INTRODUCTION TO

Candide

Social, Historical, and Philosophical Context for Voltaire's Text
Baron, gentleman, ruddy-cheeked, desirable, worthy, oracle, faith, instruction, admirably, stupidities, philosopher, obedient, reason, cause and effect, pensive, yearning, knowledge, dreaming, blushed, vivacity, emotion, plump, vigorously, confusion, beautiful, agreeable, possible, castle, province, experimental, sciences

The words above come directly from chapter 1 of *Candide*. Based on these words, what do you think is in store for you with this text?

*Hint: try grouping the words to extrapolate some meaning from the list.*
VOLTAIRE
THE NECESSARY FACTS

- Born Francois Marie Arouet in 1694
- He's French--we're all reading translations
- Pivotal figure of the Enlightenment (more to come on that)
- Bounced back and forth between exile/imprisonment and elbow-rubbing with royalty
- Basically, he had a lot of opinions and couldn't keep his mouth shut
Lived in Ferney (now called Ferney-Voltaire) for the last 20 years of his life--this is where he wrote *Candide* at age 64.

Conveniently close to Geneva allowing him to border-hop when necessary.

Life of controversy included time on the royal court of Louis XV and time in the infamous Bastille prison--at times he was exiled or condemned by government and/or church.

Lived in France as well as England, Holland, Switzerland, and Germany.

Spent his time in later life fighting various social injustices and writing A LOT!
This work is a SATIRE that ridicules a number of different ideas, people, and organizations.

Voltaire published anonymously, but his authorship was soon revealed. Copies were banned by government and the church--this only fueled his popularity.

There are many current event allusions in the book (we'll discuss them as we go).

**Voltaire explores a number of questions in this book:**

- How can one account for all the suffering and evil in this world?

- If the Creator is good and all-powerful, could he not have made a better world?

- If he could, what prevented him from doing so?

- If he could not, can we still believe in him?

- How do we live a fulfilling life in a world with such suffering and evil?
CONTEXT FOR CANDIDE
Enlightenment in Europe

- 1650-1800 (ish)--though it didn't hit France until mid-eighteenth century

- Major Highlights:
  1. Shift toward scientific reason
  2. Shared disgust at feudalistic society
  3. Emphasis on exploration (the New World)
  4. Push toward logic as a means of understanding the universe

- For more information, check out this Sparknotes page: http://www.sparknotes.com/history/european/enlightenment/summary.html
Gottfried Leibniz used logic to form his view on the world:

- All things have a cause and effect. Logically speaking, God must have created (cause) the universe (effect).

- God is all-knowing and perfect.

- God could not create a perfect world because only God can be perfect.

- Evil is necessary in a world with free will. A world without free will would be worse than a world without evil (God knew this).

- Thus, this is the best of all possible worlds.
This theory irked Voltaire, especially when followers of Leibniz diluted his philosophy to something like this:

"In this world, everything is absolutely for the best!"

**This will be the view of Pangloss, tutor in the Baron's castle.**

For Voltaire, a man who had witnessed a lot of pain and suffering (alleged sexual abuse, war, social injustice), this theory was absurd.
The Seven Years War

- Involved all the major European players (mainly Great Britain/Prussia vs. France)
- Fighting took place on many fronts, including North America (French and Indian War)
- British side wins; begins decline of French power
- Estimates of roughly 1 million casualties

**This is the current war when Voltaire is writing this book. The "Abares" are French and the "Bulgars" are Prussian.**
CONTEXT FOR CANDIDE

The Lisbon Earthquake

• 1755 on All Saints Day (religious holiday)
• Estimated 50,000 people killed
• "Optimists" were comforting victims by spreading the good news that all their suffering was for the best.
• Voltaire poked fun at them with jokes like these:
  • Survivors can get their inheritances early!
  • Masons will get rich rebuilding!
  • Animals will grow fat eating corpses of the victims!

**Candide will arrive in Lisbon right after the earthquake and witness the carnage.**
In different countries, but Voltaire focuses on Portugal.
Hundreds of years of religious persecution and forced conversions
*Auto de fe* = "act of faith" = public penance, e.g. burning alive
*Grand Inquisitor* = highest ranking authority in this process

**Candide and Pangloss experience an auto de fe in Portugal after the earthquake. They also meet the Grand Inquisitor who (not-so-shockingly) is a hypocrite.**
TYPES OF SATIRE

**Horatian satire**
light-hearted and funny (LOL humor)

Examples:
1. Dutch guy named "Vanderdendur"
2. German village of "Waldberghofftrarbk-dikdorff"
3. The baron's castle that is grand because of its doors and windows

**Juvenalian satire**
biting and harsh--holds up human follies (foolishness) and ridicules them to provoke change

Examples:
1. Violence and inhumanity of war
2. Hypocrisy of the Catholic Church
3. Sexual exploitation of women
OBJECTS OF SATIRE IN CANDIDE

- Religious persecution
- Hypocrisy in the church
- Human greed
- Idle philosophy
- War
- Nobility
- Sexual violence and exploitation
- Male ego
- Women and their materialism

It's important to approach the text with an understanding of Voltaire's satiric voice. When he trivializes serious events, he is not necessarily saying these things are not important; on the contrary, he is pointing out the absurdity in such an argument.
A FEW QUIRKS...

- Resurrection motif
- Inappropriate sexual relationships (often only suggested, but they are there)
- Hyperbole is everywhere!
- Bizarre situations/reactions may make you wonder if you are reading it correctly--you are.
- Narrative pace moves at the speed of light
- References to "cause and effect" and "sufficient reason" poke fun at Enlightenment thinkers who were all about science
• Candide = Can-DEED, means white, innocent, and naive

• Pangloss = means all-tongue, represents Leibniz and Optimism

• Cunegonde = COON-a-GAWN-da, Germanic name

• The Baron = in chapter 1 this is Cunegonde's father; from chapter 4 on it is her brother

• Jacques (or James) the Anabaptist = Christian who believes in baptism at the time of one's confession of faith (NOT "anti-baptist")

• Cacombo = Cuh-COM-bo, becomes Candide's confidant

• Pacquette = Pah-KET, French name