Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra

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**1. Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra** was a Spanish novelist, poet, and playwright. His greatest literary work was *Don Quixote*, which is considered a classic of Western literature and is regularly regarded among the best novels ever written. This long novel is among the most important in all of literature. His influence on the Spanish language has been so great, that Spanish is often called “the language of Cervantes,” and he has been dubbed “the Prince of Wits.”

2. Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra was born in Alcala de Henares, on September 29, 1547, to Rodrigo de Cervantes, a surgeon, and Leonor de Cortinas. He was the fourth of seven children. Cervantes spent his childhood moving from town to town while his father sought work. In 1569, Cervantes moved to Italy, where he entered as valet into the service of Giulio Acquaviva, a wealthy priest who was elevated to cardinal the next year. Then, in 1570, Cervantes joined a Spanish infantry regiment of the Spanish Navy elite corps, Infanteria de Marina (Spanish marines).

3. In 1571, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra took part in the sea battle against the Islamic Turkish at [Lepanto](http://historywarsweapons.com/?p=80), serving on the *Marquesa*, a ship of the Holy League Fleet, under the command of Spanish Admiral, Juan de Austria. Although the Spaniards won the battle over the Muslims, Miguel de Cervantes received three wounds as he boarded a Turkish ship, two in the chest and one crippling his left arm which resulted in amputation. As he was right-handed, he kept wielding his sword against the Turkish until he was taken back to his ship to be treated for his wounds. For this, he would be popularly known as the El Manco de [Lepanto](http://historywarsweapons.com/?p=80) (The One-armed of Lepanto). Later he would write that he lost his left arm for the glory of the right.

4. Miguel de Cervantes continued his military life until 1575, when he was captured along with his brother Rodrigo by Algerian pirates. Cervantes spent five years as a slave until his family could raise enough money to pay his ransom. During this period he tried to escape several times without success. Cervantes was released in 1580, with the payment of 500 escudos raised by his family and the Trinitarian order. He returned to Madrid where he held administrative posts, working as a purchasing agent for the Spanish Armada and as a tax collector. He also suffered a bankruptcy, and was imprisoned twice for irregularities in his accounts.

5. In 1585, Miguel de Cervantes published his first major work, *La Galatea*, a pastoral romance, at the same time that some of his plays, now lost except for *El trato de Argel*, in which he dealt with the misery life of Christian slaves in Algiers in the hands of the Muslims, and *El cerco de Numancia*, which was playing on the stages of Madrid. *La Galatea* received little contemporary notice, and Cervantes never wrote the continuation for it. Cervantes next turned his attention to the drama, hoping to derive an income from that source, but the plays which he composed failed to achieve their purpose. Aside from his plays, his most ambitious work in verse was *Viaje del Parnaso* (1614), an allegory which consisted largely of a rather tedious though good-natured review of contemporary poets. Cervantes himself realized that he was not good at writing poems.

6. Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra began to write *Don Quixote* while he was in prison at Argamasilla in La Mancha. Cervantes’ idea was to give a picture of real life and manners and to express himself in clear everday language, in simple, honest, and well-measured words, as he stated in the prologue to Part I of *Don Quixote*. The intrusion of everyday speech into a literary context not only was a novelty, but was also acclaimed by the reading public. In 1605, the first part of *Don Quixote* appeared. Although it did not make Cervantes rich, it brought him international appreciation as a man of letters. During this time Cervantes also wrote many plays, but only two of which have survived. Then Cervantes wrote the second part of *Don Quixote*, which appeared in 1615.

7. Cervantes revealed through *Don Quixote* much narrative power, considerable humor, a mastery of dialogue, and a forcible style. Of the two parts written by Cervantes, the first is the more popular with the general public – containing the famous episodes of the tilting at windmills, the attack on the flock of sheep, the vigil in the courtyard of the inn, and the episode with the barber and the shaving basin. The second part is inferior to it in humorous effect; but, nevertheless, the second part shows more constructive insight, better delineation of character, an improved style, and more realism in its action.

8. In 1613, Cervantes published a collection of tales, the Exemplary Novels, some of which had been written earlier. On the whole, the Exemplary Novels are worthy of the fame of Cervantes; they bear the same stamp of genius as Don Quixote. Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra died in Madrid, on April 22, 1616; the same year William Shakespeare died. In honour of the day Cervantes and William Shakespeare died, UNESCO established April 23 as the International Day of the Book.

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| **DIALECTICAL NOTES** | |
| A)  Either summarize or paraphrase each paragraph.  The paragraphs are numbered on the reading and here. | B)  Write down your **reactions** to this quote or summary.  The thought can be -- an observation, opinion, reaction, prediction, evaluation, analysis, connection, correlation, comparison, contrast, dispute, hypothesis, etc. |
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