

MAN OF LA MANCHA

A STUDY GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

for the musical based on Cervantes's *Don Quixote*

Written by Dale Wasserman, Lyrics by Joe Darion,

Music by Mitch Leigh

MAN OF LA MANCHA

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**I am I, Don Quixote,
The Lord of La Mancha,
My destiny calls and I go,
And the wild winds of fortune
Will carry me onward,
Oh whithersoever they blow!**

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Man of La Mancha – **A Study Guide for Students**

This study guide addresses Ohio Department of Education Academic Content Standards in the core areas of Social Studies and English Language Arts as well Foreign Languages and Fine Arts for grades 6-12. The standards addressed are:

Social Studies

- Analyze the perspectives that are evident in African-American, American Indian, and Latino art, music, literature, and media and how these contributions reflect and shape culture in the United States.
- Analyze instances in which the rights of individuals were restricted.
- Analyze the cultural, physical, economic, and political characteristics that define regions, and describe reasons that regions change over time.
- Explain how the character and meaning of a place reflect a society's economics, politics, social values, ideology, and culture.
- Students use knowledge of perspectives, practices, and products of cultural, ethnic, and social groups to analyze the impact of their commonality and diversity within local, national, regional, and global settings.
- Compare cultural practices, products, and perspectives of past civilizations in order to understand commonality and diversity of cultures.
- Explain how contact between different cultures impacts the diffusion of belief systems, art, science, technology, language, and forms of government.

English Language Arts

- Evaluate the content and purpose of a presentation by analyzing the language and delivery choices made by a speaker.
- Analyze the use of a genre to express a theme or topic.
- Identify and analyze how an author uses figurative language, sound devices, and literary techniques to shape plot, set meaning, and develop tone.
- Analyze the techniques used by speakers and media to influence an audience, and evaluate the effect this has on the credibility of a speaker or media message.

Foreign Languages

- Compare and contrast practices and perspectives of the target culture and students' own culture.

Fine Arts

Drama:

- Explain the style of a dramatic/theatrical work in historical or cultural context.
- Compare their personal responses to a drama/theatre event with the response of another person.
- Defend personal responses to a drama/theatre event.
- Engage in activities that lead to continued involvement in theatre.

Music:

- Apply technology in creating, performing, and/or researching music.
- Compare and contrast several cultures' music works based on the function music serves, role of the musicians, and conditions under which the music is performed.
- Develop and apply specific criteria for making informed, critical judgments about quality and effectiveness of music works both written and performed.
- Identify various ways music affects their lives.
- Identify various careers in music.

Dance:

- Explain the social and historical contexts that influence the development of dance in a culture.
- Explain how dance is a meaningful expression of culture.
- Explain ways in which works of dance relate to the themes and issues of their historical, cultural, and social contexts.
- Analyze how dance elements are used to convey concepts or themes in dance performances.
- Articulate their viewpoints about the merits of selected dances and explain the basis for their views.



Introduction

En un lugar de La Mancha, de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme, no ha mucho tiempo que vivía un hidalgo, de los de lanza en astillero, adarga antigua, rocín flaco y galgo corredor.

“Somewhere in La Mancha, in a place whose name I do not care to remember, a gentleman lived not long ago, one of those who has a lance and ancient shield on a shelf and keeps a skinny nag and a greyhound for racing.”

So begins *El Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quixote de la Mancha* (*The Ingenious Gentleman, Don Quixote of La Mancha*), by Miguel de Cervantes. First published in 1605 (with a second part following ten years later), *Don Quixote* was named “The Greatest Book of All Time” by the Nobel Institute and is generally acknowledged to be one of the world’s finest works of literature. Cervantes’ stories of the adventures of Don Quixote, the “knight of the woeful countenance,” and his faithful servant, Sancho Panza, has inspired authors, artists, playwrights, composers, and choreographers through the centuries since it was written.

Although many theatrical adaptations of Don Quixote have been attempted, the sprawling adventures of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza were difficult to condense into a play. Author Dale Wasserman had the idea of presenting Don Quixote’s exploits within a story about the author, Miguel de Cervantes, which allowed him to recount Don Quixote’s best-known adventures without trying to retell the entire epic tale of the thousand-page novel. The idea eventually became the 1965 musical *Man of La Mancha*.

Man of La Mancha captured the public’s imagination just as Cervantes’ original novel did. *Man of La Mancha* won five Tony awards, ran for over 2,000 performances, and was translated into a dozen languages. The show’s most popular song, “The Quest” (popularly known as “The Impossible Dream”) hit number one on the Billboard charts in 1966 and has been recorded by dozens of artists, including Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra, Diana Ross and the Supremes, Plácido Domingo, and Cher.

A film version starring Peter O’Toole and Sophia Loren was released in 1972; the musical was revived four times on Broadway and has an average of 300 to 400 productions a year throughout the world.

The phrase “tilting at windmills” (meaning to fight a pointless or imaginary battle) comes from Don Quixote’s “Adventure of the Windmills,” in which he imagines windmills to be giants (the turning blades of the windmills being the arms of the giant) and attacks them with his lance (“tilting” or jousting.)



