

*Gargantua and  
Pantagruel* by Francois  
Rabelais  
With Analysis by Bahktin

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# Francois Rabelais

- Lived in France for most of his life
- not much is known about his childhood
- was a major French Renaissance writer, physician, monk, and greek scholar.
- When he was younger he went to the Fontenay-le-Comte Fair and it inspired him to write *Gargantua*.



# Background Knowledge of the Novel

- Gargantua and Pantagruel are collections of 5 novels written in the 16th century
- 1st book: describes their education
- 2nd book: relates to the early life of Gargantua
- 3rd, 4th and 5th: follow Gargantua's life adventures
- The text has a lot of features of crudity, violence and risqué humor.
- Rabelais studied Ancient Greek and applied it in his novels to invent hundreds of new words for his text.
- Some of which became part of the French language.
- The full modern title for the book series is " The Horrible and Terrifying Deeds and Words of the Very Renowned Pantagruel King of the Dipsodes, Son of the Great Giant Gargantua"
- First book was published in 1567
- His second book was actually published first in 1532 under the pen name "Alcofribas Nasier"

# Key Summary Points

**It begins when Grangosier marries Gargamelle the daughter to the King of the Butterflies and are blessed with a child soon after.**

**During the eleventh month of her pregnancy, Gargamelle ate too many tripes which were not considered to be healthy meat for someone expecting.**

**Inconveniently, Gargantua was born from his mother's left ear. He cried like no other babies cried, "Some drink, some drink, some drink" as a way of inviting the world to drink with him.**

**Gargantua was considered a "prodigy" and he received his name because it was the first word that after his birth his father had spoken.**

# Key Points Continued...

He had to be supplied with milk from 7,913 cows and it was impossible to find a nurse sufficient enough for him in all the country.

He was dressed in white and blue in hopes to be understood as a positively celestial joy. White=joy, pleasure, delight, and rejoicing. Blue = heavenly.

Gargantua's childhood was full of obnoxious actions such as pissing in his shoes, feeling up his nurses and drank out of his slipper.

At the end of Garganuta's fifth year he talked with his father about how he was the cleanest boy in the whole country because he found out a means to "wipe his own bum."

# Incongruity Theory

## Chapter 3

- Chapter 3's name "How Gargantua was carried in his mother's belly for 11 months"
- Gargmelle is described as a jolly pug and a well-mouth wench

## Chapter 4

- When Gargmelle was pregnant she ate lots of tripe.
  - tripe is organs from different animals
  - she ate 16 quarters, 2 bushels, 3 pecks, and a pipkin full of tripe

# Incongruity Theory cont.

## Chapter 6

- When Gargmelle gave birth to Gargantua instead of crying like a normal baby he shouted "Some drink, some drink, some drink!"
  - Gargantua was repeating what Grandousier was saying

## Chapter 7

- The baby was so thirsty that no nurse could ever satisfy him. he had 7913 cows produce milk for him

# Incongruity Theory cont.

## Chapter 7

- Gargantua cried very little but "beshit himself every hour"

## Chapter 8

- Gargantua's clothes were huge taking hundred's of yards of fabric to use.

## Chapter 9

- A proverb said "A dirty asshole always has a good supply of shit."



# Last Incongruity slide I promise!

## Chapter 21

- Powerbrain said that Gargantua didn't exercise so he didn't need to drink that much Gargantua replied, "What! have I not sufficiently exercised myself? I have wallowed and rolled myself six or seven times in my bed before I rose. Is that not enough?"

# Relief Theory: Rabelais

- Relief Theory states that humor serves to facilitate release from the tension caused by one's fears.
- Chapter 6 - Gargantua born out of Gargmelle's ear ---> a caesarean section doesn't seem so bad
- Chapter 21 - Powerbrain comments on Gargantua's lack of exercise and drinking habits ---> obesity is serious by Gargantua plays it off as a joke

# Superiority Theory

- Chp. 6: Gargamelle has a really awful pregnancy
  - Her young child climbs out through her left ear
  - Her husband leaves her alone to continue drinking
  - From his first words, "some drink, some drink, some drink," Gargantua was born to be an alcoholic
- Chp. 9: Narrator blasts the author of *All about Colors*
  - He wants to give the author "credit for his arrogance and stupidity"
  - Makes us feel superior to the people who bought the book as well

# Superiority Theory: Continued

- Chp. 11: Gargantua is an idiot
  - He hides "himself in the water for fear of rain"
  - Pisses in his own shoes and shits in his own shirt
  - Feel superior because we don't have to raise such an obnoxious child
- Chp. 13: Gargantua likes to wipe his ass with various animals
  - Wipes his ass with a cat and gets scratched
- In conclusion: Feeling superior to something is much better if it is with your own species. Feeling superior to a giant really isn't saying much.

