The Types Of Insanity In Don Quixote

In the sarcastic tale, Don Quixote, the audience was introduced to the main character, whose name differed from Alonso, Don Quixote, and Don Quejana. For the sake of the essay, Don Quixote will be used as the character's main name.

This character was mentally sick throughout the majority of the story. His insanity sparked a real interest in the readers to examine what illnesses Don Quixote might have caused himself. In the duration of the story, it was concluded that the main character showed the readers symptoms of psychosis, mania, borderline personality disorder, and schizophrenia. Analyzing the mental illness Don Quixote experienced related to many of the same cases from the 16th and 17th centuries when the book was written. The character having all the named illnesses, or at least symptoms of each, made the story fascinating from a psychological standpoint to the audience.

Starting off with the development of psychosis in Don Quixote, his life progresses the more he reads the books of chivalry. Psychosis is best described as, “disruptions to a person’s thoughts and perceptions that make it difficult for them to recognize what is real and what isn’t” (NAMI, n.d., par. 1). In the story, Don had many breaks in reality, such as fantasizing about windmills as giants and seeing himself as an honorable man. See, the characters' actions and words perfectly comply with the diagnosis of psychosis. Interestingly enough, his development of psychosis was the main cause to most of the story's events. Early psychosis can be seen as, “when a person first shows signs of beginning to lose contact with reality” (NAMI, n.d., par. 3). These events occurred when the character started to worship and fantasize over chivalry and the Knight’s Code of Chivalry. Now Don Quixote didn’t become psychotic overnight. Psychosis most often doesn’t come suddenly, “usually a person has gradual, non-specific changes in thoughts and perceptions” (NAMI, n.d., par. 4). The characters years of reading slowly set off his psychotic breaks.“Our gentleman became so immersed in his reading that … his brain dried up and he went completely out of his mind” (Cervantes in Puchner, M., Akbari, S., Denecke, W., Dharwadker, V., Fuchs, B., Levine, C., Lewis, P., & Wilson, E., 2012, par. 7). This was the beginning of Don Quixote’s mental episode that got the climax of the story started. His first real showcase of mental illness was soon after his “brain dried up”. He got a fantastic idea to drop every normal thing he did and become a knight. He made himself excuses of armor, all the while telling himself that if he went on honorable quests and conquered them, he would be the greatest man and knight to ever live! These thoughts started to exemplify real distress in Sr. Quixote and a huge break from reality. This is where he started to show his manic behavior. The book prolonged for many chapters and Mr. Quixote's mental state only got worse.

Schizophrenia was yet another illness the main character exemplified. This illness is diagnosed as, “...a type of psychosis in which a person cannot tell what is real from what is imagined. It also affects how people think, act, express emotions, and relate to others” (NIH, n.d., par.1). Don’s complex character developed many symptoms relating to schizophrenia. These symptoms are listed off as, “...delusions, hallucinations, disorganized speech, strange behavior, poor hygiene, and a withdrawal from family…” (NIH, n.d., par.4). The character saw windmills as giants and an inn as a castle. He believed that innocent bystanders were threatening him as he was on his missions. Believing he had a royal duty was the reason his knighthood was a noticeable fracture in his behavior. He showed his symptoms also through never eating or

cleaning himself up along with never telling his housekeeper and niece where he was or was going. This character was a prime example of a schizophrenic patient. This not only caused Don his eventual death but also caused pain to those who really loved him.

His final break of sanity brought the story to a rushed end leaving the audience to start questioning what other types of insanity Don really showed. It was concluded that Don exemplified two more major illnesses: mania, and borderline personality disorder (BPD). Starting off with a significant illness in the story, mania, Don showed many symptoms through his actions in the tale. Mania symptoms include, "...mood changes, impaired judgment..." (Purse, 2018, par. 3). The audience can analyze both of these behaviors in the story. Through his quickly aggressive state in his battles and just when he is walking around "protecting" his belongings, one sees the character's quick mood changes. When seeing windmills as giants and guards as kidnapping thieves, the audience sees his impaired judgment. Interestingly enough mania was also one of the biggest illnesses in real life when Don Quixote was written, during the 16th and 17th centuries. Many people were checked into mental hospitals for cases much less than Don exhibited. One is a man in Spain who, "showed signs of exaggerated anxiety… and the immoderate intake of coffee" (Vizoso, 2018, par. 7). The medical field not being super-advanced noted that "people with psychological disorders were seen as dangerous so they were locked up" (Preceden, par. 4). Also back in the day of the book, "in the eyes of the law, mentally ill people lacked the capacity to reason" (England, n.d., par. 2). The fact that Don didn't get locked up was an interesting writing technique for Cervantes.

Lastly, Don showed one more very prominent illness, borderline personality disorder (BPD). BPD's most relevant symptom to Quixote was his, "display of uncertainty about how they see themselves and their role in the world" (NIH, 2017, par.1). Don Quixote became a knight so he could gain honor that he didn't think he already had. Don didn't feel he was enough as he was, therefore, starting his mental issues. This first realization started the storyline in the book and ended up being the character's reason for dying. After breaking from insanity on his deathbed he relayed on the same things except this time cursing them. He thought of himself as foolish then perished with the thought of his former implications of being insane.

In conclusion, Don Quixote was a sarcastic and rhetoric story that was filled with mental illnesses. The main character goes throughout his life in the book with symptoms of psychosis, schizophrenia, mania, and borderline personality disorder. Analyzing the mental illness Don Quixote experienced related to many of the same cases from the 16th and 17th centuries when the book was written. The character having all the named illnesses, or at least symptoms of each, made the story fascinating from a psychological standpoint to the audience.