A La Mancha windmill



The cover of the first edition of *Don Quixote*

Miguel de Cervantes

Miguel de Cervantes was born in 1547, the fourth of seven children. At age twenty-three, he joined the Spanish Army; he fought valiantly in the Battle of Lepanto, where he permanently injured his left hand, earning himself the nickname “The Cripple of Lepanto.”

In 1575, while traveling with his brother Rodrigo from Italy to Spain, he was captured by pirates and held by the Bey of Algiers as a slave. During his five years in slavery, he escaped seven times, but each time he was recaptured. Because he was one of the Bey’s favorites, he avoided serious punishment (although he had to watch other slaves be punished in his place).

His family finally raised the money to buy his freedom (the Bey kept raising the ransom because he didn’t want to lose Cervantes). Afterward, Cervantes wrote his first play, *Los Tratos de Argel*, based on his experience as a captive. He wrote between twenty and thirty other plays during his lifetime, although few have survived.

He was married briefly but left his wife to wander the country, working as a purchasing agent for the Spanish Armada and sometimes as a tax collector. He ran into financial troubles and was put in prison twice because of them; during one of his imprisonments, he conceived the story of Don Quixote.

El Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quixote de la Mancha was published in 1605. It became a popular success, and although it did not make Cervantes wealthy, it did make him famous. He wrote other books, including *Novelas Ejemplares* (“Instructive Tales”), in which he provided this description of himself:

“The person you see here, with aquiline countenance, chestnut hair, smooth and unruffled forehead, merry eyes, a nose hooked but well-proportioned, a silvery beard that less than twenty years ago was golden. Large moustache, small mouth, teeth not much to speak of . . . his figure midway between two extremes, a heightened complexion, rather fair than dark, somewhat stooped in the shoulders, and not very nimble on his feet”

Cervantes wrote a second volume of Don Quixote’s adventures, which was published in 1615. He died the following year at age sixty-eight.

Cervantes and Shakespeare

Miguel de Cervantes and William Shakespeare were contemporaries of one another: Miguel de Cervantes was born in 1547, Shakespeare in 1564; they died within ten days of each other in April 1616. (Each is recorded as having died on the same date, April 23rd; however, England and Spain each used a different calendar at this time, so April 23rd in Spain came ten days before April 23rd in England.)

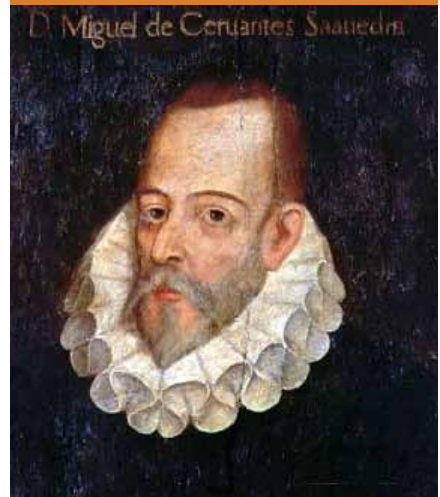
They did not know one another – Spain and England were enemies at this time – and were most likely not aware of each other’s writings (some scholars believe Shakespeare may have read *Don Quixote*, but there is no evidence that Cervantes read any of Shakespeare’s work.) Still, they were concerned with similar themes.

From *Don Quixote*:

“Plays are the semblance of reality, and deserve to be loved because they set before our eyes looking-glasses that reflect human life. Nothing tell us better what we are or ought to be than comedians and comedy.”

From *Hamlet*:

“Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o’erstep not the modesty of nature: for any thing so o’erdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold as ‘twere the mirror up to nature: to show virtue her feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.”



Dear Governor Strickland,

I write to you today to urge you to release Don Miguel de Cervantes. His crime of civil disobedience is a sham, and you should reward his bravery rather than punish him.

I believe be committed these acts because . . .

Exercise

Making the case for Cervantes

In *Man of La Mancha*, author Miguel de Cervantes has been thrown into prison for defying the church authorities. Imagine that Cervantes was alive today and had been imprisoned at a political protest. (It's up to you to decide what you think he would be protesting.)

Write a letter to the Governor of Ohio, Ted Strickland, explaining why you believe Cervantes should be released. Include the details of what Cervantes was protesting and whether you agree with him. (You might have a different opinion but still believe he should be freed.)

You may choose to begin your letter like the example to the left or come up with a different approach.

Timeline

	Year	
Miguel de Cervantes born September 29	1547	
	1550	Spain at the height of its power
	1558	Elizabeth I becomes Queen of England
	1564	William Shakespeare born
Cervantes joins Spanish Army	1570	
Cervantes wounded in Battle of Lepanto	1571	
Cervantes captured by pirates, held in slavery	1575	
Cervantes released	1580	
Cervantes marries Catalina de Salazar y Palacios	1584	
	1588	English defeat the “invincible” Spanish Armada
	1595	Henry IV declares war on Spain Shakespeare publishes <i>A Midsummer Night’s Dream</i>
Cervantes imprisoned	1597	
	1600	Shakespeare publishes <i>Hamlet</i>
Cervantes imprisoned again	1602	Spanish army surrenders to England
	1603	Elizabeth I dies
<i>Don Quixote (Vol I)</i> published	1605	
	1607	Jamestown, Virginia settled by the English
<i>Don Quixote (Vol II)</i> published	1615	
Cervantes dies April 23	1616	Shakespeare dies April 23*

**Although Cervantes and Shakespeare both died on April 23, at that time England and Spain were using different calendars. Shakespeare died ten days later than Cervantes.*



Historical Context: The Spanish Inquisition

In *Man of La Mancha*, Miguel de Cervantes has been called before the Spanish Inquisition for the crime of foreclosing on a church. In Cervantes' time, the Inquisition had been in operation for over a century. But what exactly was the Spanish Inquisition?

