

# EUROPEAN FICTION

MA English -Semester :Third

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

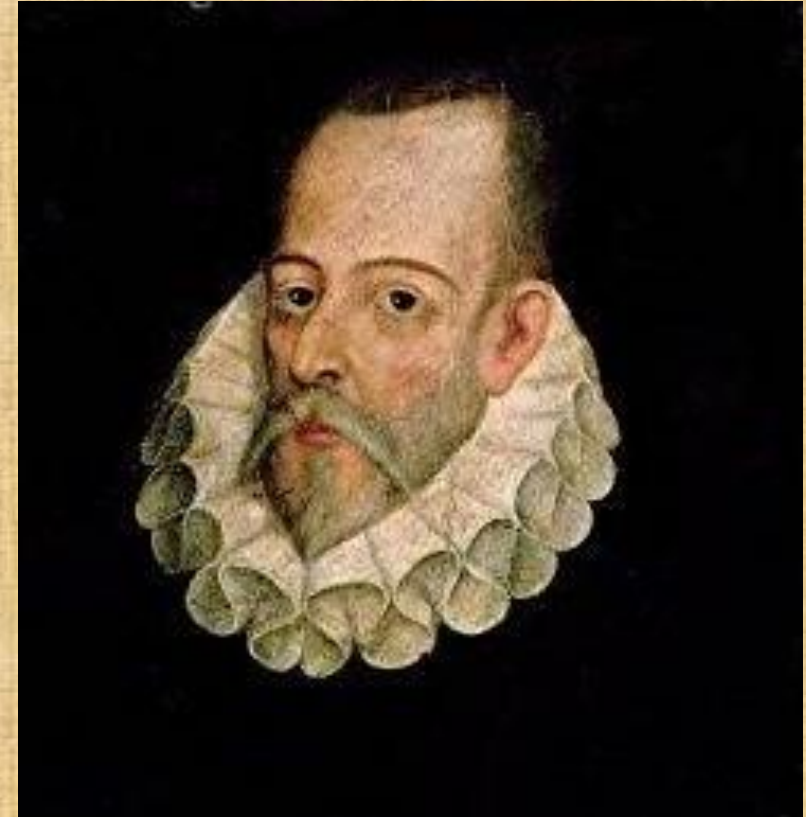
# Don Quixote

Miguel De Cervantes Saavedra



# Miguel De Cervantes Saavedra

- Miguel De Cervantes Saavedra is a Spanish author that until this very day is considered as one of the best writers in Spain, and in world's literary history overall.
- His book Don Quixote is the most translated fiction book of all times the only book that precedes it is the Bible. Although it was written in the past Don Quixote is many times considered as a modern novel.



# Don Quixote- Plot

- Don Quixote is a story about a middle-aged man from La Mancha in Spain who wants to become a knight-errant. He is obsessed with chivalrous books and the ideas that they convey, so one day he decides to live the life he has read about in those books and become a person who will stand in defence of the hopeless and defeat the wicked.
- He, therefore arms himself with a sword and a knight suit, which he considers good, but the readers can see that his arms are made of old garbage material and sets out on his first adventure. On his way, he manages to find a laborer Sancho Panza, whom he persuades to accompany him on his quests as his squire.
- Sancho Panza accepts, but not because of his love for adventure, but because Don Quixote promises to make him a governor of an isle. Don Quixote also finds a horse for himself. It is, of course, an old horse, but he gives the name Rocinante because he believes it sounds well and powerful.

