir Isaac Newton, or John Locke.

- Research the life of Alexander Pope. Describe the philosophy of optimism as he presented it.
- Research the life of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz. Dr. Pangloss was primarily based on Leibnitz. Point out the actions and words of Dr. Pangloss that illustrate this.
- Research the life and philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Describe his personal struggle with Voltaire.

## 18th Century France

In order to understand the world Voltaire was satirizing, it is necessary to become aware of the nature of existence in 18th century France.

### Assignments: Research and Writing Projects

- What was everyday life like for a person of noble birth, a middle-class merchant, and a peasant in Voltaire's France?
- How were women perceived and treated?
- What religions were practiced? Was there religious freedom?
- Who were the rulers? How were they chosen?
- What were the main social problems of the time?
- What were the main health problems? How long did people live?
- How did people spend their spare time?
- Who was educated? Where did this education take place?
- What kind of clothing was worn? Who made it?
- What kinds of transportation were available?
- What were the books, magazines, and newspapers of that time like? Who read them? Who could read?
- What was family life like?
- What kinds of censorship existed?

## The Lisbon Earthquake

Through the voice of *Candide*, Voltaire asks many questions about the Lisbon earthquake which directly challenge the concept of an orderly universe ruled by a compassionate Divine Providence.

**Questions and Discussion Ideas**

- What natural disasters in recent history are comparable to the Lisbon earthquake?
- Comment on the following explanations of the Lisbon earthquake by Voltaire's contemporaries: 1. Lisbon was being punished for its sins; 2. Lisbon's virtue was being tested; 3. The earthquake was a merely a routine event from the natural order of things.

**Assignments: Research and Writing Projects**

- Describe the Lisbon earthquake. What were its physical and psychological consequences?
- When you hear about a natural disaster, what feelings do you experience? How do you explain their occurrence?
- Does our increased understanding of the physical nature and causes of natural disasters in the 20th century help us to deal with these events emotionally when they occur?

**War**

Voltaire's anti-war views and hatred of the brutality of war are quite prominent in *Candide*. He treats the subject of war ironically by examining the gap between the words used to describe war and the realities of war itself.

**Questions and Discussion Ideas**

- How do acts of war effect the fate of the characters in *Candide*?
- How are words used in our society to create a positive image of war?

**Assignments: Research and Writing Projects**

- Investigate the wars that took place in Voltaire's lifetime in South America, Western Europe, Morocco, and Turkey. What aspects of these conflicts seem to have contributed to his perception of war?
- Investigate the Seven Years War which began in 1756 and was still raging in Europe and the New World when Voltaire wrote *Candide*. What were the historical consequences of this war which Voltaire saw as a hideous crime? What was the impact of the war on the civilian population?
- Using the 1991 war in the Persian Gulf—Operation Desert Storm—or another war of your choosing, contrast the words used by national leaders and programs created by television networks to describe the war with the realities of the conflict itself.

## The Inquisition

Voltaire presents the Portuguese Inquisition in an ironic framework contrasting the supposed virtues of the Inquisition—the redemption of heretics and the protection of divine truth—with the cruelty inflicted on its victims.

### Questions and Discussion Ideas

- What is a heretic? Why are Pangloss and Candide seized as heretics?
- Why is Pangloss sentenced to hang? Why is Candide sentenced to be flogged?
- How else is religion satirized in *Candide*?

### Assignments: Research and Writing Projects

- Research the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions. Describe the causes of the Inquisitions, their nature, and their impact.
- What is an auto-da-fé? What kind of comment are the creators of the musical *Candide* making with their choice of music, lyrics, and point of view for the song “Auto-da-fé”? Think of a comparable song you could create about the crowd response to a contemporary event.

## Picaresque Novels, Travel Novels, and Romances

Voltaire patterned *Candide* after a number of popular literary forms. By writing a narrative novel in which his hero was sent off on a series of startling adventures, he was drawing on the picaresque novel. Since he was writing in an age of censorship, he used fictional characters who travel in far-off lands as a cover for his criticism of contemporary society. He was also influenced by the popular romantic novels which were filled with melodramatic incidents involving the separation of families and lovers, shipwrecks, near-miraculous reunions, and amazing discoveries.

### Questions and Discussion Ideas

- What incident sends Candide off to start his journey? List his startling adventures.
- Trace Candide’s travels. List the places he visits during his journey.
- List the melodramatic incidents which take place in *Candide*.

