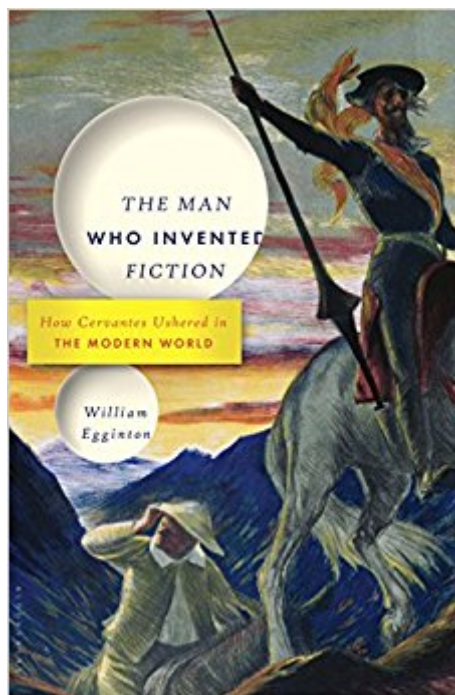




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# The Man Who Invented Fiction: How Cervantes Ushered In The Modern World



## Synopsis

In the early seventeenth century, a crippled, graying, almost toothless veteran of Spain's wars against the Ottoman Empire published a book. It was the story of a poor nobleman, his brain addled from reading too many books of chivalry, who deludes himself that he is a knight errant and sets off on hilarious adventures. That book, *Don Quixote*, went on to sell more copies than any other book beside the Bible, making its author, Miguel de Cervantes, the single most-read author in human history. Cervantes did more than just publish a bestseller, though. He invented a way of writing. This book is about how Cervantes came to create what we now call fiction, and how fiction changed the world. *The Man Who Invented Fiction* explores Cervantes's life and the world he lived in, showing how his influences converged in his work, and how his work--especially *Don Quixote*--radically changed the nature of literature and created a new way of viewing the world. Finally, it explains how that worldview went on to infiltrate art, politics, and science, and how the world today would be unthinkable without it. Four hundred years after Cervantes's death, William Egginton has brought thrilling new meaning to an immortal novel.

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## Customer Reviews

After I became accustomed to the author's writing style I am really impressed with his level of knowledge, both scholarly and intuitive. This book really gives the reader a sense of who Cervantes was and how inter-related the author is with his wonderful characters, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. It also includes biographical information about the wonderful man who wrote one of the best novels ever.

This book is an excellent read, not only for scholars and those with an interest in Spanish literature, but also for any literate book lover. The author makes a persuasive and lucid case for the unparalleled contribution Cervantes made to Western cultural and intellectual history. At the same time, Egginton weaves an intriguing narrative of the events in Cervantes' life that led to the creation of his memorable characters and stories. In doing so, the author admirably substantiates his thought-provoking title.

Egginton brings Cervantes to life better than any biographer before him. And he delivers on the promise of the title! He well and truly explains how Cervantes did - in fact - invent modern fiction. Here are a couple of nuggets: "By setting before his reader not just a problem or a passion or a crime, but the way in which that problem, passion, or crime is being presented, explored and understood by the literature and theater of his day, Cervantes had subtly begun the process of teaching his readers to divide themselves in two, to become at once the readers within the texts, whose emotions treat what's happening as real, while remaining equally without, aware that it's all just a story." - p. 121-122. "When Cervantes invited a new generation of readers to follow his knight into the Sierra Morena, they discovered through their tears of laughter that they had entered a new world. For the writers and readers to come, the pages of a book could never again stand like foreign objects of wonder, to be admired from a distance. From now on, opening a book would mean stepping into a space more like one's own, a Sierra Morena next door instead of a mythical wood or mystic crag, and even those places of mystery or magic, from Never Never Land to Hogwarts, would always be places in which other versions of our own selves would go to for relief from the pressures, pain, or simply the boredom of our daily lives." - p. 136 I haven't read a book quite like this one since Russell Shorto's "The Island at the Center of the World." If you were interested enough in this book to read the reviews, I'm more than certain that you will love it. Egginton does

not disappoint.

Egginton's most recent book again proves that literary scholarship need not be limited to an academic audience. *The Man Who Invented Fiction* provides a compelling re-examination of one of the greatest monuments of modern literature, one that focuses on the initial impact of that work and how the new kind of fictional thinking that Cervantes pioneered in the 17th Century has become an inextricable part of the Modern world. While the work is clearly the product of exhaustive investigation, any avid reader of literature, history, or philosophy will find something to love in the man who created fiction.

This book did a wonderful job giving a detailed account of Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, author of *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote de La Mancha*. Set against the backdrop of 16th and 17th century Spain, it tells the life and times of the son of a poor barber-surgeon and how his most famous work introduced a new literary genre which would impact (and still does) novels to come. Even if you haven't read about the famous Don (but you really should), readers will still get an accurate portrait of a true genius.

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