For almost 800 years, from the early eighth century to the late fifteenth century, Christians, Muslims, and Jews lived together fairly peacefully in the Iberian Peninsula (the area we know today as Spain and Portugal). The idea of *convivencia* (“coexistence”) was well-accepted; although there were conflicts at times, all three groups acknowledged the others right to believe as they wished.

At the time, Spain as we know it today was made up of several independent kingdoms: Castile and Aragon (the two largest), and the smaller Granada and Navarre. When Isabella of Castile married Ferdinand of Aragon in 1469, they united their two powerful kingdoms. Concerned that conflicts among the nobility would undermine the strength of their newly joined kingdoms, Ferdinand and Isabella decided that they would unite the nation under Catholicism.

Muslims and Jews were ordered to convert to Catholicism or leave the country. The *conversos* (those who converted) were still suspected of practicing their former religions in secret. This led to the formation of the Inquisition, a religious tribunal whose goal was to punish those who believed “incorrectly” (known as heretics).

Inquisitors – religious judges – had the power to imprison and interrogate anyone suspected of heresy. Suspects were offered the opportunity to confess; if they did not, they could be tortured until they did. Those who were convicted of the charges against them would be executed, most often by being burned at the stake.

Because charges could be made secretly by anyone against anyone, with the inquisitors being granted almost unlimited power, the Inquisition became an incredibly powerful tool that political rulers could use against their opposition. Even the Pope, the head of the Catholic Church, who had approved many Inquisitions, found the Spanish Inquisition to be incredibly harsh. Still, the Church hierarchy outside of Spain could not stop the Inquisition from continuing.

Although it was most active from 1480 to 1530, the Inquisition did not end completely in Spain until 1830.

Discuss!

Man of La Mancha takes place during the Spanish Inquisition, at a time when *convivencia* (peaceful coexistence among Christians, Jews, and Muslims) had come to an end.

Do you think coexistence is possible among different religious or social groups? Why or why not?

Are there examples of *convivencia* in the world today?



Detail of “The Inquisition Tribunal,”
a painting by Goya



Ferdinand and Isabella



From novel to Broadway: The making of *Man of La Mancha*

Man of La Mancha was born in November 1965, as a production nobody wanted, booked into a theatre nobody else would have, and ignored by everyone except the public.

--Dale Wasserman, *The Impossible Musical*.

Seven years before *Man of La Mancha* would open on Broadway, writer Dale Wasserman was on vacation in Spain. As he sat in the Plaza de España in Madrid, he read an item in a newspaper show business column that (mistakenly) claimed that Wasserman was in Spain doing research for a film version of *Don Quixote*. Wasserman recalls:

“... here Fate rapped me on the head. Even while chuckling over the item I had an uneasy sense of someone looking over my shoulder. I turned to investigate, and there, at the top of the Plaza, was the great marble monument to Miguel de Cervantes. At his feet were the equestrian statues of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, the Don riding up to the sky on his nag, Rocinante, Sancho astride his donkey, Dapple.”

Wasserman became intrigued by the idea of adapting *Don Quixote*. He found that there had been many attempts at turning the novel into a play or a film, but none had been successful. He suspected that it was because trying to tell the entire story of the novel would be like “emptying a lake with a bucket” – too much for any one play to accomplish.

Wasserman turned his attention to the novel’s author, Miguel de Cervantes. When he discovered that Cervantes had been an actor and a playwright, Wasserman knew he had found the key to his story. He would write a play centered on Cervantes, in which the author would act out key scenes from his novel.

Wasserman spent two months in Switzerland writing his play, which was presented live on the CBS television series “The Dupont Show of the Month.” Although Wasserman titled his play *Man of La Mancha*, the network asked that it be changed to *I, Don Quixote* to make the subject matter more obvious to the viewing audience. Wasserman objected – the “Man of La Mancha” was Cervantes, not Quixote – but the title change stayed.

Other changes were made during the rehearsal process. Wasserman had written a speech for Quixote which began, “To dream the impos-



The fateful monument to Cervantes
in the Plaza de España

sible dream, to fight the unbeatable foe. This is man's privilege, and the only life worth living." When the speech was cut, Lee J. Cobb, the actor playing Quixote, demanded that it be put back in. (That speech would eventually become the song "The Quest," the most popular song in *Man of La Mancha*.)

I, Don Quixote was broadcast on November 9, 1959. It was well-received; Wasserman thought about turning it into a Broadway (non-musical) play, but plans fell through. In 1963, director Albert Marre contacted Wasserman and suggested that *I, Don Quixote* be turned into a musical. Marre introduced Wasserman to composer Mitch Leigh. Although Leigh had never written a Broadway musical, he was a successful advertising jingle writer. He owned his own company, Music Makers, Inc., which employed a staff of composers, musicians, and orchestrators turning out jingles for hundreds of commercials.

