

# Barbarian to humanist

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Kimberly Kurata HI 30 Barbarian to Humanist Francois Rabelais wrote, Gargantua in the 16th century as a satirical short story depicting a giant named Gargantua and his transition from his barbaric ways to civilized humanistic way of living. The story takes place during the time of transition from the Medieval Era to the Renaissance. It went from a time of scholasticism and monasticism to a time of humanism and secularism. The Renaissance gave the modern world secularism, humanism and individualism.

Throughout the story we see Gargantua evolve into a respectable and honorable man and Frere Jean as a monk who defies all previous views of who and what a monk is. The story of Gargantua illustrates the transition from scholasticism to humanism and in a satirical account through the lives of Gargantua and Frere Jean's. Humanism can be defined as the cultural intellectual way of thinking that focuses on human beings exposing themselves to their own potential.

This way of thinking emerged during the time of the Renaissance. It was the new movement to broaden an individual's narrow seeking mind. Scholasticism was the scholarship that went on in monasteries where the tradition was the study and focus on only theological issues. Before humanism rose, scholasticism was the only type of higher education. Scholasticism consisted of memorizing texts and focusing on obscure questions. Humanists criticized and completely rejected this form of living.

The humanist's core value can be summed up in one description by Leonardo DaVinci, "Luomo Universale", the universal man is interested in everything, not one thing. Gargantua's early life can be described as a <https://assignbuster.com/barbarian-to-humanist/>

medieval type of living. He was birthed, “ As a result of that mishap, the cotyledonary veins of the womb were released from above and the child sprang through the midriff (which is situated above the shoulders where the aforesaid vena divides into two) took the left path and emerged through her left ear. [1] The way Gargantua was birthed is a metaphor to the type of world he was being born into. The old way of living was based around the Greek way of thinking. Gargantua’s birth can be paralleled to the classical reference of the birth of many Greek gods. While growing up, Gargantua was shown as a child with barbaric tendencies. His inappropriate ways and signs of pure immaturity can be exemplified when he would, “ drink out of his slippers, regularly scratch his belly on wicker work baskets, cut his teeth on his clogs... et off fat farts... shovel the soil back into the ditch... ”. [2] In Gargantua’s young mind, one of his greatest achievements was figuring out the best object to wipe his bum with; stupidity, was at an all time high. Gargantua’s ways prove the simplicity and barbarism of his character. One of the main sources of Gargantua’s lack of knowledge at a young age sprouted from his first tutor, Magister Thubal Holofernes whose intelligence, or lack of intelligence, focused around the Scholasticism movement. He taught Gargantua his ABC so well that he could recite it by heart backwards. He spent five years and three months over that. “[3] The chief concern of of the Scholastics such as Holofernes, was not to learn new facts but to integrate the knowledge already acquired by the Greeks. This example is also connected to monasticism because Rabelais is poking fun at the fact that the monks would sit in solitude for years and just memorize the Bible’s text, a tradition that humanists completely rejected.

These traditional doctrines and way of living were useless and repetitive. This skill - reciting the alphabet backwards - was a satirical swipe at scholasticism's knowledge for knowledge's sake. Finally Gargantua's father, Grandgousier, came to realize the lack of knowledge his son had when a young page named Eudemon embarrassed Gargantua, who was " an ideal Renaissance youth, clean, healthy, skilled in Latin and at elegant speaking, but his rhetoric is more eloquent than truthful in his praise of the young giant. [4] After the young page praised Gargantua so beautifully, Gargantua's, " behavior was merely to a blubber like a cow and hide his face in his bonnet. "[5] With that, the decision was made that Gargantua would go to France and learn the new ways of classicism. This signified not only the transition of Gargantua from medieval and scholastic ways, but all of Europe's transition to ways of humanism. Once in Paris, Gargantua made drastic improvements in education with his new tutor Ponocrates. At first, Ponocrates decided to observe Gargantua and the activities he partook in on a normal day.

Seeing Gargantua's daily routine and how useless his old education had made him, Ponocrates realized he had no time to spare with Gargantua's narrow-scholastic mind. Ponocrates way of teaching could be seen as the way he disciplined Gargantua's mind. He made Gargantua clear his mind of anything he learned from previous tutors, and fill it with the new humanistic subjects of learning. To start off, Gargantua was awake every morning around four am, " While he was being rubbed down, a passage of the Holy Scripture was read out to him, loud and clear...

Gargantua would often devote himself to revering, worshipping, supplicating and adoring God in his goodness, whose majesty and marvelous judgements were revealed by the reading. "[6] This shows one of the major components of humanism, the balance between religious and secular views. Humanism was indeed against most religious traditions but it was not against God and the belief in God. Humanism was focused on the human being reaching his or her full potential in all aspects of life. Focusing on one skill or talent was cutting an individual short; being well-rounded was glorified and stressed with humanists.

Striving to become his or her best whether it was the simple task of getting dressed in the morning. "[Gargantua] was dressed, combed, brushed, perfumed and made elegant, during which time yesterday's lessons were gone over with him. He would recite them by heart and base on them some practical matters concerning our human condition; they might extend it to some two or three hours but normally stopped once he was fully dressed. "[7] The distinction between the two educations in Gargantua's case are clear.

Gargantua accomplished more in the first three hours of waking up in this new humanistic way of living, than he did in probably a week or two with scholasticism. Gargantua mastered subjects such as arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music. "As regards to musical instruments, he learnt to play the lute, the spinet, the harp, both the traverse and the nine holed flutes, the viola and the sackbut. "[8] The arts were a huge part of the Renaissance, and being able to play all of those instruments is tangible evidence that his knowledge and intelligence is growing in more than one area.

The second half of Gargantua's story is brought back to his homeland. Gargantua travels back and meets a monk named Frere Jean. Frere Jean was not an ordinary monk. Monks during the Middle Ages were seen as spiritually minded men who withdrew themselves from society. Their life consisted of praying, religious exercise and works of charity. Monks were the center of scholasticism, being the only ones who could read and write. Some would isolate and withdraw themselves from society. They felt that society contained too much evil and sin to live in.

Because of their isolation, when put in a situation where they needed to defend themselves, they ran away in fear. [9] Yet, when Frere Jean was put in a situation where he was captured by enemy guards and needed to escape, he faced the situation with bravery and, " struck the archer who was holding him on his right, entirely severing the sphagitid arteries in the neck - his jugular veins - together with the uvula down to the thyroid glands... "[10]

----- [1] Rabelais, Francois. " Gargantua. The Histories of Gargantua and Pantagruel. [Harmondsworth, Middlesex]: Penguin, 1955. 226. Print. [2] Rabelais, Francois. " Gargantua. " (243). [3] Rabelais, Francois. " Gargantua. " (251). [4] Rabelais, Francois. " Gargantua. " (252). [5] Rabelais, Francois. " Gargantua. " (254). [6] Rabelais, Francois. " Gargantua. " (279). [7] Rabelais, Francois. " Gargantua. " (279). [8] Rabelais, Francois. " Gargantua. " (281). [9] Rabelais, Francois. " Gargantua. " (293). [10] Rabelais, Francois. " Gargantua. " (339).