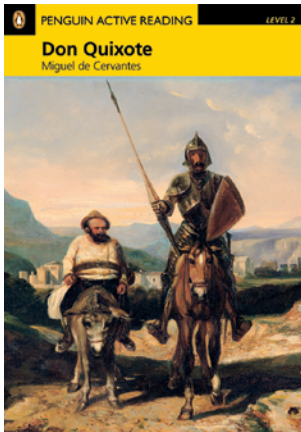




Don Quixote

Miguel de Cervantes



About the author

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra was born in 1547 in the city of Alcalá de Henares, near Madrid, Spain. He was the fourth of seven children and he was born into a noble family. His father, a surgeon, was imprisoned because of debts, however, and this brought great hardship to the family. After studying philosophy and history in Italy, he became a soldier and lost his left hand during the battle of Lepanto (1571). A few years later, when sailing home, he was captured, along with many other Christians, by Barbary pirates. He was not freed until 1580, when his family paid a ransom for him. He married in 1584, and started writing plays and poetry, but as this did not produce much income, he took a position with the Spanish government, working as a tax inspector. He often ran into financial and other difficulties, for which he was imprisoned.

In 1604, Cervantes and his family were living in Valladolid, but after the publication of the first volume of *Don Quixote* in 1605, they moved back to Madrid. In 1613, he joined the Third Order of Saint Francis and in 1615 he published the second volume of *Don Quixote*. Cervantes died in 1616, but has had an enormous influence on European literature throughout the centuries. It often appears at or near the top of lists of the greatest works of fiction ever published and it is the best-selling non-religious, non-political work of fiction of all time.

Summary

Alonso Quixada is a middle-aged country gentleman, who has read so many stories of chivalry and adventure that he descends into a fantasy world and becomes convinced that he is a knight. He sets off on his horse, Rocinante,

in search of adventure, hoping to defend the helpless and destroy the wicked. After his first adventure, he persuades a confused labourer called Sancho Panza to accompany him as his squire. Don Quixote and Sancho Panza give up food, shelter and comfort in their search for glory. Dulcinea del Toboso, whom Don Quixote believes to be his princess, is actually a plain and simple local farm girl, who has no idea of Quixote's feelings. During his travels, Quixote has a series of odd adventures. He tries to protect a young boy who is being beaten, thinks windmills are knights, steals a bowl and uses it as a helmet, tries to fight a lion, meets many people who think he is funny or crazy and gets hurt during fights. Eventually, Don Quixote returns home to die, not as a knight, but as Alonso Quixada, the man he really is.

Chapter 1: Alonso Quixada lives quietly in a village in La Mancha. He isn't rich, but he's happy and he loves reading books about knights. He decides to set off on an adventure with a suit of armour, a helmet and his horse, Rocinante. He imagines a local girl, Aldonza Lorenzo, to be the loveliest woman in the world and his 'princess'. He arrives at an inn, which he thinks is a castle, and he attacks two men with his lance. Then, the innkeeper knights him and Don Quixote leaves. He comes across a man hitting a boy and tries unsuccessfully to defend him. Next, he meets some rich men and falls off his horse. The rich men think he is very funny. A man from Don Quixote's village finds him and takes him home.

Chapter 2: While Don Quixote is recovering at home, two of his friends, Pero and Nicolás, burn his books because they think they are bad for him. They tell him a wizard did it and Don Quixote calls the wizard Frestón. He then persuades a local man, Sancho Panza, to be his squire and they set off on another adventure. They come across some windmills and Don Quixote attacks them, thinking they are giants. Then, they see a doctor on a horse carrying a bowl. Don Quixote thinks it is a famous helmet and takes it from him. Next, Don Quixote mistakes some sheep for knights and attacks them. The owners of the sheep throw things at Don Quixote and some of his teeth fall out.

Chapter 3: On their next adventure, Don Quixote sends Sancho Panza to find Dulcinea. Knowing that Dulcinea is really a simple village girl, he takes three country girls on donkeys to Don Quixote. Don Quixote believes that one of the girls is his Dulcinea, but that she has been



Don Quixote

made ugly by Frestón, the wizard. Then, they meet another 'knight' and his 'squire'. The new knight and Don Quixote plan to fight the following morning and the two squires drink and eat together. The next day, Don Quixote hits the other knight with his lance and Sancho Panza removes his helmet. They see the face of an old friend, Sansón Carrasco. The squire is also an old friend, but Don Quixote thinks they are products of Frestón's magic and sends them on their way.

Chapter 4: Don Quixote meets a rich man called Don Diego de Miranda. Then they see some men on horses, pulling a large box with a lion inside. Don Quixote makes the driver open the box so that he can fight the lion. The lion ignores Don Quixote and Don Quixote thinks he has won the fight. Some days later, Don Quixote meets a man called Pedro at an inn. Pedro has a theatre company and a clever monkey. He tricks people into thinking that the monkey can see inside people's heads.

Chapter 5: Sancho Panza tells Don Quixote that he wants to go home, where it's more comfortable but then he changes his mind. The next day, they see some rich people on horses. They speak to a woman, Doña Maria, who invites them to her castle. The woman's husband, Don Carlos, jokingly makes Sancho Panza king of a small country. As king, Sancho Panza solves a dispute about money between two old friends and helps the people in many other ways. However, the cook doesn't feed him well and one night, some bad men try to kill him so he decides he doesn't want to be king anymore.

Chapter 6: Don Quixote and Sancho Panza leave the castle and meet some young people who know all about their adventures. Then, bulls and some men on horses come down the road. Don Quixote wants to fight, but the bulls run over him and injure him. In an inn, he meets two men who have read that he no longer loves Dulcinea. Don Quixote tells them this is not true. Next, they travel to Barcelona. On the beach, Don Quixote fights the Knight of the White Mountains, who is really Sansón Carrasco. Don Quixote is badly hurt. He goes home and dies, realising before that he is, in fact, not a knight at all.

