

Don Quixote

Miguel de Cervantes

Part 1, Chapter 1

In a village of La Mancha¹ the name of which I have no desire to recall, there lived not so long ago one of those gentlemen who always have a lance in the rack, an ancient buckler,² a skinny nag, and a greyhound for the chase. A stew with more beef than mutton in it, chopped meat for his evening meal, scraps for a Saturday, lentils on Friday, and a young pigeon as a special delicacy for Sunday, went to account for three-quarters of his income.

The rest of it he laid out on a broadcloth greatcoat³ and velvet stockings for feast days, with slippers to match, while the other days of the week he cut a figure in a suit of the finest homespun. Living with him were a housekeeper in her forties, a niece who was not yet twenty, and a lad of the field and market place who saddled his horse for him and wielded the pruning knife.

This gentleman of ours was close on to fifty, of a robust constitution but with little flesh on his bones and a face that was lean and gaunt. He was noted for his early rising, being very fond of the hunt. They will try to tell you that his surname was Quijada or Quesada—there is some difference of opinion among those who have written on the subject—but according to the most likely conjectures we are to understand that it was really Quejana.⁴ But all this means very little so far as our story is concerned, providing that in the telling of it we do not depart one iota from the truth. **A**

20 You may know, then, that the aforesaid gentleman, on those occasions when he was at leisure, which was most of the year around, was in the habit of reading books of chivalry with such pleasure and devotion as to lead him almost wholly to forget the life of a hunter and even the administration of his estate. So great was his curiosity and infatuation in this regard that he even sold many acres of tillable land in order to be able to buy and read the books that he loved, and he would carry home with him as many of them as he could obtain.

ANALYZE VISUALS

What details in this photograph evoke the heroic image of the ideal knight?

A PARODY

Reread the opening paragraphs. Compare this passage with the idealized descriptions of Malory's heroes. What details establish a pointed contrast with the romance hero?

1. **La Mancha:** a high, flat, barren region in central Spain.
2. **buckler:** a small, round shield carried or worn on the arm.
3. **broadcloth greatcoat:** a heavy wool overcoat.
4. **Quijada** (kē-hă'dă) . . . **Quesada** (kě-să'dă) . . . **Quejana** (kě-hă'nă).

John Lithgow in the TNT production of *Don Quixote*

Of all those that he thus devoured none pleased him so well as the ones that had been composed by the famous Feliciano de Silva,⁵ whose lucid prose style and involved conceits⁶ were as precious to him as pearls; especially when he
30 came to read those tales of love and amorous challenges that are to be met with in many places, such a passage as the following, for example: “The reason of the unreason that afflicts my reason, in such a manner weakens my reason that I with reason lament me of your comeliness.” And he was similarly affected when his eyes fell upon such lines as these: “. . . the high Heaven of your divinity divinely fortifies you with the stars and renders you deserving of that desert your greatness doth deserve.”

The poor fellow used to lie awake nights in an effort to disentangle the meaning and make sense out of passages such as these, although Aristotle⁷ himself would not have been able to understand them, even if he had been
40 **resurrected** for that sole purpose. He was not at ease in his mind over those wounds that Don Belianís⁸ gave and received; for no matter how great the surgeons who treated him, the poor fellow must have been left with his face and his entire body covered with marks and scars. Nevertheless, he was grateful to the author for closing the book with the promise of an interminable adventure to come; many a time he was tempted to take up his pen and literally finish the tale as had been promised, and he undoubtedly would have done so, and would have succeeded at it very well, if his thoughts had not been constantly occupied with other things of greater moment. **B**

He often talked it over with the village curate,⁹ who was a learned man, a
50 graduate of Sigüenza,¹⁰ and they would hold long discussions as to who had been the better knight, Palmerin of England or Amadis of Gaul; but Master Nicholas, the barber of the same village, was in the habit of saying that no one could come up to the Knight of Phoebus,¹¹ and that if anyone could compare with him it was Don Galaor, brother of Amadis of Gaul, for Galaor was ready for anything—he was none of your finical¹² knights, who went around whimpering as his brother did, and in point of valor he did not lag behind him.

In short, our gentleman became so immersed in his reading that he spent whole nights from sundown to sunup and his days from dawn to dusk in poring over his books, until, finally, from so little sleeping and so much
60 reading, his brain dried up and he went completely out of his mind. He had

resurrect (rēz'ə-rēkt') v.
to bring back to life

B PARODY
Describe the **tone** of lines 27–48. How does the narrator seem to view books of chivalry and Quejana's passion for them?

5. **Feliciano de Silva**: a Spanish author of fictional books about knights.

