An Introduction to the Life and Work of Voltaire
(François-Marie Arouet 21 November 1694 – 30 May 1778),

This is an Introduction to the Life and Work of François-Marie Arouet, born four hundred and eighteen years ago today. He died in May, 1778.

Better known by the pen name Voltaire,

Voltaire bust by Houdon, National Gallery of Washington

this French Enlightenment writer, historian and philosopher was famous for his wit and for his advocacy of civil liberties, including freedom of religion, free trade and the separation of church and state. Voltaire was a prolific writer, producing works in almost every literary form, including plays, poetry, novels, essays, and historical and scientific works. He wrote more than 20,000 letters and more than 2,000 books and pamphlets. He was an outspoken supporter of social reform, despite strict censorship laws and harsh penalties for those who broke them. As a satirical polemicist, Voltaire frequently made use of his works to criticize intolerance, religious dogma and the French institutions of his day.

With Montesquieu,

Montesquieu,

John Locke,
John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Dénis Diderot
and Émilie du Châtelet,
Voltaire was one of the most important Enlightenment figures whose works and ideas influenced intellectuals and activists of both the French and the American Revolutions.

Although he never married, Voltaire loved women and lived with several during his long life, unfazed by public opinion, not worried about scandal.

Born in Paris, the youngest of five children, Voltaire was among the three who survived. Their parents were François Arouet (1650 – 1722), a notary and minor treasury official, and his wife, Marie Marguerite d'Aumont,
Jean-Baptiste Greuze, a student with a lesson book

he was sent to the Jesuit Collège Louis-le-Grand three years later, where he remained till 1711, learning Latin and Greek. Later in life he became fluent in Italian, Spanish and English.

The young Voltaire, Nicolas de Larguillière, 1718

By the time he left school, Voltaire had decided he wanted to be a writer. This was contrary to the wishes of his father, so while pretending to work in Paris as an assistant to a notary, Voltaire actually spent much of his time writing poetry. When his father found out, he sent Voltaire to study law, this time in Caen, but Voltaire continued to write, producing essays and historical studies as well as verse.

Portrait of Voltaire reading,
Voltaire's wit made him popular among some of the aristocratic families with whom he mixed. His father then obtained a job for him as a secretary to the French ambassador in the Netherlands, where Voltaire fell in love with a French Protestant refugee named Catherine Olympe Dunoyer. Their scandalous elopement was foiled by Voltaire's father and he was forced to return to France.

Most of Voltaire's early life revolved around Paris. From early on, Voltaire had trouble with the authorities for even mild criticism of the government and religious intolerance. These activities were to result in numerous imprisonments and exiles. One satirical verse about the Régent thought to be by him led to his imprisonment in the Bastille for eleven months, until the real author came forward. While there, he wrote his first play, “Œdipe”. Its success established his reputation.

Oedipe

The name "Voltaire", which the author adopted in 1718, is an anagram of "AROVET LI," the Latinized spelling of his surname, Arouet, and the initial letters of "le jeune". The name also echoes in reverse order the syllables of the name of a family château in the Poitou region: "Airvault". The adoption of the name "Voltaire" following his incarceration at the Bastille is seen by many to mark Voltaire's formal separation from his family and his past.

Richard Holmes notes that a writer such as Voltaire would have intended it to also convey its connotations of speed and daring. These come from associations with words such as "voltige" (acrobatics on a trapeze or horse), "volte-face" (a spinning about to face one's enemies), and "volatile" (originally, any winged creature). "Arouet" was not a noble name fit for his growing reputation, especially given that name's resonance with "à rouer" ("to be broken on the wheel" - a form of torture still prevalent) and "roué" (a "débauché").

In a letter of 1719, Voltaire concludes by asking that if the recipient wishes to send him a return letter, he do so by addressing it to Monsieur de Voltaire. A post-script explains: "I was so unhappy under the name d'Arouet that I took another..." Voltaire is known to have used at least 178 separate pen names during his lifetime.

After Voltaire retorted to an insult from the young French nobleman, the Chevalier de Rohan in 1725, the aristocratic Rohan family obtained a royal lettre de cachet, a penal decree signed by the French King (Louis XV, in the time of Voltaire) that was often
bought by members of the wealthy nobility to dispose of undesirables. This warrant caused Voltaire to be imprisoned in the Bastille without a trial.
Voltaire's exile in Great Britain lasted nearly three years, and his experiences there greatly influenced his thinking. He was intrigued by Britain's constitutional monarchy in contrast to the French absolute monarchy, and by the country's greater support of the freedoms of speech and religion. He was also influenced by several neoclassical writers of the age, and developed an interest in earlier English literature, especially the works of Shakespeare, still relatively unknown in continental Europe. Despite pointing out his deviations from neoclassical standards, Voltaire saw Shakespeare as an example that French writers might emulate, since French drama, despite being more polished, lacked on-stage action. Later, however, as Shakespeare's influence began growing in France, Voltaire tried to set a contrary example with his own plays, decrying what he considered Shakespeare's barbarities.

Before returning to France in 1729, Voltaire began writing his first two major essays in prose: the “Histoire de Charles XII”; and a book about the English, which is now best known under the title "Lettres philosophiques", but was first published in an English translation (London 1733) as the "Letters Concerning the English Nation".

Because Voltaire regarded the British constitutional monarchy as more developed and more respectful of human rights (particularly religious tolerance) than its French counterpart, the French publication of the "Letters" caused controversy and the book was burnt.

