The Princess Bride

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM GOLDMAN

Goldman was born and raised in Chicago. His father was a successful businessman while Goldman was very young, but due to alcoholism he lost his business and committed suicide when Goldman was in high school. Goldman attended Oberlin College and soon after graduation was drafted into the Army. Following his discharge, he earned his Master of Arts at Columbia University. Throughout college, Goldman edited his school literary magazine and took writing courses, but even his own magazine wouldn't publish his anonymously submitted written work. After helping his brother and roommate with several scripts for musicals, Goldman wrote his first novel, *The Temple of Gold*, and his career took off from there. He wrote novels, plays, and screenplays, most notably *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, for which he won an Oscar for Best Original Screenplay in 1969. Goldman was openly critical of the film industry and wrote several nonfiction books and memoirs about his experiences with it. As he writes in *The Princess Bride*, it is true that he bought back his own screenplay when nobody would greenlight it after the novel's publication, and he was very involved in the filming and casting process. He was married for 30 years but divorced in 1991. Goldman died in 2018 after suffering pneumonia and complications from colon cancer.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

While Florin and Guilder are fictional European countries, Goldman does make note of some general European trends. Goldman asserts that S. Morgenstern wrote *The Princess Bride* as a reaction to the decline of European monarchies as a whole. Monarchies fell in and out of favor throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, and in the wakes of the world wars, most European countries either abolished their monarchies entirely or stripped the monarchy of any real power. Goldman also references the trend of mergers and acquisitions in the publishing industry that began after World War Two but started to accelerate in the 1980s. This has continued as publishing houses attempt to remain competitive with the rise of new modes of distributing information (such as the internet). In more recent years, publishing companies have justified massive mergers by citing the need for more negotiating power with distributors like Amazon.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Goldman has written a number of other novels, including *The Silent Gondoliers*, which is ostensibly another work by S. Morgenstern. He cited Russian authors Leo Tolstoy (*War and Peace*) and Anton Chekhov (*The Cherry Orchard*) as two of his favorite authors, as well as Miguel de Cervantes (*Don Quixote*). Children's author Louis Sachar listed *The Princess Bride* as one of his inspirations for his award-winning novel *Holes*. *The Princess Bride* shares similarities with a number of fantasy novels, especially those that are especially silly or use larger-than-life characters, like Kate DiCamillo's *The Tale of Despereaux* and Jonathan Stroud's Bartimaeus Trilogy (whose narrator, Bartimaeus, narrates in a manner reminiscent of Goldman's). The dark and violent nature of Goldman's tale also draws on motifs and elements from *Grimm's Fairy Tales*. Finally, in 2014, Cary Elwes, who played Westley in the film adaptation of *The Princess Bride*, published *As You Wish: Inconceivable Tales from the Making of The Princess Bride*, which offers interviews and an insider look at what went into making the movie.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Princess Bride: S. Morgenstern's Classic Tale of True Love and High Adventure/The "Good Parts" Version, Abridged by William Goldman
- **When Written:** 1972
- **Where Written:** New York City, NY
- **When Published:** The original novel was published in 1973, with new editions that added additional introductions and *Buttercup's Baby* in 1998 and 2003.
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Adventure, Romance, Fantasy, Satire
- **Setting:** The fictional country of Florin; New York and Los Angeles
- **Climax:** Inigo, Westley, and Buttercup fool Prince Humperdinck and escape
- **Antagonist:** Prince Humperdinck, Count Rugen, and the Shogs; more broadly, unfairness and death
- **Point of View:** First-person and third-person omniscient

EXTRA CREDIT

Writing In. When *The Princess Bride* first came out, about 100 people per week followed Goldman's instructions and wrote to the publisher, asking for the reunion scene. The entire thing was a ruse; readers received the letters as printed in the novel, detailing the (fictional) issues with the Shogs, and the website that Goldman lists never hosted the reunion scene.

Bedtime Stories and Writer's Block. Goldman conceived of *The Princess Bride* when his young daughters asked him for a

bedtime story about princesses and brides. He decided to write an "abridged novel" when he found himself running out of material while writing the second chapter, "The Groom."

PLOT SUMMARY

When the author, William Goldman, is ten years old, he comes down with pneumonia. He spends ten days in the hospital and when he comes home, Goldman's father, a Florinese immigrant, starts to read him *The Princess Bride*, a classic Florinese adventure tale written by S. *Morgenstern*. The story captures Goldman's interest and he vows to share *The Princess Bride* with his own son when he has one. Unfortunately for Goldman, his son, Jason, is overweight and has no sense of humor. Regardless, while Goldman is in California working on the screenplay for *The Stepford Wives*, his wife Helen reminds him that it's Jason's birthday and Goldman spends two hours and several hundred dollars on the phone to get a copy of *The Princess Bride* delivered to Jason.

When Goldman gets home, he discovers that Jason was only able to get through the first chapter. This disturbs Goldman, as he remembers the book as being extremely exciting. When he opens Jason's copy to revisit the story, he realizes the problem: S. Morgenstern's novel is 1000 pages of satirical Florinese court history, and Goldman's father only read him the exciting passages. Goldman starts calling around to get permission to abridge Morgenstern's classic, which is the tale to follow. He's cut out almost 700 pages of court history and distilled it down to the "good parts."

