



Great Novels

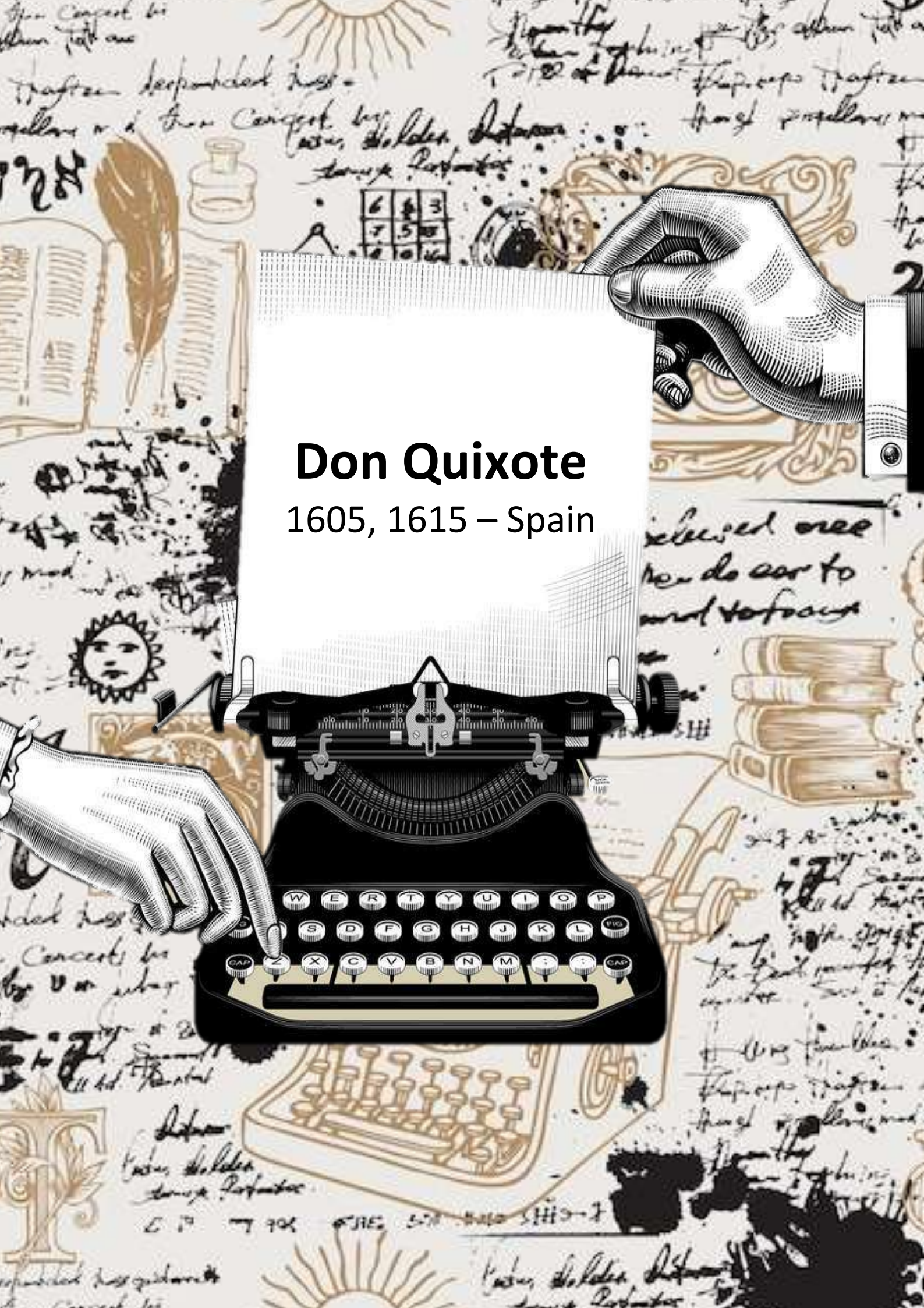
By DK Books



The World's Most Remarkable Fiction
Explored and Explained

Don Quixote

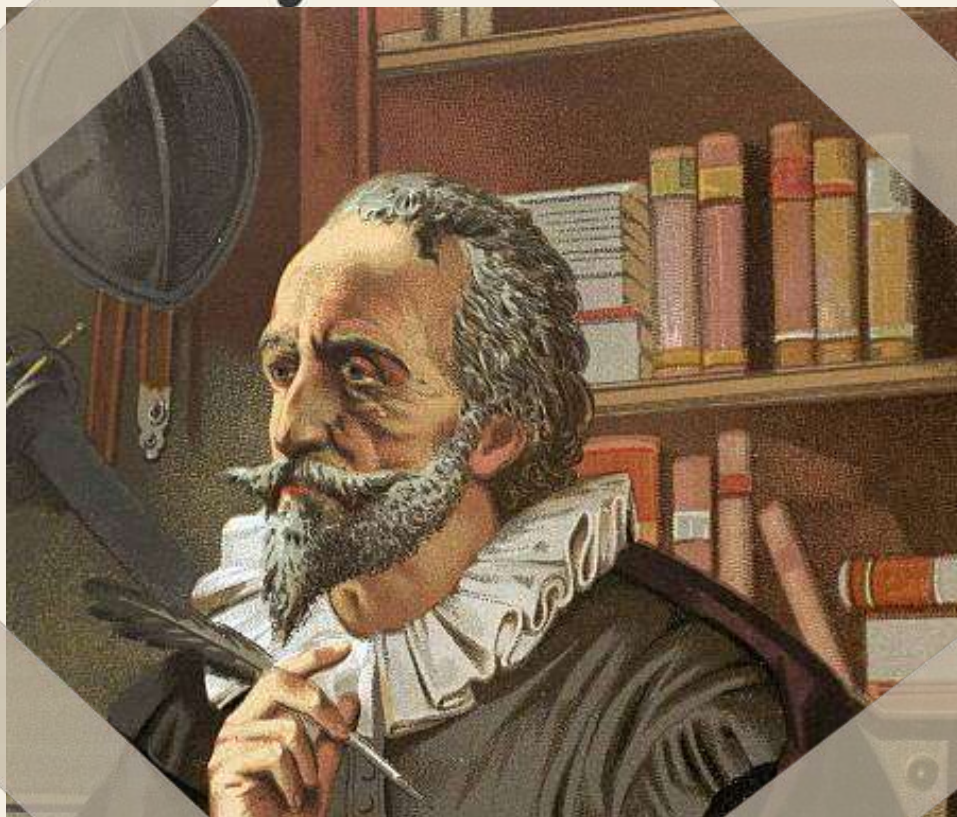
1605, 1615 – Spain





Miguel De Cervantes

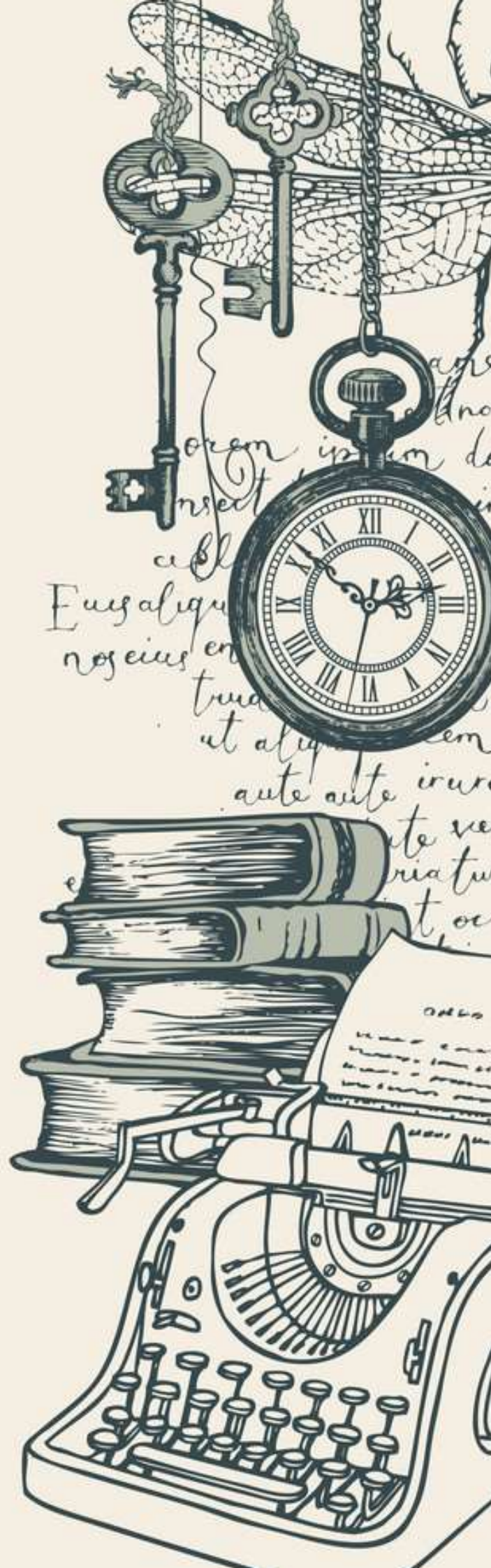
(1547 – 1616)



Published in two parts, in 1605 and 1615, and considered the first major modern novel, of a Spanish hidalgo (country gentleman) named Alonso Quixano, who loses his sense of reality by obsessively reading books about medieval chivalry.

Inspired by tales of knights and maidens from Spanish, French and Italian literature, Quixano, who lives in a village in La Mancha, Spain, renames himself Don Quixote de la Mancha, and sets forth to right the world's del Toboso (in reality, a plain country girl he has never met).

Accompanied by his peasant squire, Sancho Panza, whom he has promised to make the governor of an island for his services, and borne along by his trusty steed, a malnourished horse named Rocinate, Don Quixote mistakes the every day world of 16th century Spain for scenes taken from chivalric romance.



Part 1 of the novel is a loose account of Don Quixote's initial adventures, and draws on the Spanish "picaresque" tradition of accompanying ordinary characters on their travels in a contemporary setting.

Originally planned as a cuento (short story), the novel expanded to become a series of episodes recounting the modern knight's misreading of reality – he mistakes windmills for giants, frees dangerous criminals from a chain-gang, regards country inns as castles, and insists that a barber's shaving basin is the fabulous helmet of the Moorish king Mambrino.