The furore created by the publication of this volume led Voltaire to leave Paris and take refuge in the château of Cirey, located on the borders of Champagne and Lorraine.
Voltaire’s château at Cirey

Château de Cirey

The building was renovated with his money, and here he began a relationship with the Marquise du Châtelet, Gabrielle Émilie le Tonnelier de Breteuil (famous in her own right as Émilie du Châtelet).

Voltaire & Emilie de Châtelet

Cirey was owned by the Marquise's husband, Marquis Florent-Claude du Chatelet, who sometimes visited his wife and her lover at the château. The relationship, which lasted for fifteen years, was as important to them intellectually as emotionally. Emilie was not just a collaborator in Voltaire’s work but often the moving force both as researcher and writer.

On 29 October of this year, Christie’s Paris auctioned a large collection of her scientific works, some of them only found recently. It was a big success, the turnover reaching over €3 m. for 43 lots, sold out of a total of 47.

Collectors and lovers of period books and manuscripts paid tribute to this great woman of science of the 18th century. The centrepiece of the auction, “Abridged Exposition of the System of the World according to Mr Newton’s Principles, corrected by the Marquise du Châtelet”, was sold for nearly a million €, to the Paris Museum of Letters and Manuscripts, where it will be on show from 15 January 2013. The “New Philosophy of Newton to Madame la Marquise du Châtelet”, by Voltaire, sold for €421,000.
Emilie’s Geometry books

The Marquise’s geometry lessons, (estimated between €40,000 and €60,000), sold for €121,000.

From 1734 until Emilie’s death in 1749, the Château de Cirey was Voltaire’s haven from the world.

Château de Cirey c.1734

Jardins à la française – particularly appreciated by Voltaire.

Château de Cirey - gardens

During this period, he studied and wrote intensively in a wide variety of areas, including science ("Eléments de la philosophie de Newton", 1738), poetry ("Le Mondain", 1736), drama ("Mahomet", 1741), and fiction ("Zadig", 1747). (Inspirational to many:

“Zadig et Voltaire”

Having learned from his previous brushes with the authorities, Voltaire tried keeping out of harm's way, and denying any awkward responsibility. He continued to write plays, and
began his long researches into science and history. During the years of his British exile, Voltaire had been strongly influenced by theories of Sir Isaac Newton, especially concerning optics and gravity. (Optics: Newton’s discovery that white light is composed of all the colours in the spectrum led to many experiments at Cirey), and gravity (Voltaire is the source of the famous story of Newton and the apple falling from the tree, which he had learned from Newton's niece in London, and first mentioned in his "Essai sur la Poésie épique".

Although both Voltaire and Emilie were curious about the philosophies of Gottfried Leibniz,

a contemporary and rival of Newton, they remained essentially "Newtonians", despite the Marquise's adoption of certain aspects of Leibniz's arguments against Newton. She translated Newton's Latin Principia in full, adjusting a few errors along the way, and hers remained the definitive French translation well into the 20th century. Voltaire's book "Eléments de la philosophie de Newton", which was probably co-written with Emilie, made Newton accessible to a far greater public. It is often considered the work that finally brought about the general acceptance of Newton's optical and gravitational theories.

In the frontispiece to her translation of Newton, Émilie du Châtelet appears as Voltaire's muse, reflecting Newton's heavenly insights down to Voltaire.
Voltaire's muse

Voltaire and Emilie collected over 21,000 books, an enormous number for the time. Together, they studied these books and performed experiments in the "natural sciences" in his laboratory. Voltaire's experiments included an attempt to determine the elements of fire.

They also studied history—particularly those persons who had contributed to civilization. Voltaire's second essay in English had been "Essay upon the Civil Wars in France". It was followed by "La Henriade", an epic poem on the French King Henri IV, glorifying his attempt to end the Catholic-Protestant massacres with the Edict of Nantes, and by a historical novel on King Charles XII of Sweden.

These, along with his "Letters on England" mark the beginning of Voltaire's open criticism of intolerance and established religions. Voltaire and the Marquise also worked with philosophy, particularly with metaphysics, the branch of philosophy that deals with being, and what is beyond the material realm such as whether or not there is a God, or souls. They analyzed the Bible, trying to assess its validity in their time. Voltaire's critical views on religion are reflected in his belief in the separation of church and state and religious freedom, ideas that he had formed after his stay in England.

In 1743, after several failed attempts, Voltaire was finally elected to the Académie Française. He had turned fifty and was now the leading poet and dramatist of his day; perhaps even he did not imagine that the works which would make him even more famous still lay in the future.

Voltaire had begun a correspondence with Frederick the Great in August, 1736 and had been his guest in Prussia.
Voltaire and Frederick the Great's Sanssouci.

Frederick greatly admired Voltaire and invited him to return to Prussia many times, but the invitation did not include Emilie. Frederick and Emilie did not like each other -- both were competing for Voltaire.

Though deeply committed to the Marquise, by 1744 Voltaire found life at the château confining. On a visit to Paris that year, he found a new love: his niece. At first, his attraction to Marie Louise Mignot was clearly sexual, as evidenced by his letters to her (only discovered in 1937). Much later, they lived together, perhaps platonically, and remained together until Voltaire's death. Meanwhile, the Marquise also took a lover, the Marquis de Saint-Lambert, and, in 1749, died in childbirth of the baby that resulted.
Emilie du Châtelet shortly before her death

Voltaire was devastated by the loss of the woman who had shared his life for so many years and wrote: "I have lost the mainstay of my sad and languishing life… One must suffer and see others suffer, die and see them die. That is our lot."

Voltaire’s relationship with Madame de Pompadour.

