

## “Don Quixote” Discussion Questions

March 28, 2015

1. Cervantes is often referred to as the father of the modern novel. What do you think about this statement?
2. “In short, he so immersed himself in those romances that he spent whole days and nights over his books; and thus with little sleeping and much reading, his brains dried up to such a degree that he lost the use of his reason.” How does the novel mock books of chivalry, and how does it defend them? Do the characters who mock and try to humiliate Don Quixote come across in a positive or a negative light?
3. Given the events and overall arc of the novel, Don Quixote, what do you think Cervantes’ opinion is of fiction and storytelling?
4. Throughout Don Quixote, Cervantes claims that his novel is a true history about real people and based on documented evidence. Why does he make this claim and how does it advance the themes of the novel? How does Don Quixote’s perception of reality affect other characters’ perceptions of the world; does his disregard for social convention change the rules of conduct for the other characters?
5. What attitude does the novel take toward social class? How is social class a factor in relationships between characters?
6. Many characters in *Don Quixote* serve as foils, or opposites, of other characters. What role do these opposed pairs play in developing the novel’s themes?
7. Like Hamlet’s madness, Don Quixote’s insanity is the subject of much controversy among literary critics. Is Don Quixote really insane, or is his behavior a conscious choice? What might account for the change in his behavior over the course of the novel? What is your take on Sancho Panza’s mental state?
8. Literary critics who write about the book have tended to divide into two camps. Some see Cervantes’ novel as a satire directed against chivalric romances and a foolish man who absurdly confuses them with reality; others see the novel as a celebration of an idealistic hero and his exalted imagination. What is your opinion?
9. *Don Quixote* highly values genuine romantic love, yet many of the love stories embedded in *Don Quixote* are resolved only through trickery. What is Cervantes implying if true love in the novel can be realized only by deceit?
10. How would you characterize each of Don Quixote’s three expeditions? What is the significance of having three expeditions rather than one long expedition? How do the two parts of the novel differ?