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**CLASSIC
FICTION**



**THE
COMPLETE
CLASSICS**

UNABRIDGED

Voltaire

Candide

and

Zadig

Read by
Neville Jason

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| 1 | CANDIDE: Chapter 1: How Candide was Brought up in a Magnificent Castle and How he was Driven Thence | 5:57 |
| 2 | Chapter 2: What Befell Candide Among the Bulgarians | 5:49 |
| 3 | Chapter 3: How Candide Escaped from the Bulgarians and What Befell Him Afterward | 5:05 |
| 4 | Chapter 4: How Candide Found his Old Master Pangloss Again and What Happened to Him | 4:41 |
| 5 | 'Oh Sage Pangloss' cried Candide... | 3:45 |
| 6 | Chapter 5: A Tempest, a Shipwreck, an Earthquake and What Else Befell Dr Pangloss, Candide and James the Anabaptist | 6:51 |
| 7 | Chapter 6: How the Portuguese Made a Superb Auto-De-Fe to Prevent Any Future Earthquakes, and How Candide Underwent Public Flagellation | 2:52 |
| 8 | Chapter 7: How the Old Woman Took Care of Candide and How He Found The Object of His Love | 4:50 |
| 9 | Chapter 8: Cunegund's Story | 6:32 |
| 10 | Chapter 9: What Happened to Cunegund, Candide, the Grande Inquisitor and the Jew | 3:55 |
| 11 | Chapter 10: In What Distress Candide, Cunegund and the Old Woman Arrive at Cadiz, and of Their Embarkation | 4:28 |
| 12 | Chapter 11: The History of the Old Woman | 7:53 |
| 13 | Chapter 12: The Adventures of the Old Woman Continued | 4:53 |

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|----|---|------|
| 14 | 'We had a very pious and humane Imam...' | 3:58 |
| 15 | Chapter 13: How Candide was Obligated to Leave the Fair Cunegund and the Old Woman | 5:28 |
| 16 | Chapter 14: The Reception Candide and Macambo Met with among the Jesuits in Paraguay | 5:18 |
| 17 | He was a very handsome young man... | 3:01 |
| 18 | Chapter 15: How Candide Killed the Brother of His Dear Cunegund | 4:50 |
| 19 | Chapter 16: What Happened to Our Two Travellers with Two Girls, Two Monkeys, and the Savages, Called Orellions | 4:11 |
| 20 | When they awoke, they were surprised to find they could not move... | 4:18 |
| 21 | Chapter 17: Candide and His Valet Arrive in the Country of El Dorado and What They Saw There | 5:05 |
| 22 | The schoolmaster, with a smile, flung them on the ground... | 3:53 |
| 23 | Chapter 18: What They Saw in the Country of El Dorado | 6:16 |
| 24 | Candide and Cacambo got into the coach | 7:34 |
| 25 | Chapter 19: What Happened to Them at Surinam, and How Candide became Acquainted with Martin. | 6:33 |
| 26 | Candide continued some days longer at Surinam ... | 6:04 |
| 27 | Chapter 20: What Befell Candide and Martin on Their Passage | 5:50 |
| 28 | Chapter 21: Candide and Martin, While Thus Reasoning with Each Other, Draw Near to the Coast of France | 4:06 |

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| 29 | Chapter 22: What Happened to Candide and Martin in France | 6:12 |
| 30 | 'That was very impolite' said Candide... | 7:45 |
| 31 | Candide listened to this discourse with great attention... | 5:54 |
| 32 | The artful abbé let not a word of this escape him... | 5:59 |
| 33 | Chapter 23: Candide and Martin Touch Upon the English Coast and What They See There | 3:28 |
| 34 | Chapter 24: Of Pacquette and Fair Giroflée | 7:16 |
| 35 | Thus did Pacquette unbosom herself to honest Candide in his closet... | 4:20 |
| 36 | Chapter 25: Candide and Martin Pay a Visit to Seignor Pocourante, a Nobel Venetian | 7:33 |
| 37 | Candide, who had been brought up with a notion of never making use of his own judgement... | 6:48 |
| 38 | Chapter 26: Candide and Martin Sup with Six Strangers and Who They Were | 4:16 |
| 39 | Cacambo's master then began with great gravity... | 4:16 |
| 40 | Chapter 27: Candide's Voyage to Constantinople | 4:57 |
| 41 | There were two slaves among the crew of the galley... | 4:43 |
| 42 | Chapter 28: What Befell Candide, Cunegund, Pangloss and Martin | 6:29 |
| 43 | Chapter 29: In What Manner Candide Found Miss Cunegund and the Old Woman Again | 2:49 |
| 44 | Chapter 30: Conclusion | 5:15 |
| 45 | This new adventure engaged them more deeply than ever... | 7:11 |

