

# [Cervantes’ quixote de la mancha and, accompanied](https://assignbuster.com/cervantes-quixote-de-la-mancha-and-accompanied/)

Cervantes’ greatest work, Don Quixote, is a unique book ofmultiple dimensions.

From the moment of its appearance ithas amused readers or caused them to think, and itsinfluence has extended in literature not only to works ofsecondary value but also to those which have universalimportance. Don Quixote is a country gentleman, anenthusiastic visionary crazed by his reading of romances ofchivalry, who rides forth to defend the oppressed and toright wrongs; so vividly was he presented by Cervantes thatmany languages have borrowed the name of the hero as thecommon term to designate a person inspired by lofty andimpractical ideals. The theme of the book, in brief, concerns Hidalgo AlonsoQuijano, who, because of his reading in books aboutchivalry, comes to believe that everything they say is trueand decides to become a knight-errant himself. He assumesthe name of Don Quixote de la Mancha and, accompaniedby a peasant, Sancho Panza, who serves him as a squire, sets forth in search of adventures.

Don Quixote interpretsall that he encounters in accordance with his readings andthus imagines himself to be living in a world quite differentfrom the one familiar to the ordinary men he meets. Windmills are thus transformed into giants, and thisillusion, together with many others, is the basis for thebeatings and misadventures suffered by the intrepid hero. After the knight’s second sally in search of adventure, friends and neighbors in his village decide to force him toforget his wild fancy and to reintegrate himself into hisformer life. The “ knight” insists upon following his calling, but at the end of the first part of the book they make himreturn to his home by means of a sly stratagem. In thesecond part the hidalgo leaves for the third time andalternately gives indication of folly and of wisdom in adazzling array of artistic inventions.

But now even hisenemies force him to abandon his endeavors. Don Quixotefinally recognizes that romances of chivalry are mere lyinginventions, but upon recovering the clarity of his mind, heloses his life. The idea that Don Quixote is a symbol of the noblestgenerosity, dedicated to the purpose of doing gooddisinterestedly, suggests the moral common denominatorto be found in Cervantes’ creation. But in addition tofurnishing a moral type capable of being recognized andaccepted as a symbol of values in any time or place, DonQuixote is a work of art with as many aspects and reflectionsas it has readers to seek them. Considerations of generalmorality thus become intermingled with the psychologicaland aesthetic experience of each individual reader in a waythat vastly stimulated the development of the literary genrelater known as the novel, and Fielding, Dickens, Flaubert, Stendhal, Dostoyevsky, and many others have thus beeninspired by Cervantes. In Madame Bovary, is GustaveFlaubert, for example, the heroine changes the orientationof her life because she, like Don Quixote, has read herromances of chivalry, the romantic novels of the nineteenthcentury. Cervantes demonstrated to the Western world how poetryand fantasy could coexist with the experience of realitywhich is perceptible to the senses. He did this bypresenting poetic reality, which previously had beenconfined to the ideal region of dream, as somethingexperienced by a real person, and the dream thus becamethe reality of any man living his dream.

Therefore, thetrivial fact that a poor hidalgo loses his reason for one causeor another is of little importance. The innovation is thatDon Quixote’s madness is converted into the theme of hislife and into a theme for the life of other people, who areaffected as much by the madness of the hidalgo as is hehimself. Some want him to revert to his condition of apeaceful and sedentary hidalgo; others would like him tokeep on amusing or stupefying people with his deeds, insane and wise at the same time. Before Cervantes, literature was, as occasion offered, fantastic, idealistic, naturalistic, moralistic, or didactic. After his time, literature continued to exploit all thesetypes, but with them it was inclined to incorporate, as well, some readers’ experience of them. Romances of chivalrycould now attain a significance beyond that of mere booksand could become what people felt or thought about them, thus growing to be the very dynamic functioning of livingpersons.

In Don Quixote, for example, the hero takes themfor the gospel; the priest believes them to be false; theinnkeeper admires the tremendous blows delivered by theknights; his daughter is taken by the sentimental aspect