For the lyrics, Marre commissioned W.H. Auden, the renowned poet (who would co-write lyrics with his partner, Chester Kallman). Although Auden was a highly skilled poet, he clashed with Wasserman over the tone and style of the lyrics. Auden also insisted that, at the end of piece, Quixote should renounce his quest, while Wasserman contended that Quixote's sincere belief in his quest was the very point of the play. Auden left the project and was replaced by Joe Darion, a lyricist who had written one Broadway show, *Shinbone Alley*.

Darion and Wasserman worked together well; Darion turned many lines of dialogue into lyric with little or no alterations, while Wasserman incorporated many of Darion's suggestions into the dialogue. As Wasserman and Darion worked on finding the songs within *I, Don Quixote*, Leigh composed the music. While most Broadway composers first write a song to be played with piano accompaniment, Leigh (who did not play piano) used his staff of arrangers at Music Makers, Inc. to produce fully orchestrated recordings of the songs. Leigh sent the recordings to Wasserman and Darion as he completed them.

Once the script and score were completed, the authors and director searched for a theater to present the show. The Goodspeed Opera House, a theater in East Haddam Connecticut, decided to produce the show in its summer season, along with two other pieces with music by Leigh. Rex Harrison, the star of *My Fair Lady*, intended to play Cervantes/Quixote but found that the score was too demanding for his own limited singing voice. Richard Kiley was cast as Cervantes/Quixote, with the director's wife, Joan Diener, as Aldonza.

During rehearsals, the creative team clashed over the style of the show. Wasserman felt strongly that the story should remain within the prison where Cervantes is being held: all props, scenery and costumes he uses to tell Quixote's story should believably emerge from the prison setting or out of Cervantes' "actor's trunk." Marre explored the idea of using more elaborate scenery which would magically appear through



W.H. Auden and Joe Darion

Compare excerpts from lyrics written by W.H. Auden for "The Impossible Dream" to the final version, written by Joe Darion (using dialogue originally written by Dale Wasserman).

Auden:

*Once the voice has quietly spoken,
every knight
Must ride alone
On the quest appointed him into the
unknown
One to seek the healing waters, one
the dark
Tower to assail,
One to find the lost princess, one to
find the grail.
Through the wood of evil counsel,
through the
Desert of dismay,
Past the pools of pestilence he must
find the way.
Hemmed between the haunted
marshes and the
Mountains of the dead,
To the valley of regret and the bridge
of dread*

Darion/Wasserman:

*To dream the impossible dream,
To fight the unbeatable foe,
To bear with unbearable sorrow
To run where the brave dare not go;
To right the unrightable wrong.
To love, pure and chaste, from afar,
To try, when your arms are too weary,
To reach the unreachable star!*

“Don Quixote and Sancho Pansa,” a painting by Daumier

trapdoors in the stage. Eventually Wasserman won the battle, and the show kept its spare, abstract look.

Audiences loved the show, weeping at the end. Still, seasoned Broadway producers did not think *Man of La Mancha* could be successful in New York – it was too different from the popular shows of the day.

In the end, Albert Selden, the general manager of the Goodspeed Opera House, contributed the money required to open the show in New York. The only theater available was the ANTA Washington Square theater in Greenwich Village, forty blocks south of the Broadway theater district. The theater had a thrust stage (meaning the audience sat on three sides); there was no orchestra pit, so the musicians sat on either side of the set.

Although the reviews were mixed (some critics complaining that the show was sentimental), word of mouth began to spread. Something about Quixote’s idealism and refusal to give in to worldly cynicism struck a chord with audiences. The song “The Quest” began to be sung at political protests and rallies, while theatergoers returned to see the show again and again. With its flamenco-guitar inspired score, spare, theatrical staging, and inventive use of minimal props and costumes, *Man of La Mancha* did not look or sound like any other Broadway musical.

Man of La Mancha won five Tony Awards (Best Musical, Best Direction, Best Composer and Lyricist, Best Scenic Design, and Best Actor for Richard Kiley) and ultimately ran 2,328 performances.

It was translated and performed in German, Swedish, Hebrew, Japanese, Urdu, Icelandic, Gujarati, Uzbekistani, Siamese, Magyar, Slovenian, Swahili, Polish, Finnish, Ukrainian, and nine different dialects of Spanish. Cast albums were recorded in French, Hebrew, Czech, Japanese, Dutch, Polish, Czech, Spanish, and German.

The film version, starring Peter O’Toole as Cervantes/Quixote, Sophia Loren as Aldonza, and James Coco as Sancho, opened in 1972 to generally poor reviews. Still, the popularity of the show was unaffected: Richard Kiley starred in Broadway revivals in 1972 and 1977. Raul Julia and pop singer Sheena Easton starred in a 1992 revival (in which Joan Diener eventually returned to her original role of Aldonza almost thirty years after the original production). The most recent Broadway revival, in 2002, starred Brian Stokes Mitchell and Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio.