The story follows the very beautiful Florinese milkmaid Buttercup. Buttercup doesn't care about being beautiful and instead spends her time riding her horse and bossing around the farm boy, Westley. As she gets older men begin to take notice of her beauty and one day, Count Rugen and his wife, the Countess, stop in at the farm. While they're there, Buttercup notices that the Countess seems interested in Westley. By evening, Buttercup is extremely jealous and the next morning, she confesses her love to Westley. He slams his door in her face but that evening, he comes to say goodbye: he's going to America to seek his fortune so that they can live happily together. According to Morgenstern, their parting kiss is the most perfect kiss ever. Buttercup starts to attend to her appearance in Westley's absence, but not long after he leaves, she receives news that the Dread Pirate Roberts attacked Westley's ship and that he's certainly dead. The pain of losing Westley makes Buttercup the most beautiful woman in the world.

Meanwhile, at the Florinese court, Prince Humperdinck is annoyed to learn that since his father, King Lotharon, isn't well, he needs to marry so that he can become the king. Humperdinck loves hunting more than anything, so taking time away from his beloved **Zoo of Death**, which houses animals for him to hunt, is obnoxious. After a failed attempt to court Princess Noreena from the neighboring country of Guilder, Count Rugen introduces Humperdinck to Buttercup. Buttercup agrees to marry Humperdinck, but says that she can never love him. She spends the next three years going to princess school. About 100 days before her wedding, however, while on her daily ride, three criminals—Vizzini, a Sicilian hunchback; Fezzik, a Turkish giant; and Inigo, a Spanish swordsman—capture her.

As Buttercup's captors reach the Cliffs of Insanity, they notice that a man in black is following them. Vizzini deems this "inconceivable." Vizzini, Inigo, and Buttercup tie themselves to Fezzik as he starts to climb the Cliffs using a rope. Vizzini bullies Fezzik into going faster, especially as the man in black starts to climb up after them. Vizzini finally decides to leave Inigo to deal with the man in black and continue on with just Fezzik and Buttercup. Morgenstern offers a bit of Inigo's backstory: as a child, a six-fingered nobleman killed his father, Domingo Montoya, and he's dedicated his life to finding and killing this man. He's a "fencing wizard," and Vizzini saved him from life as a drunk. When the man in black reaches the top of the cliffs, the men duel. The man in black wins, knocks out Inigo, and runs after Vizzini.

Vizzini then leaves Fezzik behind to throw a rock at the man in black. Fezzik's parents taught him to fight as a child, even though he hates fighting and really loves rhymes. More than anything, he hates being alone, so he'll do whatever Vizzini asks of him. Fezzik challenges the man in black to a fair fistfight, which the man in black wins. The man in black then comes upon Vizzini and challenges him to a duel of wits. He puts lethal iocane powder in a wine goblet and asks Vizzini to choose the goblet that's not poisoned. Vizzini cheats but dies anyway; the man in black reveals that he's immune to the poison and both goblets were poisoned.

The man roughly drags Buttercup through the woods for hours until they get to the top of a ravine. There they fight and notice that Humperdinck is after them. Buttercup takes her chance and shoves the man down into the ravine, at which point she realizes he's Westley. She throws herself down after him. At this point, Goldman cuts in and says that Morgenstern didn't write a "reunion scene" between the lovers at the bottom of the ravine. Because this is an abridgement, Goldman's editors wouldn't let him write his own and include it—but if the reader writes to the publishing house, the publisher will mail them Goldman's reunion scene.

Using his skill at hunting, Humperdinck tracks Westley, Buttercup, and Vizzini's crew all the way to the top of the ravine, at which point he sees that Westley and Buttercup are headed straight for the dangerous Fire Swamp. The Fire Swamp is a terrifying place, so in order to distract Buttercup, Westley tells her how he's still alive. He is now the Dread Pirate

Roberts; many men have played Roberts over the years to take advantage of the name recognition. Buttercup falls into Snow Sand and R.O.U.S.s (rodents of unusual size) attack Westley, but they make it out of the Fire Swamp. On the other side, Humperdinck and Rugen are already waiting for them. Buttercup asks Humperdinck to release Westley in exchange for her hand in marriage. He agrees, but secretly asks Rugen to put Westley in the fifth level of his Zoo of Death. Meanwhile, Inigo goes back to the Thieves Quarter in Florin City, and Fezzik panics and forgets what he's supposed to do.

As the 90 days of wedding festivities begin, Buttercup begins having nightmares and decides she can't marry Humperdinck. He promises to send four ships to find the Dread Pirate Roberts's ship and see if Westley will come back for her. He reveals to the reader that he's not going to follow through, as he wants to murder Buttercup and blame it on Guilder so that he will have a reason to start a war. Humperdinck and Count Rugen use what Buttercup shares about Westley to torture him down in the Zoo of Death once the zookeeper, the albino, returns Westley to health. Westley knows how to "take his mind away," so the torturing does nothing to him. This changes when Rugen begins using his Machine on Westley. Though the Machine looks ridiculous, it painfully sucks away years of Westley's life.