## iClicker Summary Question

How many months was Gargantua carried in his mother's belly?

- a.) 2 years
- b.) 11 months
- c.) 5 months
- d.) 1 day

# iClicker Summary Questions

What was Gargantua dressed in?

- a.) A purse made of elephant testicle
- b.) blue/crimson -velvet shoes
- c.) white velvet bonnet/cap
- d.) golden chain on his neck
- e.) all of the above

# iClicker Summary Question

What was Gurgantua saying as he was being born?

- a.) "Love, love, love !"
- b.) "Give me my mothers milk"
- c.) "Some drink, some drink, some drink"
- d.) "Let it be known, I am here"

# iClicker Question

Did you think it was funny?

- a.) I was hysterically laughing
- b.) I chuckled
- c.) It was not funny
- d.) I fell asleep reading it



# Mikhail Bakhtin

November 17, 1895 - March 7, 1975

- Russian philosopher and literary scholar
- Attended Petersburg University until 1918
- 1923 - Diagnosed with osteomyelitis
- Sentenced to six years of 'internal exile' in Kazakhstan
- 1940 - Lived in Moscow
- Later denied a doctorate by the State Accrediting Bureau
- 1957- Became head of the Department of Russian and World Literature at the Mordovian Pedagogical Institute before he retired in 1961

# Bakhtin's Analysis of *Rabelais* Summarized

-Strongly believes that Rabelais's book has been misunderstood for years

-Says that there are manifestations of this folk culture that can be divided into three distinct forms

1. Ritual Spectacles

2. Comic Verbal Compositions

3. Various genres of billingsgate

# Bakhtin's Analysis of *Rabelais* Summarized Continued

- Talks a lot about the openness of the book (for example: sex and cursing)
- Analysis of the social system of the Renaissance era to discover the balance between the language that was and was not allowed
- Study of the interaction between the social and the literary

# Does where he wrote matter?

-Yes

-Bakhtin wrote this analysis in Soviet Russia

-Wanted to portray the horror in the life under Stalin ruling

-He was also active in the aesthetics and literature in the Soviet Union

-His writing is definitely affected by his bringing up as a child and his home as an adult

# Historical Context of Bakhtin's Analysis

- Rabelais - Renaissance (post Middle Ages)
  - "rebirth" and discovery
  - *Gagantua and Pantagruel* (1532-1552)
- Comedy during this time period
  - Satire - what is wrong with society
    - Criticism
- Social System
  - Humanism - human experience

# Historical Context of "Gargantua and Pantagruel"

- Satirical response to the religious oppression present during the 16th century during the Protestant Reformation.
- Rabelais' works were condemned.
- Displayed the dissonance between French humanists and their struggle to deal with their constant ostracized state.
- Alludes to the mass murdering of Huguenots in France
- Parallel in Gargantua, a conservative man is ridiculed and compared to the ideals that of King Francis I who Rabelais supported.

# Historical Context of "Gargantua and Pantagruel" (cont'd)

- French did not become the official language of France until, 1539.
- Rabelais, beginning in 1532 when "Pantagruel" was published, incorporated Greek words that he created in his piece that later became integrated into the French language.
- Duality between religious reformation and intellectual reformation present in 16th century France.
- New humanistic thinking due to the Scientific Rev. and Protestant Reformation.
- Rabelais suggests a new way of learning that supplements the new renaissance way of thinking.

# Modern Relation to *Gargantua*

## *Mars Attacks!* (1996)

- Rabelais used Gargantua and Pantagruel to mock superstitions of the times.
- Bakhtin relates parodies to being "debasing" or "degrading."
- The film *Mars Attacks!* shows both of these traits:
  - Pokes fun at modern superstitions of alien invasions.
  - Degrades the superstition through the aliens' downfall.



# Modern Relation to *Gargantua* (cont.)

*Mars Attacks!* Trailer:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oC5O9NFWZCs>

And Clip:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-MhgnMX73Pw>

# Works Cited

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