

# Don Quixote

- Date** ■ Part I 1605, Part II 1615
- Place** ■ Madrid, Spain
- Type of Source** ■ Novel, satire, comedy (original in Spanish)
- Author** ■ Miguel de Cervantes
- Historical Context** ■ The Renaissance flourished in Spain between 1350 and 1660. Cervantes' travels to Italy, adventures as a soldier, and capture by pirates also influenced his work. When Cervantes wrote *Don Quixote*, medieval romances about knights and chivalry had been popular for over a century. Cervantes set out, instead, to portray the realities of life in 17th century Spain using clear, simple, everyday language.
- Internal Context** ■ The hero of *Don Quixote* is an elderly landowner who spends many years reading tales about heroic knights. He eventually loses his senses and imagines himself a knight. Renaming himself Don Quixote of La Mancha, the deluded knight sets off on a series of absurd adventures with his squire, Sancho Panza. *Don Quixote* is considered the first Western novel.

## Chapter VIII—Of the Good Fortune Which the Valiant Don Quixote Had in the Terrible and Undreamt-of Adventure of the Windmills, With Other Occurrences Worthy to Be Fitly Recorded

At this point they came in sight of thirty or forty windmills that there are on plain, and as soon as Don Quixote saw them he said to his squire, "**Fortune** is arranging matters for us better than we could have shaped our desires ourselves, for look there, friend Sancho Panza, where thirty or more monstrous giants present themselves, all of whom I mean to engage in battle and slay, and with whose **spoils** we shall begin to make our fortunes; for this is righteous warfare, and it is God's good service to sweep so evil a breed from off the face of the earth."

"What giants?" said Sancho Panza.

"Those thou seest there," answered his master, "with the long arms, and some have them nearly **two leagues** long."

"Look, **your worship**," said Sancho; "what we see there are not giants but windmills, and what seem to be their arms are the sails that turned by the wind make the millstone go."

"It is easy to see," replied Don Quixote, "that thou art not used to this business of adventures; those are giants; and if thou art afraid, away with thee out of this and **betake** thyself to prayer while I engage them in fierce and unequal combat."

So saying, he gave the spur to his steed **Rocinante**, heedless of the cries his squire Sancho sent after him, warning him that most certainly they were windmills and not giants he was going to attack. He, however, was so positive they were giants that he neither heard the cries of Sancho, nor perceived, near as he was, what they were, but made at them shouting, "Fly not, cowards and vile beings, for a single knight attacks you."

### **Fortune**

*fate*

### **spoils**

*goods taken from a military victory*

### **two leagues**

*a distance of about six miles*

### **your worship**

*a form of address for those above you in rank*

### **betake**

*move*

### **Rocinante**

*Don Quixote's slow, clumsy horse; Quixote perceives the horse to be a magnificent steed*

## *Don Quixote*

A slight breeze at this moment sprang up, and the great sails began to move, seeing which Don Quixote exclaimed, "Though ye flourish more arms than the giant **Briareus**, ye have to reckon with me."

So saying, and commending himself with all his heart to his lady **Dulcinea**, imploring her to support him in such a peril, with lance in rest and covered by his **buckler**, he charged at Rocinante's fullest gallop and fell upon the first mill that stood in front of him; but as he drove his lance-point into the sail the wind whirled it round with such force that it **shivered** the lance to pieces, sweeping with it horse and rider, who went rolling over on the plain, in a sorry condition. Sancho hastened to his assistance as fast as his [donkey] could go, and when he came up found him unable to move, with such a shock had Rocinante fallen with him.

"God bless me!" said Sancho, "did I not tell your worship to mind what you were about, for they were only windmills? and no one could have made any mistake about it but one who had something of the same kind in his head."

"Hush, friend Sancho," replied Don Quixote, "the fortunes of war more than any other are liable to frequent fluctuations; and moreover I think, and it is the truth, that that same **sage Friston** who carried off my study and books, has turned these giants into mills in order to rob me of the glory of vanquishing them, such is the **enmity** he bears me; but in the end his wicked arts will avail but little against my good sword."

"God order it as he may," said Sancho Panza, and helping him to rise got him up again on Rocinante...

### **Briareus**

*In Greek mythology, one of the sons of Uranus and Gaea. Briareus had 100 arms and 50 heads.*

### **Dulcinea**

*In reality Dulcinea is a peasant in Don Quixote's native town, but he imagines her to be his true love. She is not aware of the Don's feelings.*

### **buckler**

*a round shield carried on the arm for protection*

### **shivered**

*shattered*

### **sage Friston**

*a magician who is Don Quixote's greatest enemy*

### **enmity**

*hatred*

**Source:** Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, n.d., <[http://www.online-literature.com/cervantes/don\\_quixote/12/](http://www.online-literature.com/cervantes/don_quixote/12/)> (May 27, 2011).