

Who is Cyrus Dallin?

Cyrus Edwin Dallin (1861-1944) Springville, Utah

Don Quixote, 1898

Sculpture-bronze cast, 36-5/8" x 36"

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING

(History, Aesthetics, Criticism)

Background for the teacher

The story of *Don Quixote* by Cervantes and the music and words from *Man of La Mancha* can serve as background for the sculpture by Cyrus Dallin.

A synopsis of the story by Cervantes:

Alonso was addicted to books about knights and chivalry, squires, magicians, giants, and beautiful maidens. He began to sell off parts of his estate to buy even more books. Finally, he decided to become a knight himself. Finding a moldering suit of armor left by his great-grandfather, he dressed the part. To complete his attire, he added other knickknacks like a helmet visor made of cardboard. Though he looked ridiculous, Alonso imagined his costume to be the finest suit of armor in the world. He imagined his dilapidated old nag to be a healthy, noble steed. Since a knight should have a musical name, Alonso called himself, henceforth, Don Quixote de la Mancha after his town.

Before roaming the world to right wrongs, Don Quixote chose his lady-love, a country girl he called Dulcinea.

Decked out in his clattering armor and dreaming of fame, Don Quixote set out to search for adventure. He happened upon an inn he imagined to be an enchanted castle and persuaded a bewildered inn keeper to officially dub him a knight.

Plagued with misadventures, Don Quixote did do some good, like free a young boy from a flogging. He convinced a fat, unrefined barber, Sancho Panzo, to accompany him as his squire.

Together, Don Quixote and Sancho fell into outrageous undertakings, usually resulting from Quixote's hallucinations. On the plains of La Mancha, the pair spotted a group of huge windmills. Don Quixote instantly declared them wicked giants and despite

Sancho's protest, charged them with a lowered lance. The windmill caught the knight and his steed and sent them rolling.

However, Quixote's exploits soon came to an end. He was deceived by old friends, captured, and placed in a cage. On the way home, his captors tried to coax him to give up his preoccupation with chivalry, explaining that knights were merely fanciful fiction. Don Quixote refused to be cured.

However, at the end of the book, when Don Quixote is dying, he renounces his books of chivalry, confessing, "how foolish I was. . . ." In a pathetic moment, he begs forgiveness. "I was Don Quixote de la Mancha, and now I am Alonso Quejana, the good." The novel closes as Don Quixote denounces his dream. "These tales are nonsensical stories. . . tottering. . . and doomed to fail."

Commentary:

Cervantes originally intended the story as a crude, slapstick parody of romantic chivalry. Over the years, the interpretation has reversed. It is now a warm, human tale depicting conflict between noble idealism and unfeeling practicality. Don Quixote has become a symbol of noble, though impractical, idealism. Explain idealism to students. Have them give examples. The adjective "quixotic" originated with this story. It means impractically romantic or idealistic.

Questions:

Look at *Don Quixote* by Cyrus Dallin. Ask the students if they think Cyrus Dallin created an ideal or a real sculpture of Don Quixote (or both). Make sure they give reasons for their opinion.

Do you think Luke Skywalker in *Star Wars* is quixotic? How is Luke Skywalker like Don Quixote? How is he different? How is the story of *Star Wars* like Cervantes' *Don Quixote*? Can you list other romantic heroes?

ACTIVITIES

1. Visual Arts-expressing

Objectives: Students will be able to create a three-dimensional art piece as a group project.

Materials:

• plasticine clay, oil-based clay, model magic, or salt dough

• modeling tools

Theme Motivation: Don Quixote fought windmills, thinking they were dragons, monsters, or giants. What kind of beast could Don Quixote have imagined? A griffin, for example, was created using the hind quarters of a lion and the head and wings of an eagle.

Give the following background information after the students have completed their individual parts:

The Surrealist artists would create artworks entitled 'Immaculate Corpses' by folding a piece of paper into four or five strips. One artist would draw a head on the first strip and then fold their strip over so that the next artist could not see what they had drawn. The second artist would then draw an upper torso with arms on the next strip and then fold their strip over. The paper was passed around until an entire corpse was complete and then the paper was unfolded to reveal the artwork.

Procedure:

1. Divide the class into teams of four students. Each member of the team counts off a number from one to four. Secretly, assign each member of the team a subject and ask them not to reveal what they are making. Students complete this activity in silence.

ÔOnes are assigned to create a torso, real or imagined, human, animal, insect, fish, or bird.

ÔTwos make a head.

ÔThrees make appendages like arms and hands, legs and feet, fins, or wings.

ÔFours create a tail or antennae.

2. Next, students from a team place their creations in the center of the table and create a special creature by joining all the forms.

3. After creation, students brainstorm ideas about a name for their creature, its history, environment, temperament, personality, and habits.

2. Visual Arts-expressing

Objective: Students will demonstrate their ability to make judgments and give reasons for choices about art.

Motivation: Give your students the following background information regarding the purchase of Don Quixote:

Cyrus Dallin is a little like Don Quixote himself. He was 35 years old and just not satisfied with his artistic efforts, so he took his family to Paris to study art some more. He wanted to bring his work up to the technical competence of the French masters. According to Caffin, Dallin did achieve his goal. He "acquired the technical perfection and elegance of style" for which the French schools were famous (Caffin, *American Masters of Sculpture*, 1913).