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| 46 | ZADIG: Chapter 1: The Blind of One Eye | 7:59 |
| 47 | Chapter 2: The Noise | 4:55 |
| 49 | Chapter 3: The Dog and the Horse | 8:24 |
| 50 | Chapter 4: Envious | 5:12 |
| 51 | Envious went to see Zadig... | 5:56 |
| 52 | Chapter 5: The Generous | 5:22 |
| 53 | Chapter 6: The Minister | 5:03 |
| 54 | Chapter 7: The Disputes and the Audiences | 4:49 |
| 55 | Chapter 8: Jealousy | 6:33 |
| 56 | This little mute was strongly attached to the Queen and Zadig... | 4:13 |
| 57 | Chapter 9: The Woman-Beater | 7:35 |
| 58 | Chapter 10: Slavery | 7:53 |
| 59 | Chapter 11: The Funeral Pyre | 6:35 |
| 60 | Chapter 12: The Supper | 4:31 |
| 61 | The man of Cathay took up the discourse... | 4:03 |
| 62 | Chapter 13: I – The Rendezvous | 7:16 |
| 63 | II – The Dance | 6:30 |
| 64 | III – Blue Eyes | 4:52 |
| 65 | The King was transported with joy, astonishment and love... | 4:34 |
| 66 | Chapter 14: The Robber | 8:19 |
| 67 | Chapter 15: The Fisherman | 4:08 |
| 68 | In my distress I resolved to apply to justice... | 4:27 |

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| 69 | Chapter 16: The Basilisk | 6:24 |
| 70 | Neither of us were to be found... | 6:17 |
| 71 | I now saw myself in the power of a barbarian... | 5:55 |
| 72 | Chapter 17: The Combats | 5:21 |
| 73 | The other knights acquitted themselves with greater ability and success... | 5:34 |
| 74 | Chapter 18: The Hermit | 5:40 |
| 75 | The miser started and was ready to fall backwards... | 5:51 |
| 76 | She performed the honours of the house as well as she could... | 5:36 |
| 77 | Chapter 19: The Enigmas | 4:03 |
| 78 | 'Illustrious Lords,' said Zadig... | 4:06 |

Total time: 7:03:48

Voltaire

Candide *and* Zadig

Francois-Marie Arouet, who later changed his name to 'Voltaire', was born in Paris on November 21 1694, the son of a lawyer. As a youth he was a brilliant scholar, and a great future was predicted for him. On leaving school aged seventeen he was accepted at once into the aristocratic circle which revolved around the French court. His ready wit resulted in his being suspected of writing a satirical poem concerning the Regent, and he was imprisoned for eleven months. This was to be the first of many occasions where his attacks on authority would land him in trouble.

In 1726, having already achieved fame with his play *Oedipe*, a quarrel with a nobleman resulted in his exile to England, where he remained for the next two years. There he mastered the English language speedily and perfectly, and made the acquaintance of the most eminent writers, philosophers and notable

citizens. His *Letters Concerning the English Nation* bear witness to his admiration for the freedom and justice he discovered in England, which he found notably lacking in France.

Returning from exile he was once again in trouble when the famous actress Adrienne Lecouvreur, who had died at the early age of twenty-eight, was refused Christian burial. His attack on this decision, and the publication of certain works which displeased the authorities, sent him into hiding in the provinces for a time. But some months later he was back in Paris, where his play *Zaïre* was produced to great acclaim.

In 1733 Voltaire met the aristocratic intellectual Madame de Châtelet. They became lovers and were together for the next sixteen years. When Madame de Châtelet died in 1749, Frederick the Great of Prussia, a great admirer of Voltaire

whom he considered his mentor, teacher and friend, succeeded in persuading him to join his court at Potsdam. Voltaire accepted, but gradually they fell out of sympathy with each other, and after two years Voltaire returned to France.

The great Lisbon earthquake of 1755, in which some thirty thousand people died, shocked Voltaire profoundly. The poem he wrote in homage and the story of *Candide*, in which he contests the idea that all is for the best, resulted from the depth of his emotional response to the disaster.

His attacks on perceived injustice made him powerful enemies, including the Church, and from time to time he was obliged to seek refuge abroad in Switzerland. In 1759 he settled in Ferney – in France but very near the Swiss border. From there he continued to attack the cruelty and injustice which flourished in pre-Revolutionary France, to fight for the poor and oppressed, and to champion peace, tolerance and enlightenment. In addition to his writings, he became a highly successful businessman and public benefactor, earning considerable sums of

money for himself and his adopted home town.

In February 1778 Voltaire returned to Paris after an exile lasting twenty-eight years. He was now acknowledged as one of the greatest living authors, and he received a tumultuous reception. Thousands of visitors called to welcome the great man.

His play *Irène* was in rehearsal and he occupied himself with preparations for the opening, which turned out to be a splendid triumph. He attended the Académie française where he was overwhelmed with honours and elected President. But the excitement of these months proved to be too much for his constitution, and on Saturday, May 30 1778, aged 83, he died.

In England Oliver Goldsmith wrote: 'We have just received accounts here that Voltaire, the poet and philosopher of Europe, is dead. He is now beyond the reach of the thousand enemies who, while living, degraded his writings and branded his character. Scarce a page of his later productions that does not betray the agonies of a heart bleeding under

the scourge of unmerited reproach. Happy, therefore, at last in escaping from calumny! happy in leaving a world that was unworthy of him and his writings!’