A few days before the wedding, Humperdinck tells Yellin, the Chief of All Enforcement, to clear out the Thieves Quarter so that no Guilderian spies can attack Buttercup. Yellin forms a brute squad that includes Fezzik. As the brutes capture the last of the criminals, Fezzik finds Inigo drunkenly refusing arrest. Fezzik returns Inigo to a sober state and shares that Vizzini is dead and he found the six-fingered man: it's Count Rugen. Inigo reasons that Westley is smart enough to plan the attack on Count Rugen and, knowing Rugen and Humperdinck, he thinks they're likely torturing Westley.

At this moment, they hear a scream of "ultimate suffering": it's Westley. Humperdinck, in his anger with Buttercup, used Rugen's Machine to suck all the life out of Westley. When the albino emerges from the Zoo of Death to look for a wheelbarrow to deal with Westley's body, Inigo and Fezzik knock him out and begin descending through the levels of the Zoo. It's a terrifying experience. Inigo is distraught when he finds Westley dead, but he and Fezzik take Westley to Miracle Max, King Lotharon's old miracle man, to purchase a miracle. Though Max tries to refuse the job, he agrees to do it when he learns that bringing Westley back to life will humiliate Humperdinck.

After giving Westley the resurrection pill, he begins to come to life slowly. At the same time as he, Inigo, and Fezzik storm the castle, Humperdinck and Buttercup get married in a private ceremony. Inigo pursues Count Rugen and successfully cuts out his heart, while Westley stops Buttercup from committing suicide and tricks Humperdinck into putting down his sword.

Fezzik appears outside with four white horses and the heroes run away on them. Goldman explains that his father left the story there, but Morgenstern writes that as the heroes escape, things start to go wrong immediately and Humperdinck starts to chase them. Goldman's actual novel *The Princess Bride* itself ends there.

In both the introduction to *Buttercup's Baby*, Morgenstern's sequel to *The Princess Bride*, and in the introduction to the 30th anniversary edition, Goldman discusses the process of turning *The Princess Bride* into a movie and how successful he was in that endeavor. However, when his grandson Willy is about seven and asks Goldman to read him *Buttercup's Baby*, Goldman learns that the movie was almost *too* successful: in part because of all the lawsuits brought by the Morgenstern estate and in part because the movie was more successful than Goldman's abridgement, the Morgenstern estate wants Stephen King to abridge *Buttercup's Baby*. King eventually agrees to let Goldman abridge the first chapter of *Buttercup's Baby* if he promises to go to the Morgenstern Museum in Florin and research it properly.

Buttercup's Baby begins with a scene of Fezzik chasing a skinless madman, who has Buttercup's baby daughter, Waverly. He throws himself off a cliff after the madman tosses the baby. Goldman thinks this beginning is awful, but can't fix it since it's an abridgement. The second part of the first chapter is what Goldman calls the **Unexplained Inigo Fragment**. It does nothing for the plot, but it flashes back ten years to when Inigo was studying in Italy and fell in love with a young Countess. Then, the story skips ahead in time to the end of *The Princess Bride*. It details all the things that go wrong with the heroes' escape and explains how Westley manages to get his friends through a dangerous whirlpool to the secluded One Tree Island. There, they return to health and Buttercup gets pregnant. After 50 hours of labor, something "invades" Fezzik's mind and he performs a C-section. He and Waverly become best friends, and this is why he leaps off the cliff after her. Goldman then thanks the reader for joining him on this journey and getting so involved in the story. He hopes that Morgenstern gives the heroes a happy ending.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

William Goldman – Goldman is both the author of the novel itself and a character within it. In the framing device that begins the novel, Goldman explains that as a boy, he contracted pneumonia and when he got home from the hospital, Goldman's father started to read him *The Princess Bride*. Hearing the story turned Goldman from a boy obsessed with sports to one obsessed with adventure stories, and it also allowed him to connect with his father. Goldman grows up to

become an author of novels and screenplays. He marries Helen and when his son Jason is about to turn ten, Goldman finds a copy of *The Princess Bride* for him. He believes that the book is magical, and he wants to share this experience with his own son. Goldman soon realizes, though, that his father had only read him the "good parts" of the 1000-page book; as such, he sets about abridging the novel himself. Goldman believes that, as an abridger, he should have some power to change things that he feels don't work very well in Morgenstern's original tale. His editors disagree, and because Goldman feels that his publishing house isn't properly advertising his novels, in the frame story he encourages readers to write in for his "reunion scene," the only piece of *The Princess Bride* that he wrote. Goldman is critical of the publishing and film industries throughout the novel and the introductions. He insists that they're out to make money, not to tell good or compelling stories. When he buys back the rights to the **Princess Bride screenplay**, an event he discusses in the introduction to the 25th anniversary edition, Goldman positions himself as a champion for the people who love the book. He believes that *The Princess Bride* is about the fact that life isn't fair, as the wrong people die and things don't end happily. He suggests that this is one of the best lessons the reader can learn. In the introduction to the actual novel's 30th anniversary edition, Goldman details his attempts to abridge *Buttercup's Baby* (another fictitious novel by Morgenstern) for his grandson, Willy. He is only allowed to do the first chapter, which he thinks is a bit of a disjointed mess but can't fix because it's an abridgement. The most confusing bit, the **Unexplained Inigo Fragment**, is something he wholeheartedly believes in, however: he thinks it's important to see that Inigo has a backstory and is capable of love. Again, neither Morgenstern nor his unabridged tomes are real, and Goldman blurs the line between fact and fantasy by writing as if they are in the text framing his actual novel.

