

# Candor

by  
Pam Bachorz

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Student's Edition



**Street Smarts** Classroom Resource for

# Candor

by Pam Bachorz

This School Street Media **Street Smarts** was written by Sarah Ward Terrell.

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## About the Book and Author

### Summary:

Everything is perfect in the town of Candor, Florida. Teens respect their elders, do their chores, and enjoy homework—because they're controlled by subliminal messages. Only Oscar, the son of the town's founder, knows how to get kids out—for a price.

**Pam Bachorz** says, “Candor was inspired by the six years I lived in a planned community in central Florida. I longed for any sign of imperfection amongst the plastic picket fences and massive beds of flowers. No wonder, then, that my main character Oscar makes his mark with graffiti at the end of the first chapter!

“One night, I was walking the dog and the mosquito truck passed us. The plume of ‘harmless’ spray covered me. What if, I wondered, the spray had Prozac in it? What if that explained why everybody in our town was so friendly and happy? From there it wasn’t a huge jump to brainwashing.

“I think that people often choose to move to a beautiful place in hopes that it will make their lives beautiful, too—but, of course, we never leave our troubles behind. What if, though, we could buy our way into wonderful new lives? How many people would merrily pay a premium if they were guaranteed perfect new lives with obedient children whose only wish is to get into an Ivy League school—and to do the dishes without complaint? And what happens when those children find out that their parents have been messing with their brains?”

[www.pambachorz.com](http://www.pambachorz.com)

## Prereading Activities

### Understanding Genre: Dystopian Fiction

Reread the summary of and author's note about *Candor* by Pam Bachorz on page 4. Then answer the questions below.

1. Go to the Internet and look for a description of *dystopian fiction*. What are the characteristics of dystopian fiction?

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2. Why is *Candor* an example of dystopian fiction?

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3. Why is Candor an ironic name for a town in which people's minds are controlled?

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4. Everything is supposed to be perfect in Candor, Florida. Why does this make Candor ironic subject matter for a dystopian fiction novel?

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## Prereading Activities

### Making Predictions

Reread the summary for *Candor*. Then make predictions based on evidence from the text and/or from your prior knowledge or personal experience.

1. Do you think Oscar can continue helping kids escape Candor without being discovered? Why?

I predict:	Based on what evidence?
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2. If Candor is a bad place to live, and Oscar knows how to get people out of there, why do you think Oscar stays?

I predict:	Based on what evidence?
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3. Set a purpose for reading based on your predictions above.

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**Chapters 1–5:  
Oscar Meets Nia  
pages 1–39**

**Before You Read**

**Literary Devices: Onomatopoeia**

*Onomatopoeia* is the use of words that sound like—sounds! Onomatopoeia is created by both real and made-up words. For example, *squawk* and *bang* are dictionary words that imitate sounds, or an author might fabricate a word, such as *ker-plash* or *whew-eee*, to imitate something he or she has heard.

1. Below are examples of onomatopoeia used in *Candor*. As you read, find each example on the page indicated. Then, on the line provided, tell what makes the sound. (Note: Not all answers are found on the same page as the word—read on until you find the answer.)

a. ca-chunk, ca-chunk, ca-chunk (page 1) \_\_\_\_\_

b. hissing (page 1) \_\_\_\_\_

c. screeching (page 1) \_\_\_\_\_

d. rattle-rattle-rattle (page 2) \_\_\_\_\_

e. rap-rap-rap (page 11) \_\_\_\_\_

f. beep-beep-beep (page 22) \_\_\_\_\_

g. sniffles (page 27) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Why do authors use onomatopoeia in their writing? How does it affect the reader?

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**After You Read**

**Checking Predictions**

Before reading, you made a prediction about whether or not Oscar would be able to continue helping kids escape Candor. What have you read that supports or refutes your prediction?

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## Analyzing the Writing: Setting, Imagery, and Mood

1. As the story opens, how does imagery appealing to readers' sense of hearing contribute to Candor's eerie mood?

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2. How do the homes in Candor contribute to Candor's image of being the perfect place to live?

