

Candide Group Work 1 – Chapters 1-4 Have a timekeeper!



1. How does Candide, specifically, end up in the Army? During the Vietnam War (especially towards the beginning, statistics showed that a disproportional number of the American (and South Vietnamese for the that matter) soldiers came from the children of blue collar (make sure you know what this means) workers¹. Additionally, for the first part of that (the Vietnam) War, a disproportional number of combat deaths were suffered by African American soldiers. What, specifically, is the connection between the targets of Voltaire's satire and what happened in Vietnam?

2. On page 23, Candide comments to the two men intent on *shanghaiing* (*kidnapping and placing in military service*) him that he could not comment on the Bulgar King as he'd "never seen him." (23). What does this say about Candide? How is this different than what we learn about the Baron's reputation among the people on the first page of Chapter 1? Remember what Alex said in *Everything is Illuminated* about *meaning what you say and saying what you mean* – connect.

3a. (Lots of Time – Timekeepers) Examine the battle that Candide takes part in (page 25). Specifically, how does Voltaire satirize war (name at least 4 specific targets and explain)? What is the most effective ironic description (give the exact quote) he uses? Explain what makes it so ironic? How are the heroes ironic (*Grendel* anyone?) We are often given descriptions of the horrors of war and atrocities committed

by the *enemy*, but rarely of our own forces. Bring the following two readings: "The End and the Beginning," and Chris Hedges Commencement Speech along with the film, *Everything is Illuminated* into (specifically) your discussion: (you need to get them out (not the movie – I know that) for this).

3b. BIG QUESTION – What makes Voltaire's satirical description of these battles (and also the ease that the combatants switch sides) different? For a further hint think about the attacks against Afghanistan's Taliban regime – a short time ago we supported, armed them and called them heroes for fighting the Russians, later in Iraq and Afghanistan they became our enemy (planning and carrying out the 9/11 attacks). The same thing happened in Vietnam – Ho Chi Minh fought with the U.S. during World War II against the Japanese – shortly thereafter he became our enemy.

4. Find the poem by John Donne in your poetry packet (for *Candide*). What event in Candide's tumultuous life does this poem echo – there is a very specific event that I am talking about here. Think of the choice the men on Donne's burning ship have. How does this poem illuminate the choice that Candide was given? Be specific and thoughtful. Remember as you read chapter

5. How do the questions that Candide is asked upon his arrival in Holland, echo what happens with the two army recruiting men? How do the threats to put him in a reformatory echo what is said (by some) about homeless or poor people today (Barbara Bush commenting on refugees at the Houston Astrodome said that the Hurricane Katrina refugees were better off than they were before the hurricane struck)? How does Candide's initial treatment (including the manure on his head) contradict the ideals professed by his tormentors? How then is it ironic, and be very specific here, that he is eventually saved by James (Jacques in some editions)?

6. Which poem(s) (from your before *Candide*) packet do(es) Candide's treatment initial treatment in Holland most closely echo. Find a quote from the poem(s) and from the novel to back up your answer.

7. Why, in Chapter 4, are Candide's spirits crushed? Why, given what you've read, as well as our discussion in class, does this lead to his questioning of Pangloss (on page 29) on the best of all possible worlds? Use at least 2 quotes (one from page 29) in your answer.

8. How does Pangloss, almost unbelievably, still believe that all is for the best – given what has happened to him?

9. How is James's (Jaques's) opinion on the condition of life quite different than Pangloss's? How does this affect our opinion of him? Of his motives? Look back to the beginning of the book – how is Candide's personality initially described – how does this fit in with James' philosophy? Be specific and be sure to look over what you wrote in your answer to question 4. Which character from *Candide* reminds you the most of Alma (the younger)? Why? Do you remember what Leo said (in *The History of Love*) that for a while he was heading towards becoming the kind of person who "kicked dogs." How is what Candide is – what Leo aspired to keep inside him – compared to the kind of people you meet in Chapter 4 (the dog kickers)?

10. Look at the third stanza of "[As once the winged energy of delight]" by Rainer Rilke² (the 3rd stanza is in the box to the right) – can you connect this "drifting along" to what has (and will – keep this in mind as you continue reading) happened in *Candide*? Of course, be specific in your answer.

From "As once the winged energy of delight"
To work *with* Things in the indescribable
relationship is not too hard for us;
the pattern grows more intricate and subtle,
and being swept along is not enough.

¹

² This poem was in the packet of poems we read before reading *The History of Love*