Westley/Farm Boy/The Man in Black – Westley, the hero of *The Princess Bride*, meets Buttercup when he works on her family's farm. Though Buttercup is cruel to him, he loves her and does everything she asks. He's strong, tall, and very handsome, and Buttercup also knows that he's quite intelligent. When she finally confesses her love, Westley decides to sail for America to seek his fortune, but before he reaches America, the Dread Pirate Roberts captures Westley's ship. Because Westley is able to spin a compelling tale about Buttercup, Roberts doesn't kill him. Westley learns everything he can in the next few years with Roberts until the old Roberts passes the name on to Westley. He appears three years later his disappearance as the man in black in Florin City. As Westley follows Vizzini, Fezzik, Inigo, and the captured Buttercup, he shows that he's exceptionally smart, skilled with the sword, adept at hand-to-hand combat, and is also very honorable. After stealing Buttercup he's physically abusive to her, however, which suggests that their relationship—which the narrator deems is perfect—isn't actually so. When Buttercup finally realizes that the man in black is Westley, she follows him down into a ravine and lets him lead her through the Fire Swamp. Prince Humperdinck captures Westley on the other side and tortures him with Count Rugen. Westley, however, knows how to "take his mind away" and think of Buttercup, so he feels no pain until Rugen begins testing his Machine on him. Westley dies when Humperdinck pushes the Machine to its highest setting, but he comes back to life when Inigo and Fezzik purchase a resurrection pill for him. Westley wanted to come back for "true love," and he goes on to devise a plan to rescue Buttercup from Humperdinck. The plan works because Westley is a skilled storyteller and is able to trick Humperdinck into surrendering.

Buttercup – Buttercup is the titular princess bride of the novel. She's a very beautiful teenager at the start of the story, though she doesn't care about her looks: she's more concerned with riding her horse, Horse, and bossing around Westley, the farm boy. Buttercup realizes she loves Westley only after it occurs to her that other women might also take an interest in him. After Westley leaves to seek his fortune, Buttercup begins attending to her appearance and soon begins climbing the ranks of beautiful women. After she gets news that Westley has died at sea, the pain and suffering make her even more beautiful. She agrees to marry Prince Humperdinck under the condition that she can't love him, as she can only love Westley. She spends three years at Princess School but about three months from her wedding, Vizzini, Fezzik, and Inigo kidnap her so they can kill her on the Guilder frontier. When she realizes that Westley, disguised as the man in black, is pursuing her, she reaffirms her love and agrees to run away with him—though when Prince Humperdinck catches them, she agrees to marry Humperdinck in exchange for Westley going free. When she begins having nightmares in which people berate her for hurting Westley, Humperdinck helps her draft a letter to send to Westley asking him to return. Unwittingly, Buttercup gives Humperdinck information he needs to torture Westley. Buttercup doesn't realize that Humperdinck is tricking her until days before the wedding, when she calls him out on being a coward and demonstrates that she's capable of critical thought. She remains convinced that Westley is coming to save her until the minute before he appears.

Fezzik – Fezzik is a kindhearted Turkish man in the story of *The Princess Bride*. He's the size of a giant and was the size of an adult by the time he started kindergarten. Despite his size, Fezzik isn't violent and was bullied mercilessly as a child. The one thing that he loves is making up rhymes, which he does both out loud and in his head. When Fezzik's father teaches him to throw a punch and ends up with a broken jaw, he and Fezzik's mother decide to train Fezzik to be a pro wrestler. Fezzik is miserable and scared, as he hates fighting and hates it

even more when audiences boo him. After his parents die, Fezzik fights as part of a circus troupe until people start booing him again. Because what Fezzik hates most in the world is being alone, he's distraught when the circus fires him and leaves him in Greenland. There, Vizzini recruits him to be a part of his criminal organization. Though Fezzik enjoys having a friend in Inigo and making Vizzini happy, Vizzini is verbally abusive and tells Fezzik that he's incapable of thinking for himself. This damages Fezzik's already low self-esteem. When Vizzini tells Fezzik to kill Westley, Fezzik demonstrates that he prioritizes fairness over anything else by challenging Westley to a proper fight. He loses and when he comes to later, he forgets the rhyme that Inigo made up for him to remember what he was supposed to do. Fezzik reconnects with Inigo in Florin City and is able to quickly and skillfully soak the brandy out of Inigo's body. In the preparations to storm the castle, Fezzik shows that he's perfectly happy to follow directions. Though he's lost when the heroes split up without a plan, Fezzik shows that he is capable of thinking for himself when he finds Prince Humperdinck's white horses.