The earthy, proverbial statements of Sancho Panza, bemused by Don Quixote's peculiar ideas and language, provide a sceptical running commentary on his master's actions, most of which soon make bad situations worse.



In the early chapters, the narrator also introduces a recurring element of irony – he informs us that we are reading a transcription of a translation of an original Arabic document by one Cide Hamete Benegeli, recounting the real life of Don Quixote.





The Adventures of Don Quixote

The Golden Century in Spain



During a period known as El Siglo de Oro (the Golden Century), Spain flourished both economically and artistically. The period began in 1492, when the Spanish regained southern Spain from the Moors, and sponsored Christopher Columbus to cross the Atlantic. Over the next 150 years, writers such as Lope de Vega, Garcilaso de la Vega, Francisco de Quevedo, Luis de Gongora, and St John of the Cross produced an extraordinary range of drama and poetry.

During this period, artists such as EL Greco, Diego Velazquez, Bartolome Esteban Murillo, and Francisco de Zurbaran also created major paintings that celebrated aspects of Spanish culture, including its members of the aristocracy and the country's Catholic traditions.



**Las Meninas (Ladies in Waiting)
By Diego Velazquez,**

In Context



Battle of Lepanto in Europe, the 16th century was a time of political and religious upheaval. Cervantes fought alongside his countrymen at the Battle of Lepanto (1571), in which the Ottomans were defeated in the biggest naval engagement of the era.