Madame de Pompadour, by François Boucher, 1757
National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh

Madame de Pompadour was not of the noble class, but she was extremely talented and could act, dance, sing, and play the clavichord. Her marriage brought her out into society and she became well known as a star of the Paris salons. Voltaire met Pompadour in the homes of friends.
and also attended her salon. He stated that she was "well brought up, amiable, good, charming and talented." In 1744, she caught the eye of King Louis XV and became his mistress. It was at the urging of Madame de Pompadour that the King appointed Voltaire royal historiographer in April 1745, with a salary of two thousand livres per annum and a room at Versailles.

Madame de Pompadour suffered two miscarriages in 1746 and 1749, and she is said to have arranged lesser mistresses for the King's pleasure to replace herself. Louis was devoted to her until her death from tuberculosis in 1764 at the age of forty-two. Voltaire wrote: "I am very sad at the death of Madame de Pompadour. I was indebted to her and I mourn her out of gratitude. It seems absurd that while an ancient pen-pusher, hardly able to walk, should still be alive, a beautiful woman, in the midst of a splendid career, should die at the age of forty."

This brief digression shows how Voltaire could please the ladies as well as benefit from their influence.

We now return to 1750.

After Emilie's death, Frederick offered Voltaire the position of Chamberlain and 20,000 francs a year if he would come to Prussia. Voltaire accepted and spent three years at Frederick's court from 1750 to 1753.

An initially idyllic interlude was enjoyed, and 1752 saw the publication of both "Le Siècle de Louis XIV" and "Micromégas".
Sanssouci, Die Tafelrunde by Adolph von Menzel.

Eventually Voltaire blew it again by his tactless criticism of Pierre-Louis de Maupertuis, president of the Berlin Academy, and found himself to be persona non grata. Frederik accused him of treason and Voltaire fled to Leipzig. His dreams of having found the ideal enlightened monarch were definitively shattered. His correspondence with Frederik, which had begun when the latter was still crown prince, survived; and, after a hiatus, it continued until Voltaire's death. They corresponded on literary and philosophical matters, and Voltaire sent Frederik many of his works in manuscript. Their exchange of more than seven hundred letters remains as an extraordinary literary achievement in its own right.

Geneva and Ferney

Voltaire headed toward Paris, but Louis XV banned him from the city, so instead he turned to Geneva, and bought a large estate nearby, "Les Délices". In 1755, a few months after Voltaire moved in, Mlle Clairon took on the role of Idamé, in “The Chinese Orphan” at the Comédie Française.

Mlle Clairon in the role of Médée

She was very bad tempered but created many great Voltairean roles including “Médée”, “Semiramis”, “Electra”, “Olympia”, etc. Though Voltaire was received openly at first, the law in Geneva which banned theatrical performances and also the publication of "The Maid of Orleans" led him to move after a few years, at the end of 1758, across the French border to Ferney,
Voltaire's château, Ferney, France

where he had bought an even larger estate. Here, Voltaire wrote "Candide, ou l'Optimisme" the following year, in 1759.

Candide

I will talk more about this, his best-known work, presently. Voltaire would stay in Ferney for most of the remaining 20 years of his life, frequently entertaining distinguished guests, like James Boswell,

James Boswell in 1785, Sir Joshua Reynolds, NPG, London

Giacomo Casanova,
Giacomo Casanova, and Edward Gibbon.

Edward Gibbon

In 1764 he published one of his best-known philosophical works, the "Dictionnaire Philosophique", a series of articles mainly on Christian history and dogmas, a few of which were originally written in Berlin.

From 1762 Voltaire began to champion unjustly persecuted people, the case of Jean Calas being the most celebrated.

This Huguenot merchant had been tortured to death in 1763, supposedly because he had murdered his son for wanting to convert to Catholicism.
Death of Calas

His possessions were confiscated and his remaining children were taken from his widow and were placed in a monastery. Voltaire, seeing this as a clear case of religious persecution, managed to overturn the conviction - after Calas’ death - in 1765.

In 1766 Jean-François de la Barre was a young French nobleman, who was tortured and beheaded before his body was burnt on a pyre along with Voltaire's "Philosophical Dictionary". This was not only outrageous to Voltaire but placed him in a dangerous situation, obliging him to flee back to Ferney.

De la Barre

De la Barre is often said to have been executed for not saluting a religious procession, but the elements of the case were far more complex.
De la Barre statues

In France, he is a symbol of Christian religious intolerance, along with Jean Calas, both championed by Voltaire. A street and a statue in Montmartre are named for him. This incident is sometimes thought to have led – eventually – to the separation of Church and State in 1905.

Death and burial

In February 1778, Voltaire returned to Paris for the first time in 20 years, partly to see the opening of his latest tragedy, "Irène". The 5-day journey was too much for the 83-year old, and he believed he was about to die on 28 February, writing "I die adoring God, loving my friends, not hating my enemies, and detesting superstition." However, he recovered, and in March saw a performance of "Irène" where he was treated as a returning hero by the audience.

He soon became ill again and died on 30 May 1778. The accounts of his deathbed have been numerous and varying, and it has not been possible to establish the precise details of what occurred. His enemies related that he repented and accepted the last rites given by a Catholic priest, or that he died under great torment, while his adherents told how he was defiant to his last breath. According to one story, his reply to a priest by his deathbed, asking Voltaire to renounce Satan was, "Now, now, my good man, this is not the time for making enemies."

"I have asked God for only one thing in my life and that is that he should make people laugh at my enemies. And he did."

