Francois Marie Arouet de Voltaire was the French author of the novella *Candide*, also known as "Optimism" (Durant and Durant 724). Famous as a playwright and essayist, Voltaire’s *Candide* is the book where he tries to point out the fallacy of Gottfried William von Leibniz's theory of optimism. He uses satire, and techniques of exaggeration to contrast highlight the evil and brutality of war and the world in general when men are meekly accepting of their fate. Leibniz, a German philosopher and mathematician of Voltaire's time, developed the idea that the world they were living in at that time was "the best of all possible worlds." This systematic optimism shown by Leibniz is the philosophical system that believed everything already was for the best, no matter how terrible it seemed. In this satire, Voltaire also used contrast in the personalities of the characters to convey the message that Leibniz's philosophy should not be dealt with any seriousness.

Leibniz, sometimes regarded as a Stoic or Fatalist because his philosophies were based on the idea that everything in the world was determined by fate, theorized that God, having the ability to pick from an infinite number of worlds, chose this world, "the best of all possible worlds." Although Voltaire chose that simple quality of Leibniz's philosophy to satirize, Leibniz meant a little more than just that. Even though his philosophy stated that God chose "the best of all possible worlds," he also meant that God, being the perfection he is, chose the best world available to him, unfortunately it was a world containing evil. It seems as though Voltaire wanted to ridicule Leibniz's
philosophy so much that he chose to satirize only the literal meaning and fatal acceptance of evil of Leibniz's philosophy.

To get his point across in *Candide*, Voltaire writes a novel about a man by the name of Candide and his struggles with realizing the harsh truths of life. Candide is the son of the Baron of Thunder-ten-tronckh's sister. Candide grows up in the Castle of Westphalia and is taught by Dr. Pangloss, a man that Candide often looked to for insight and understanding. One of Panglos many great beliefs is that all is for the best and that good can be found in everything. Candide fell in love with a girl by the name of Lady Cunegonde who is described as having extravagant beauty.

Candide is abruptly exiled from the castle when found kissing the Baron's daughter, Cunegonde. Devastated by the separation from Cunegonde, his true love, Candide sets out to different places in the hope of finding her and achieving total happiness. On his journey, he faces a number of misfortunes, among them being tortured during army training, yet he continues to believe that there is a "cause and effect" for everything. Candide is reunited with Cunegonde, and regains a life of prosperity, but soon all is taken away, including his beloved Cunegonde. He travels on, and years later he finds her again, but she is now fat and ugly. His wealth is all gone and so is his love for the Baron's daughter. Throughout Candide, we see how accepting situations and not trying to change or overcome obstacles can be damaging. Life is full of struggles, but it would be nonproductive if people passively accepted whatever fate had in store for them, shrugging off their personal responsibility. Voltaire believes that people should not allow themselves to be victims. He sneers at naive, accepting types, informing us that people must work to reach their utopia (Bottiglia 93).
In Candide, reality and "the real world" are portrayed as being disappointing. The only thing that keeps Candide alive is his hope that things will get better. Even though the world is filled with disaster, Candide has an optimistic attitude that he adopted from Dr. Pangloss teachings. In spite of his many trials, Candide believes that all is well and everything is for the best. Candide's enthusiastic view of life is contrasted with, and challenged by the suffering which he endures throughout the book. Voltaire wrote this book in a mocking and satirical manner in order to express his opinion that passive optimism is foolish (Richter 134).

Voltaire's Candide is the story of an innocent man's experiences in a mad and evil world, his struggle to survive in that world, and his need to ultimately come to terms with it. All people experience the turmoil of life and must overcome obstacles, both natural and man-made, in order to eventually achieve happiness. This book is important because it shows us that in the Enlightenment period in Europe, people wanted more rational answers and they were becoming more intellectual. Many books were written and published and even if people could not buy them they could get them at libraries which were new in this period when public life was more important.

In my opinion, one of the major weaknesses of this novel was the fact that it bounced all over the place in such a short time. It was difficult for me to grasp at first but I eventually got used to the style of writing. The book was strong in it's delivery of the message that all people experience tragedy and man was not born to an easy life. I also enjoyed very much how the novel was told in a simple fashion. The novel was interesting and at many times I was eager to find out what happened next.
Candide eventually learns how to achieve happiness in the face of misadventure. He learns that in order to attain a state of contentment, one must be part of society where there is collective effort and work. Labor, Candide learns, eliminates the three curses of mankind: want, boredom, and vice. In order to create such a society, man must do the following: love his fellow man, be just, be vigilant, know how to make the best of a bad situation and keep from theorizing. Throughout the entire book, we observe Candide searching for happiness, sustained by his dream of achieving that happiness. He believes, in his optimistic way, that he will find Cunegonde, his true love, and Dr. Pangloss, his mentor, and all will be well. When Candide is reunited with both he realizes that he was right not to lose hope. In essence, it was Candide's optimism that keeps him from a state of total dejection, maintaining his sanity during troubled times. Candide eventually achieves happiness with his friends in their simple, yet full, lives. The book's ending affirms Voltaire's moral that one must work to attain satisfaction. Work helps Candide overcome his tragedies and enables him to live peacefully and in contentment. The message of Candide is: "Don't rationalize, but work; Don't utopianize, but improve. We must cultivate our own garden, for no one is going to do it for us" (Richter 161).

Works Cited