### Assignments: Research and Writing Projects

- Compare *Candide* to *Don Quixote*, both of which are picaresque novels. Name other picaresque novels.
- A number of travel novels have been used as vehicles for ideas. Compare *Candide* with one of these novels such as Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*.

- Investigate the romance novels popular in 17th and 18th century French literature. Compare their plots with the plot of *Candide*. Compare them with the romance novels popular today.

## **The Meaning of the Garden in *Candide***

At the end of *Candide*, Candide and his friends vow to make their “garden grow.”

### **Questions and Discussion Ideas**

- What does this statement mean? Does it suggest that the characters think we should all withdraw from the world pessimistically? Does it advocate a rustic life lived in an actual garden?

### **Assignments: Research and Writing Projects**

- Write an essay discussing the possibility that the “garden” could be any kind of realistic, positive, or productive activity.
- Discuss the possibility that Voltaire meant the concept of the “garden” to represent any effort with direct social purpose that better the environment. What kinds of activities might fit this concept today?
- Discuss the possibility that “garden” is another way of describing an environment where creative activity takes place.

## **The Responsibility of Social Critics: Voltaire’s Legacy**

Many critics feel that the solutions Voltaire offers for the problems he presents in *Candide* are not adequate.

### **Questions and Discussion Ideas**

- Voltaire criticized institutions including the church, the state, and war as irrational, sometimes cruel, and useless. He also criticized unjust laws as well as philosophy and popular concepts about love. Do you feel such criticisms are justified today?
- Did Voltaire have a social responsibility to offer specific solutions to the problems he raised?

### **Assignments: Research and Writing Projects**

- If one finds fault with society, one may either resign oneself to those faults, fight to correct those faults, or leave society. Which of these solutions would you choose?

- Critics suggest that the writings of Voltaire and the other *philosophes* may have been a major force in causing the French Revolution and a cause of its failure as well. Although they inspired their followers to achieve reform through revolt, the *philosophes* did not provide workable alternatives to the institutions they sought to destroy. As a result, attempts to reconstruct life after the revolution ended with the despotism of Napoleon and a return to the old regime after his defeat. Investigate this period of French history and see if you agree.
- What are the responsibilities of a social critic such as Voltaire for the actions that are taken as the result of his criticism?
- Can you find other examples of fiction writers whose works have had great impact on subsequent history?

## Book Banning

*Candide* was banned in Switzerland and copies of it were burned publicly.

### Questions and Discussion Ideas

- What do you think leads people to ban or destroy books?
- Why would *Candide* have incited this kind of behavior?

### Assignments: Research and Writing Projects

- Investigate the circumstances under which *Candide* was banned.
- In what other periods of world history have books been banned or destroyed?
- In what periods of American history have books been banned or destroyed? Can you find any recent examples? What kinds of books have been banned? Why?
- How do you feel about the banning and destruction of books?

## Quick Takes: Additional Projects for Discussion or Writing

- *Candide* is an allegory. What is an allegory? Name other famous allegories?
- What is Voltaire's attitude toward human nature in *Candide*?
- What is Voltaire's attitude toward civilization in *Candide*?
- List the beliefs, institutions, and people Voltaire satirized in *Candide*.
- How does Voltaire combine wit and deep seriousness in *Candide*?
- Was Voltaire attacking philosophers or a philosophy in *Candide*?
- Does Voltaire believe humans are inherently evil?

- Compare the philosophies of Dr. Pangloss and Candide at the end of *Candide*.
- Candide frequently rationalizes, inventing plausible explanations for things that have other causes. Do you ever rationalize? Why?
- Candide and Pangloss often have different perceptions about events. They see the same thing but understand it differently. Has this ever happened to you? How is this possible?
- If a teacher or leader gives a student or follower bad guidance and the student or follower accepts it blindly, who is responsible for the consequences that may result?
- Why do you think Candide is less physically marred by his misfortunes than his companions at the end of the play?
- Describe the way in which Cunegonde's character changes and develops in the course of *Candide*.
- Write an essay on the universality of *Candide*.
- Select a specific period in human history and show the relevance of *Candide* to that period.
- Show the relevance of *Candide* to the present.
- How are women treated in *Candide*? How do women tend to survive? Does anyone respect their minds? Who usually finds a way out of the group's problems—the male or female characters?
- Why do you think the authors of the musical ended the show by having the cow die from the pox? What message does that action suggest?
- Write a story describing what happens to the main characters in *Candide* after the curtain falls.