Voltaire
"I have asked God for only one thing in my life
and that is that he should make people laugh at my enemies.
And he did."
Voltaire

Because of his well-known criticism of the church, which he had refused to retract before his death, Voltaire was denied a Christian burial, but friends managed to bury his body secretly at the abbey of Scellières in Champagne before this prohibition had been announced. His heart and brain were embalmed separately.

Voltaire's tomb in the Pantheon, Paris

On 11 July 1791, the National Assembly, which regarded him as a forerunner of the French Revolution, had Voltaire’s remains brought back to Paris to enshrine him in the Panthéon. It is estimated that a million people attended the procession, which stretched throughout Paris.

The Triumph of Voltaire, Duplessis, Château de Ferney

There was an elaborate ceremony, complete with an orchestra, and the music included a piece that André Grétry composed specially for the event.

A widely repeated story: that the remains of Voltaire were stolen by religious fanatics in 1814 or 1821 during the Pantheon restoration and thrown into a garbage heap is false. Such rumours resulted in the coffin being opened in 1897, which confirmed that his remains were still present.

Writings
(illustrated with paintings by the Swiss painter, Jean Huber,
Voltaire had an enormous influence on the development of historiography through his demonstration of fresh ways to look at the past. His best-known histories are "The Age of Louis XIV" (1751), and "Essay on the Customs and the Spirit of the Nations" (1756). He broke from the tradition of narrating diplomatic and military events, and emphasized customs, social history and achievements in the arts and sciences. The “Essay on Customs” traced the progress of world civilization in a universal context, thereby rejecting both nationalism and the traditional Christian frame of reference.

Influenced by Bossuet's "Discourse on the Universal history" (1682), Voltaire was the first scholar to make a serious attempt to write the history of the world, eliminating theological frameworks, and emphasizing economics, culture and political history. He treated Europe as a whole, rather than as a collection of nations. He was the first to emphasize the debt of medieval culture to Arab civilization, but otherwise was weak on the Middle Ages. Although he repeatedly warned against political bias on the part of the historian, he did not miss many opportunities to expose the intolerance and frauds of the church over the ages. Voltaire advised scholars that anything contradicting the normal course of nature was not to be believed. Although he found evil in the historical record,
he fervently believed that reason and educating the illiterate masses would lead to progress.

Voltaire explains his view of historiography in his article on "History" in Diderot's Encyclopédie:

"One demands of modern historians more details, better ascertained facts, precise dates, more attention to customs, laws, mores, commerce, finance, agriculture and population." Voltaire's histories imposed the values of the Enlightenment on the past, and helped free historiography from antiquarianism, Eurocentrism, religious intolerance and a concentration on great men, diplomacy, and warfare.

Poetry

From an early age, Voltaire displayed a talent for writing verse and his first published work was poetry. He wrote two book-long epic poems, including the first ever written in French, the "Henriade", and later, "La Pucelle", or "The Maid of Orleans", besides many other smaller pieces.

The "Henriade" was written in imitation of Virgil, using the Alexandrine couplet reformed and rendered monotonous for modern readers, but it was a huge success in the 18th and early 19th century, with sixty-five editions and translations into several languages. The epic poem transformed the French King Henri IV into a national hero for his attempts at instituting tolerance with his Edict of Nantes. "La Pucelle", on the other
hand, is a burlesque on the legend of Joan of Arc. Voltaire's minor poems are generally considered superior to either of these two works.

Prose

This satire on Leibniz's philosophy of optimistic determinism remains the work for which Voltaire is perhaps best known.

Many of Voltaire's prose works and romances, usually composed as pamphlets, were written as polemics. "Candide" attacks the passivity inspired by Leibniz's philosophy. In this work, Voltaire's ironic style, free of exaggeration, is apparent, particularly the restraint and simplicity of the verbal treatment. It bears comparison with Samuel Johnson’s “The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia”,

Frontispiece and first page of chapter one of an early English translation by T. Smollett et al. of Voltaire's "Candide", printed by J. Newbery, 1762
often abbreviated to “Rasselas”, an apologue or moral fable about happiness. The book's original working title was “The Choice of Life”. The book was first published in April 1759 in England, four months after the publication of “Candide”, in January of that year.

While the stories are thematically similar —

both concern young men travelling in the company of honoured teachers, encountering and examining human suffering in an attempt to determine the root of happiness — their concerns are distinctly different. Voltaire was very directly satirizing the widely-read philosophical work by Gottfried Leibniz, particularly the “Theodicee”, in which Leibniz asserts that the world, no matter how we may perceive it, is necessarily the "best of all possible worlds", whereas the question Rasselas confronts most directly is whether or not humanity is essentially capable of attaining happiness. Writing as a devout Christian, Johnson makes no blanket attacks on the viability of a religious response to this question, as Voltaire does, and while “Rasselas” is in places light and humorous, it is not a piece of satire, as is Candide.

Candide contains thirty chapters which may be grouped into three parts each comprising ten chapters and defined by locale: 1-10 in Europe, 11-20 in the Americas, and 21-30 in Europe and the Ottoman Empire.

The tale begins in the castle of the Baron Thunder-ten-Tronckh in Westphalia, home to the Baron's daughter, Lady Cunégonde; his bastard nephew, Candide; a tutor, Pangloss; a
chambermaid, Paquette; and the rest of the Baron's family. Candide is romantically attracted to Cunégonde. He is a child of "the most unaffected simplicity", whose face is "the index of his mind". Dr. Pangloss, professor of "métaphysico-théologo-cosmolonigologie" and self-proclaimed optimist, teaches his pupils that they live in the "best of all possible worlds" and that "all is for the best".