Background and themes

Chivalry and systems of morality: Don Quixote has strong moral principles and believes he has to defend the weak and vulnerable from the evils of the changing world.

He believes that the traditional values of the Golden Age, when men and women were honest and true, have been lost and he sees it as his mission to show people the error of their ways. Cervantes, although obviously siding with his principal character, recognises that old values cannot co-exist with modern ones, and for this reason, Don Quixote is considered by most people to be crazy.

Class and worth: Cervantes challenged the idea that the aristocracy was always respectable, noble and more worthy than the poor. In the same way, he suggests that peasants, like Sancho Panza, can be wise and thoughtful and that wealth is not essential to happiness. At the beginning, Alonso Quixada lives a simple life, but he is happy. Don Quixote advises Sancho Panza to remember his old friends and not to be greedy when he becomes king.

Romance: Don Quixote is a romantic. He idealises Dulcinea, whom he sees as the perfect princess. He would do anything to defend her honour. Love is presented in the novel as a pure, everlasting and honourable emotion.

Discussion activities

Chapter 1

Before reading

- Write:** Write *Spain* on the board and tell students that the story takes place in this country. In groups, students write a list of words that they associate with Spain. Get feedback and write the words on the board. Discuss the words with the class.

After reading

- Write and discuss:** Write the following adjectives on the board: *afraid, angry, beautiful, bored, busy, clever, different, important, interesting, kind, rich, stupid, weak*. Now ask students to work in pairs and write sentences about the different characters in Chapter 1 using the listed adjectives. Encourage them to write complete sentences. You can give them an example: *The innkeeper was kind because he knighted Don Quixote*. The pairs read out their sentences and the rest of the class say if they agree or disagree.
- Discuss:** Put the students in groups to discuss the following questions:
 - Why did Don Quixote want to be a knight?*
 - Did he live well before he left his village?*
 - Would you like to live in his village or be a knight? Why?*
 - What good things did Don Quixote do in Chapter 1?*
 - What bad things did he do?*
 - What do people think of him?*



Don Quixote

Chapter 2

While reading (p. 13, after 'They wanted him to stay at home.')

- 4 **Role play:** Put students in pairs and tell them one of them is Don Quixote and the other is Pero. Ask them to role play the conversation in which Don Quixote explains his plans for the future and Pero tries to convince him to stay at home. Allow them to write the dialogue first if necessary.

Student A: *You are Don Quixote. Tell Pero about your plans and the adventures you are going to have. Tell him why you don't want to stay in your village.*

Student B: *You are Pero. Tell Don Quixote that you don't want him to leave. Talk about the good things in the village and the bad things that might happen if he leaves.*

After reading

- 5 **Discuss:** Remind the students that Don Quixote thinks the wizard turned knights into windmills and men on horses into sheep. Ask them to discuss in small groups what they would do if they had the power of a wizard.

You are wizards. Think of things in your house, your school, your town or country that you don't like very much. What would you turn them into and why? e.g., I would turn the television into a computer because TV is boring.

Chapter 3

After reading

- 6 **Discuss and write:** Refer students back to p. 22 and the sentence, 'Don Quixote sent Sancho Panza into El Toboso with a long letter for his beautiful Dulcinea.' Ask students to discuss in pairs what things he might have said in the letter. Get feedback from the whole class and write some of their ideas on the board. Elicit ways of beginning and ending the letter. Students then write letters individually, choosing from the ideas on the board.
- 7 **Write and ask:** Write *What did Sancho Panza open?* on the board and elicit the answer (Sansón Carrasco's helmet). Ask students to write another question about something in Chapter 3. Check their work as they do this. Now have students stand up and mingle, asking and answering each other's questions.

Chapter 4

Before reading

While reading (p. 32, after 'He and Don Quixote began a long conversation about the lives of knights.')

- 8 **Role play:** Put students in pairs and ask them to write questions that the rich man may have asked Don Quixote. Get feedback from the whole class before the pairs role play the conversation.

Student A: *You are the rich man. Ask Don Quixote about his life as a knight.*

Student B: *You are Don Quixote. Answer the rich man's questions.*

After reading

- 9 **Pair work:** Write the following words on the board: *milk, box, lion, theatre, monkey, wife*. Ask the students to talk in pairs about these things in Chapter 4 and write sentences using the words on the board.

Chapter 5

Before reading

- 10 **Discuss:** Write *Good King Sancho* on the board. Ask students to discuss in small groups what makes a good king and a bad king. Encourage them to talk about their personality, the way they live their lives and the things they do. Get feedback from the whole class.

After reading

- 11 **Write and guess:** Put students in pairs and ask them to choose a short paragraph from Chapter 5. Tell them to write it again, making five changes to words in the text. Students then read out their paragraphs to the other students, who have to identify the mistakes.

Chapter 6

After reading

- 12 **Write:** Put students in pairs and ask them to look back at the pictures in Chapter 6. Ask them to make a list of the things they can see in each picture. The pair with the longest list wins.
- 13 **Write:** Put students in pairs to write a list of all the good things and the bad things that Don Quixote did in the book. Check the answers with the whole class and have a vote about whether he is mostly good or bad.
- 14 **Act and guess:** Put students in small groups and ask them to choose one scene from the whole book. Tell them they have to mime the scene. Give them time to practise and then get them to perform it for the whole class. The other students guess what is happening.

Vocabulary activities

For the Word list and vocabulary activities, go to www.penguinreaders.com.