## Transferring a Literary Classic into a Musical Form

Read Voltaire's *Candide*.

### Assignments: Research and Writing Projects

- Compare the overall experiences of reading the novel and seeing the musical version of *Candide*. What were the strengths of each experience?
- Which episodes in the novel were not in the musical? What was the impact of their absence on the meaning of the story?
- Which characters in the novel were not in the musical? Why do you think they may have been left out? Were they necessary to the story?

- If you could add one episode from the novel to the musical, which one would you choose? Try to write dialogue for that episode. Would it include a song? Why?
- If you could add one character from the novel to the musical, who would it be? When would you introduce him/her? Describe his/her role in the plot. Would the character sing?

## The Role of Music and Lyrics in *Candide*

Songs are an important part of the satirical style of the musical *Candide*.

### Questions and Discussion Ideas

- Would *Candide* have been as effective without music? What kind of story do you think is better told with music? Is *Candide* that kind of story? Why?
- How does the style of the music and lyrics contribute to the meaning of the musical *Candide*?
- In what specific ways do the music and lyrics offer another layer of meaning or subtext to the elements of Voltaire's tale?
- Would *Candide* work with contemporary pop music score? Why? Why not? What styles of pop music would you use?

### Assignments: Research and Writing Projects

- Select one of the following songs:

"Life Is Happiness Indeed"  
 "The Best of All Possible Worlds"  
 "Oh, Happy We"  
 "It Must Be So"  
 "O Miserere"  
 "Glitter and Be Gay"  
 "Auto Da Fé"  
 "This World"  
 "You Were Dead, You Know"  
 "I Am Easily Assimilated"  
 "My Love"  
 "Eldorado"  
 "Bon Voyage"  
 "Make Our Garden Grow"

1. Summarize the contents of the song. Discuss:
  - a. What do we learn about the world in which *Candide* takes place from this song?
  - b. What do we learn about the character or characters who sing the song and their personal philosophies or feelings about other characters?



- c. What do we learn about the larger themes of the show from the song?
- Can you think of another place in the show where a song might fit? What would a title for the song be? Who would sing it? What would it be about? Try to write a few lines of the song lyric.

## Free Adaptation

### Assignments: Research and Writing Projects

- Using the basic story of a young person setting off into a hostile world to discover the meaning of life as a starting point, outline your own musical. Set your story in the present, at any time in the past, or in the future. Set it anywhere in the world or in another universe. Invent a new set of parallel characters who belong to any groups of your choosing. Who are Candide and Cunegonde in your new world? Who is Dr. Pangloss? Is he a teacher or national leader or possibly a media figure? Who are the Baron and Baroness? Who are Paquette and Maximilian? Reverse the genders of some of the characters if you wish. Could Candide be a woman in your new world?

What “dangerous” lessons are your characters being taught? How are their reasoning powers being numbed? What evils do they confront—what is the nature of war, religious persecution, disasters, human greed, piracy, and cruelty in your new world? What is the vision of utopian perfection or Eldorado? What lesson will your characters learn at the end? How will they act upon it?

What kind of music would your characters sing as a result of your choices? How would their music be influenced by your new cultural setting? Would the characters dance? Why and how? If you wish, write some dialogue for your characters. Try to write one of the musical episodes.

Tell a story that *you* need to tell *now* about searching for meaning in the midst of a seemingly meaningless world.

## Critical Analysis

### Assignments: Research and Writing Projects

- Write a review of a performance of *Candide*. You may wish to include any combination of the following elements in your review.
  1. Did *Candide* hold your interest? Why?

2. Describe the manner in which the story was presented to the audience? Was there a narrator? What was the dialogue like?
3. Describe the structure of the story. Was there a single story or were there multiple stories? How did the multiple stories connect? Was anything about the story unexpected? How did it begin and end?
5. Describe the way music and lyrics worked in the show.
6. Describe the sets, costumes, lighting, and musical accompaniment. How did these elements add to the meaning of the show?
7. Discuss the effectiveness of the performers.
8. Discuss the ideas presented in the show. Analyze their importance today.
9. Explain why others should make an effort to see the show.

## Appendix

The following background material on the creative team who wrote the musical *Candide*; the historical background of *Candide*; Voltaire; utopias; and a resource list are designed to enrich your exploration of the Themes and Topics.

