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History of the Book Final Project Summary

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“Quixote’s impossible imaginings are a call for courage” (Martinez, 519).

### **Cervantes, Don Quixote, and the Book That Shaped Fiction**

I have explored a lot of books throughout my library classes but have saved my favorite book for last. There has always been something about Alonso Quixano, his madness, and his magic that speaks to this world and the darkness within it. I chose *Don Quixote* for this project because beyond the story, there is so much to the history of the book and story that it felt like a natural book to explore.

#### **Problem Statement:**

Cervantes is given a lot of credit for creating a modern hero in Alonso/Quixote. The book is often credited with shaping the fiction world in numerous ways. For this project, I wanted to explore how *Don Quixote* changed the written landscape of both Europe and the US, as well as how the knight errant still influences culture today. What did the world of fiction look like before *Don Quixote*? What did it look like after? Is Alonso/Quixote the model for other heroes in fiction? Why does a book written over 400 years ago still matter today?

#### **Statement of Need:**

Outside of the academic, literary world, I am not sure many people are familiar with *Don Quixote* and are even less familiar with the lasting impact of the book on some of their favorite modern stories. By looking at how *Don Quixote* came to be, and then comparing it to modern hero stories, I hope to connect readers to the past and encourage them to look deeper into their own favorite books. There are pieces of Cervantes’ hero in Marvel, Harry Potter, and more. What gets lost in the length and rhetoric of the story is how important Cervantes hero is, and how he fundamentally changed and shifted culture.

#### **Strengths and Limitations:**

Strengths: There is a lot of information about Cervantes and *Don Quixote*, as well as numerous articles on his impact on storytelling and even a pretty clear description of the early book cycle. Because it is a well-known book academically, it feels familiar, and there are plenty of sources to draw from.

Limitations: Most of the academic research I have found acknowledges Cervantes role in shaping modern literature and Alonso/Quixote’s role in the greater cannon of literature. The jump to comparing *Quixote* to more current heroes and books has taken more personal opinion and leaps than are traditionally acceptable in an academic setting.

The other limitation of such an undertaking is that there is just so much information out there. This project doesn’t touch on the women of Quixote’s world, the delusion, the well-meaning but damaging people in his life that just want him to be normal, etc. Instead, it focuses on the cultural implications of a book that changed my world.

## Process in Completing the Study

I started by re-evaluating what I already knew about this book. It has been a long time since I read it, but it has always stuck with me as a piece of literature that was fundamentally different than anything else before or after it. I started with a general search about Quixote and Cervantes, and then narrowed my focus to how he affected literature and theater, characters that were influenced by Don Quixote the character, and how Don Quixote encourages people to just *be who they are*.

My conclusion, on the "As Reader" page of the website, is that the ultimate message of *Don Quixote* is one of self-acceptance in a world that wants to make you anything else and how that, more than anything, changes readers and changed the literary world.

## Primary Sources

Primary sources for *Don Quixote* are almost impossible to find. First editions have been sold for as much as \$80,000 at an auction at Christie's (for the first Belgium printing in 1607).

<https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/cervantes-saavedra-miguel-de-1547-1616-el-ingenioso-6145827-details.aspx>.

I consulted several sources on archive.org as I worked on this project. First editions from 1605 are hard to find and in not great condition. Some of the editions I consulted are listed in the Weebly site.

1605 Madrid printings courtesy of Universidad Francisco Marroquin & University of Toronto:

(UFM) <https://archive.org/details/elingeniosohidal00cerguat/page/n3>

(UT) <https://archive.org/details/elingeniosohi00cerv/page/n3>

1615 Second Part Barcelona edition courtesy of University of California

(<https://archive.org/details/elingeniosohida00unkngoog/page/n4>)

1802 German Opera

<https://archive.org/details/ritterdonquixote00hens/page/n1>

1885 London edition (opensource)

<https://archive.org/details/TheIngeniousGentlemanDonQuixoteOfLaMancha>

1897 Berlin Opera

<https://archive.org/details/imslp-quixote-op50-kienzl-wilhelm>

1960 Broadway Musical Score

<https://archive.org/details/manoflamanchasou00leig>

**References:**

Martinez, Felicia. *I Know who I Am: Don Quixote, Self-Fashioning, and the Humanness of Ordinary Identity*. *Philosophy and Literature*, vol 40, no 2, October 2016. pp 511-525.