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3. In what ways are the residents of Candor more like scenery than people? How do they contribute to Candor's creepy quality?

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## Responding to the Story

1. Why does Oscar have to "pick his battles" when fighting the Messages?

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2. Campbell outlawed palm trees in Candor, even though they naturally grow there. What was his reason for doing so, and what does this say about his character?

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3. In what ways is Sherman a *foil*, or contrast, to Oscar's character, and how does this make him a danger to Oscar?

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4. Oscar says that people who are aurally addicted die when they stop getting Messages. Why might this be?

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5. Why might artists be particularly threatening to Campbell's vision of a perfect society?

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6. On page 35, Oscar says that he has to help Nia. Why do you think he feels this so urgently? Does Oscar feel this way about all potential clients, or is there something about Nia that makes her particularly worth saving?

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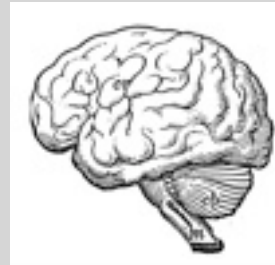
## Science Connection

### Subliminal Messages

In Candor, people are made into "perfect" versions of themselves through the use of subliminal messages that are hidden in music. Subliminal messaging and its effect on the subconscious mind have been studied since the late 1800s.

Find out how these messages work, what forms they can take, how effective they are, and why they have sparked controversy in the past.

Write a brief report on your findings to share with your classmates.



**Chapters 6–9:  
Truth or Consequences  
pages 40–72**

**Before You Read  
Making Predictions**

Do you think Oscar will get Sherman out of Candor safely?

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**Literary Devices: Simile and Metaphor**

Both *simile* and *metaphor* are types of figurative language that writers use to evoke images in readers' minds. Both similes and metaphors compare two unlike things that are alike in a specific way. Similes always include the word *like* or *as*. Metaphors compare two unlike things without using *like* or *as*.

Complete the chart below by telling whether each example of figurative language is simile or metaphor. Then find the example on the page indicated and use context clues to tell what two things the figurative language compares and what the figurative language means.

Figurative Language	Simile or Metaphor?	Comparison and Meaning
It's like [Nia has] become a Message, stuck in my brain. (page 40)		
And then their brains unraveled. (page 51)		
Sometimes it's nice to do what the Messages say. It's like sinking back in a warm bath, eyes shut, arms floating, and letting the water cover my face. (page 51)		
[Art] is just chalk. (page 61)		
A low hiss sounds by our feet. Like a snake. A big one. (page 62)		

## After You Read

### Checking Predictions

Earlier you made a prediction about whether or not Oscar would get Sherman out of Candor safely. What evidence confirmed or refuted your prediction?

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### Analyzing the Writing: Ambiguity and Complexity

Sometimes, instead of explaining everything in a text, the author creates *complex* (complicated) or *ambiguous* (unclear) situations that cause readers to question and analyze characters and their motives.

1. On page 51, Oscar says that Campbell cried when the Lockarts died, but he didn't change anything about the way he ran Candor. What questions does this raise, and what might be their answers?

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2. On page 71, Oscar's mom abruptly leaves the family and tells Oscar not to follow her. What questions does this raise, and what might be their answers?

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3. Do you think Oscar has the same questions about his parents that you do? How does this affect your feelings about his character?

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**Getting to Know the Characters:  
Character Traits as Shown By Actions**

On page 69, Campbell says to Oscar, “We both know you’re my clone.” Oscar disagrees, but there’s actually some truth to this statement. Complete the chart below by reading each trait and then telling what each character does to show he possesses the trait.

Character Trait	Oscar’s Actions	Campbell’s Actions
He has good business sense.		
He believes that everyone leaves; therefore, profiting from someone is better than becoming attached.		
He values self-control.		
He can be callous and even vicious when crossed.		
He needs predictability or situations in which he knows what the rules are and how he can be successful.		
He believes he knows better what is good for people than they know for themselves.		

What experiences do Oscar and Campbell share that help explain some of their negative behaviors? Why do you think they reacted to these experiences the way they did?