During the battle, Cervantes suffered a permanent injury to his left hand. In his later travels, he was taken prisoner and held captive in Algier's from 1575-80. This experience features in the Captive's Tale in Part 1 of Don Quixote.



The Battle of Lepanto

Don Quixote's quest, which frequently involves beatings, defeats, and humiliations, is interspersed with the tales of characters he encounters on the road, which explore love, fidelity, and madness. At the end of the first volume of comical escapades, Don Quixote, whom by now Sancho Panza has dubbed the Cballero de la Triste Figura (the Knight of the Sad Face), speaks of his intention to travel to Sargossa for further adventures, but is finally persuaded to return to his village and abandon his "quixotic" (imaginative but unrealistic) behaviour.

In 1615, Cervantes published his long-awaited sequel to the story, elaborating on Don Quixote's further travels, and allowing Sancho Panza to finally realise, albeit briefly, his dream of ruling an island.



More tightly structured and more philosophical, but still freewheeling in the style of Part 1, the sequel extended Cervantes' playful discussion of the subject of literature. The narrator frequently comments on the sources of the story and literature.

The narrator frequently comments on the sources of the story and continues to make inflated claims about the significance of the adventures described. This self-referential aspect of the novel influenced many later writers, as did the idea of focusing on two companions on the road, and the comical clash of medieval and modern ways of thinking.



While Cervantes was writing Part 2, an unauthorized sequel to Part 1 was published in 1614 by a writer with the pseudonym Alonso Fernandez de Avellaneda.

This version of the tale took the characters to Saragossa, as suggested towards the end of Part 1, and Cervantes incorporated many of the negative reviews of this book into his own authentic Part 1.

In particular, instead of going to Saragossa, as outlined in the spurious sequel, Cervantes has Don Quixote suddenly decide to travel to Barcelona instead, after which he returns home and declares that his days of reading books of chivalry are over for good.





Inspiration for the Battle With the Giants

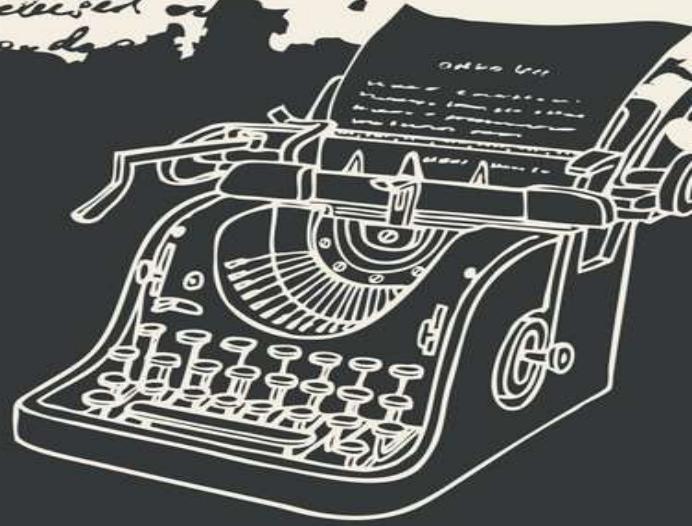
Don Quixote famously attacks a group of windmills, which he mistakes for giants. The scene exemplifies Cervantes' approach of presenting Don Quixotes' exploits in unremarkable settings.

The novel replaces the typical pastoral environment of chivalric tales with the common, everyday landscape of 16th – century Spain.

The battle with the giants is brief, but lives on in the expression “tilting at windmills”, which means “talking on imaginary foes.”



Fiction Versus Reality



Don Quixote satirizes the tales of chivalry that feed the imagination of its hero. Don Quixote refers to many of these works, especially his favourite, *Amadis de Gaula*, by Garcia Rodriguez de la Montalvo. Others include a range of stories dealing with figures from the worlds of King Arthur and Charlemagne. These books make up Don Quixote's library, which is later destroyed by his priest and barber in an attempt to bring him to his senses.

Don Quixote usually explains events by insisting that "enchanters" have transformed reality, and Cervantes enhances this by making many of his minor characters aware that Don Quixote is a literary character. In Part 2, for instance, several characters tell him that they have read about his adventures, and Don Quixote even comes across a copy of the unauthorized sequel to Cervantes' original novel.

Don Quixote and Sancho Panza



Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. The relationship between Don Quixote and Sancho Panza forms the crux of the novel and shapes many of the episodes. The dialogue between the two characters highlights the difference between Don Quixote's idealism and Sancho Panza's common-sense approach to life.