Inigo Montoya – In the story of *The Princess Bride*, Inigo is a fencing wizard" who was born in a village in Spain and idolizes his father, a sword maker named Domingo. Inigo has been interested in fencing from a young age, given that Domingo makes them, but he doesn't decide to dedicate his life to learning to fence until after Count Rugen brutally murders his father. After this, Inigo spends the next ten years training all over the world to learn to fence so he can avenge his father's death, though he does briefly fall in love while studying in Italy. When finding Count Rugen proves more difficult than Inigo expected, he turns to brandy and is an alcoholic when Vizzini finds him. With Vizzini, Inigo finds that he has a purpose and always knows what to do. He befriends Fezzik, Vizzini's other employee, and the two men become great friends. Inigo doesn't think Fezzik is silly for being interested in rhymes, so he makes up rhymes and plays games with him. Both men, however, seriously doubt their own abilities to think and plan thanks to Vizzini's abuse, though Inigo is better about standing up for himself. Inigo is thrilled at first to fight Westley, but he becomes distraught when he loses their fencing match. He returns to the Thieves Quarter and to brandy until Fezzik rescues him a month later. Once Inigo learns that Count Rugen is in the castle, he formulates a plan to find Westley so that Westley can plan their attack on the castle. Despite this, Inigo is the one who does most of the planning and legwork as he and Fezzik penetrate Prince Humperdinck's **Zoo of Death** and then purchase a miracle to bring Westley back to life. When Inigo finally confronts Count Rugen, Rugen immediately throws a knife into Inigo's belly. Inigo's rage and desire for revenge is so great that he's able to rise above the pain and cut out Count Rugen's heart.

Prince Humperdinck – The antagonist of *The Princess Bride*, Prince Humperdinck is the evil prince of Florin. He's shaped like a barrel and loves to hunt, so when King Lotharon's health begins to go downhill, he and Count Rugen construct the **Zoo of Death**. The Zoo allows Humperdinck to hunt in the comfort of his own backyard rather than traveling the world. Humperdinck also loves war and desperately wants to rule Guilder, Florin's neighbor. He agrees to take a wife when King Lotharon's health takes a turn for the worse, and Count Rugen is able to talk him into marrying the beautiful Buttercup. Because Humperdinck wants power above all else, he hires Vizzini to kidnap and kill Buttercup and blame it on Guilder, as pretense to start a war. He shows that he's a clever and thoughtful villain when Vizzini is unsuccessful, as he easily figures out how to use the fact that Buttercup's popularity skyrockets after her kidnapping to manipulate the emotions of the populace. Because he's jealous that Buttercup still loves Westley, he enjoys torturing Westley with Count Rugen. Westley ultimately outwits Humperdinck and is able to escape with Buttercup. Goldman and Morgenstern, however, note that Humperdinck doesn't die or give up: he continues to pursue Westley and Buttercup for the foreseeable future.

Count Rugen – In the story of *The Princess Bride*, Rugen is Prince Humperdinck's evil sidekick. He's a hulking man who has six fingers on his right hand and was given his title as a birthday present. Though Inigo doesn't figure out who Rugen is until many years later, Rugen brutally murders Domingo, Inigo's father, when Inigo is ten years old. Inigo carries the six-fingered sword that Domingo made for Rugen. In the present, Rugen does whatever he can to support Prince Humperdinck, including scouting for possible brides and affirming whatever he says. After he and Humperdinck catch Westley, Rugen reveals that in addition to being Humperdinck's right-hand man, he's also an academic who's interested in pain. He tells Westley that he's written several scholarly articles on pain and hopes to write a book with what he learns from studying what happens to Westley in the Machine. The Machine is something that Rugen has been working on for ten years; it's a silly-looking device composed of many suction cups and a dial. It is, however, lethal and horrifying—the suction cups suck years of life out of a victim. True to his scientific nature, Rugen is very annoyed when Humperdinck uses the machine to kill Westley, as he will no longer be able to experiment with the different pain levels the machine is capable of delivering. Though he doesn't recognize Inigo at first, Rugen inexplicably runs from him after Inigo breaks into the castle. Rugen begins his fencing match with Inigo in the lead, but Inigo manages to pull ahead and cut out Rugen's heart. Rugen dies of fear before Inigo can finish the job.

Vizzini – Vizzini is a Sicilian criminal in the story of *The Princess Bride*. While others describe him as having a hunchback, Morgenstern describes Vizzini as a bit misshapen and with legs that are two different lengths. Because of Vizzini's physical

deformities, he has dedicated himself to developing his brain and thinks of himself as extremely intelligent. After he recruits Inigo and Fezzik, Vizzini forms the criminal organization The Sicilian Crowd. Prince Humperdinck hires him to kidnap Buttercup and kill her on the Guilder frontier. During the kidnapping, however, Vizzini's intelligence comes into question. He deems it "inconceivable" that anyone could follow them and refuses to acknowledge the clear evidence that Westley is indeed following them. Both Inigo and Fezzik engage in mental gymnastics so that they don't anger Vizzini by questioning his intelligence, though they see the truth of the situation. He's extremely cruel to Fezzik in particular and continually tells Fezzik that he's not even capable of thought. Vizzini meets his downfall when Westley challenges him to a battle of wits surrounding a poisoned wine goblet. Vizzini cheats during the battle but dies anyway, because Westley had filled both goblets with a poison to which he himself is immune.

