CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

Don Quixote

Miguel de Cervantes · *1605–1615 · John Ormsby translation*

A country gentleman reads so many romances of chivalry that he loses his wits and rides out as a knight-errant, with the peasant Sancho Panza as his squire. Mocked, beaten and deceived, he still keeps faith with courtesy, courage and his lady — and at the end, restored to his reason, he dies a penitent Christian.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What separates noble ideals from foolish illusions — and how should a good man live in the real world?

"Bear in mind, Sancho, that one man is no more than another, unless he does more than another"

Don Quixote · Part I, ch. XVIII

Don Quixote's madness is false, but his virtues are true: courtesy, courage, loyalty and mercy. The novel ends by turning him from fantasy to repentance, keeping the goodness and casting off the illusion.

KEY CHARACTERS

Don Quixote
illusion joined to real virtue

Sancho Panza
earthy sense, growing loyalty

Dulcinea del Toboso
the lady he imagines

Rocinante & Dapple
the knight's nag, the squire's donkey

The curate & the barber
friends who try to bring him home

Samson Carrasco
the scholar who defeats him

The Duke & Duchess
wealth that amuses itself with cruelty

Antonia & the housekeeper
the household that loves him

COUNSEL TO A GOVERNOR

> *"First of all, my son, thou must fear God, for in the fear of him is wisdom, and being wise thou canst not err in aught."*
>
> **Don Quixote to Sancho** · Part II, ch. XLII

> *"Freedom, Sancho, is one of the most precious gifts that heaven has bestowed upon men"*
>
> **Don Quixote** · Part II, ch. LVIII

Grades 10–12
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01 The Madness

PART I, CH. I–VII

A gentleman reads himself into a knight.

- **Alonso Quixano**, a gentleman of La Mancha, loses his wits over books of chivalry
- He renames himself **Don Quixote**, his nag **Rocinante**, and a farm girl his lady **Dulcinea**
- An innkeeper "knights" him in a mock ceremony
- His friends the curate and the barber burn his books
- He recruits **Sancho Panza**, promising him an island to govern

02 On the Road

PART I, CH. VIII–XXII

Giants that are windmills, armies that are sheep.

- He charges the windmills and is flung to the ground
- He attacks flocks of sheep as enemy armies
- A barber's basin becomes the golden helmet of Mambrino
- Sancho names him the Knight of the Rueful Countenance
- He frees a chain of galley slaves, who stone him in return

> *"look there, friend Sancho Panza, where thirty or more monstrous giants present themselves"*
>
> **Don Quixote, seeing windmills** · Part I, ch. VIII

03 The Mountains and the Inn

PART I, CH. XXIII–LII

Other people's troubles, and a trip home in a cage.

- He does penance for Dulcinea in the Sierra Morena
- Tangled love stories — Cardenio, Dorotea, Luscinda and Don Fernando — meet at an inn
- Wrongs are confessed and the lovers are reconciled
- The curate and the barber carry him home in a cage on an ox-cart

> *"Each of us is the son of his own works"*
>
> **Sancho Panza** · Part I, ch. XLVII

04 Fame and Mockery

PART II, CH. I–XLI

The world has read Part I, and plays along.

- Their adventures are already a printed book
- The bachelor **Samson Carrasco**, as the Knight of the Mirrors, tries to defeat him and is beaten
- Sancho passes off a peasant girl as Dulcinea, "enchanted"
- A **Duke and Duchess** stage elaborate pranks to mock them

05 Sancho Governs

PART II, CH. XLII–LVII

The simple squire proves a just ruler.

- Don Quixote gives Sancho wise counsel for ruling
- Made "governor" of Barataria as a joke, Sancho judges with sense and fairness
- After a staged night attack he gives up the office
- He leaves as poor and honest as he came

> *"naked I was born, naked I find myself, I neither lose nor gain"*
>
> **Sancho, resigning** · Part II, ch. LIII

06 Return and Repentance

PART II, CH. LVIII–LXXIV

Defeat, homecoming, and a good death.

- In Barcelona, Carrasco returns as the Knight of the White Moon and defeats him
- He must go home and give up arms for a year
- At home he falls ill and recovers his reason
- He renounces the books of chivalry, confesses, and makes his will
- He dies as Alonso Quixano the Good, with Sancho weeping at his side

> *"I was mad, now I am in my senses; I was Don Quixote of La Mancha, I am now, as I said, Alonso Quixano the Good"*
>
> **On his deathbed** · Part II, ch. LXXIV

Ideals & Illusion | Honor & Courtesy | Friendship | Justice | Reading & Imagination | Repentance

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 10–12

1. Laugh — Cervantes means you to — but notice when Don Quixote is right and the "sane" people are cruel.
2. Watch Sancho change. When does he begin to speak like his master, and his master like him?
3. Compare the Duke and Duchess with the people who love Don Quixote. Who is truly courteous?
4. Read Don Quixote's counsel to Sancho (Part II, ch. XLII) as real advice. Which of it would you keep?
5. Ask what kind of reading made him mad, and what kind of reading forms good judgment.
6. At his death, ask what he gives up and what he keeps.

Quotations are verbatim from the John Ormsby translation, Project Gutenberg #996, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/don-quixote/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.