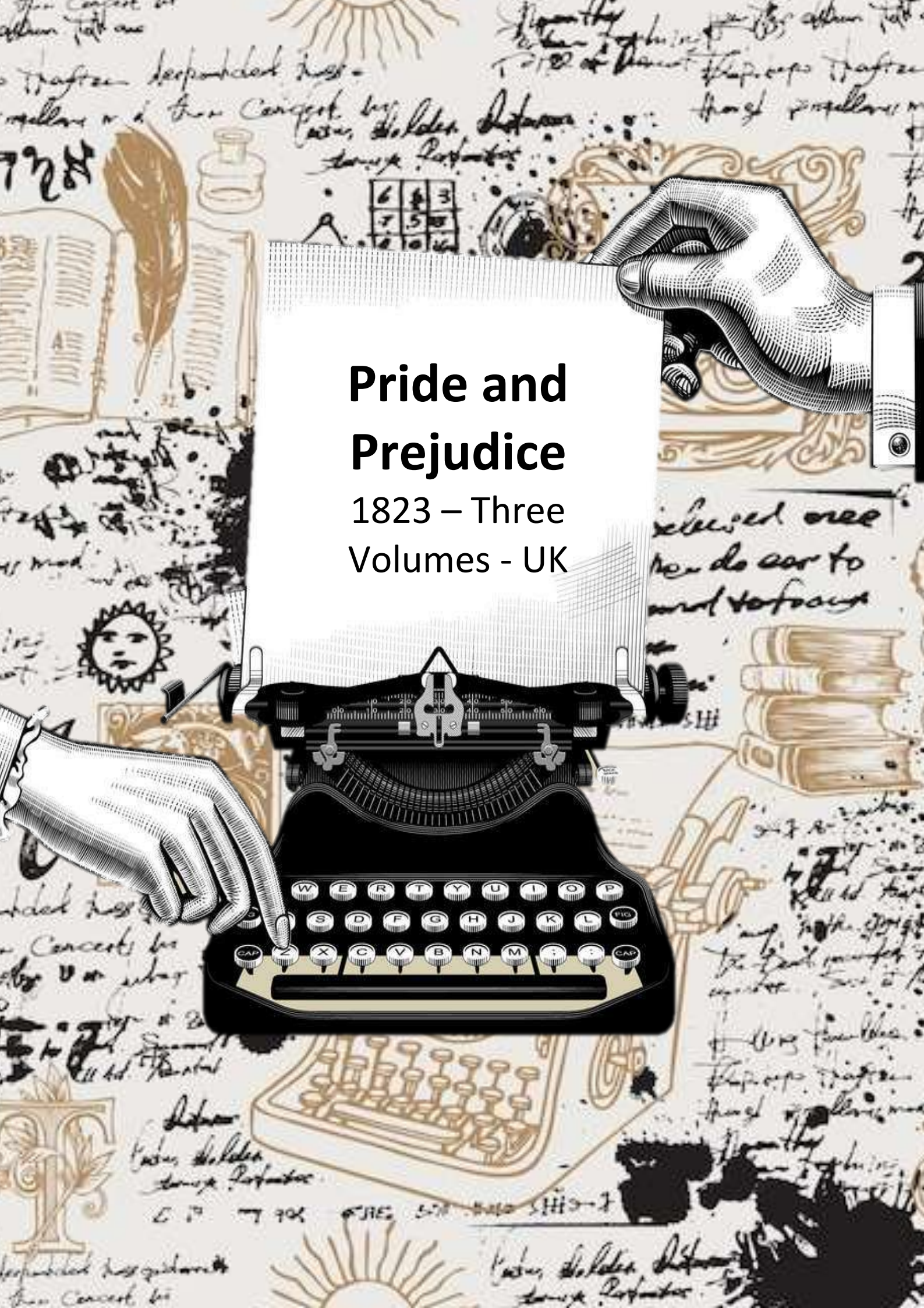
Although Cervantes never strays from the comic, the emotional heart of the novel is the companionship of the mater and his squire.



Don Quixote and Sancho Panza

Pride and Prejudice

1823 – Three
Volumes - UK





Jane Austen

(1775 - 1817)



The author of perhaps the best-known literary classic of all time lived a life of obscurity. Born in 1775, Jane Austen was the seventh child of a Hampshire clergyman, George Austen; she had six brothers and one sister, Cassandra, who was two years older than her and became her closest friend. She grew up in a small Hampshire village, called Steventon; village life would be a feature of her fiction. She had little formal schooling, and depended upon her father, and his library, for her education.

In 1797, Austen completed a novel called *First Impressions*. Her father sent it to a London bookseller in the hope that it would be published, but the manuscript (now lost) was returned unread. Fifteen years later, Austen would return to this manuscript and rewrite it completely to produce *Pride and Prejudice*.



After her father's death in 1805, Jane and her mother and sister were dependent on her brothers for financial support. Eventually, her brother Edward, who had been adopted by wealthy, childless relatives, found a secure home for them in the Hampshire village of Chawton. Here, over the course of some seven years, she produced all six of her completed novels, which included *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) and *Emma* (1816)

Although *Pride and Prejudice* followed the "courtship" plot of other novels of the time, it was in many ways unconventional. Elizabeth Bennet was a heroine unlike any other fiction before her: "arch", irrelevant, and independent-minded. Austen's readers were used to virtuous, exemplary heroines. Elizabeth is witty and confident; she also gets things wrong. Indeed, the plot relies on her prejudiced misjudgement of both Mr Darcy and the smooth but deceitful Mr Wickham.



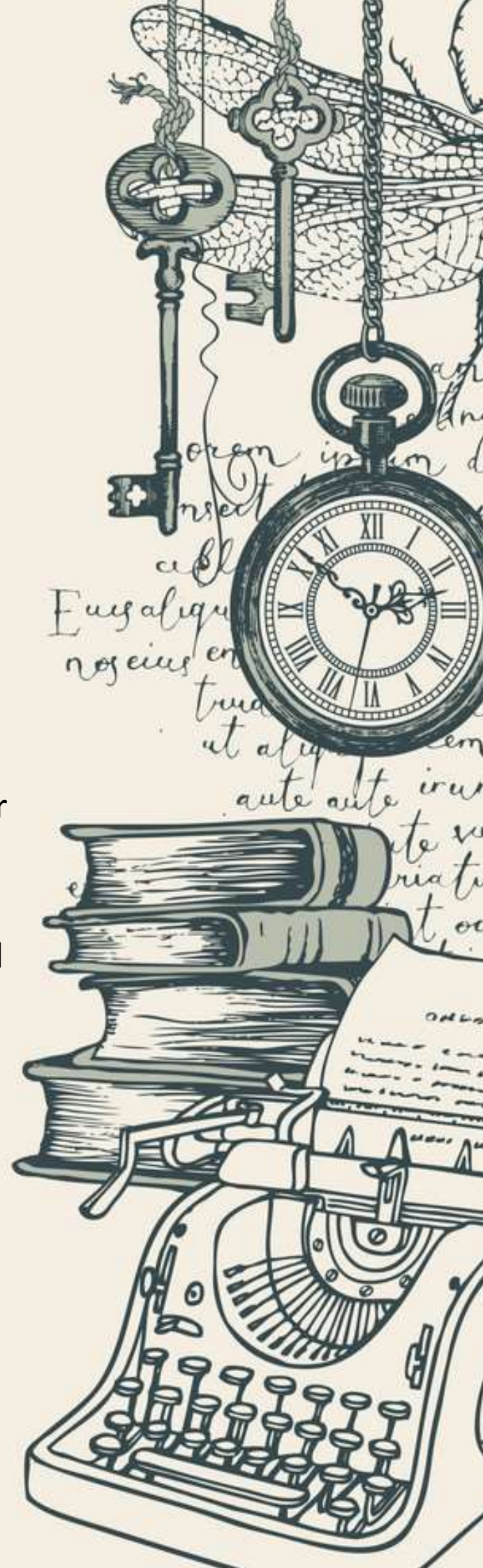
Elizabeth's interest in Mr Darcy is all the more believable because she does not recognize it herself. He, meanwhile, is confident that he can overcome his attraction to her. In the first volume of the novel, they fence with and tease each other. Both have to discover their true feelings through their errors.