All is well in the castle until Cunégonde sees Pangloss sexually engaged with Paquette in some bushes. Encouraged by this show of affection, Cunégonde drops her handkerchief next to Candide which entices him to kiss her.

For this infraction, Candide is – quite literally – kicked out of the castle, at which point he is captured by Bulgar (Prussian) recruiters and coerced into military service, where he is flogged, nearly executed, and forced to participate in a major battle (an allegory representing the Prussians and the French). Candide eventually escapes the army and makes his way to Holland where he is given aid by Jacques, an Anabaptist. Soon after, Candide finds his tutor, Pangloss, now a beggar with syphilis. Pangloss reveals he was infected with this disease by Paquette and shocks Candide by relating how Castle Thunder-ten-Tronckh was destroyed by Bulgars, and that Cunégonde and her whole family were killed. Pangloss is cured of his illness by Jacques, losing one eye and one ear in the process, and the three set sail for Lisbon. In Lisbon's harbour, they are overtaken by a vicious storm.
Lisbon Earthquake and Tsunami of 1755

which destroys the boat. Jacques attempts to save a sailor, and is in the process thrown overboard. The sailor makes no move to help the drowning Jacques, and Candide is in a state of despair until Pangloss explains to him that Lisbon harbor was expressly created in order for Jacques to drown there. Only Pangloss, Candide, and the "brutish sailor" survive and reach Lisbon,

Lisbon Earthquake and Tsunami of 1755

which is promptly hit by an earthquake, tsunami and fire which kill tens of thousands. (This part is true – and marked Voltaire and many others at the time). The sailor leaves in order to loot the rubble while Candide, injured and begging for help, is lectured on the optimistic view of the situation by Pangloss. The next day, Pangloss discusses his optimistic philosophy with a member of the Portuguese Inquisition, and he and Candide are arrested for heresy,

An Auto-da-Fé, Francisco Ricci, 1683

Auto da fé

set to be tortured and killed in an "auto-da-fé" set up to appease God and prevent another disaster. Unbelievably, this really happened, too! Candide is flogged
Candide is flogged and sees Pangloss hanged, but another earthquake intervenes and he escapes. He is approached by an old woman, who leads him to a house where Lady Cunégonde waits, alive. Candide is surprised: Pangloss had told him that Cunégonde had been raped and disemboweled. She had been, but Cunégonde points out that people survive such things. However, her rescuer sold her to a Jewish merchant who was then forced by a corrupt Grand Inquisitor to share her. Her owners arrive, find her with another man, and Candide kills them both.

Candide flees the city, heading for the Americas. Along the way, Cunégonde falls into self-pity, complaining of all the misfortunes that have befallen her.

The old woman reciprocates by revealing her own tragic life, which included having a buttock cut off in order to feed some starving men.
Chapters 11-20  The trio arrive in Buenos Aires, where Governor Don Fernando d'Ibarra, y Figueroa, y Mascarenes, y Lampourdos, y Souza asks to marry Cunégonde. Just then, a Portuguese commander arrives, pursuing Candide for killing the Grand Inquisitor. Leaving the women behind, Candide flees to Paraguay with his practical and heretofore unmentioned manservant, Cacambo.

At a border post on the way, Cacambo and Candide speak to the commandant, who turns out to be Cunégonde's unnamed brother. He explains that after his family was slaughtered, the Jesuits' preparation for his burial revived him, and he has since joined the order. When Candide announces that he intends to marry Cunégonde, her brother attacks him, and Candide stabs him through with his rapier. After lamenting all the people (mainly priests) that he's killed, he and Cacambo flee again. In their flight, Candide and Cacambo come across two naked women being chased and bitten by a pair of monkeys.

being chased and bitten by a pair of monkeys. Candide, seeking to protect the women, shoots and kills the monkeys, but is informed by Cacambo that the monkeys and women were probably lovers.

Cacambo and Candide are captured by Oreillons, the fictional inhabitants of the area. Mistaking Candide for a Jesuit by his robes, the Oreillons prepare to cook Candide and Cacambo; however, Cacambo convinces the Oreillons that Candide killed a Jesuit to procure the robe. Cacambo and Candide are released and travel for a month on foot and then down a river by canoe, living on fruits and berries.

After a few more adventures, they wander into El Dorado, a geographically isolated utopia where the streets are covered with precious stones, there are no priests, and all of the king's jokes are funny.
El Dorado

Candide and Cacambo stay for a month, but Candide is missing Cunégonde, and begs to leave. The king points out that this is a foolish idea, but generously helps them do so. The pair continue their journey, now accompanied by one hundred red pack sheep carrying provisions and incredible sums of money.

The pair continue their journey

which they slowly lose or have stolen over the next few adventures.

Candide and Cacambo eventually reach Surinam, where they split up: Cacambo travels to Buenos Aires to retrieve Lady Cunégonde, while Candide prepares to travel to Europe to await the two.