It’s estimated that *Man of La Mancha* is produced 300 to 400 times a year by theater companies worldwide, putting the number of productions somewhere between 12,000 and 18,000 since the show premiered on Broadway in 1965.



Write your own!

Write a version of “The Quest (The Impossible Dream)” for your favorite musical artist. First, read the excerpt from the lyrics in this section. What does the song mean? Put it into your own words.

Next, turn those words into a song for a singer of your choice. Come up with a rhythm or a tune for it if you can.



Man of La Mancha: Synopsis

Man of La Mancha is set in the late 1500s, when Miguel de Cervantes is thrown into prison by the Spanish Inquisition. Having failed as a soldier and as a playwright, Cervantes was working as a tax collector – until he made the mistake of foreclosing on a church. Now Cervantes and his manservant face a group of fellow prisoners, who stage a mock trial before the inmate known as “The Governor.” Faced with the loss of all his possessions, including a tattered manuscript, Cervantes proposes that his defense will take the form of a play. He begins to spin the tale of Alonso Quijana, “a country squire . . . no longer young . . . bony, hollow faced . . . eyes that burn with the fire of inner vision.” Quijana, having read too many tales of heroic knights in the age of chivalry, declares he will become a knight-errant – Don Quixote de la Mancha – traveling the countryside righting all wrongs. Cervantes’ manservant takes on the role of Don Quixote’s faithful companion, Sancho Panza.

Quixote battles a “giant” – in reality, one of the many windmills that dot the landscape of the plains of La Mancha. He is defeated, retreating to a “castle” – really a roadside inn. The inn is populated by rough mule drivers (muleteers); the kitchen serving-wench, Aldonza, scorns their advances, making no secret of her low beginning and harsh life. (“I was spawned in a ditch by a mother who left me there . . .”)

Quixote sees the boisterous muleteers as fellow knights and believes the hard-edged Aldonza to be a beautiful noble lady, whom he calls “Dulcinea” (meaning “sweetness”). Aldonza is confused by this; no one has ever treated her with kindness.

Cervantes now takes the story to Quijana’s home, where his niece Antonia and her fiancé, Dr. Carrasco, along with the housekeeper and Quijana’s friend Padre Perez, worry about Quijana’s increasingly erratic behavior. Although they each declare they are “only thinking of him,” it’s clear that they are determined to put a stop to Quijana’s antics and bring him home.

While Quixote admires “Dulcinea” from afar, Aldonza confronts Sancho: she asks why he follows a madman like Quixote. Sancho replies that he simply likes Quixote; Aldonza, alone, wonders what Quixote could possibly see in a woman like her. Meanwhile, the muleteers jeer at Aldonza and her eccentric admirer.

A wandering barber arrives at the inn. Quixote believes the barber’s brass shaving basin to be a magical golden helmet that makes its wearer invulnerable and demands that the barber give it to him. Dr. Carrasco and the Padre witness this. Carrasco is certain that Quijana/Quixote is mad, while the Padre is not so sure.



Quixote statue in the Spanish town
of Alcázar de San Juan

The Innkeeper, whom Quixote believes to be the “Lord of the Castle,” agrees to dub Quixote a knight once he has spent a night holding vigil. As he meditates alone, Aldonza interrupts him. She cannot understand – why does he do these things? He replies that it is necessary to follow the quest – every knight’s mission.

When the lead muleteer abuses Aldonza, Quixote leaps to her defense, leading to a fight between Quixote (aided by Sancho and Aldonza) and the gang of muledrivers. Quixote is victorious and is dubbed a knight by the Innkeeper. Meanwhile, Quixote is unaware that the angry muleteers have abducted Aldonza in revenge.

Setting out on the road once more, Quixote and Sancho are attacked by thieves, who take everything they have. When they return to the inn, they find Aldonza, who has been beaten bloody by the muleteers. She expresses her frustration and rage at ever having believed in Quixote’s dreams.

The Knight of the Mirrors, whom Quixote sees as his mortal enemy, the Enchanter, enters and challenges Quixote to a duel. As they battle, Quixote is struck by his reflection in the Knight’s mirrored shield – he sees himself for the broken old man that he truly is. The Knight reveals himself to be Dr. Carrasco.

The guards interrupt the story to inform Cervantes that he will soon be taken to face the Inquisitors. He asks for enough time to conclude his story.

Alonso Quijana, no longer Don Quixote, lays in his bed at home, surrounded by his family. His spirit has been broken; he is dying. Fighting her way through his family, Aldonza comes to Quijana’s side. He does not recognize her and does not know her name. She pleads with him, saying that he once called her “Dulcinea,” and he begins to remember. She reminds him of the words of his quest – “to dream the impossible dream.” Quixote dies as the Padre prays over him, and Aldonza declares that she is now Dulcinea.

Cervantes’ story is finished: the prisoners give him his manuscript, as the guards return to remove him from the cell and bring him before the officials of the Inquisition. As Cervantes is lead out of the prison, the inmates join together, singing Quixote’s song of his impossible dream.

Write the Next Scene!

What will happen when Cervantes faces the Inquisition? Did his time with the prisoners give him courage? Write a speech for Cervantes as he is brought before the judges.