"After a silence of several minutes, he came towards her in an agitated manner, and thus began: "In vain I have struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you." Elizabeth's astonishment was beyond expression. She stared, coloured, doubted and was silent. This he considered sufficient encouragement; and the avowal of all that he felt, and had long felt for her, immediately followed. He spoke well; but there were feelings besides those of the heart to be detailed; and he was not more eloquent on the subject of tenderness than of pride.



His sense of her inferiority – of the family obstacles which had always opposed to inclination, were dwelt on with a warmth which seemed due to the consequence he was wounding, but was very unlikely to recommend his suit.”

The first edition, *Pride and Prejudice* was published, in three volumes, on 28 January 1813 for 18 shillings. All 1500 copies sold and a second edition was called for later the same year. Austen had sold the copyright to the publisher, Thomas Egerton, for one-off payment of \$100 and made no further profit. Egerton made four times as much money from the novel as Austen.





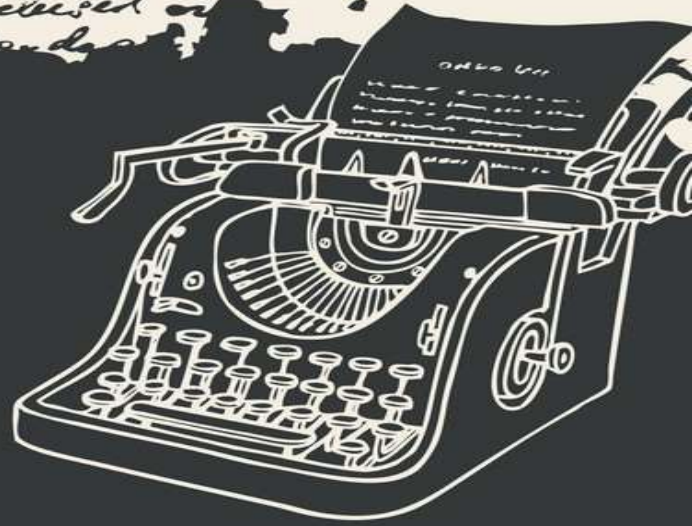
Don Quixote and Sancho Panza

Mr Darcy proposing to Elizabeth. This picture shows Mr Darcy's second proposal to Elizabeth. He seizes his opportunity when they are out walking with Mr Bingley and Jane Bennet, who are now officially engaged and lag behind, interested only in each other, and Kitty Bennet, who leaves them to call on Maria Lucas. They are alone together, and he can tell her, "My wishes and affections are unchanged." This time, she reciprocates.

"Elizabeth looked archly, and turned away. Her resistance had not injured her with the gentleman ..."



Dancing



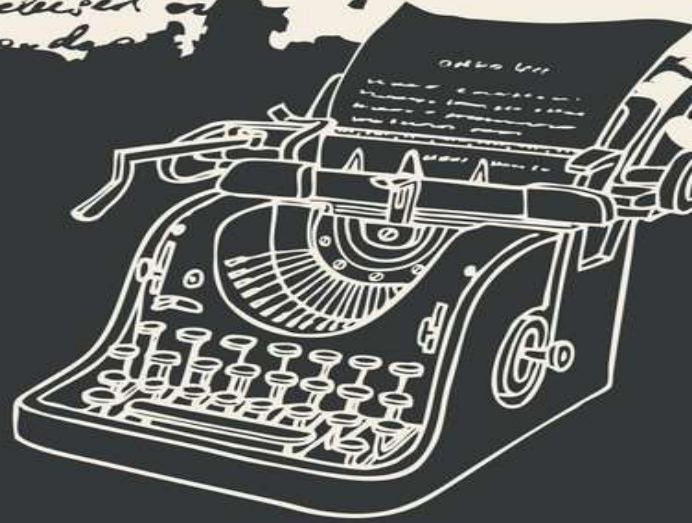
In Austen's world, dances were essential to courtship. They were the most important occasions for young men and women to meet and have some physical contact (although both wore gloves). Some dances were open to anyone who bought a ticket, like the Meryton assembly ball in *Pride and Prejudice*. Others were improvised occasions, to a piano accompaniment, like the dance at the Lucases' in the novel, which happens at the end of a party. And some grand, private affairs, by invitation only, like the Netherfield ball, where Elizabeth finally danced with Mr Darcy.

At all of these, dances were undertaken in "sets", or formations, following complicated patterns that had to be learned in advance. As we see with Elizabeth and Mr Darcy, this often allowed partners to speak to each other as they danced.