Yeste – In *The Princess Bride*, Yeste is an old friend of Domingo Montoya and a skilled sword maker, though not as skilled as Domingo. He's a fat and wealthy man who does well for himself making swords in Madrid. Occasionally, he takes a job that is too difficult, at which point he begs Domingo to secretly make the sword for him and Domingo agrees. After Count Rugen kills Domingo, Yeste cares for young Inigo for two years until Inigo runs away. When Inigo returns ten years later, Yeste declares him a fencing wizard, which is the next level up from a fencing master. Inigo explains that he trained with others because he knew that the kind Yeste wouldn't push him for fear of hurting his ego.

Goldman's Father – Goldman's father was a Florinese immigrant who came to the U.S. as a sixteen-year-old. He never fully learned English and so though he held a job as a barber, he was never very successful. In the framing device surrounding the actual story of *The Princess Bride*, Goldman implies that he and his father were never close, mostly because of the language and cultural differences, until Goldman came down with pneumonia as a ten-year-old. At this point, Goldman's father began to read him *The Princess Bride*, which he insisted was a Florinese classic. Goldman learns years after his father's death that his father only read him the exciting parts of the novel and left out almost 700 pages of boring Florinese court history.

The Dread Pirate Roberts – Within *The Princess Bride*, the Dread Pirate Roberts is a name that a number of people go by, including Westley. The first Dread Pirate Roberts became a terror on the seas about twenty years before the action of the novel starts, but tried to give his ship to one of his hands when he wanted to retire. He soon learned that people were only afraid of the name, so the habit became for the current Dread Pirate Roberts to train a first mate, take on a new crew when that the first mate proved ready to become the new Roberts, and then drop off the old Roberts, who by that time transitions to going by his own name and can retire in obscurity. Westley is the fourth or fifth Roberts. In general, The Dread Pirate Roberts is known for being a ruthless pirate and taking no prisoners.

Domingo Montoya – In the story of *The Princess Bride*, Domingo is Inigo's father. He's an extremely impoverished but secretly talented sword maker who lived in the mountain village of Arabella, Spain. Inigo idolized his father as a boy, though the narrator notes that Domingo wasn't particularly generous or kind to his son. Domingo made most of his money as a repairman but about once per year, an old friend and fellow sword maker, Yeste, would arrive from Madrid and ask Domingo for help making something particularly difficult. Domingo always said yes after some arguing, though he didn't find any of Yeste's commissions especially challenging. The last sword that Domingo made was a six-fingered sword for Count Rugen. The process took a year and when Count Rugen returned for his sword, he refused to pay for it, deemed the sword unworthy, and killed Domingo. Inigo has spent the rest of his life learning to fence so in order to kill the six-fingered man and avenge his father's death.

Jason – Goldman's son. When the reader first meets Jason in the introduction to *The Princess Bride*, he's an unhappy, serious, and overweight ten-year-old. While Goldman wants to be close to his son, the only way he knows how is by showering Jason with gifts. It's especially difficult for Goldman when Jason doesn't like *The Princess Bride*, which he receives for his tenth birthday. Jason's behavior at this point shows that he desperately wants Goldman to like him, but he's not sure how to connect with his father. Goldman details in the introduction to *Buttercup's Baby* (which is not part of the original novel) that five years later, when Jason is fifteen, he finally confides in Goldman that he's unhappy with his weight. Once Goldman shows Jason kindness, Jason blossoms: he has a growth spurt, loses weight, and becomes very handsome. He grows up to be a sex therapist and marries Peggy. He and Peggy name their son, Willy, after Goldman.

S. Morgenstern – The fictional Florinese author who, right after World War One, published his self-proclaimed classic *The Princess Bride*. Goldman says in the introduction to *The Princess Bride* (i.e. the real-life novel that Goldman wrote) that the original version is about 1000 pages long and though it includes the tale of Westley and Buttercup, more than two-thirds of the tome concerns itself with satirizing Florinese court life; according to Florinese scholars quoted by Goldman, it is a groundbreaking text in terms of understanding Florinese culture. Goldman also notes that Morgenstern's masterpiece wasn't well read outside of Florin, though he became very rich after publishing *The Princess Bride*. *Buttercup's Baby* is Morgenstern's (fictional) follow-up to *The Princess Bride* but was published late in his career. Morgenstern used *Buttercup's Baby* mostly as a vehicle to advocate for forest conservation.

Miracle Max – The former miracle man for the Florinese royalty in the tale of *The Princess Bride*. Though he's quite old and has been married to his wife, Valerie, for 80 years, it's unclear exactly *how* old he is. He lost his confidence after King Lotharon fired him and, until Fezzik and Inigo bring him Westley, he refuses to perform magic or miracles. Valerie talks him into helping Fezzik and Inigo after she hears that Westley wants to return to life because of true love, though Max does make a small mistake with his pill and only gives Westley 40 minutes instead of an hour of life.

