***Don Quixote*** (Spanish: ***El Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha***, is a Spanish [novel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novel) by [Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miguel_de_Cervantes_Saavedra). Published in two volumes, in 1605 and 1615, *Don Quixote* is considered the most influential work of literature from the entire Spanish literary canon. As a founding work of modern Western literature and one of the earliest canonical novels, it regularly appears high on lists of the greatest works of fiction ever published.

The story follows the adventures of a noble ([hidalgo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hidalgo_(nobility))) named Alonso Quixano who reads so many chivalric romances that he loses his sanity and decides to set out to revive [chivalry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chivalry), undo wrongs, and bring justice to the world, under the name *Don Quixote de la Mancha*. (Don is a title of nobility, like Sir.) He recruits a simple farmer, [Sancho Panza](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sancho_Panza" \o "Sancho Panza" \t "_blank), as his squire, who often employs a unique, earthy wit in dealing with Don Quixote's rhetorical orations on antiquated [knighthood](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knighthood). All of his achievements are to honor his love, Dulcinea, who doesn't even know he exists. Don Quixote does not see the world for what it is and prefers to imagine that he is living out a knightly story.  He seeks to defend the helpless and destroy the wicked.

But, is he crazy? Or does he just prefer to see the world as more adventurous than it is? His interactions with other characters, and the antics and misadventures that follow, are entertaining and illustrative of a bygone era. There is a reason it continues to inspire, 500 centuries after publication

- Distinguishing between a person’s class and a person’s worth was a fairly radical idea in Cervantes’s time. In *Don Quixote,* Cervantes attacks the conventional notion that aristocrats are automatically respectable and noble.

- Despite his low social status, the peasant Sancho is wise and thoughtful. Likewise, the lowly goatherds and shepherds often appear as philosophers. In contrast, the cosmopolitan or aristocratic characters like the Duke and Duchess are often frivolous and unkind. Cervantes’s emphasis on these disparities between class and worth is a primary reason that *Don Quixote* was such a revolutionary work in its time.

el simbolismo:

**Inns:** The inns that appear throughout the novel are meeting places for people of all classes. They are the only locations in the novel where ordinarily segregated individuals speak and exchange stories. Inns symbolize rest and food but also corruption and greed, since many innkeepers in the novel are devious.

**Horses:** Horses symbolize movement and status in the novel and often denote a character’s worth or class. The pilgrims outside Barcelona, for instance, walk to the city. The noblemen ride in carriages, and the robbers and Don Quixote ride on horseback.

**Romance:** Though many people in Don Quixote’s world seem to have given up on romantic love, Don Quixote and a few other characters hold dear this ideal. Ironically, Don Quixote’s own devotion to Dulcinea mocks romantic love, pushing it to the extreme as he idolizes a woman he has never even seen.

**Windmills:** The phrase “Tilting at windmills” found its origin in Don Quixote. Don Quixote took up the lance/ sword to fight windmills that he imagines are giants. ("Tilting" refers to engaging another mounted opponent in combat with lances). It is usually assumed, though not completely clear in the book, that Don Quixote thought that the windmills really were the giants.

The phrase is usually used to mean "attacking an imaginary menace."  Over time it has acquired the additional meaning of fighting futile idealistic battles.