### About the Creators

**LEONARD BERNSTEIN (Composer)** A well-known figure in contemporary music, Leonard Bernstein was considered one of the most talented composers and conductors of his generation. He was also a pianist, lecturer, television personality and author. He was the first American to serve as musical director and conductor of the New York Philharmonic (1958-1969); in 1969 he was appointed conductor laureate of the orchestra for life. His major works include three symphonies: *Jeremiah*, *The Age of Anxiety*, and *Kaddish*; three ballets, *Fancy Free*, *Facsimile*, and *Dybbuk*; a choral work, *Chichester Psalms*, and *Mass*. His Broadway musicals include *On the Town*, *Wonderful Town*, *Candide*, and *West Side Story*. Bernstein's operas include *Trouble In Tahiti* and its sequel, *A Quiet Place*.

**HUGH WHEELER (Librettist)** In addition to writing the librettos for *A Little Night Music*, *Sweeny Todd*, and *Candide*, Hugh Wheeler wrote a new adaptation of Kurt Weill's opera *Silverlake*, which Harold Prince directed for New York City Opera.

**RICHARD WILBUR (Lyricist)** One of the most highly praised poets of his generation, Pulitzer Prize-winner Richard Wilbur is noted for his craftsmanship and linguistic grace. His witty verse translations of Moliere's *The Misanthrope* and *Tartuffe* enjoyed successful Broadway runs and were critically praised.

**JOHN LATOUCHE (Lyricist)** John Latouche wrote the lyrics for *Cabin In The Sky*, *Banjo Eyes*, *The Lady Comes Across*, *Rhapsody*, *Polonaise*, *The Littlest Revue*, and *Candide*. He wrote both book and lyrics for *Beggar's Holiday*, *The Golden Apple*, and *The Vamp*.

**STEPHEN SONDHEIM (Lyricist)** One of Broadway's most accomplished and innovative composers and lyricists, Stephen Sondheim wrote the lyrics for *West Side Story*, *Gypsy*, and *Do I Hear a Waltz?* He has written both the lyrics and music for *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, *Anyone Can Whistle*, *Company*, *Follies*, *The Frogs*, *A Little Night Music*, *Pacific Overtures*, *Sweeny Todd*, *Merrily We Roll Along*,

*Sunday in the Park with George, Into the Woods, Assassins and Passion. Side By Side By Sondheim, and Marry Me a Little* are anthologies of his work as a composer and lyricist.

HAROLD PRINCE (Director/Co-Producer) Harold Prince has directed and/or produced 47 musicals, plays, and operas beginning with *The Pajama Game* in 1954. His directorial assignments have included *She Loves Me, Cabaret, Zorba, Company, Follies, A Little Night Music, Candide, Pacific Overtures, Evita, Sweeney Todd, and Phantom of The Opera*. His Tony award for the direction of *Phantom of The Opera* was his sixteenth.

## **The Historical Setting of *Candide*: The Enlightenment**

The intellectual flowering in the 18th century called the “Enlightenment” was the result of Renaissance and Reformation thinkers who rejected the medieval world view. Other important factors that led to the Enlightenment included the growth of nationalism, the rise of the middle class, a new emphasis on individualism, and an increasing reliance on reason rather than belief in the supernatural.

The major thinkers of the 17th century and the fathers of the Enlightenment were René Descartes (1596-1650), Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), and John Locke (1632-1704).

The four major beliefs of the Enlightenment were trust in reason, disbelief in original sin, the infallibility of scientific laws, and trust in the simple and natural methods and ways of life. The thinkers of the Enlightenment believed that Man was capable of understanding the universe and that perfect knowledge was within their grasp. Through the use of reason, Man would uncover the laws set down by God. Each encounter with suffering was seen as a chance to use reason to bring order, progress, and happiness to Man. The Enlightenment was highly optimistic about the future.

## **The *Philosophes***

The ideas of the Enlightenment were spread by a group of men known as the *philosophes*. They included Locke and Hume in England; Franklin and Jefferson in America; and Leibnitz in Germany. French *philosophes* included Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, and Turgot.

The *philosophes* were both original thinkers and popularizers of an intellectual doctrine. They brought their thinking to the middle-class using the emerging media, newspapers and magazines. Since the evolving merchant class could not rely on noble birth as a source of status, they relied on their minds instead and were receptive to new thinking. The ideas of the *philosophes* were most widely spread in France and America. The French and American Revolutions were largely led by *philosophes*.