Yellin – In the story of *The Princess Bride*, Yellin is the Chief of All Enforcement in Florin City. He and his cousin, the albino, are the only two commoners that Prince Humperdinck trusts. He's a small and crafty man who's very loyal to Humperdinck, but he becomes increasingly distraught and confused when Humperdinck insists that Guilder plans to kill Buttercup and invade Florin, as there's no evidence that this is true. Finally, on the night of the wedding, Yellin tries to hand in his resignation, but reaffirms his loyalty to Humperdinck when Humperdinck finally lets him in on his ruse: he's trying to frame Guilder to start a war.

The Albino – The man Prince Humperdinck employs to be the caretaker of his **Zoo of Death** in *The Princess Bride*. He's a slippery man who's always around, yet seldom seen. Prince Humperdinck tasks him with caring for Westley daily after Count Rugen's daily torture, and though it's unclear if the albino is genuine or not, he encourages Westley to give Rugen and Humperdinck whatever information they want so that the torture can stop. Fezzik and Inigo knock the albino out when they break into the Zoo of Death. The reader later learns that the albino is Yellin's cousin.

King Lotharon – Prince Humperdinck's elderly and ailing father in *The Princess Bride*. His health has been precarious for some time; the novel states that the palace fired Miracle Max because he wasn't able to do enough for Lotharon. The reader gets few clues as to who King Lotharon is or what he's like; he mumbles so severely that his wife, Queen Bella, translates everything he says for others, though he does seem very interested in upholding tradition by finding Prince Humperdinck a wife.

Fezzik's Mother – In *The Princess Bride*, Fezzik's mother seems to be a perfectly normal Turkish woman. She cares deeply for Fezzik and wants for the other kids to not pick on him, so she and Fezzik's father decide to teach him to fight. Upon seeing Fezzik's strength and potential, she and her husband quit their jobs to train Fezzik to be a pro fighter. They threaten to leave him alone if he doesn't fight, though they do worry that they're pushing him too hard for such a young kid. She and Fezzik's father die in Mongolia after several years of managing Fezzik's fights.

Fezzik's Father – A Turkish carpenter who cares deeply for Fezzik's wellbeing in *The Princess Bride*. He and Fezzik's mother decide to teach their son to fight. Fezzik's first punch breaks his father's jaw, and he decides to quit his job so he can manage Fezzik's fighting career. He and his wife die in Mongolia.

Waverly – Buttercup and Westley's daughter, introduced in *Buttercup's Baby*, (she is not present in the original novel, *The Princess Bride*). She's born via C-section after 50 hours of labor, thanks to something or someone that possesses Fezzik and guides him through performing the procedure. She and Fezzik form a close bond and spend most of their time together. *Buttercup's Baby* begins and ends with the madman kidnapping Waverly and throwing her off of a cliff, though Goldman notes in earlier introductions that Waverly and Fezzik (who jumps off after her) are saved from their fall by the miraculous appearance of a giant bird.

Buttercup's Father – Morgenstern writes in *The Princess Bride* that Buttercup's father isn't particularly handsome, so nobody is exactly certain how he fathered the most beautiful woman on earth. He and his wife, Buttercup's mother, fight constantly and keep score of who wins. He often loses. Buttercup's father seems to be a kind man; he decides to leave Westley an acre in his will. He's also a horrendous dairy farmer and his milk is only drinkable because of the care that his cows receive from Westley.

Queen Bella – Prince Humperdinck's "gumdrop-shaped" stepmother in *The Princess Bride*. She and King Lotharon have been married since Prince Humperdinck was a child. She's a kind, bubbly, and generous woman who is very affectionate with both her husband and her stepson. Because the only stepmothers Humperdinck had ever heard of were evil ones, he often calls her E.S. (Evil Stepmother), though she's anything but. She arranges for Humperdinck to meet Princess Noreena, the princess of Guilder.

Falkbridge – In *The Princess Bride*, Falkbridge is a criminal who owns an alehouse in the Thieves Quarter of Florin City. He's been bribing Yellin for 20 years in order to avoid prison, as he's one of the worst criminals in the city. Yellin refuses to let Falkbridge hide out in his alehouse for Prince Humperdinck's wedding, though he's displeased when a brute clubs Falkbridge instead of taking him gently.

Princess Noreena – A princess of Guilder known for her extensive hat collection in *The Princess Bride*. Queen Bella arranges for her to visit Florin so that Prince Humperdinck can court her, as she's very beautiful and it would be a politically advantageous match. However, Humperdinck calls the whole thing off when a draft blows Noreena's hat off and reveals that she's bald.

Valerie – Miracle Max's wife in *The Princess Bride*. They met at miracle school, where Valerie was a potion ladler. Because every miracle man needs to have a witch, Valerie learns enough witchcraft to pass for a witch. She's instrumental in getting Max

to take Inigo and Fezzik's case; she insists that true love is worth coming out of retirement for.

Edith Neisser – An author of parenting books who lived in Goldman's neighborhood when he was a teenager. She learned that he secretly wanted to be a writer and so they'd talk about writing. In the novel's frame story, Goldman relates how her advice that life isn't fair changed how he thinks about life and *The Princess Bride*.