6. **conceits**: lengthy, exaggerated comparisons.

7. **Aristotle**: a Greek philosopher (384–322 B.C.) widely known for his wisdom.

8. **Don Belianís** (dōn bē-lyā-nēs'): the hero of a chivalric romance.

9. **curate** (kyōōr'īt): a religious official in charge of a parish.

10. **Sigüenza** (sē-gwēn'sä): a “minor” university of Spain, whose graduates were often mocked.

11. **Palmerin of England . . . Amadis** (ä'mə-dīs) **of Gaul . . . Knight of Phoebus** (fē'bēs): romance heroes who exemplified knightly perfection.

12. **finical** (fīn'ī-kəl): finicky; picky.

filled his imagination with everything that he had read, with enchantments, knightly encounters, battles, challenges, wounds, with tales of love and its torments, and all sorts of impossible things, and as a result had come to believe that all these **fictitious** happenings were true; they were more real to him than anything else in the world. He would remark that the Cid Ruy Díaz¹³ had been a very good knight, but there was no comparison between him and the Knight of the Flaming Sword,¹⁴ who with a single backward stroke had cut in half two fierce and monstrous giants. He preferred Bernardo del Carpio,¹⁵ who at Roncesvalles had slain Roland despite the charm the latter bore, availing
70 himself of the stratagem which Hercules employed when he strangled Antaeus, the son of Earth, in his arms.

fictitious (fĭk-tĭsh'əs) *adj.*
fabricated; created by the imagination

He had much good to say for Morgante¹⁶ who, though he belonged to the haughty, overbearing race of giants, was of an **affable** disposition and well brought up. But, above all, he cherished an admiration for Rinaldo of Montalbán,¹⁷ especially as he beheld him sallying forth from his castle to rob all those that crossed his path, or when he thought of him overseas stealing the image of Mohammed which, so the story has it, was all of gold. And he would have liked very well to have had his fill of kicking that traitor Galalón,¹⁸ a privilege for which he would have given his housekeeper with his niece
80 thrown into the bargain.

affable (ăf'ə-bəl) *adj.*
warm and friendly

At last, when his wits were gone beyond repair, he came to conceive the strangest idea that ever occurred to any madman in this world. It now appeared to him fitting and necessary, in order to win a greater amount of honor for himself and serve his country at the same time, to become a knight-errant¹⁹ and roam the world on horseback, in a suit of armor; he would go in quest of adventures, by way of putting into practice all that he had read in his books; he would right every manner of wrong, placing himself in situations of the greatest peril such as would redound²⁰ to the eternal glory of his name. As a reward for his valor and the might of his arm, the poor fellow could already
90 see himself crowned Emperor of Trebizond²¹ at the very least; and so, carried away by the strange pleasure that he found in such thoughts as these, he at once set about putting his plan into effect.

13. **Cid Ruy Díaz** (sēd' rwē' dē'ās): Rodrigo (or Ruy) Díaz de Vivar, known as the Cid, was an actual Spanish military leader and national hero about whom an epic poem was written.

14. **Knight of the Flaming Sword**: Amadis of Greece, a romance hero whose symbol was a red sword.

15. **Bernardo del Carpio** (kär'pyô): a legendary Spanish hero who, in some tales, killed the hero of *The Song of Roland* by strangling him in midair, as Hercules had done to the giant Antaeus.

16. **Morgante** (môr-găn'tě): a ferocious giant, in an Italian romantic poem, who later became sweet and loving.

17. **Rinaldo of Montalbán** (môn-täl-băn'): the hero in a series of French epic poems.

18. **Galalón** (gä-lä-lôn'): Ganelon, the stepfather and betrayer of Roland, the French epic hero.

19. **knight-errant**: a knight who wanders the countryside in search of adventure to prove his chivalry.

20. **redound**: contribute.

21. **Trebizond**: a former Greek empire, often mentioned in stories of knighthood.

burnish (bûr'nîsh) v.
to polish

The first thing he did was to **burnish** up some old pieces of armor, left him by his great-grandfather, which for ages had lain in a corner, moldering and forgotten. He polished and adjusted them as best he could, and then he noticed that one very important thing was lacking: there was no closed helmet, but only a morion, or visorless headpiece, with turned up brim of the kind foot soldiers wore. His ingenuity, however, enabled him to remedy this, and he proceeded to fashion out of cardboard a kind of half-helmet, which, when
100 attached to the morion, gave the appearance of a whole one. True, when he went to see if it was strong enough to withstand a good slashing blow, he was somewhat disappointed; for when he drew his sword and gave it a couple of thrusts, he succeeded only in undoing a whole week's labor. The ease with which he had hewed it to bits disturbed him no little, and he decided to make it over. This time he placed a few strips of iron on the inside, and then, convinced that it was strong enough, refrained from putting it to any further test; instead, he adopted it then and there as the finest helmet ever made.