Some *philosophes* preached revolution, some preached gradual change, and some insisted that there were no problems. The model for Dr. Pangloss, Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibnitz (1646-1716), and his followers were part of this third group. They believed that all that happened was part of God's world-plan. As part of this plan, progress is assured; all that happens is for the best; and perfection is within the reach of anyone who harmonizes his actions with the laws of God. Leibnitz and his followers were obviously not reformers. Consequently they were the target of the *philosophes* who preached revolution and reform; their most savage and biting critic was Voltaire.

## Voltaire

Voltaire, whose real name was Francois Marie Arouet, was born in Paris on November 21, 1694, and he became the most significant force in the French Enlightenment. His writings filled over seventy large volumes. While he was considered by his contemporaries to be the finest poet and dramatist of his time, he is now better known for his prose works. He greatly influenced the most influential writers, philosophers, and politicians of his day.

A precocious wit and satirist, Voltaire was devoted to opposition. Above all, he was a *philosophe* who fought for reform. His ideas were expressed in his poems, tracts, pamphlets, and tales.

Voltaire's father was a middle-class lawyer who had a number of prominent clients. Voltaire's mother died when he was seven years old and his father raised him in an authoritarian environment, educating him in strict Jesuit schools. He was a sickly child and was plagued by illness throughout his life.

Voltaire resisted his father's effort to make him become a lawyer and spent much of his time with freethinkers who attacked religious and social customs. He was expelled from Paris for writing satires about the state. He spent a year in prison at the Bastille (1717-18) for writing satiric verses about the Duke of Orleans, then Regent of France. It was at this time that he took the name, Voltaire.

Upon his release, he enjoyed a successful career as a writer and moved in the upper levels of society. He wrote his first successful play, "*Oedipe*" at the age of 24 in 1718. Although he was soon considered an important playwright, he never forgot his role as critic, using his wit to attack the clergy, kings, and other authority figures. He was imprisoned in the Bastille a second time in April, 1726 by the Chevalier de Rohan-Chabot.

After leaving the Bastille the second time, he was exiled from France. He spent three years in England where he admired the more democratic form of government and took advantage of free speech to publish his *Letters to the English Nation*, an indictment of French social abuses. As a result, he was banished from Paris upon his return to France.

He shocked society by living openly with his mistress, Madame de Chatetlet, and her husband at their estate in Cirey in Lorraine from 1734 to 1744. While both Voltaire and Madame de Chatetlet initially supported the beliefs of the popular philosophical viewpoint of the 18th century called "optimism," he eventually turned against it.

Voltaire's relationship with King Louis XV worsened as his pen grew more satirical at the King's expense. He lived for a time at the court of Frederick the Great of Prussia, but left in 1753 when Frederick grew increasingly tyrannical. He exiled himself at a lakeside chateau in Geneva, Switzerland.

He took up his pen against the optimists using the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 as his primary argument to prove that all is not well in this best of all possible worlds. He entered into a dispute with Jean-Jacques Rousseau about the meaning of the earthquake and the two became bitter enemies.

## **Voltaire and *Candide***

When Voltaire wrote *Candide* in 1758, he was 64 years old. He was at height of his literary powers and *Candide* was his most successful act of opposition.

In *Candide*, Voltaire mocked "optimism", particularly as it was advanced by the English poet Alexander Pope, Leibnitz, and Rousseau.

Pope advanced the theory that the world is planned by God in the best possible way for nature and life. He and his fellow optimists believed that the universe is essentially in harmony. In their view, evil that may befall an individual contributes to the universal good and is part of God's fundamental plan. According to Pope, "whatever is, is right."

Leibnitz began with two main assumptions: (1) God is good; (2) of all the possible worlds which God could have created he must therefore in creating this one have created the best. Leibnitz did not suggest that the world was free of defects. Rather he felt that evil was inevitable in the moral scheme of things; that everything had its cause or "sufficient reason." Rousseau added the notion that the origin of moral evil is found in man's free will rather than the order of the universe.

Voltaire had long seen optimism as a dispiriting and fatalistic philosophy used to justify the status quo. He felt it made people unwilling to face facts and destroyed hope. By creating a portrait that combined most of the ills that beset mankind, Voltaire depicted a world in *Candide* that was in sharp contrast to the optimists' view of the "best of all possible worlds."