What happens in the prison after Cervantes is taken away? Write a scene for two of the prisoners reacting to what has just happened.

In Cervantes’ story of Alonso Quijana, what happened to Aldonza and Sancho after Quijana dies? Write a scene for the two of them.

The Setting of *Man of La Mancha*

Setting: “A prison in the city of Seville: the common room of a stone prison vault whose furthest reaches are lost in shadow. It has niches and crannies where the prisoners make their nests.”

Miguel de Cervantes was held in the Royal Prison in Seville from 1597 to 1598 when he was falsely accused of tax fraud. He described the prison as a place “where every discomfort has its seat and every dismal sound its habitation.”

He used this experience as the basis for his novel *Riconete y Cortadillo*; Dale Wasserman drew on Cervantes’ character descriptions as inspiration for the inmates in I, Don Quixote and *Man of La Mancha*. The prison no longer exists, but at No. 85 Calle Sierpes in Seville, a plaque commemorates the former site of the Royal Prison (*Cárcel Real*).

Cervantes’s story of Alonso Quijana is set in the area known as *La Mancha*, the wide, dry plain in central Spain. Farmers in the area have traditionally raised sheep and grown some cereal crops (grinding the flour in the famous windmills). The arid climate has also proved to be good for wine production.

The name of the area comes from the Arabic word *manxa* meaning “parched earth,” although in Spanish *la mancha* can also mean “the stain.” Cervantes was poking fun at his character Don Quixote, calling him “Lord of the Stain.”

The Royal Prison

Captain of the Guard: The cells are below. This is the common room, for those who wait.

Cervantes: How long do they wait?

Captain of the Guard: Some an hour . . . some a lifetime.



The plaque at the former Cárcel Real



The vast *La Mancha* shown on the Spanish map

The Characters of *Man of La Mancha*

Miguel de Cervantes (who plays Alonso Quijana, known as Don Quixote): *“Tall and thin, a man of gentle courtliness leavened by humor. He is in his late forties but his dominant qualities are childlike – ingenuousness, a grave and endless curiosity about human behavior, candor which is very nearly self-destructive. He has, too, the child’s delight in play-acting.”*

Cervantes’ manservant (who plays Sancho Panza): *“As old or older than his master, short, rotund, suspicious and pragmatic.”*

“The Governor”: the leader of the prison inmates

“The Duke”: the Governor’s second-in-command.

The Captain of the Inquisition

Inmates and guards.

Characters within the story of Alonso Quijana/Don Quixote:

Aldonza: the serving wench at a roadside inn, whom Quixote names

“Dulcinea”: *“A savage alley cat, veteran if not always victor of many back-fence tussles.”*

The Innkeeper (played by The Governor)

The Innkeeper’s wife, Maria

Antonia, Alonso Quijana’s niece

Dr. Carrasco, Antonia’s fiancé, who disguises himself as the Knight of the Mirrors.

The Padre

The Housekeeper

The Barber

Pedro, the head muleteer

Other muleteers

Write!

Don Quixote saw things as bigger, more exaggerated, or more beautiful than they really were. Quixote believed windmills were giants, a roadside inn was a castle, and a serving wench was a noble lady.

Imagine Don Quixote is hanging out with you on a normal day. Describe three things or people you see every day, and how Don Quixote would see them.



A statue of Don Quixote in Seville

The Writers of *Man of La Mancha*

Joe Darion (lyrics) January 30, 1917 – June 6, 2001

After serving in the Navy during World War II, Joe Darion began a career as a lyricist. Three of his songs became top ten hits in the 1950s; he then made the switch to theater, writing lyrics for the jazz musical *Shinbone Alley*, which played on Broadway briefly in 1957. Although *Shinbone Alley* (based on Don Marquis' stories of the friendship between Archy, a cockroach, and Mehitabel, an alley cat) was not a great success, the wit and imagination in Darion's lyrics convinced Dale Wasserman and Mitch Leigh that he would be the right lyricist for *Man of La Mancha* when poet W.H. Auden left the project. After the success of *Man of La Mancha*, Darion wrote one other Broadway musical (*Ilya Darling* in 1967), as well as a number of opera librettos.

Mitch Leigh (music) January 30, 1928 –

Born Irwin Michnick, Mitch Leigh studied music at Yale. He found success as a writer of advertising jingles (his most well-known composition being "Nobody Doesn't Like Sara Lee"). Leigh founded a company, Music Makers, Inc., which employed a staff of composers, arrangers, musicians, and orchestrators to create jingles and background music of any kind for commercials. He had written incidental music for two Broadway comedies (*Too True to Be Good* and *Never Live Over A Pretzel Factory*) but had never attempted to write a musical before he composed *Man of La Mancha*. Although he wrote several other Broadway musicals (including *Cry For Us All*, *Home Sweet Homer*, and *Chu Chem*), none achieved the success of *Man of La Mancha*. Leigh became a producer as well as a writer, producing his own work, as well as revivals of *Mame* and *The King and I*. In 2001, Yale University named their music building after Mr. Leigh and his wife, the painter Abby Leigh.