After this, he went out to have a look at his nag; and although the animal had more *cuartos*, or cracks, in its hoof than there are quarters in a real,²²
110 and more blemishes than Gonela's steed²³ which *tantum pellis et ossa fuit*,²⁴ it nonetheless looked to its master like a far better horse than Alexander's Bucephalus or the Babieca of the Cid.²⁵ He spent all of four days in trying to think up a name for his mount; for—so he told himself—seeing that it belonged to so famous and worthy a knight, there was no reason why it should not have a name of equal renown. The kind of name he wanted was one that would at once indicate what the nag had been before it came to belong to a knight-errant and what its present status was; for it stood to reason that, when the master's worldly condition changed, his horse also ought to have a famous, high-sounding appellation, one suited to the new order of things and the new
120 profession that it was to follow.

After he in his memory and imagination had made up, struck out, and discarded many names, now adding to and now subtracting from the list, he finally hit upon "Rocinante," a name that impressed him as being sonorous and at the same time indicative of what the steed had been when it was but a hack, whereas now it was nothing other than the first and foremost of all the hacks²⁶ in the world. **C**

Having found a name for his horse that pleased his fancy, he then desired to do as much for himself, and this required another week, and by the end of that period he had made up his mind that he was henceforth to be known as

C PARODY
What does the horse's name imply about the hero's lofty goals?

22. **quarters in a real** (râ-âl'): A real was a coin worth about five cents.

23. **Gonela's steed**: the horse of the Italian court comedian Pietro Gonela, which was famous for having gas.

24. **tantum pellis et ossa fuit** *Latin*: was only skin and bones.

25. **Alexander's Bucephalus** (byoo-sëf'ə-ləs) **or the Babieca** (bâ-byë'kâ) **of the Cid**: famous horses. Alexander is Alexander the Great, the early conqueror of Asia.

26. **Rocinante** (rô-së-nän'të) . . . **foremost of all the hacks**: *Rocin* means "nag" or "hack" in Spanish; *ante* means "before" or "first." So the name Rocinante indicates that the horse is the first, or chief, nag.

130 Don Quixote,²⁷ which, as has been stated, has led the authors of this veracious history to assume that his real name must undoubtedly have been Quijada, and not Quesada as others would have it. But remembering that the valiant Amadis was not content to call himself that and nothing more, but added the name of his kingdom and fatherland that he might make it famous also, and thus came to take the name Amadis of Gaul, so our good knight chose to add his place of origin
140 and become “Don Quixote de la Mancha”; for by this means, as he saw it, he was making very plain his lineage and was conferring honor upon his country by taking its name as his own.

And so, having polished up his armor and made the morion over into a closed helmet, and having given himself and his horse a name, he naturally found but one thing lacking still: he must seek out a lady of whom he could become enamored; for a knight-errant without a ladylove was like a tree
150 without leaves or fruit, a body without a soul.

“If,” he said to himself, “as a punishment for my sins or by a stroke of fortune I should come upon some giant hereabouts, a thing that very commonly happens to knights-errant, and if I should slay him in a hand-to-hand encounter or perhaps cut him in two, or, finally, if I should vanquish and subdue him, would it not be well to have someone to whom I may send him as a present, in order that he, if he is living, may come in, fall upon his knees in front of my sweet lady, and say in a humble and submissive tone of voice, ‘I, lady, am the giant Caraculiambro,²⁸ lord of the island Malindrania, who has been overcome in
160 single combat by that knight who never can be praised enough, Don Quixote de la Mancha, the same who sent me to present myself before your Grace that your Highness may dispose of me as you see fit?’” **D**

Oh, how our good knight reveled in this speech, and more than ever when he came to think of the name that he should give his lady! As the story goes, there was a very good-looking farm girl who lived near by, with whom he had once been smitten, although it is generally believed that she never knew or suspected it. Her name was Aldonza Lorenzo, and it seemed to him that she was the one upon whom he should bestow the title of mistress of his thoughts. For her he wished a name that should not be **incongruous** with his
170 own and that would convey the suggestion of a princess or a great lady; and,



John Lithgow and Vanessa Williams in the TNT production of *Don Quixote*

D PARODY

Reread lines 127–162, and note Cervantes’s imitation of the style of medieval romance. What romance conventions does Cervantes mock here?

incongruous

(in-kong’grō-əs) *adj.*
unsuitable; incompatible

27. **Quixote** (kē-hō’tē): The word literally denotes a piece of armor that protects the thigh.