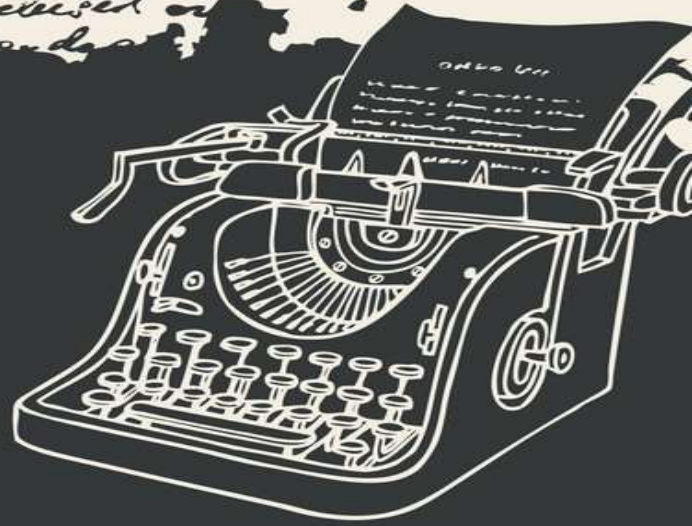
Balls and Dancing in Pride and Prejudice

Money



In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen is alert to the importance of money, and so are all the characters in the novel. Mr Bennet's estate will pass to Mr Collins, a distant cousin, so his five daughters must hope to escape penury through marriage. As the very first chapter reveals, Mrs Bennet is preoccupied with their marriage prospects. hilariously foolish though she is, many of her hopes are gratified. Even the "wild, noisy and fearless" Lydia, who elopes, aged 16, with a rakish seducer, gets a husband in the end. Elizabeth comes to realise that her father, whose "sarcastic humour" she appreciates, is partly to blame for his wife's and daughter's follies.

Marriage



Marriage for love may be the happy ending towards which *Pride and Prejudice* is headed, but Austen's fiction is clear-eyed about the possible pains for marriage. Mr Bennet has married a woman for whom he has no respect; he takes refuge in his subtle mockery of her and his daughters. The fate of Charlotte Lucas, Elizabeth's closest friend, is unforgettable.

Mr Collins, having been refused by Elizabeth, rapidly turns to Charlotte, who accepts for the sake of the financial security this will bring her. When Elizabeth visits her in her new home in Kent, she sees that Charlotte has arranged everything so that she encounters her husband as little as possible. It is a sad prospect for the rest of her life.

Solemnly self-important, Mr Collins is one of the novel's deliciously comic characters. Another is his patroness, the haughty and bullying Lady Catherine De Bourgh, Mr Darcy's aunt, who has a memorable verbal duel with Elizabeth when she tries to stop her from marrying Mr Darcy. Here, as everywhere in the novel, Austen's dialogue is brilliantly sharp – one of the reasons the novel has proved irresistible to film and TV adaptors.





Godmersham Park

Inspiration for the Setting of *Pride and Prejudice*



Mr Darcy's House

Key Characters



The Bennet Family:

Mr Phillips married to Mrs Phillips

Mrs Phillips sibling of Mr Gardiner and Mrs Bennet

Mr Bennet and Mrs Bennet parents to Jane Bennet, Elizabeth Bennet, Mary Bennet, Catherine (Kitty) Bennet and Lydia Bennet

Mr Collins distant cousin of Mr Bennet



Mr. Collins



Mrs. Bennet



Wickham



Jane Bennet



Lady Catherine



Darcy



Elizabeth Bennet



Mr. Bennet



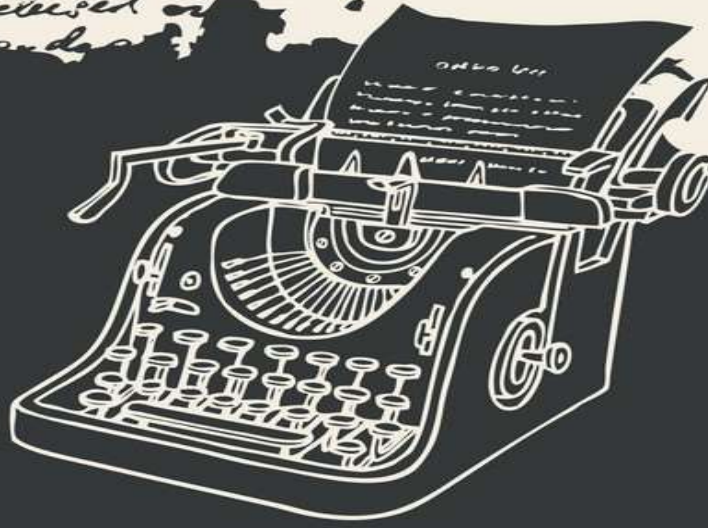
Lydia Bennet

Bingley



Key Characters

Proposals



Strict conventions governed marriage proposals in Austen's day. In her novel *Northanger Abbey*, a character compares matrimony to dancing: "in both, man has the advantage of choice, woman only the power of refusal."

The proposal had to come from the man, but once a couple became engaged, only the woman could break off the engagement.

Whether made in writing or speech, any declaration of affection could be taken as a proposal of marriage: Mr Darcy does not explicitly mention marriage in either of his proposals. In Austen's novels, men who propose as if they cannot imagine a negative answer (such as Mr Collins) are turned down: some diffidence is a better sign of true affection.



Mr Collins proposes to Elizabeth, believing that he “will not fail of being acceptable.”

Jane Austen's Letter



Two days after receiving her copy of *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen wrote to her sister Cassandra, her closest confidante, who was staying with their brother Charles, only 15 miles away. She calls the novel “my own darling child”. She and her mother have read it aloud to a neighbour, Miss Benn, who never suspects (because the novel is anonymous) that Jane is the author.

Jane Austen's Letters
Nov 29 - 1814

I am very much obliged to you, my dear Anna, & should be very happy to come & see you again if I could, but I have not a day disengaged. We are expecting your Uncle Charles tomorrow; and I am to go the next day to Hamwell to fetch some Miss Moores who are to stay here till Saturday; then comes Sunday & Elizth. Gibson, and on Monday your Uncle Henry takes us both to Chawton. It is therefore really impossible, but I am very much obliged to you & to Mr. B. Lefroy for wishing it.

We should find plenty to say, no doubt, & I should like to hear Charlotte Devereux's Letter; however, though I do not bear it, I am glad she has written to you. I like first Cousins to be first Cousins & interested about each other. They are but one remove from B^r & S^r.