In addition to satirizing his philosophical opponents, his numerous personal enemies, and human frailty and evil in general, Voltaire also satirized the unreality and exaggeration of popular romance in 17th and 18th century French literature. The

shipwrecks, kidnappings by rival suitors, attacks by pirates, sudden and unexpected recognition scenes in *Candide* were borrowed directly from romantic adventure novels. Voltaire hurries his central figures through a series of such encounters so quickly that minor characters are often established in a single phrase, situations are presented in a few sentences, and journeys accomplished at a furious pace.

Voltaire was reported to have written *Candide* in four days. He published *Candide* with the inscription, "translated from the German by Dr. Ralph." He wrote to his friends denying he had written the novel and asking "what sort of work is this *Candide* of which it is said it is a scandal to sell it? I might like to have it. Couldn't you gentlemen, get me a bound copy? It is said that some people are brazen enough to claim that I am the author of this work, which I have never laid eyes on."

However Voltaire revealed his authorship when the Calvinist leaders in Geneva ordered the book banned and had it publicly burned. He then moved to Ferney, just inside the French border, for safety reasons. Many of the great thinkers of the time visited him at Ferney, where he remained until 1778, when he returned to Paris in triumph.

In his old age, Voltaire did not stop fighting. He attacked the church for its persecution of alleged heretics and disbelievers. To the end of his life, he opposed any act of intolerance or inhumanity that came to his attention.

Voltaire was one of the most prolific correspondents of his day. He left thousands of letters that not only offer insights into his wit, personality, and ideas, but also describe his times.

He died in Paris at the age of eighty-four in 1778.

## Utopias

The word utopia means "no place" in Greek. Utopias are perfect societies where the social, political, and economic ills that plague humanity have been erased. In a utopia, the governing force works for the best interests of all citizens.

Alternative styles of existence described by social thinkers and visionaries have been described as "utopias" since the first use of the word in this context by Sir Thomas More in 1516. In his work *Utopia*, More described an imaginary island where social institutions and the life of each individual were ideal.

However, the notion of creating an ideal society had interested authors long before 1516. The Biblical Garden of Eden is a utopian concept. Plato's *Republic* written in the 4th century B.C. is regarded as the greatest example of utopian literature.

Other famous works with utopian themes include Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* in 1627; Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backwards* in 1888; H.G. Wells's *Modern Utopia* in 1905; and B.F. Skinner's *Walden Two* in 1948.

Many attempts have been made to create real communities based on these literary concepts. During the 19th century, experiments with their roots in utopian socialism were begun by the Comte de Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier and Etienne Cabet in France; Robert Owen in England and the United States; and his son Robert Dale Owen in the United States. While all of these utopias were based on the building block of small cooperative communities, they differed significantly in terms of operating philosophies. For example, Fourier believed that these new communities should support themselves through agriculture, while Saint-Simon stressed the importance of technological progress and large-scale economic organization.

Most of the communities did not last long; one of the most successful was the Oneida Community in New York State, which existed between 1848 and 1881. By the middle of the 19th century, more militant movements such as anarchism and Marxism overshadowed the concept of utopian communities as the solution to social problems.

While utopianism is now often viewed as naive and impractical, utopian literature remains a popular and powerful device for exposing contemporary ills. Satiric anti-utopian works which accomplish this goal include Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.



## Resources

### American Musical Theatre History

- Bordman, Gerald. *The American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle*.
- Green, Stanley. *The World of Musical Comedy*.
- Kislan, Richard. *The Musical*.
- Briggs, John. *Leonard Bernstein: The Man, His Work, and His World*.
- Cummins, Paul. *Richard Wilbur: A Critical Essay*.
- Gradenwitz, Peter. *Leonard Bernstein*.
- Lewis, Donald. *Richard Wilbur*.
- Prince, Hal. *Contradictions: Notes on Twenty-six Years In The Theatre*.
- Zadan, Craig. *Sondheim and Company*.

### Voltaire

- Aldington, Richard. *Voltaire*.
- Besterman, Theodore. *Voltaire*.
- Brailsford, Henry N. *Voltaire*.
- Brandes, Georg. *Voltaire*.
- Gay, Peter. *Voltaire's Politics: The Poet as Realist*.
- Maurois, Andre. *Voltaire*.
- Meyer, Adolph. *Voltaire: Man of Justice*.