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## Responding to the Story

1. Oscar has set up a plan for his own escape. Why do you think he doesn't put it into action?

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2. What is the significance of the drawing Nia gives to Oscar?

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3. Oscar says that he and his father don't want all the same things. How is Oscar's attraction to Nia proof of this?

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### **Social Studies Connection**

#### **Business and Marketing**

In Chapter 9, we learn a lot about Campbell's philosophies for running a successful business, some of which include the following:

- There's no such thing as too much business.
- We must focus on the future.
- People want something when they see someone else using it.
- Everyone wants to be part of a crowd.

How does Campbell put these ideas to work when selling homes in Candor? Also, what examples do you see in real-world advertising of these same ideas at work? Discuss your observations with a peer.

**Chapters 10–13:**  
**To Tell or Not to Tell**  
pages 73–105

**Before You Read**

**Making Predictions**

At the end of Chapter 9, Campbell tells Oscar to befriend Nia. Do you think that having to be friends with Nia will complicate Oscar’s plan to help her escape or make it easier?

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**After You Read**

**Checking Predictions**

Earlier you made a prediction about whether or not Oscar would have a harder time orchestrating Nia’s escape, now that Campbell wants he and Nia to be friends. Was your prediction correct? Why or why not?

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**More Metaphors**

Complete the following chart by going to each page number indicated and finding a metaphor on the page, as directed. Then write what two things are being compared and what the metaphor means.

Location	Metaphor	Comparison and Meaning
Page 76		
Page 94		
Page 95		
Page 100		

## Analyzing the Writing: Symbolism

**Symbolism** is using one thing to represent another (such as a dove to represent peace). In literature, authors often use symbols to reveal emotional subtext or the truth about an event or situation. An example of this in *Candor* is the scene in which Oscar and Nia view art together in the potting shed. How they identify with their favorite paintings is telling of who they are as people and what role each plays in the novel.

1. Reread the third- and second-to-last paragraphs on page 98. Assume Oscar relates to this painting, because it is symbolic of his relationship with Nia. If Nia is the girl in the painting, what in the painting represents Oscar, and what might it show about Oscar's relationship with Nia?

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2. Reread Paragraphs 2–5 on page 100. Nia likes the painting of Judith, a biblical hero who saved her people from foreign rule by getting the foreign leader to trust her and then killing him. How might Nia be like Judith?

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3. Reread Paragraphs 2–6 on page 101. Both Nia and Oscar relate to the tiny man in this painting. What are the differences in the way they relate to him?

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4. Assume these three paintings together help form a narrative about what will happen to Nia and Oscar in the rest of the story. What might the paintings foreshadow?

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## Getting to Know the Characters

In *Candor*, Campbell Banks is the *antagonist*, or adversary, of the story.

1. An antagonist is often a character with particular power over people and is difficult to defeat. His or her primary goal is to destroy something or someone. How is this descriptive of Campbell?

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2. Sometimes the antagonist thinks he or she is the hero of his or her own story. In what ways might Campbell view his actions as heroic?

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3. One of Campbell's Messages is, "Never take advantage of someone else's need." How is this Message a sign of hypocrisy and a lack of true benevolence in Campbell?

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## Responding to the Story

1. What does Oscar mean when he says that Winston's absence feels like a broken promise?

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2. On pages 84–86, Nia reveals that she created an unhappy life for herself by rebelling against her parents, simply for the sake of rebelling. Oscar advises her to do what she wants, instead of worrying about whether or not her parents will like it. Does Oscar follow his own advice? Explain your answer.

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3. In literature, a character's contact with water often symbolizes a transformation. How is Oscar transformed after swimming in the pool with Nia?

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4. What does Oscar suspect is the reason Mandi broke up with him?

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5. Oscar decides not to tell Nia about the Messages, because he wants to keep Nia with him. How is this like something his father would do?

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## Social Science Connection

### The Subconscious

The power of the subconscious mind is at the center of *Candor's* plot. It forms the basis for the conflict of the story and also affects the motives and actions of all its characters. Psychology is the study of the human subconscious. Find out how long the subconscious has been an area of study and whose ideas have influenced modern-day psychology the most. Write a brief report to share what you learn with your classmates.

