Don Quixote Notes

Part 1, Author's Preface

* It's not always necessary to include an author's preface in the summary of a book. But we've decided to include it here because Miguel de Cervantes explains point-blank why he wrote *Don Quixote*.
* And why is that, you ask? He wrote this book because stories about dragon-slaying knights (or "books of chivalry") were by far the most popular form of literature during his time. He was annoyed, though, by how these books never actually focused on any real-world concerns or consequences.
* What would actually happen, Cervantes asks, if a person tried to dress up as a knight and seek out adventures like the ones in chivalry books? That person would be considered crazy and get him- or herself locked up. Or beaten up.
* So, with that in mind, Cervantes says that he wants to give all of our favorite adventure stories a little dose of reality…

Part 1, Book 1, Chapter 1

* We pan in on a village in the Spanish region of [La Mancha](http://www.spain.info/en/que-quieres/ciudades-pueblos/comunidades-autonomas/castilla-la_mancha.html). The author won't name the exact village, because he's worried that everyone will try to claim the hero of this book as their own native son.
* We hear that there was once a dude who had quite a bit of money and never had to work because he was getting on in years. In other words, he had nothing to do all day but try to amuse himself and fight off boredom.
* It turns out that in 17th-century Spain, nothing warded off boredom more than a good rousing tale about knights and dragons and all that stuff you're still likely to see in movies.
* But as the dude gets older and more bored, he get really, really into his books until one day, poof, he decides that he wants to become a knight himself.
* The first thing he does is go into a closet and fish out an old suit of armor that belongs to his great-grandfather. He doesn't have a proper helmet, so he just makes one out of some thin wood that he ties to a metal hat. It's already looking pretty sad.
* Next, the old dude goes to look at his horse, which is basically an old bag of bones—just like the old dude himself, really. But when the great Don Quixote (that's our old dude) looks at this sorry excuse for a horse, he sees a noble stallion. He's kind of living in a post-fact world at this point. For kicks, he also decides to rename the horse Rocinante. Why? Just because he thinks it sounds cool.
* Okay, so now Don Quixote has some armor, a noble steed, and a name for himself. According to the rules of those knight books he likes so much, all he now needs is a woman to fall in love with and to admire from afar. So just like that, he decides that he's going to love a girl from the nearby town of Toboso. He's never actually seen the girl, but he's heard that she's pretty enough. He also decides to rename her Dulcinea del Toboso because it sounds more like a princess's name than whatever her name actually is.

Part 1, Book 1, Chapter 7

* While recovering in bed, Don Quixote starts getting really agitated and hallucinates again. When the Curate and barber burst back into his bedroom, they see him fighting the air with his sword, thrusting and slicing in every direction.
* This just makes the barber and curate speed up their work with the books, so they seal off the door to Don Quixote's library and tell him that some sort of sorcerer must have stolen an entire room off of his house.
* Don Quixote decides that this won't stand, so he makes ready to dress up like a knight again and go off in search of adventures. His niece and housekeeper beg him not to, but he doesn't listen.
* No one has the power to stop Don Quixote by force, so the dude just walks out his front door, dressed in his armor again.
* This time around, the Don decides that it might be good to have a trusty sidekick or squire. A lot of other famous knights in books have them, you know. For this purpose, he gets a pudgy little dude named Sancho Panza from a neighboring village to come along on his adventures with him.
* Why does Sancho go, you ask? Well, frankly, it's because Don Quixote promises him all kinds of riches, and the little man knows that Don Quixote has enough money to make this happen.
* But the thing that really gets Sancho on board with the whole operation is Don Quixote's promise that one day, he'll give Sancho an entire island to govern. As in, he'll really be the governor.
* To pay for his new adventures, Don Quixote sells one of his houses and mortgages another (both at a brutal financial loss).
* When Don Quixote and Sancho hit the road again, all Sancho wants to talk about is the island that he'll be ruling over someday.

Part 1, Book 1, Chapter 8

* Get ready for what is probably the most famous chapter in Don Quixote (probably because most people don't stick around to read the whole book). This is the chapter in which Don Quixote gets into a battle with a whole army of giants. The only problem is that the giants aren't really giants; they're just windmills.
* As Don Quixote and Sancho Panza ride over the Spanish countryside, Don Quixote spies a field of windmills in the distance and decides that they are a bunch of evil giants.
* Sancho glances toward the windmills and says they're just windmills, but the Don doesn't believe him. He charges the windmills with his new lance and gets totally clobbered by the blades of one of them.
* When he finally realizes that he just tried to fight a windmill, Don Quixote decides that some evil magician must be playing tricks on him and turning giants into windmills. Sancho realizes that the whole explanation is nuts but eventually goes along with it.
* Don Quixote and Sancho spend the night under some trees. The Don doesn't sleep at all, though; he just stands around pining for his beautiful Dulcinea.
* The next morning, Don Quixote promises Sancho that they'll have all kinds of dangerous adventures. But Sancho isn't all that interested in danger.
* As they talk, Don Quixote and Sancho see a group of holy monks approaching them in front of a covered carriage. Don Quixote assumes that the carriage must contain some sort of imprisoned princess. He stops the carriage and demands that the monks release the lady.
* Don Quixote attacks the monks, who flee. But there's one dude in the group, a Biscainer, who's willing to go toe-to-toe with the Don. He pulls out his sword and gets ready to fight.
* At this point, Cervantes hits us with the ol' cliffhanger routine, and we have to wait for the next chapter to see how this fight plays out.

**Analyze character traits**: A **foil** is a character whose traits contrast sharply with those of the main character. List three traits that make Sancho Panza a foil for Don Quixote. How does the contrast between these characters bring out the humor of Don Quixote’s behavior?