Candide prepares to travel to Europe

His remaining sheep are stolen, and he is fined heavily by a Dutch magistrate for petulance over the theft. Before leaving Surinam, Candide feels in need of companionship, so he interviews a number of local men who have been through various ill-fortunes and settles on a man named Martin.
Chapters 21-30: Martin, is a Manichean scholar based on the real-life pessimist Pierre Bayle, chief opponent of Leibniz. They argue about philosophy, Martin painting the entire world as occupied by fools. Candide, however, remains an optimist at heart, since it is all he knows. As they arrive in England, they see an admiral

Admiral Byng being shot

(based on Admiral Byng) being shot for not killing enough of the enemy. Martin explains that Britain finds it necessary to shoot an admiral from time to time "pour l'encouragement des autres". Candide, horrified, arranges for them to leave Britain immediately. After various scenes satirising other European institutions, Candide and Martin meet Paquette, the chambermaid who infected Pangloss with syphilis, in Venice. She is now a prostitute, and is spending her time with a monk, Brother Giroflée. Although both appear happy on the surface, they reveal their despair: Paquette has led a miserable existence as a sexual object,
and the monk detests the religious order in which he was indoctrinated. Later, while Candide and Martin are at supper, Cacambo returns and informs Candide that Cunégonde is in Constantinople, and has been enslaved. She is now washing dishes for a prince of Transylvania, and has become ugly. On the way to rescue her, Candide finds Pangloss and Cunégonde's brother rowing in the galley. Candide buys their freedom and further passage at steep prices. The baron and Pangloss relate how they survived, but despite the horrors he has been through, Pangloss's optimism remains unshaken:

"I still hold to my original opinions, because, after all, I'm a philosopher, and it wouldn't be proper for me to recant, since Leibniz cannot be wrong, and since pre-established harmony is the most beautiful thing in the world."

The travellers arrive on the Ottoman coast where they rejoin Cunégonde and the old woman. Cunégonde has become worn out and ugly but Candide nevertheless buys their freedom and marries her to spite her brother. Paquette and Brother Giroflée, too, are reconciled with Candide on a farm which he has just bought with the last of his finances.

One day, the friends seek out a dervish known as a great philosopher. Pangloss asks him why Man is made to suffer so, and what they all ought to do. The dervish responds by asking rhetorically why Pangloss is concerned about the existence of evil and good. The
dervish compares human beings to mice on a royal ship; their comfort does not matter to the king. The dervish then slams his door in their faces.

Returning to their farm, Candide, Pangloss, and Martin meet a Turk whose philosophy is to devote his life only to simple work and not concern himself with external affairs. He and his four children work a small farm

![Candide's garden](image)

Candide's garden

to keep "free of three great evils: boredom, vice and poverty. Candide, Pangloss, Martin, Cunégonde, Paquette, Cacambo, the old woman, and Brother Giroflée all set to work on this "commendable plan", each to a specific task. Candide concludes the narrative by telling Pangloss, "We must cultivate our garden".

![We must cultivate our garden](image)

We must cultivate our garden

Behind the playful façade of Candide which has amused so many, there lies very harsh criticism of contemporary European civilization. European governments are each attacked ruthlessly by the author: the French and Prussians for the Seven Years' War, the Portuguese for their Inquisition, and the British for the execution of John Byng. Organised religion, too, is harshly treated. A characteristic example of anti-clerical passages for which the work was banned: "The Jesuits are masters of everything, and the people have no money at all ...". Voltaire suggests the Christian mission in Paraguay is holding the indigenous peoples as slaves while claiming to help them.

At the end of “Candide” Voltaire says 'Il faut cultiver le jardin'. What is meant by this? "The garden should be cultivated" can be taken to imply that in the garden of ideas one should cultivate sense and weed out nonsense, or that in the garden of the world, one
must weed out the vile for the desirable to flourish. Arguments could be made for other meanings and implications. Perhaps this is not a metaphor at all, or at least not only a metaphor, but words of sage practical advice. Voltaire was sixty-five in 1759 when “Candide” was published. From about 1750 onwards, there was a revolution in French landscape garden design, which was tied up with Enlightenment ideals and theories. Voltaire was fully party to this discussion, and practiced what he preached. A very rich man, he bought the lordship of Ferney.

Formal garden

complete with landscaped and formal gardens, a lake, terraces and an orangerie as well as a working farm. He went on to develop the town itself, draining the marshes, building more than 100 houses, funding the erection of a church, school, water reservoir and town fountain. He instigated regular markets and encouraged artisans to settle there. During the famine of 1771 he personally fed the inhabitants of the town, which by his death in 1778 had grown from about a hundred to over a thousand inhabitants. This is gardening on a very large scale. Voltaire was involved in the design, supervised the works himself, and was to be found from time to time with his sleeves rolled up, gardening.

Voltaire's literary output remained as prodigious as ever during the development of Ferney, and I think that he actually practiced what he is heartily recommending to us in the novel. Activity in a garden, even on a small scale, allows any amount of ideals and theories to be tested in a very practical way, by interacting directly with the laws of nature to produce an aesthetically satisfactory result.

Rousseau and Voltaire hated each other.
Rousseau and Voltaire hated each other.

It would be hard to imagine the urbane and suave Voltaire and the radically democratic Rousseau ever seeing eye to eye: Voltaire believed that through education and reason man could separate himself from the beasts while Rousseau thought that it was precisely all this which made men "unnatural" and corrupted. For many people at that time, the myth of the "noble savage"

propagated by Rousseau popularized the myth of primeval bliss: happiness, simplicity, and equality that were lost when humankind left its "primitive" state and became "civilized".

On getting a copy of Rousseau's "The Social Contract" Voltaire wrote: "I have received your new book against the human race, and thank you for it. Never was such cleverness used in the design of making us all stupid. One longs, in reading your book, to walk on all fours. But as I have lost that habit for more than sixty years, I feel unhappily the impossibility of resuming it. Nor can I embark in search of the savages of Canada, because the maladies to which I am condemned render a European surgeon necessary to me; because war is going on in those regions; and because the example of our actions has made the savages nearly as bad as ourselves."