28. **Caraculiambro** (kā-rā-kōō-lyām’brō).

accordingly, he resolved to call her “Dulcinea del Toboso,”²⁹ she being a native of that place. A musical name to his ears, out of the ordinary and significant, like the others he had chosen for himself and his appurtenances.³⁰

After completing his preparations, Don Quixote sets off on his first adventure, which lasts three days. He persuades an innkeeper to dub him a knight. Then he “rescues” a servant boy from his master’s beating, but as soon as “our knight” leaves, the master beats the boy even harder. Next, Don Quixote mistakes a traveling group of merchants for hostile knights. After insulting the merchants for failing to swear to the beauty of Dulcinea del Toboso, he is badly beaten. A neighbor finds him on the road and carries him home, to the great relief of his family and friends. They blame Don Quixote’s mad behavior on his reading habits, so for his own good they decide to burn his books.

❧ from Part 1, Chapter 7 ❧

. . . That night the housekeeper burned all the books there were in the stable yard and in all the house; and there must have been some that went up in smoke which should have been preserved in everlasting archives, if the one who did the scrutinizing had not been so indolent. Thus we see the truth of the old saying, to the effect that the innocent must sometimes pay for the sins of the guilty.

180 One of the things that the curate and the barber advised as a remedy for their friend’s sickness was to wall up the room where the books had been, so that, when he arose, he would not find them missing—it might be that the cause being removed, the effect would cease—and they could tell him that a magician had made away with them, room and all. This they proceeded to do as quickly as possible. Two days later, when Don Quixote rose from his bed, the first thing he did was to go have a look at his library, and, not finding it where he had left it, he went from one part of the house to another searching for it. Going up to where the door had been, he ran his hands over the wall and rolled his eyes in every direction without saying a word; but after some little while he asked the housekeeper where his study was with all his books.

190 She had been well instructed in what to answer him. “Whatever study is your Grace talking about?” she said. “There is no study, and no books, in this house; the devil took them all away.”

“No,” said the niece, “it was not the devil but an enchanter who came upon a cloud one night, the day after your Grace left here; dismounting from a serpent that he rode, he entered your study, and I don’t know what all he did there, but after a bit he went flying off through the roof, leaving the house full of smoke;

29. **Dulcinea del Toboso** (dōōl-sē-ně’ā dēl tō-bō’sō): The name comes from *dulce*, the Spanish word for sweet.

30. **appurtenances**: appendages; accessories.

and when we went to see what he had done, there was no study and not a book in sight. There is one thing, though, that the housekeeper and I remember very well: at the time that wicked old fellow left, he cried out in a loud voice that it
 200 was all on account of a secret **enmity** that he bore the owner of those books and that study, and that was why he had done the mischief in this house which we would discover. He also said that he was called Muñatón the Magician.”

“Frestón, he should have said,” remarked Don Quixote.

“I can’t say as to that,” replied the housekeeper, “whether he was called Frestón or Fritón;³¹ all I know is that his name ended in a *tón*.”

“So it does,” said Don Quixote. “He is a wise enchanter, a great enemy of mine, who has a grudge against me because he knows by his arts and learning that in the course of time I am to fight in single combat with a knight whom
 210 he favors, and that I am to be the victor and he can do nothing to prevent it. For this reason he seeks to cause me all the trouble that he can, but I am warning him that it will be hard to gainsay or shun that which Heaven has ordained.” . . . **E**

In the meanwhile Don Quixote was bringing his powers of persuasion to bear upon a farmer who lived near by, a good man—if this title may be applied to one who is poor—but with very few wits in his head. The short of it is, by pleas and promises, he got the **hapless** rustic to agree to ride forth with him and serve him as his squire. Among other things, Don Quixote told him that

enmity (ĕn’mĭ-tĕ) *n.*
 hostility and ill will

E PARODY
 Would Don Quixote’s response in lines 206–212 make sense in the context of a traditional romance? Explain.

hapless (hăp’lĭs) *adj.*
 pitiful; unfortunate

31. **Frestón** (frĕs-tôn’) or **Fritón** (frĕ-tôn’): Frestón, a magician, was thought to be the author of *History of Belianís of Greece*.



Bob Hoskins and John Lithgow in the TNT production of *Don Quixote*

he ought to be more than willing to go, because no telling what adventure might occur which would win them an island, and then he (the farmer) would
220 be left to be the governor of it. As a result of these and other similar assurances, Sancho Panza forsook his wife and children and consented to take upon himself the duties of squire to his neighbor.