Goethe referred to Voltaire as ‘the greatest writer of all time’, and Macaulay wrote ‘Of all the intellectual weapons that have ever been wielded by man, the most terrible was the mockery of Voltaire. Bigots and tyrants who had never been moved by the wailings and cursings of millions, turned pale at his name.’

CANDIDE

Candide is probably the best known and most popular of Voltaire’s *contes*. This story of the young innocent Candide provides Voltaire with ample means to attack his most hated targets, which he does with the greatest wit, originality and verve.

Candide was Voltaire’s riposte to the philosophy of Rousseau and others, which opines that all that happens in the world is for the best. Voltaire holds this theory up to ridicule by involving his naïve hero in every possible disaster.

Candide is exiled for falling in love

with Cunegonde, press-ganged into the army, experiences the hideous cruelties of war, learns of the disease with which Paquette has infected Pangloss, hears of Cunegonde’s abuse at the hands of the Jew and the Inquisitor, commits murder, discovers the misuse of slaves, is cheated of his wealth, witnesses examples of extreme cruelty and the effects of sickness and old age.

Yet Candide is so faithful a follower of Dr Pangloss’s teaching that he persists in maintaining the doctrine that ‘all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds’ in the face of the most appalling proofs to the contrary. Only towards the end of the epic series of adventures in which he and his friends are involved is he able to see the world clearly, freed from the distortion of a faulty philosophy.

Candide comes to understand that our attempts to understand God and the world are doomed to failure, and that in the face of our limited capabilities, all we can do is to lead the best life we can, and ‘cultivate our garden’, that is to say, concentrate on the work in front of us and give up fruitless speculation.

ZADIG

In *Zadig* Voltaire adopts the style of Oriental tales fashionable at the time. Zadig, like *Candide*, is an optimist. He expects the good qualities with which he is blessed and his successful achievements to bring him the happiness which continues to elude him. However, unlike *Candide*, Zadig does not have his head in the sand. He understands the world, and uses his wits to gain advantage or escape from danger in one adventure after another.

He plays dead to prove the perfidy of his lover; he uses his powers of deduction to guess what has happened to the King's horse and the Queen's dog (an episode which surely must have been in the mind of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle when he invented the methods of Sherlock Holmes); as a Minister he discovers which son loved his father best, and which man will make the best father to a child; as a slave he wins a court case on behalf of his master and is elevated to become his friend; he advises a ruler how to catch a thieving treasurer and confound his enemies; he cures a glutton with an imaginary basilisk.

As in many romances true love blossoms, but is not allowed to prevail until the hero has proved himself worthy to win the hand of his lady.

Before Zadig succeeds in winning Astarte, Voltaire throws in an enchanting tale in which Zadig is confounded by the incomprehensible behaviour of his travelling companion, a hermit, who eventually reveals himself to be the angel Jesrad, and explains his actions in the light of what he knows, but Zadig cannot. So, once again, Voltaire shows us that we must accept the fate we are unable to understand.

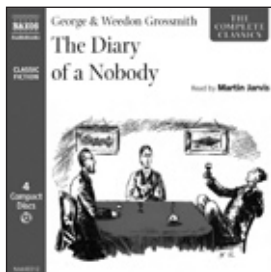
If, unlike *Candide*, *Zadig* lacks a single over-arching message and seems to be aiming more to entertain than to enlighten, its protagonist's magical adventures are related with all the author's inimitable wit, wisdom and humanity.

Notes by Neville Jason



Neville Jason trained at RADA where he was awarded the Diction Prize by Sir John Gielgud. He has worked with the English Stage Co., the Old Vic Company and the RSC as well as in films, TV and musicals. He is frequently heard on radio. As well as *Remembrance of Things Past*, he also reads *Tolstoy's War and Peace*, *The Life and Works of Marcel Proust*, *Far from The Madding Crowd*, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, *The Sword in the Stone* and has read the part of Antonio in *The Tempest* for Naxos AudioBooks.

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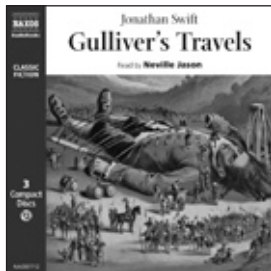
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Voltaire

Candide *and* Zadig

Read by **Neville Jason**

Voltaire's razor-sharp satire on philosophical optimism *Candide* is coupled here with another of the author's most celebrated works, *Zadig*. Both challenge the moral and philosophical orthodoxies of the day with humour and sly wit, whilst parodying the clichéd formulae of so many contemporary novels. *Candide* traces the fortunes of its eponymous character, a staunch optimist who eventually becomes disillusioned by a series of hardships and misfortunes. *Zadig* likewise follows its main character Zadig, a Babylonian philosopher, as he is subjected to the whims of Fate and the machinations of those around him.



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