**Chapters 14–18:  
Paradise Lost  
pages 106–147**

**Before You Read  
Making Predictions**

Do you think Oscar will continue to keep the Messages a secret from Nia? Explain your answer.

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**After You Read  
Checking Predictions**

Earlier you made a prediction about whether or not Oscar would continue to keep the Messages a secret from Nia. Was your prediction correct? Why or why not?

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**Analyzing the Writing: Foreshadowing**

*Foreshadowing* consists of hints or clues in the text about what will happen later in the story. Lightning and thunder often foreshadow difficulties for the main character and call attention to events that change the course of the story.

1. In Chapter 14, a lightning storm starts during Brick Day. What does Brick Day symbolize for the residents of Candor?

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2. How does Oscar feel about helping his father on Brick Day, and why does he feel this way?

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3. There are loud cracks of thunder after events on pages 112 and 114. What are the events?

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4. At the end of Chapter 14, what choice does Oscar make, and what might this foreshadow?

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### Getting to Know the Characters: The Fool

Sherman is example of a character type called *The Fool*.

1. *The Fool* is usually someone who criticizes the society in which he or she lives and is a blunderer with an uncanny ability to survive. How is this descriptive of Sherman?

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2. *The Fool* also has a crude or childlike quality that disguises a talent for understanding the truth of a situation. Sherman first shows this ability when he tells Oscar, "For someone who's fighting the system, you share care a lot about this place." Then he shows this ability again, on page 137. What accusation does he level at Oscar?

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3. *The Fool* sometimes has questionable morals. What does Sherman do that shows he is not a completely honorable person??

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4. The Fool is often an endless source of frustration for the protagonist as well as a catalyst for change in the protagonist's story. How does Sherman embody these qualities?

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## Responding to the Story

1. What do bricks symbolize for Oscar, and what does Oscar say would happen if the bricks surrounding the flagpole froze?

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2. When Oscar sees Sherman with his mother at the Brick Day ceremony, he wonders what kind of mother would want a teenage son who still holds her hand. Why do you think a mother would want that? Do you think Sherman's mother is anything like Oscar's father? Explain your answer.

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3. At the beginning of the novel Nia wanted nothing to do with Oscar. However, now she's completely in love with him. Do you trust that her feelings for Oscar are real, or do you think she may have been brainwashed into loving Oscar? Explain your answer.

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**Chapters 19–24:**  
**The Listening Room**  
pages 183–206

**Before You Read**

**Making Predictions**

Do you think Oscar will continue to try to make amends with Nia? Why or why not?

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**After You Read**

**Checking Predictions**

Earlier, you made a prediction about whether or not Oscar would continue to try to make amends with Nia. What have you read that supports or refutes your prediction?

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**Responding to the Story**

1. To what extent do you think adult residents of Candor know the side effects of the Messages? What has Campbell done to ensure that the Messages appear always to be a good thing?

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2. The doctors that work at the hospital understand that the Listening Room is harmful to people’s minds. Why do they continue to work in Candor, knowing the harm that Messages do there?

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3. The bird is a recurring image in *Candor*. First Nia’s drawing reminds Oscar of a bird that doesn’t know how to stop flying. Then a bird on a leash appears in a painting Oscar shows Nia. Now, Sherman and Nia are fearful of birds, as a side effect of being too long in the Listening Room. What do you think these birds symbolize? Explain your answer.

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4. On page 176, Oscar says, “I stare up at the stars. They’re farther away than the ones on my ceiling. But they’re more beautiful, because they are where they belong.” How does this observation relate to what Oscar now understands about Nia?

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**Analyzing the Writing: Making Inferences**

When readers make *inferences*, they use information from the text along with their own knowledge to answer a question they have about the text. Complete the chart below by writing a question and inference for each event provided. The first one is done for you.