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- Sancho and Rocinante will accompany him until the end of his adventures. Of course, like all knights, he also needs a woman. So he finds a peasant woman whom he names Dulcinea del Toboso and thinks of her as a princess. The character of Dulcinea is interesting since the Dulcinea from his imagination has nothing to do with the person he connects her to in reality. She is much more of an imaginary person than a real one since she barely even shows up in the book.
- And even when she does, she is a manly woman, nothing like the princess Don Quixote thinks of. His thoughts of her are so different from the reality that even Sancho Panza does not realize that the peasant woman and the Dulcinea from Don Quixote's talks are the same people.
- Then, he begins riding around the country trying to find events in which he can shine – moments in which people need his help. The book consists of two parts which tell the stories of the people Don Quixote meets on his journey. Sancho Panza is a complete opposite of him: he is a character based in reality but decides not to oppose Don Quixote's imagination, since he is an opportunist who decided to accompany him because of the reward he expects in the end.

# Summary

- Don Quixote is a middle-aged gentleman from the region of La Mancha in central Spain. Obsessed with the chivalrous ideals touted in books he has read, he decides to take up his lance and sword to defend the helpless and destroy the wicked. After a first failed adventure, he sets out on a second one with a somewhat befuddled laborer named Sancho Panza, whom he has persuaded to accompany him as his faithful squire.
- In return for Sancho's services, Don Quixote promises to make Sancho the wealthy governor of an isle. On his horse, Rocinante, a barn nag well past his prime, Don Quixote rides the roads of Spain in search of glory and grand adventure. He gives up food, shelter, and comfort, all in the name of a peasant woman, Dulcinea del Toboso, whom he envisions as a princess.



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- On his second expedition, Don Quixote becomes more of a bandit than a savior, stealing from and hurting baffled and justifiably angry citizens while acting out against what he perceives as threats to his knighthood or to the world. Don Quixote abandons a boy, leaving him in the hands of an evil farmer simply because the farmer swears an oath that he will not harm the boy.
- He steals a barber's basin that he believes to be the mythic Mambrino's helmet, and he becomes convinced of the healing powers of the Balsam of Fierbras, an elixir that makes him so ill that, by comparison, he later feels healed. Sancho stands by Don Quixote, often bearing the brunt of the punishments that arise from Don Quixote's behavior.
- The story of Don Quixote's deeds includes the stories of those he meets on his journey. Don Quixote witnesses the funeral of a student who dies as a result of his love for a disdainful lady turned shepherdess.
- He frees a wicked and devious galley slave, Gines de Pasamonte, and unwittingly reunites two bereaved couples, Cardenio and Lucinda, and Ferdinand and Dorothea. Torn apart by Ferdinand's treachery, the four lovers finally come together at an inn where Don Quixote sleeps, dreaming that he is battling a giant.

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- Along the way, the simple Sancho plays the straight man to Don Quixote, trying his best to correct his master's outlandish fantasies. Two of Don Quixote's friends, the priest and the barber, come to drag him home. Believing that he is under the force of an enchantment, he accompanies them, thus ending his second expedition and the First Part of the novel.
- The Second Part of the novel begins with a passionate invective against a phony sequel of Don Quixote that was published in the interim between Cervantes's two parts. Everywhere Don Quixote goes, his reputation gleaned by others from both the real and the false versions of the story precedes him.





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- As the two embark on their journey, Sancho lies to Don Quixote, telling him that an evil enchanter has transformed Dulcinea into a peasant girl. Undoing this enchantment, in which even Sancho comes to believe, becomes Don Quixote's chief goal.
- Don Quixote meets a Duke and Duchess who conspire to play tricks on him. They make a servant dress up as Merlin, for example, and tell Don Quixote that Dulcinea's enchantment which they know to be a hoax can be undone only if Sancho whips himself 3,300 times on his naked backside.
- Under the watch of the Duke and Duchess, Don Quixote and Sancho undertake several adventures. They set out on a flying wooden horse, hoping to slay a giant who has turned a princess and her lover into metal figurines and bearded the princess's female servants.