Dale Wasserman (book) November 2, 1914 – December 21, 2008

Born in Wisconsin as one of fourteen children of Russian immigrant parents, Dale Wasserman dropped out of high school after one year. He traveled the country by hopping aboard freight trains – "riding the rails" – working odd jobs to support himself. He ended up in New York working in the theater as a stage manager, lighting designer, director and writer. He wrote many scripts for television, including *I, Don Quixote*, which would become the basis for *Man of La Mancha*. Before *Man of La Mancha* reached Broadway, he had written the book for a musical based on Mark Twain stories called *Livin' the Life*, which had a brief run in 1957. He also adapted Ken Kesey's book *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* into a play, which ran on Broadway in 1963.

Explore!

Choose a favorite book, movie or television show. Who wrote it?

Find out how he or she got the idea for the story. Share it with the group.



A photo of Dale Wasserman

The Music of *Man of La Mancha*

When composer Mitch Leigh began to research the music of late sixteenth century Spain, he did not find much that inspired him. The music of the time was mostly composed for use in the church, while non-religious music was written for bagpipes.

Leigh made the decision to use a style of music, flamenco, which would not actually appear in Spain until two hundred years after Cervantes. However, the rhythmic guitar-based music of flamenco would “sound like Spain” to a modern audience – even if it was historically inaccurate.

The roots of flamenco music go back to the centuries of convivencia, when Muslims, Jews, and Christians were coexisting throughout Spain: influences from each culture can be heard in the melodies and rhythms of flamenco.

Flamenco Melody

Most flamenco music uses a particular kind of musical scale, called a mode. You can hear what this scale sounds like if you play the “white notes” on a piano from E to E:

E F G A B C D E

This mode, which is often found in Arabic music, is similar to the minor scale, but not exactly the same (in an E minor scale, the F is raised to an F#, and the D is also sometimes raised to D#.)

It’s very easy to play in this mode on a guitar, the primary instrument used in flamenco: the guitar’s lowest and highest strings are tuned to the note E.

Flamenco in action

These are just a few of the many examples of flamenco music on YouTube.

A demonstration of the basic 12-count rhythm:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=40jjnE7Zhvl
(Note that they start the 12-count on 12.)

Flamenco guitarist Ana Vidovic:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=QtgiYhu_k00

Flamenco guitarist Vicente Amigo:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_qzL-H3FgxM



Flamenco guitar



Flamenco Rhythm

The rhythm or meter in flamenco music is known as *compás*. There are many types of *compás*, but most are based on alternating groups of two and three beats. Flamenco music was accompanied by foot stomping and hand clapping – you can create a basic flamenco *compás* by stomping your feet and clapping your hands in the following pattern:

Clap		○	○		○	○		○		○		○
Stomp	X			X			X		X		X	

You can also count the groups of three and two as you stomp and clap.

Clap		○	○		○	○		○		○		○
Stomp	X			X			X		X		X	
	One	two	three	One	two	three	One	two	One	two	One	two

You will hear this rhythm throughout the score of *Man of La Mancha*, especially in the song “Man of La Mancha (I, Don Quixote)” Listen for it when you hear Don Quixote sing “I am I, Don Quixote, the Lord of La Mancha.”

Clap		○	○		○	○		○		○		○
Stomp	X			X			X		X		X	
									I		am	
	I			Don		Qui	xo-		te,		The	
	Lord			of		La	Man-		cha			

(The song “America” from *West Side Story* also uses this rhythm.)

Themes in *Man of La Mancha*

The power of theater and storytelling

CERVANTES (*as he applies makeup which transforms him into Alonso Quijana/Don Quixote*): May I set the stage? I shall impersonate a man. Come, enter into my imagination and see him!

When Miguel de Cervantes first enters the prison, the inmates put him on trial. As Cervantes leads his fellow prisoners in acting out the story of Don Quixote, he gradually wins them over, gaining their trust. By the end of the play, he has fully captured their imagination and their support.

Truth vs. Illusion/Sanity and Insanity

DR. CARRASCO (played by THE DUKE): There are no giants. No kings under enchantment. No chivalry. No knights . . . these are facts.

QUIXOTE (played by CERVANTES): Facts are the enemy of truth.

THE DUKE: A man must come to terms with life as it is!

CERVANTES: Maddest of all, [is] to see life as it is and not as it should be.

Don Quixote persists in seeing things the way he wishes them to be: a run-down inn is a castle; a ragged serving-girl is a noble lady; a tattered windmill is a fierce giant. Although he has his “facts” wrong, he does see the truth: outwardly Aldonza may be a ragged serving-girl, but inwardly she does become the noble lady “Dulcinea” that he believes her to be.

Contrast Aldonza with Antonia, Alonso Quijana’s niece. Although pious on the outside, inwardly she is only concerned about her inheritance and worried about the embarrassment her uncle’s behavior is causing the family.

Discuss!

Have you ever read a story or seen a television show or movie that changed your opinion about something? What was it? Do you think a story can persuade people to change their minds? Why or why not?

From “What Does He Want of Me?”