In various works by Voltaire, such as “Alzire, ou les américains”, “L'Ingénu”, “Candide”, and Dialogues, "savages" play important roles. Despite his disdain for the theory of humankind's natural goodness in its primitive state, Voltaire himself created his very own "savage." While Rousseau's "noble savage" leads one to condemn civilization as the root of human degeneration, Voltaire's "savages"
exalt civilization, education, and the scientific ethos of the Enlightenment. They are his mouth pieces for his call to tolerance, justice, scientific enterprise, and a government guided by reason.

Almost all of Voltaire's more substantive works, whether in verse or prose, are preceded by prefaces of one sort or another, which are models of his caustic yet conversational tone. In a vast variety of nondescript pamphlets and writings, he displays his skills at journalism. In pure literary criticism his principal work is the "Commentaire sur Corneille", although he wrote many more similar works – sometimes (as in his "Life and notices of Molière") independently and sometimes as part of his "Siècles".

Voltaire's works, especially his private letters, frequently contain the word "l'infâme" and the expression "écrasez l'infâme," or "crush the infamous". The phrase refers to abuses to the people by royalty and the clergy that Voltaire saw around him, and the superstition and intolerance that the clergy bred within the people. He had felt these effects in his own exiles, the burnings of his books and those of many others, and in the hideous sufferings of Calas and La Barre. He stated in one of his most famous quotes that "Superstition sets the whole world in flames; philosophy quenches them".
Voltaire's country walk by Jean Huber, c.1772

The most oft-cited Voltaire quotation is apocryphal. He is incorrectly credited with writing, “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.” These were not his words, but rather those of Evelyn Beatrice Hall, in her 1906 biographical book "The Friends of Voltaire". Hall intended to summarize in her own words Voltaire's attitude but her first-person expression was mistaken for an actual quotation from Voltaire.

Voltaire telling a story

Voltaire's first major philosophical work in his battle against "l'infâme" was the “Treatise on Tolerance”, exposing the Calas affair, along with the tolerance exercised by other faiths and in other eras (for example, by the Jews, the Romans, the Greeks and the Chinese). Then, in his "Dictionnaire Philosophique", containing such articles as "Abraham", "Genesis", and "Church Council", he wrote about what he perceived as the human origins of dogmas and beliefs, as well as inhuman behaviour of religious and political institutions in shedding blood over the quarrels of competing sects. Amongst other targets, Voltaire criticized France's colonial policy in North America, dismissing the vast territory of New France as "a few acres of snow" ("quelques arpents de neige").

Letters
Voltaire also engaged in an enormous amount of private correspondence during his life, totaling over 20,000 letters. One historian called the letters "a feast not only of wit and eloquence but of warm friendship, humane feeling, and incisive thought."

Philosophy and Religion

Voltaire did not believe that any single religious text or tradition of revelation was needed to believe in God. Voltaire's focus was rather on the idea of universal laws, demonstrable, and in the main, still waiting to be discovered in the physical world as well as those of the moral world, underlying every religious system, along with respect for nature reflecting the contemporary pantheism.

Like other key thinkers during the European Enlightenment, Voltaire considered himself a deist, expressing the idea: "What is faith? Is it to believe that which is evident? No. It is perfectly evident to my mind that there exists a necessary, eternal, supreme, and
intelligent being. This is no matter of faith, but of reason." As for religious texts, Voltaire's opinion of the Bible was mixed. Although influenced by Socinian works such as the Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum, Voltaire's skeptical attitude to the Bible separated him from Unitarian theologians like Fausto Sozzini or even Biblical-political writers like John Locke.

This did not hinder his religious practice, though it did win for him a bad reputation in certain religious circles. The deeply Catholic Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart wrote to his father the year of Voltaire's death, saying, "The arch-scoundrel Voltaire has finally kicked the bucket...."

Evolving views of Islam and its prophet, Mohammed, can be found in Voltaire's writings. In a letter recommending his play "Fanaticism, or Mahomet" to Pope Benedict XIV, Voltaire described the founder of Islam as "the founder of a false and barbarous sect" and "a false prophet", a view he later revised upon further research for his "Essai sur les Moeurs et l'Esprit des Nations". It contains much fuller and more sympathetic accounts of Mohammed and the founding and spread of his religion, as do a number of his later polemical works on religion.

In the Scottish Enlightenment the Scots began developing a uniquely practical branch of humanism to the extent that Voltaire said "We look to Scotland for all our ideas of civilisation". In a letter to Frederick of Prussia, dated 5 January 1767, he wrote about Christianity: “Our religion is without a doubt the most ridiculous, the most absurd, and the most bloody to ever infect the world.”

Religious tolerance
In a 1763 essay, Voltaire supported the toleration of other religions and ethnicities: "It does not require great art, or magnificently trained eloquence, to prove that Christians should tolerate each other. I, however, am going further: I say that we should regard all men as our brothers. What? The Turk my brother? The Chinaman my brother? The Jew? The Siam? Yes, without doubt; are we not all children of the same father and creatures of the same God?"

Race and slavery

Voltaire rejected the Christian Adam and Eve story and was a polygenist who speculated that each race had separate origins. Like other philosophes, such as Buffon, he divided humanity into varieties or races and attempted to explain the differences between them. Voltaire took this position primarily to defy Christianity, and biblical monogenism. He wondered if blacks fully shared in the common humanity or intelligence of whites due to their participation in the slave trade.

His most famous remark on slavery is found in "Candide", where the hero is horrified to learn 'at what price we eat sugar in Europe'.