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- During his stay with the Duke, Sancho becomes governor of a fictitious isle. He rules for ten days until he is wounded in an onslaught the Duke and Duchess sponsor for their entertainment. Sancho reasons that it is better to be a happy laborer than a miserable governor. A young maid at the Duchess's home falls in love with Don Quixote, but he remains a staunch worshipper of Dulcinea.
- Their never-consummated affair amuses the court to no end. Finally, Don Quixote sets out again on his journey, but his demise comes quickly. Shortly after his arrival in Barcelona, the Knight of the White Moon actually an old friend in disguise—vanquishes him.
- Cervantes relates the story of Don Quixote as a history, which he claims he has translated from a manuscript written by a Moor named Cide Hamete Benengeli. Cervantes becomes a party to his own fiction, even allowing Sancho and Don Quixote to modify their own histories and comment negatively upon the false history published in their names.
- In the end, the beaten and battered Don Quixote forswears all the chivalric truths he followed so fervently and dies from a fever. With his death, knights-errant become extinct. Benengeli returns at the end of the novel to tell us that illustrating the demise of chivalry was his main purpose in writing the history of Don Quixote.

# Themes

- The novel's structure is episodic in form. The full title is indicative of the tale's object, as ingenioso (Spanish) means quick with inventiveness marking the transition of modern literature from dramatic to thematic unity. The novel takes place over a long period of time, including many adventures united by common themes of the nature of reality, reading, and dialogue in general.
- Although burlesque on the surface, the novel, especially in its second half, has served as an important thematic source not only in literature but also in much of art and music, inspiring works by Pablo Picasso and Richard Strauss. The contrasts between the tall, thin, fancy-struck and idealistic Quixote and the fat, squat, world-weary Panza is a motif echoed ever since the book's publication, and Don Quixote's imaginings are the butt of outrageous and cruel practical jokes in the novel.

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- Even faithful and simple Sancho is forced to deceive him at certain points. The novel is considered a satire of orthodoxy veracity and even nationalism. In exploring the individualism of his characters, Cervantes helped move beyond the narrow literary conventions of the chivalric literature that he spoofed which consists of straightforward retelling of a series of acts that redound to the knightly virtues of the hero. The character of Don Quixote became so well known in its time that the word quixotic was quickly adopted by many languages. Characters such as Sancho Panza and Don Quixote's steed, Rocinate are emblems of Western literary culture. The phrase tilting at windmills to describe an act of attacking imaginary enemies derives from an iconic scene in the book.
- It stands in a unique position between medieval chivalric romance and the modern novel. The former consist of disconnected stories featuring the same characters and settings with little exploration of the inner life of even the main character. The latter are usually focused on the psychological evolution of their characters. In Part I, Quixote imposes himself on his environment. By Part II, people know about him through "having read his adventures", and so, he needs to do less to maintain his image. By his deathbed, he has regained his sanity, and is once more "Alonso Quixano the Good"

# Characters

## ➤ **Don Quixote**

The novel's tragicomic hero. Don Quixote's main quest in life is to revive knight-errantry in a world devoid of chivalric virtues and values. He believes only what he chooses to believe and sees the world very differently from most people. Honest, dignified, proud, and idealistic, he wants to save the world. As intelligent as he is mad, Don Quixote starts out as an absurd and isolated figure and ends up as a pitiable and lovable old man whose strength and wisdom have failed him.

## ➤ **Sancho Panza**

The peasant labourer greedy but kind, faithful but cowardly whom Don Quixote takes as his squire. A representation of the common man, Sancho is a foil to Don Quixote and virtually every other character in the novel. His proverb-ridden peasant's wisdom and self-sacrificing Christian behavior prove to be the novel's most insightful and honorable worldview. He has an awestruck love for Don Quixote but grows self-confident and saucy, ending the novel by advising his master in matters of deep personal philosophy.

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➤ **Rocinante**

Don Quixote's barn horse. Rocinante is slow but faithful, and he is as worn out as Don Quixote is.

➤ **Dapple**

Sancho's donkey. Dapple's disappearance and reappearance is the subject of much controversy both within the story and within the literary criticism concerning Don Quixote.