ALDONZA: *Doesn't he know
He'll be laughed at wherever he'll go?
And why I'm not laughing myself
I don't know.*

*Why does he want the things he wants?
Why does he want these things?
Why does he batter at walls that won't break?
Why does he give when it's natural to take?
Where does he see all the good he can see,
And what does he want of me?
What does he want of me?*

From “I’m Only Thinking of Him”

ANTONIA: *I'm only thinking of him,
I'm only thinking of him,
Whatever I may do or say;
I'm only thinking of him!
In my body; it's well known,
There is not one selfish bone...
I'm only thinking and worrying about him!*

*I've been told he's chasing dragons
And I fear it may be true
If my groom should hear about it,
Heaven knows what he will do!
Oh, I dearly love my uncle,
But for what he's done to me,
I would like to take and lock him up
And throw away the key!*

The Quest/Idealism/Heroism

THE DUKE: I charge you with being an idealist, a bad poet, and an honest man. How plead you?

CERVANTES: An idealist? Well, I have never had the courage to believe in nothing.

When he began writing the play *I, Don Quixote*, Dale Wasserman knew that the most central theme he was trying to express was the power of idealism and the need for a goal, or quest, in every person's life, to counteract the cynicism and bitterness so often found in the world.

ALDONZA: Why do you do these things?

DON QUIXOTE: What things?

ALDONZA: These ridiculous . . . the things you do!

DON QUIXOTE: I hope to add some measure of grace to the world.

ALDONZA: The world's a dung heap and we are maggots that crawl on it!

DON QUIXOTE: My Lady knows better in her heart.

ALDONZA: What's in my heart will get me halfway to hell. And you, Señor Don Quixote—you're going to take such a beating!

DON QUIXOTE: Whether I win or lose does not matter.

ALDONZA: What does?

DON QUIXOTE: Only that I follow the quest.

The song that Quixote sings at this point, "The Quest (The Impossible Dream)," with its simple and direct message of belief in one's dreams, is the essence of idealism. It's no surprise that this song became immensely popular and was recorded by dozens, if not hundreds, of singers.

From the review of the original production of *Man of La Mancha*, written by Tom Prideaux for *Life* magazine:



Debate!

Imagine that you and a friend are cousins, and you've just found out that your uncle has been running all over Ohio pretending that he is a knight, "Don Quixote of Dayton." Debate what the family should do: should he be allowed to continue (after all, who is he hurting? he just has an active imagination), or should he be stopped (it could be embarrassing to the family, and he could injure himself or someone else)?

Discuss!

What do you think an "impossible dream" would be in today's world? Can you think of examples of people with "impossible dreams"?

What are the benefits of being an idealist (a "dreamer")? What's the downside to being a dreamer? What are the advantages to being practical/realistic? What are the disadvantages?

If you had to choose one, which do you think you are: an idealist, or a realist?

It is easy to dismiss this play as sentimental. But the audience's tears are shed not so much for Quixote's death as for his undying valor – his bravery in still being, in the end, his own dream-ridden self. In a time when men complain about losing their identity, of being mere cogs and numbers in a computerized world, the spectacle of a rampantly individual Don Quixote is welcome. His constant homage to spiritual ideals touches a chord, especially among the young today who are so earnestly and vociferously trying to find ideals among political realities.

The audience's tears testify to the aching human ambivalence of Quixote, who is both a criticism and a defense of man's idealism. In making us love him and recognize parts of him in ourselves, this absurd but magnificent dreamer has revealed deep truths. He has shown to what an important extent all men can, and must, create their own reality – and how inspiring and dangerous it can be.

Breaking News

After seeing the show, conduct an interview in front of the class. One person plays a television reporter; the other plays a character from *Man of La Mancha*.

- Cervantes in his jail cell
- Aldonza after she is beaten
- Antonia, Alonso Quijana's niece, after Dr. Carrasco has confronted Quixote
- Sancho Panza after Quijana/Quixote has died

The interviewer should find out what happened, the character's opinion about what happened, and what the character will do next.

Post-Show Discussion

The leading actor in *Man of La Mancha* plays Miguel de Cervantes, who acts out the story of Alonso Quijana, who imagines himself to be Don Quixote. How was the actor different as Cervantes, Quijana and Quixote?

What moments stood out to you in the performance? Why?

Can you imagine yourself as one of the characters? Which one would it be?

Man of La Mancha has been performed over 10,000 times since it was first written. What do you think draws people to this story? What makes Don Quixote a memorable character?

How would you describe the music? What did the songs add to the story?

Why do you think the authors chose to have the “frame story” of Miguel de Cervantes acting out the tale of Don Quixote? Why not just tell the story of Don Quixote’s adventures?

Did anything surprise you in the story?

Do you think this story could take place today? Why or why not?

How would you describe *Man of La Mancha* to someone who had never seen it?

Imagine that you are making a new movie version of *Man of La Mancha*. Who would you cast as Don Quixote? As Sancho Panza? As Aldonza?

Can you imagine a different ending to the story? What would it be?

Alonso Quijana reads so many books about knights, chivalry, and adventure that he believes he is a knight. Is Cervantes warning us about the danger of reading books and taking them too literally? Do you think Don Quixote is a hero or a fool?

Don Alonso becomes Don Quixote, a very different person from himself. Is he a happier, better person with this assumed identity? Do we sometimes act like Don Alonso and take on a different identity? If so, why?



Quixote statue in the Spanish town of Campo de Criptana

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