Event	Question	Inference
Campbell insists that Oscar go to the hospital to have his foot checked, even though Oscar doesn’t want to go. (page 163)	Possible question: Does Campbell have more than one motive for wanting Oscar to go to the hospital? What might it be?	Possible inference: Campbell may want Oscar to go to the hospital both to have his foot checked and to have his memory of Nia at the grocery store erased.
A nurse refers to a patient as a “pizza delivery for Dr. Stevens” that is “overbaked.” (page 165)		
Dr. Reeb says Sherman is his second Listening Room patient this week. (page 167)		
Nia stopped being perfect for a few seconds, and Oscar wants to see if he can make this happen again using M&Ms. (page 176)		
Sherman is looking for “slippery shiny silver secrets.”		

## Getting to Know the Characters: Internal and External Conflict

An *internal conflict* is a problem a character experiences within him- or herself, such as indecision or grief about a loss. An *external conflict* is a problem caused by actions taken against a character by others in the story or forces in nature, such as weather or animals.

In the chart below are examples of conflict Oscar experiences in Chapters 19–24. Complete the chart by telling whether each conflict is internal or external and then explaining your answer.

**Note:** Some conflicts can have both internal and external causes.

Conflict	Internal, External, or Both?	Explanation
Nia has spray painted hints that she knows about the Messages at the fountain, the welcome sign, and the flagpole.		
Nia and Sherman were sent to the Listening Room.		
Oscar still loves Nia, even though she's not the same person.		
Mandi and Sherman catch Oscar with M&Ms.		
Oscar has lost all but two M&Ms.		

**Chapters 25–28:  
Mixed Messages  
pages 183–206**

**Before You Read**

**Making Predictions**

Mandi knows something about Oscar that he doesn't want anyone to find out. What do you think she will do with this information?

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**After You Read**

**Checking Predictions**

Before reading you made a prediction about what Mandi would do with what she knows about Oscar. What happened that confirmed or refuted your prediction?

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**Analyzing the Writing: Relationships and Their Effect on Plot**

1. Why does Oscar decide to help Sherman for Mandi?

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2. Why does Oscar think he owes Sherman something, and what does he give to Sherman?

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3. Sometimes Campbell suspects Oscar is up to something, but he always comes around to believing Oscar is infallible. Why do you think this is?

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## Getting to Know the Characters: Character Traits

Even though the Messages brainwash people, each character has core traits that the Messages can't fully affect.

1. What character traits does Nia still possess, even though she has been to the Listening Room?

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2. What traits do Oscar's Messages to Sherman strengthen in Mandi, and how have these traits always been apparent in Mandi's personality?

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3. The way Messages affect people seems to depend a bit on how individuals interpret them. With that in mind, think about Oscar. From the beginning of the story, he has felt compelled to help Nia. Could this be due to a Message Oscar interpreted in a different way than intended? What character trait may have influenced his interpretation? Explain your answer.

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## Responding to the Story

1. Oscar says that Sherman is "like a stain that just keeps spreading." What does he mean by this?

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2. Though Oscar doesn't take free will away from clients who have escaped Candor, he still knows how to influence them. What does he do, and where do you think he learned this trick?

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3. Nia threw away her art, after the Messages started taking hold. However, Mandi kept all of her pageant gear. What does this say about Mandi?

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4. In these chapters, a struggle between Oscar's good and evil sides is apparent. What is evidence of his good side beginning to overcome his evil side?

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## Science Connection

### Sense and Memory

In *Candor*, Oscar tries to make Nia remember her old self by triggering memories attached to the senses of touch and taste. (He hopes the feeling of her feet in the grass and the taste of M&Ms will help her recall who she was before she was brainwashed.)

Find out more about how people associate memories with tastes, feelings, sounds, sights, and smells, as well as how actors use sense memories to help them get into character. Share your findings with your classmates.

**Chapters 29–37:  
Letting Go  
pages 207–249**

**Before You Read  
Making Predictions**

Do you think Campbell is convinced of Oscar’s innocence? Explain your answer.

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**After You Read  
Checking Predictions**

Based on what you read, did you predict accurately about Campbell’s belief in Oscar?

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**Responding to the Story**

1. In Chapter 29, Oscar experiences another water transformation. What does Oscar realize while in the pool behind Nia’s house, and how does the realization change him?