➤ **Cide Hamete Benengeli**

The fictional writer of Moorish descent from whose manuscripts Cervantes supposedly translates the novel. Cervantes uses the figure of Benengeli to comment on the ideas of authorship and literature explored in the novel and to critique historians. Benengeli's opinions, bound in his so-called historical text, show his contempt for those who write about chivalry falsely and with embellishment.

➤ **The priest**

A friend of Don Quixote's. The priest disapproves of fictional books that, in his opinion, negatively influence society. Nonetheless, he enjoys tales of chivalry so much that he cannot throw them away. Moreover, despite his social conscience, he enjoys Don Quixote's madness at times

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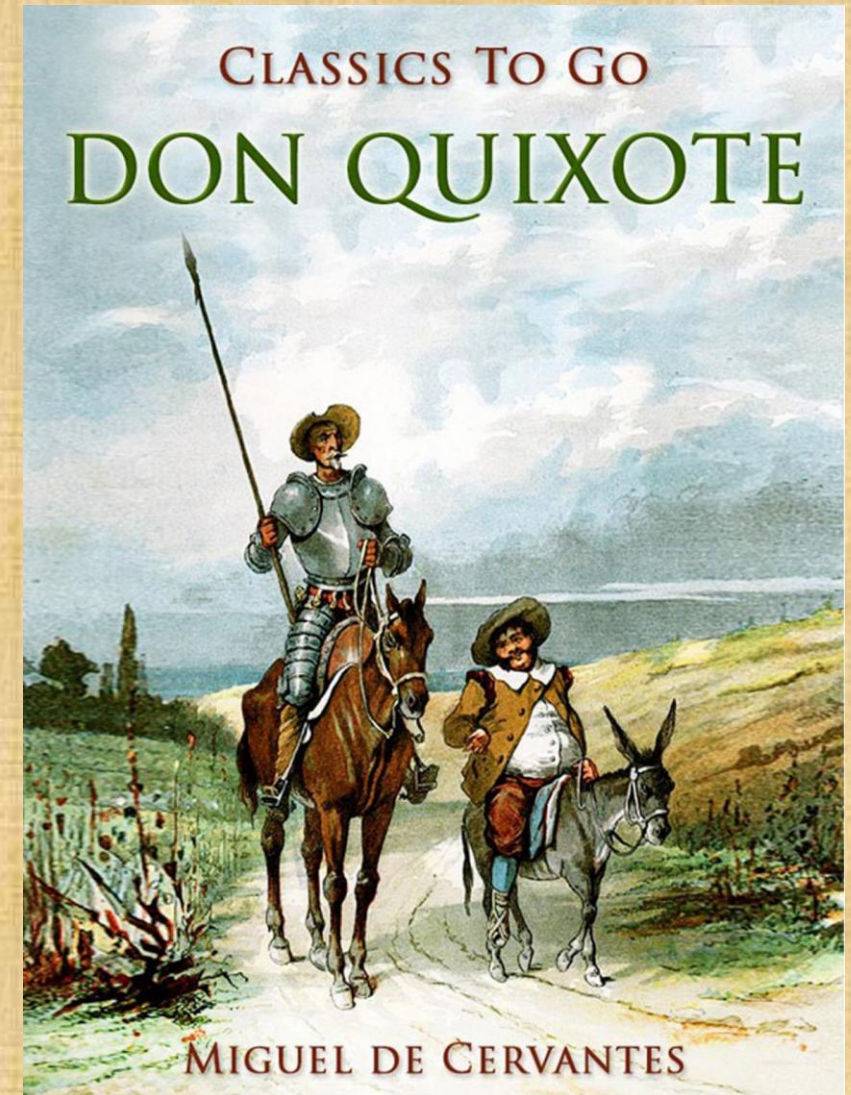
➤ **Dulcinea del Toboso**

The unseen force driving all of Don Quixote's adventures. Dulcinea, a peasant woman whom Don Quixote envisions as his ladylove, has no knowledge of his chivalric dedication to her. Though constantly mentioned and centrally important to the novel, she never appears as a physical character.