Next, Don Quixote set out to raise some money, and by selling this thing and pawning that and getting the worst of the bargain always, he finally scraped together a reasonable amount. He also asked a friend of his for the loan of a buckler and patched up his broken helmet as well as he could. He advised his squire, Sancho, of the day and hour when they were to take the road and told him to see to laying in a supply of those things that were most necessary, and, above all, not to forget the saddlebags. Sancho replied that he
230 would see to all this and added that he was also thinking of taking along with him a very good ass that he had, as he was not much used to going on foot.

With regard to the ass, Don Quixote had to do a little thinking, trying to recall if any knight-errant had ever had a squire thus asininely³² mounted. He could not think of any, but nevertheless he decided to take Sancho with the intention of providing him with a nobler steed as soon as occasion offered; he had but to appropriate the horse of the first discourteous knight he met. Having furnished himself with shirts and all the other things that the innkeeper had recommended, he and Panza rode forth one night unseen by anyone and without taking leave of wife and children, housekeeper or niece.
240 They went so far that by the time morning came they were safe from discovery had a hunt been started for them. . . .

❧ from Part 1, Chapter 8 ❧

At this point they caught sight of thirty or forty windmills which were standing on the plain there, and no sooner had Don Quixote laid eyes upon them than he turned to his squire and said, “Fortune is guiding our affairs better than we could have wished; for you see there before you, friend Sancho Panza, some thirty or more lawless giants with whom I mean to do battle. I shall deprive them of their lives, and with the spoils from this encounter we shall begin to enrich ourselves; for this is righteous warfare, and it is a great service to God to remove so accursed a breed from the face of the earth.”

250 “What giants?” said Sancho Panza.

“Those that you see there,” replied his master, “those with the long arms some of which are as much as two leagues in length.”

“But look, your Grace, those are not giants but windmills, and what appear to be arms are their wings which, when whirled in the breeze, cause the millstone to go.”

32. **asininely**: foolishly; ridiculously (derived from Latin *asinus*, “ass”). The statement is both a literal description and a sly joke about Sancho’s unheroic appearance.

“It is plain to be seen,” said Don Quixote, “that you have had little experience in this matter of adventures. If you are afraid, go off to one side and say your prayers while I am engaging them in fierce, unequal combat.”

Saying this, he gave spurs to his steed Rocinante, without paying any heed
260 to Sancho’s warning that these were truly windmills and not giants that he was riding forth to attack. Nor even when he was close upon them did he perceive what they really were, but shouted at the top of his lungs, “Do not seek to flee, cowards and vile creatures that you are, for it is but a single knight with whom you have to deal!”


At that moment a little wind came up and the big wings began turning.

“Though you flourish as many arms as did the giant Briareus,”³³ said Don Quixote when he perceived this, “you still shall have to answer to me.”

He thereupon commended himself with all his heart to his lady Dulcinea, beseeching her to succor him in this peril; and, being well covered with his
270 shield and with his lance at rest, he bore down upon them at a full gallop and fell upon the first mill that stood in his way, giving a thrust at the wing, which was whirling at such a speed that his lance was broken into bits and both horse and horseman went rolling over the plain, very much battered indeed. Sancho upon his donkey came hurrying to his master’s assistance as fast as he could, but when he reached the spot, the knight was unable to move, so great was the shock with which he and Rocinante had hit the ground.

“God help us!” exclaimed Sancho, “did I not tell your Grace to look well, that those were nothing but windmills, a fact which no one could fail to see unless he had other mills of the same sort in his head?”

280 “Be quiet, friend Sancho,” said Don Quixote. “Such are the fortunes of war, which more than any other are subject to constant change. What is more, when I come to think of it, I am sure that this must be the work of that magician Frestón, the one who robbed me of my study and my books, and who has thus changed the giants into windmills in order to deprive me of the glory of overcoming them, so great is the enmity that he bears me; but in the end his evil arts shall not prevail against this trusty sword of mine.” **F**

“May God’s will be done,” was Sancho Panza’s response. And with the aid of his squire the knight was once more mounted on Rocinante, who stood there with one shoulder half out of joint. And so, speaking of the adventure
290 that had just befallen them, they continued along the Puerto Lápice³⁴ highway; for there, Don Quixote said, they could not fail to find many and varied adventures, this being a much traveled thoroughfare. . . . 

F PARODY

Compare Don Quixote’s quest with the heroic journeys of the knights-errant of romance. What point is Cervantes making about using chivalry as a practical guide to life?

Translated by Samuel Putnam

33. **Briareus** (brē-är’yōös): a mythological giant with 100 arms.

34. **Puerto Lápice** (pwěhr’tô lä’pē-sě).