Jane Austen's Letter Describing the Novel

“Miss Benn dined with us on the very day of the Books coming, and in the evening we set fairly at it and read half the 1st vol. to her ... I believe it passed with her unsuspected. – she was amused, poor soul! That she c. not help, you know, with two such people to lead the way; but she really does seem to admire Elizabeth. I must confess that I think her as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print, and how I shall be able to tolerate those who do not like her at least, I do now know.” – letter to Cassandra 29 January 1813.



Jane Austen's Writing Box



When Austen was 18, her father gave her this “writing box”. As well as being a container for her writing, with a lockable drawer, it was a portable desk. When opened, it became a slope on which to rest paper and write, complete with a place for her ink pot. It is now in the British library.



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Austen's Other Works



Jane Austen completed six novels in her lifetime. *Pride and Prejudice* was the second to be published. It came after *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) – the story of two sisters, the judicious Elinor and the impetuous Marianne – and was followed by *Mansfield Park* (1814), whose heroine, (1815), Austen's longest and most formally ambitious novel, which sees the world through the deluded eyes of its meddling heroine, Emma Woodhouse.

Before her death in July 1817, Austen had completed *Persuasion*, the story of a woman, Anne Elliot, who believes that she has lost her one chance of love.

This and *Northanger Abbey*, her revision of an early satire of Gothic fiction, were published posthumously.

Frankenstein

1818 – Three
Volumes - UK





Mary Shelley

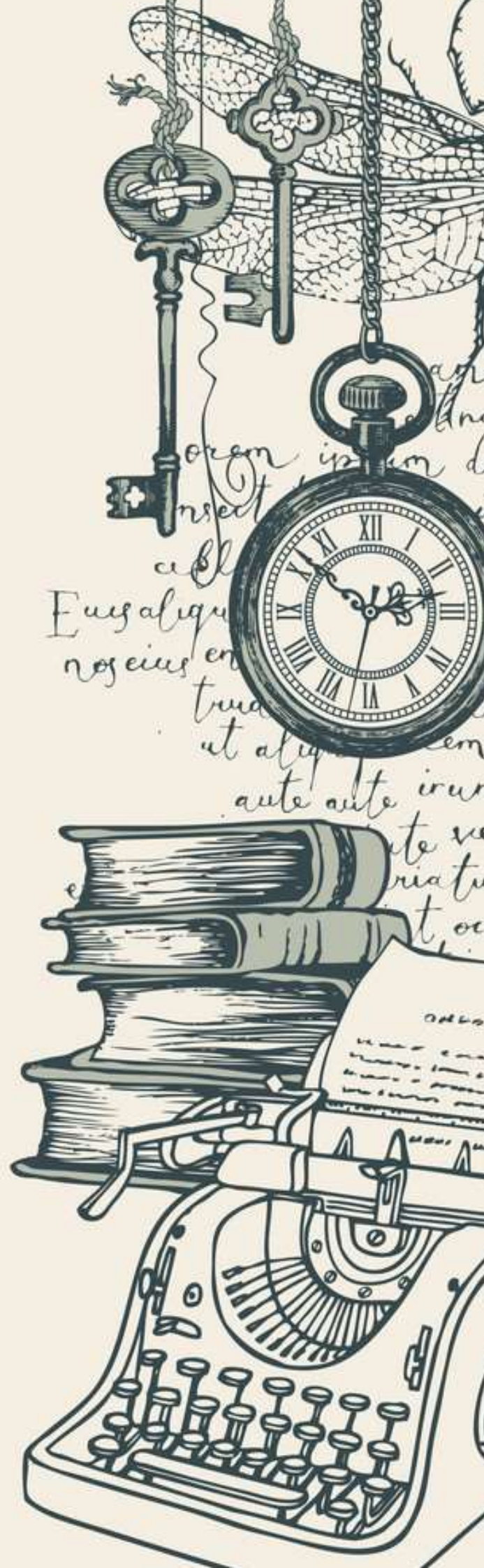
(1797 - 1851)



Begun near Lake Geneva in 1816, on a night of telling ghost stories in the company of her future husband Percy Bysshe Shelley; Lord Byron; her half-sister John Polidori, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*; or, the Modern Prometheus created an enduring literary and cultural myth.

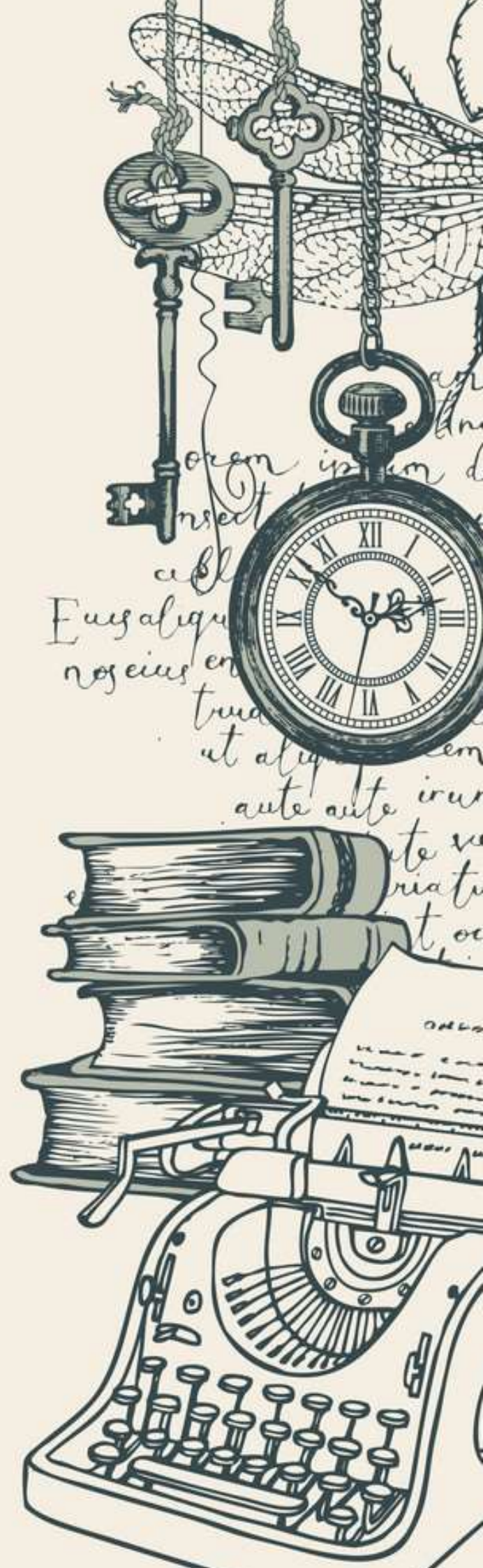
Victor Frankenstein, a Swiss student of science and nature, explores forbidden areas of knowledge that come back to haunt him. Seeking "the secrets of heaven and earth", he brings forth a live creature endowed with the power of thought. Horrified by what he has made, Frankenstein flees from his creation and the monster escapes to the mountains to wreak revenge on its maker.

