Early Life and Name Change: Voltaire was born François-Marie Arouet on November 21, 1694, in Paris, France. He later adopted the pen name "Voltaire," derived from the Latinized spelling of his surname "Arouet le jeune" ("Arouet the young").

Playwright and Satirist: In addition to his work as a philosopher and writer, Voltaire was a prolific playwright and satirist. His comedies, such as "Zaire" and "Candide," were widely acclaimed for their wit and social commentary.

Exile to England: Due to his scathing critiques of the French government and the nobility, Voltaire faced censorship and imprisonment. To avoid further persecution, he spent two years in exile in England, where he was greatly influenced by English philosophers and writers like John Locke and Alexander Pope.

Advocacy for Freedom of Speech: Voltaire was a fervent advocate for freedom of speech and expression. He famously said, "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it," encapsulating his belief in the importance of open dialogue and the exchange of ideas.

Influence on the Enlightenment: Voltaire played a significant role in the Enlightenment, a cultural and intellectual movement in Europe that emphasized reason, science, individual rights, and progress. His writings contributed to shaping the philosophical foundations of the Enlightenment era.

Philosopher and Deist: Voltaire was a deist, believing in a distant, non-interfering creator who set the universe in motion but did not intervene in human affairs. He critiqued religious dogma and the abuses of organized religion, advocating for a more rational and tolerant approach to faith.

Voltaire's Iconic Work "Candide": "Candide, or Optimism," published in 1759, is one of Voltaire's most famous works. It satirizes the optimistic philosophy of Leibniz and critiques the idea that "all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds." The novel's protagonist, Candide, journeys through a series of tragicomic misadventures that challenge his optimistic worldview.

Encyclopédie Collaboration: Voltaire was a contributor to the "Encyclopédie," a monumental collaborative work edited by Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert. This comprehensive encyclopedia aimed to compile and disseminate knowledge and promote Enlightenment ideals.

Correspondence with Frederick the Great: Voltaire maintained a lengthy and engaging correspondence with Frederick II of Prussia, also known as Frederick the Great. Their letters reveal discussions on philosophy, politics, and their shared disdain for religious intolerance.

Lasting Legacy: Voltaire's ideas continue to be influential, and his legacy endures through his literary works and philosophical writings. His impact on the fields of literature, philosophy, and political thought has solidified his status as one of the greatest thinkers of the Enlightenment era.