➤ **Cervantes**

The supposed translator of Benengeli's historical novel, who interjects his opinions into the novel at key times. Cervantes intentionally creates the impression that he did not invent the character of Don Quixote. Like Benengeli, Cervantes is not physically present but is a character nonetheless. In his prologues, dedications, and invention of Benengeli, Cervantes enhances the self-referential nature of the novel and forces us to think about literature's purpose and limitations.

EUROPEAN FICTION



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➤ **The Duke and Duchess**

The cruel and haughty contrivers of the adventures that occupy Don Quixote for the majority of the novel's Second Part. Bored and snobby, the Duke and Duchess feign interest in Don Quixote and Sancho but continually play pranks on them for their personal entertainment. The Duke and Duchess spend so much money and effort on their ploys that they seem as mad as Don Quixote.

➤ **Altisidora**

The Duchess's bratty maid. Altisidora pretends to love Don Quixote, mocking his concept of romantic love.

➤ **Sampson Carrasco**

A sarcastic student from Don Quixote's village. Sampson mocks Don Quixote at first but loses to him in combat and then dedicates himself to revenge. Self-important and stuffy, Sampson fails to grasp the often playful nature of Don Quixote's madness.

➤ **Ferdinand**

An arrogant young duke who steals Lucinda from Cardenio with no remorse



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➤ **The barber**

Don Quixote's friend who recognizes Quixote's madness but intervenes only to help the priest carry out his plans. The barber strenuously disapproves of Don Quixote's chivalry.

➤ **Teresa Panza**

Sancho's good-hearted wife. Teresa speaks in proverbs, exhibiting more wisdom than most other characters. Unambitious but a bit greedy, she endures Sancho's exploits and supports him with her prayers.

➤ **Cardenio**

An honorable man who is driven mad by the infidelities of his wife, Lucinda, and the treachery of a duke, Ferdinand. Cardenio is the quintessential romantic lover.

➤ **Lucinda**

Cardenio's wife. Silent and beautiful, Lucinda is a model of the courtly woman. Docile and innocent, she obliges her parents and her lover.

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➤ **Dorothea**

Ferdinand's faithful and persistent love. Dorothea flouts tradition to hunt down Ferdinand when he takes her chastity but refuses to marry her. Deceptive and cunning, smart and aggressive, Dorothea is not the typical female character of her time.

➤ **Countess Trifaldi**

A fictitious maidservant in distress who is impersonated by the Duke's steward. The countess's sob story sends Don Quixote and Sancho off on their expedition on the wooden horse. She is more ridiculous and fantastic than anyone except Don Quixote.

➤ **Gines de Pasamonte**

An ungrateful galley slave whom Don Quixote frees. Gines appears mostly for comic relief, but his justifications for his crimes force us to be more critical of Don Quixote's justifications for his crimes.

➤ **Roque Guinart**

A chivalrous bandit. Inherently conflicted, Roque believes in justice and generosity but kills an underling who challenges him for being so generous to others.

# Critical Essays Purpose of Don Quixote

- Cervantes himself states that he wrote Don Quixote in order to undermine the influence of those vain and empty books of chivalry as well as to provide some merry, original, and sometimes prudent material for his readers' entertainment. Whether or not the author truly believed the superficiality of his own purpose is immaterial; in fact, Cervantes did make a complete end to further publications of chivalric romances.
- Despite the harmful extravagances of these novels, this form of writing has one advantage over more truthful literary forms, Cervantes writes in the latter section of Part I, for chivalry "offers a wide and spacious meadow through which the pen may run without any hindrance." Perhaps Don Quixote owes his genesis to these notions of his author. But as Cervantes launches his idealistic and possessed hero on a career open to public contempt, the possibilities of a many leveled, kaleidoscopic theme must have become apparent very early.

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