### Candide

- Aldington, Richard. *Candide, or Optimism*.
- Foster, Milton P. *Voltaire's Candide and the Critics*.
- Wade, Ira O. *Voltaire and Candide*.

## The Enlightenment

Aldridge, A. Owen. *Voltaire and The Century of Light*.

Becker, Carl. *The Heavenly City of the Enlightenment*.

Cobban, Alfred. *In Search of Humanity*.

Durant, Will and Ariel. *The Age of Voltaire*.

Havens, George. *Age of Ideas*.

Torrey, Norman. *Voltaire and the Enlightenment*.

## Utopias

Chianese, Robert L. *Peaceable Kingdoms: An Anthology of Utopian Writings*.

Elliot, Robert C. *The Shape of Utopia*.

Erasmus, Charles J. *In Search of the Common Good*.

Ferguson, John. *Utopias of the Classical World*.

Mumford, Lewis. *The Story of Utopias*.

Parrington, Vernon L. *American Dreams*.

## Satire

Elliott, Robert C. *The Power of Satire*.

Highet, Gilbert. *The Anatomy of Satire*.

Hodgart, Matthew. *Satire*.

## Discography

The followings recordings of *Candide* are available:

Sony Broadway 48017: CD and Cassette

This recording of the production of *Candide* seen on Broadway in 1956-57, is based on the musical score by Leonard Bernstein, a libretto by Lillian Hellman, and lyrics by Ms. Hellman, John Latouche, Richard Wilbur, Dorothy Parker, and Mr. Bernstein. The cast includes Barbara Cook, Robert Rounseville, Max Adrian, and Irra Petina. The conductor is Samuel Krachmalnick.

## CBS Records: CD and Cassette

This complete recording of Harold Prince's 1974 Broadway version based on Bernstein's musical score, with a libretto by Hugh Wheeler and some new lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, is currently not in print.

## New World 340/1: Phonograph record, CD, and Cassette

This New World recording features the New York City Opera version of *Candide* as conducted by John Mauceri. Mauceri, who assembled the score for the 1974 Broadway version of *Candide*, supervised its expansion in 1982 into a two-act "opera house version" which includes music from the 1956 Broadway version restored in a new order and a new context. David Eisler plays Candide.

## That's Entertainment Records TER 1156: CD and Cassette

Recorded excerpts from John Mauceri's Scottish Opera revival of *Candide* in 1988. The libretto of this version, which keeps some features of the 1974 Broadway version and also goes back to the 1956 scenario, is credited to Hugh Wheeler and John Wells. The cast includes Nickolas Grace, Marilyn Hill Smith, and Ann Howard. Conducted by Justin Brown.

## Deutsche Grammophon 429 734: two CDs and two Cassettes

Leonard Bernstein conducted the London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus in a 1989 concert performance of what he called "the final revised version" of *Candide*. This version was essentially based on the Mauceri revision staged in 1988 by the Scottish Opera. Bernstein made a studio recording of this version of *Candide* for Deutsche Grammophon a year before his death. Including most of the music found in previous recordings and much more, it represents his definitive word on the subject of the *Candide* score. The cast, which Bernstein selected, includes Jerry Hadley, June Anderson, Christa Ludwig, Adolph Green, Nicolai Gedda, Della Jones, and Kurt Ollmann. The Deutsche Grammophon recording is accompanied by a booklet featuring the libretto, an essay by Andrew Porter, and a synopsis. It is the only recording of *Candide* conducted by Bernstein and the last recording in which he conducted his own music. A VHS cassette and laserdisc of the 1989 concert performance has also been released by Deutsche Grammophon.

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She has a string of musical lyricist-librettist credits: *On the Swing Shift* (Manhattan Theatre Club), *Heidi* (Theatreworks USA) and *Follow the Sun* (Hudson Guild), among others. She just completed work on *Love Comics*, a musical interpretation of the romance comics of the 1950s and '60s, with David Evans. Ms. Schlesinger is also working on *O'Henry's New York*, as well as writing lyrics for a new musical based on L. Frank Baum's *Queen Zixi of Ix*.

She is also the author of recent non-fiction works published by Random House/Villard, William Morrow, Avon Books and the Princeton Book Company.

The Music Theatre International Study Guides are edited by John W. Lowell. Special acknowledgment to Richard Salfas.