One of Dallin's most superb sculptures is his bronze, *Don Quixote*. "In it Dallin attempted to make the superlative qualities he found in French sculpture of the day," says Vern Swanson, Director of the Springville Museum. William Downs, art critic, says, "Don Quixote is conceived in an absolutely ideal spirit, and is enveloped in an atmosphere of romance which is completely in harmony with that of Cervantes'." In fact,

Downs calls Don Quixote, "one of the most delightfully original and imaginative American sculptures."

Dr. Vern Swanson tells the following story:

Historian Rell Francis had searched for the sculpture of *Don Quixote* for 30 years and feared it had been destroyed. The Springville Museum of Art first heard of the piece in July of 1996, when an art dealer from Virginia contacted me, as the Museum director. While the Museum was interested, it was not sure the piece was not a surmulage (mold made from an existing bronze statue). The dealer visited the Museum and selected a number of pieces he would be willing to trade. Then he shipped the Dallin to the Museum.

When Robert Nickelson and I (Vern Swanson) opened the crate, we knew instantly that it was not only an original life-time bronze, but one of great importance. A discovery of a seminal work by the artist is a rare find indeed! It was in good condition (missing only the lower end of a lance) and was a textbook on the casting foundry methods of the late nineteenth century.

What the Dallin sculpture of *Don Quixote* means to the Springville Museum of Art is manifold. The sculptor is noted for his Indian, patriotic, and portrait sculptures. Although the Springville Museum's collection comprises 37 works by Cyrus Dallin, having a piece not in his typical genre extends our view of the artist. The work is also not sculpted in his typical classical style, but rather in a tight academic style of the Beaux-Arts fashion. In *Don Quixote*, the artist stepped out of his typical style to create in the style of his contemporaries. Having proven his talent, he reverted to his typical style, only with greater confidence and ability.

Activity: Visit an art museum with your class. Give students the following instructions:

Imagine that you can own three works of art in the Springville Museum. Which works would you choose? Why? Complete the following worksheet about your three favorite works of art. The first person to choose a work of art may pretend to own it. No two students may own the same work of art.

Art galleries often trade works of art for other works of art. Show other members of the class your three favorite works of art and explain why you like them. Maybe someone found a piece you didn't notice the first time through. Or maybe someone's description or reason made you decide you like their piece better than yours. Do any of you want to trade? Would you give one, two, or three of the paintings you "own" for another? Why?

Evaluation: Students participate in the activity and give reasons for their choices.

3. Language Arts, Music, Theater:

Objective: The students will demonstrate their understanding of idealism through discussion and by writing and performing a dramatic portrayal of a romantic quest.

Listen to the music from *Man of La Mancha* by Dale Wasserman, music by Mitch Leigh, lyrics by Joe Darion. Have students follow along with the words to "The Impossible Dream." Perhaps they can sing the words. Ask them to discuss an impossible dream or the unbeatable foe. You may need to suggest ideas such as curing all the diseases in the world, ending hunger in the world, halting all crime, ending violence, eliminating poverty. Explain that Don Quixote set out to cure all the evils in the world, an impossible task.

Next explain the difference between an idealist and a realist. For example, an ideal is something you would like to happen. Realism is what really happens. An ideal would be to cure all the diseases in the world. In reality, we have wiped out small pox. We can prevent polio with vaccine, etc., but we can't cure ALL sickness in the world.

Using the story of Don Quixote as a starting point, have students create a script for their own version of a romantic quest. They may present their creation in the form of a puppet show, a radio drama, or a skit. Students should explain how their hero is an idealist as well as how he/she is like Don Quixote.

4. Mathematics/Visual Arts:

Objective: Students will apply their knowledge of geometry by constructing a three-dimensional form, i.e. pyramid, cube, or rectangular shaped box, from a two-dimensional surface (poster board) and decorate it with visual images that represent ideal and realistic ideas.

Materials:

Newsprint or butcher paper for pattern

Posterboard for final construction

Glue (Elmer's for box construction and glue sticks for magazine pictures)

Magazines

Examples of boxes

Scissors

Procedure:

1. Have the students examine three-dimensional forms, i.e. box, cube, cylinder, pyramid, rectangular-shaped box. They will identify the characteristics of each form. You may want to take a form or box apart to show students the two-dimensional surface, and then put it back together. Show several examples. Instruct students to make a pattern for their own three dimensional form. They must plan where to place flaps and how to construct their form.

Some students will be able to do this easily and other will struggle. Have students help each other until each has constructed a sturdy three-dimensional form.

2. Review the story of Don Quixote and discuss idealism and realism. Have students make their own list of things they would want to conquer if they were Don Quixote, setting out to right all the wrongs in the world. Have them choose at least three of their

favorite ideas and illustrate these ideas with pictures from magazines. At least three sides of their box should illustrate a different idealistic idea. (For example, one side could be covered with pictures of people eating to represent "no more hunger;" another could be covered with medicines and healthy bodies to represent "no more disease;" another could be covered with people laughing together or holding hands to represent "no more war.") On other sides of their box students can write words that correspond with their ideals, or list realistic solutions.

3. For evaluation, students will show their constructions to classmates and explain their "ideals."