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2. As Oscar prepares for an escape from Candor with Nia, what are signs that he has become less focused on himself?

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3. Did Oscar win or lose his battle against the antagonist in this story? Explain your answer.

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4. Over the course of the story, the extent to which Oscar has free will is called into question. Though his actions and feelings are his own, they are greatly influenced by Messages Campbell used to make Oscar his clone and control Oscar's relationships with people. However, Oscar does something toward the end of the story that is undoubtedly a show of free will. What does he do, and how does it prove he is different from Campbell?

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5. Do you think Oscar can regain his free will after being in the Listening Room? Why or why not?

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## Wrap-up

### Reviewing Predictions

Turn to page 5 of this guide to review your first predictions. How accurate were they?

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### Making Connections

1. Have you ever had to change everything in order to fix something that had gone wrong in your life? What did you change?

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2. Describe a time when you had to put someone else's needs ahead of your own.

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### Thinking About the Genre: Dystopian Fiction

1. This dystopian fiction story is about a hero who struggles against both inner demons and evil forces that are outside of him. What other stories you know that have a hero like Oscar?

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2. Do you think it would be possible for a dystopian society such as the one depicted in *Candor* to exist in the real world? Why or why not?

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## Thinking About Theme

1. Oscar's rebellion ends up having little effect on Campbell and the way Candor is run. However Oscar's fight was still important. Why is this?

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2. What are the problems of living in a society in which one person's ideals effect everyone else who lives there?

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3. Why is free will so important?

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4. Though many of Oscar's actions come close to casting him as a bad character, his motives for these actions are usually understandable. For example, it's easy to identify with Oscar's need to protect himself and desire to keep Nia with him. What does this say about the nature of evil?

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## Library Applications

### Musicians

In *Candor* subliminal messages are fed to people through classical and jazz music. Ask students why they think Pam Bachorz may have chosen these genres as the delivery system for Candor’s Messages. (For example, it may be because both classical and jazz music are noted for being soothing to some listeners.) Then invite students to use the media center to listen to music by the jazz musicians referenced in *Candor* (John Coltrane and Charlie “Bird” Parker), as well as other jazz and classical musicians, such as Thelonious Monk, Johann Sebastian Bach, Ludwig Van Beethoven, and others. As they listen, have students think about how these music styles may have influenced other popular music genres, such as rap, metal, alternative, and blues.

### The Fool

Discuss with students that *The Fool* is a character archetype that originated in dramatic literature and that is particularly noted for appearing in most of William Shakespeare’s plays. Invite students to read a play such as *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night*, *King Lear*, or *As You Like It*, and then write a Response to Literature that compares and contrasts the play’s fool with Sherman from *Candor*.



### Dystopic Literature

Help students form a reading club in which they select a favorite novel of dystopic fiction to discuss in with the group. Some recent examples that you may already have in your library may include:

- The Uglies Trilogy by Scott Westerfeld and Rodrigo Corral
- *The Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire* by Suzanne Collins
- The Maze Runner Trilogy by James Dashner
- *The Ask and the Answer* and *The Knife of Never Letting Go* by Patrick Ness
- Works by Ray Bradbury
- Works by Kurt Vonnegut
- *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley
- Works by Arthur C. Clarke

See **Suggestions for Further Reading** for more examples.

## Suggestions for Further Reading

### Fiction books:

Anderson, M. T. *Feed*. Candlewick, 2004.

Bray, Libba. *Going Bovine*. Delacorte Books for Young Readers, 2009.

Collins, Suzanne. *Hunger Games*. Scholastic Press, 2008.

Farmer, Nancy. *The House of the Scorpion*. Atheneum, 2004.

Green, John. *Paper Towns*. Speak, 2009

Myers, Walter Dean. *Monster*. Amistad, 2001.

Pearson, Mary E. *The Adoration of Jenna Fox*. Square Fish, 2009.

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Simon and Schuster, 2003.

Shusterman, Neal. *Unwind*. Simon and Schuster Children's Publishing, 2009.