Anti-semitism
According to the rabbi Joseph Telushkin the most significant of Enlightenment hostility against Judaism was found in Voltaire, although claims to the contrary have been made by many that his remarks were in fact anti-Biblical, not anti-semitic. Thirty of the 118 articles in his Dictionnaire Philosophique dealt with Jews and described them in consistently negative ways, although this analysis overlooks the fact that he had already defended the Jews as more tolerant than the Christians in his "Treatise On Toleration" the previous year, and issued "Le Sermon du rabbin Akib", a text attacking anti-semitism, three years previously.

Freemasonry

Voltaire was initiated into Freemasonry the month before his death.

On 4 April 1778 Voltaire accompanied his close friend Benjamin Franklin into the Loge des Neuf Soeurs in Paris, and became an Entered Apprentice Freemason, perhaps only to please Franklin.

Legacy

Voltaire perceived the French bourgeoisie to be too small and ineffective, the aristocracy to be parasitic and corrupt, the commoners as ignorant and superstitious, and the church as a static and oppressive force useful only on occasion as a counterbalance to the rapacity of kings, although all too often, more rapacious itself. Voltaire distrusted democracy, which he saw as propagating the idiocy of the masses.

Voltaire long thought only an enlightened monarch could bring about change, given the social structures of the time and the extremely high rates of illiteracy, and that it was in
the king's rational interest to improve the education and welfare of his subjects. But his disappointments and disillusionments with Frederick the Great changed his philosophy somewhat, and led to "Candide". His most polemical and ferocious attacks on intolerance and religious persecutions began to appear a few years later.

Voltaire is also known for many memorable aphorisms, such as: "Si Dieu n'existaït pas, il faudrait l'inventer" ("If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him"), contained in a verse epistle from 1768. But far from being the cynical remark it is often taken for, it was meant as a retort to the atheistic clique of d'Holbach, Grimm, and others. Voltaire is remembered and honoured in France as a courageous polemicist who fought for civil rights indefatigably — the right to a fair trial and freedom of religion — and who denounced the hypocrisies and injustices of the Ancien Régime.

Voltaire has had his detractors among his later colleagues. Carlyle argued that, while Voltaire was unsurpassed in literary form, not even the most elaborate of his works were of much value for matter and that he never uttered an original idea of his own. Nietzsche, called Carlyle a muddlehead who had not even understood the Enlightenment values he thought he was promoting.

A few "faits divers":

Voltaire was a millionaire by the time he was 40. While in his twenties, he cultivated the friendship of wealthy bankers, through whom he learned how to invest in bonds and speculate in currency and other commodities. Voltaire participated in a contract to supply the French army with food and munitions, an extremely profitable enterprise. He invested in ships that sailed the world and in art. He also made loans at interest.
Voltaire's coffee

Voltaire was known to have been an advocate for coffee, as he was purported to have drunk the beverage at least 30 times per day. It has been suggested that high amounts of caffeine acted as a mental stimulant to his creativity.

His great grand-niece was the mother of

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a famous philosopher and Jesuit priest.

The town of Ferney, where Voltaire lived out the last 20 years of his life, is now named Ferney-Voltaire in honour of its most famous resident. It was inherited, with the bulk of his possessions, by his niece and sometime lover

Mme Denis (Marie-Louise Mignot) 1712-90

Mme Denis (Marie-Louise Mignot) 1712-90 - but she sold it and returned to Paris. The château is now a Voltaire museum.

Voltaire's library was bought by Catherine the Great,
Catherine the Great

and is preserved intact in the National Library of Russia at St. Petersburg.

Some of Voltaire’s works - National Library of Russia at St. Petersburg

Some of Voltaire’s Works:

Philosophical works:

Some of Voltaire’s Works:
Philosophical works
*Letters concerning the English nation* (London, 1733) (French version entitled Lettres philosophiques sur les Anglais, Rouen, 1734), revised as Letters on the English (circa 1778)
*Le Monde* (1738)
*Sept Discours en Vers sur l’Homme* (1738)
*Zadig* (1747)
*Micromégas* (1752)
*Candide* (1759)
*Treatise on Tolerance* (1763)
*Ce qui plaît aux dames* (1764)
*Dictionnaire philosophique* (1764)
*L’Ingénieux* (1767)
*La Princesse de Babylone* (1768)

Philosophical works

Plays:
Plays

Voltaire wrote between fifty and sixty plays, including a few unfinished ones. Among them are:

- "Œdipe" (1718)
- "Marianne" (1724)
- "Zaïre" (1732)
- "Esther" (1732)
- "Irène"
- "Socrate"
- "Mahomet"
- "Mérope"
- "Nanine"
- "The Orphan of China" (1755)

And Historical works:

Historical works

- "History of Charles XII, King of Sweden" (1731)
- "The Age of Louis XIV" (1751)
- "The Age of Louis XV (1746–1752)
- "Annals of the Empire – Louis of Bavaria, 1315 to Ferdinand II 1631" Vol. II (1754)
- "Essay on the Manners of Nations" (or 'Universal History') (1756)
- "History of the Russian Empire Under Peter the Great" (Vol. I 1759; Vol. II 1763)
- "History of the Parliament of Paris" (1769)

Historical works

Voltaire was one of the most brilliant writers and philosophers of all time. His influence in securing liberty for humanity is inestimable. He changed his world and ours.

Bye-bye!

His ideas contributed to the revolutions in both France and America, and later, to the securing of separation of State from Church in both countries. Freedom of Speech,
Freedom of Religion, the Right to Assemble, to protest, to think, to act like an individual - the development of Human Rights world wide - all owe something to the words and deeds of Voltaire.

THE END!

The END !!!