The novel opens nears the North Pole, where a weakened Victor Frankenstein is found stranded on the ice by a ship's captain. Frankenstein's story is told within the framework of Captain Walton's letters to his sister.



From his cabin bed, Frankenstein recounts the harrowing experiences – including murder – of his family as they become the prey of the monster. He also explains the monster’s state of mind, when it confronts Frankenstein high in the Alps and explains why it was intent on evil. Shunned by humanity, it demands that Frankenstein play God once more and create a companion for its solitude.

Frankenstein explores ambition, community, rejection, the will and the nature of good and evil, taking us from the sources of life to the darkness of death in a complex story of hunter and hunted. It adopts a distinctly Romantic critique of Promethean themes – its subtitle, “the Modern Prometheus”, alludes to the Greek hero who stole fire from the gods and paid the price for doing so.



As such, the book continues the committed social engagement of Shelley's parents – the political thinker William Godwin and the feminist Mary Wollstonecraft.

“With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs. How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form?”



In Context



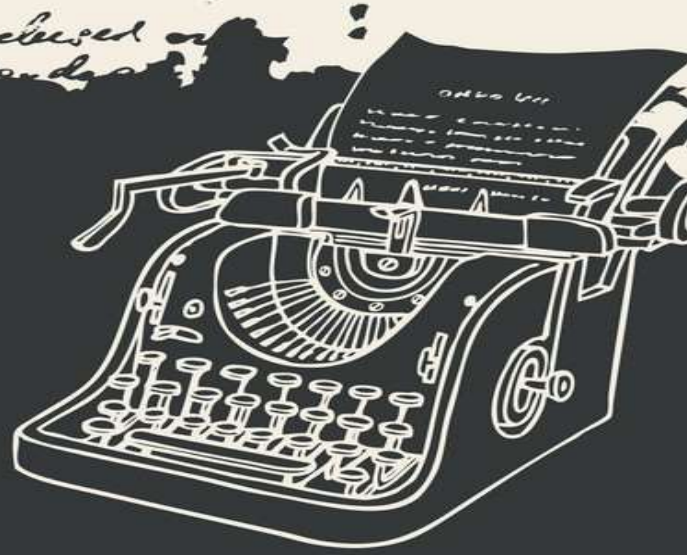
Alienation in both its themes and its dramatic Alpine setting *Frankenstein* examines alienation, a common topic in Romantic literature. The theme is found elsewhere in defining works of art of the period, from the paintings of German artist Caspar David Friedrich to the writings of Lord Byron.

John Martin's painting *Manfred on the Jungfrau* was inspired by Byron's work *Manfred*. Like *Frankenstein*, it features characters cast out into the sublime grandeur of nature, which diminishes and awes human beings.



Manfred on the Jungfrau
By John Martin

The Manuscript



In this part of the manuscript, Frankenstein records his horror at the “catastrophe” of his creature awakening and attempting to approach him. His rejection of the monster, which he calls a “wretch”, begins a trail of disaster, moving from Frankenstein’s laboratory of scientific creation to the wilderness of pack ice that bookends the novel. This moment has inspired countless efforts to imagine the monster, from cinema and television to graphic novels and advertising.

Shelley’s manuscript was around 300 pages long and was written in two large notebooks. This page is the opening of chapter 7.

Both Shelley and her husband-to-be, poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, made revisions to the manuscript.

It was on a dreary night of November
 that I beheld ^{the fiend no more} my man completed, and
 with an anxiety that almost amount-
 ed to agony, I collected my implements of life
 around me and ~~endeavoured~~ ^{that I might} infuse a
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 the creature open - it breathed hard,
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But how now can I describe my
 emotion at this catastrophe, or how deli-
 neate the wretch whom with such
 infinite pains and care I had endeavoured
 to form. His limbs were in proportion
^{beautiful} and I had selected his features & as
^{beautiful} handsome handsome. ~~His~~ ^{His} Great God! His
 yellow skin scarcely covered the work of
 muscles and arteries beneath; his hair
 of a lustrous black ^{was} flowing and his teeth of a pearly white
 set, but these luxuriantly only ~~formed~~
 formed a more hoarse contrast with
 his watery eyes that seemed almost of
 the same colour as the sun white
 sockets in which they were set,

The Manuscript



The Gothic novel explores the late 18th and early 19th-century world with an emphasis on subjective experience, the emotions, the obscure corners of the human psyche, and fear of the supernatural.

One major influence on the literature of the period was *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), by Irish philosopher Edmund Burke, which examined our attraction to “sublime” forces that can overwhelm us.

Before *Frankenstein*, the most popular Gothic novels were *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), by Horace Walpole, and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), by Ann Radcliffe.



Imagery Typical of Gothic Literature



THINK

DIGITAL ACADEMY