Buttercup's Mother – Morgenstern writes in *The Princess Bride* that Buttercup's mother isn't a beautiful woman; the fact that she was able to give birth to the most beautiful woman on earth is a mystery. She and her husband, Buttercup's Father, keep score of which of them wins their arguments, as they argue viciously all the time. She's thrilled when Buttercup begins to take an interest in her appearance.

The Countess – Count Rugen's wife in The Princess Bride. She's very beautiful and takes an interest in Westley when she and Count Rugen visit Buttercup's parents' farm. She purchases expensive dresses that she wears only once. Though Buttercup is initially in awe of the Countess's beauty, she soon decides that the Countess is ugly and silly as Buttercup's jealousy grows.

Andre the Giant – The seven-foot-tall Frenchman who plays Fezzik in the film version of *The Princess Bride*. (Note that though he is mentioned in the introductions to the 25th and 30th anniversary editions, he is not an actual character in the novel.) Andre loves his role in the film and according to Goldman, takes it extremely seriously: he goes to Florin to scale the Cliffs of Insanity, just like Fezzik did, and he learns to wrestle groups. Goldman discusses how much he adored Andre in both the introductions to the 25th and 30th anniversary editions. During filming, Goldman says that Andre could often be found watching shots with the children of various crewmembers on his shoulders and head.

Stephen King – A prolific American author of horror and suspense novels and short stories; according to Goldman, he's also of Florinese descent. Goldman notes in the introduction to the 30th anniversary edition of *The Princess Bride* that he adapted a number of King's works into screenplays and the two appear to be good friends. In the introduction to the 30th anniversary edition, King even writes a letter to the Curator that gives Goldman permission to look at S. Morgenstern's notebooks. Goldman explains in the introduction to *Buttercup's Baby* that things go south in their relationship when Goldman learns that the Morgenstern estate wants King to adapt *Buttercup's Baby* instead of him. King tells Goldman that he doesn't like how Goldman adapted *The Princess Bride*, but he allows Goldman to take on the first chapter of *Buttercup's Baby* to see how he does when he sees how much it means to Goldman to have the opportunity. (Stephen King is a real author, but his interactions with Goldman here are all fictionalized.)

Sandy Sterling – A "starlet" who takes an interest in Goldman when he's in Los Angeles to work on the script for *The Stepford Wives*. She's busty and beautiful, but loses interest when Goldman ignores her in favor of trying to procure a copy of *The Princess Bride* for Jason's birthday in the introduction for the original *Princess Bride*.

Miss Roginski – William Goldman's teacher for several of his elementary school years. He explains in the introduction to *The Princess Bride* that she thinks he's very bright but is perplexed by his unwillingness to read or pay attention to his tests. When he decides that he wants only to read adventure stories, she's his main source of material. Years later, when Goldman publishes his first novel, he has an advance reader's copy sent to her.

Kermit Shog – The lawyer in charge of the Morgenstern estate. He sues Goldman and Goldman's publisher thirteen times in the name of the Morgenstern estate and stops Goldman's publisher from printing or distributing Goldman's reunion scene. He's a sweaty man and Goldman explains that he knew Kermit Shog was dead when he stopped sweating. Goldman details this in the introduction to *Buttercup's Baby*; he does not feature in the original novel.

Karloff Shog/Carly – The final member of the Shog family to argue with Goldman about his abridgement. Karloff, Goldman explains, is the most popular name for girls in Florin, and Carly is a beautiful woman in her mid-thirties. However, Goldman decides she's horrible when she explains that she's going to drop the lawsuits against Goldman as long as he agrees to support Stephen King in abridging *Buttercup's Baby*. Goldman describes all this in the introduction to *Buttercup's Baby*; Carly does not feature in the original novel.

Piccoli – An Italian "master of the mind" whom Inigo trains with for a while in *Buttercup's Baby*. Rather than working on Inigo's strength or skill, Piccoli makes Inigo tune into his mind by doing nothing but sleeping, relaxing, and thinking about his mind. For fifteen minutes every evening, Inigo is allowed to practice fencing.

Mandy Patinkin – The actor who plays Inigo in *The Princess Bride* film; he does not feature in the original novel. According to Goldman, he was essential to getting Andre the Giant prepared to play the role of Fezzik and even slapped Andre when he wouldn't say his lines fast enough. He attends a script reading that Goldman details in the introduction to the 25th anniversary edition.

Guilietta – A young woman whom Inigo meets in Spain, according to *Buttercup's Baby*; she does not feature in the original novel. She is, according to him, the living embodiment of a woman he created in his mind to keep him company. Though she disguises herself as a servant, she's actually the daughter of a powerful count.

Giulietta A character who does not appear in the original novel. Instead, she appears in **The Unexplained Inigo Fragment**, which is part of the *Buttercup's Baby* chapter that Goldman included in the 25th anniversary edition of the book. Giulietta is the daughter of a count, but she always disguises herself as a servant girl in order to get a true measure of what people think of her and how those people will act when they don't know who she is. She falls in love with Inigo after hearing his story, and when he is with her he feels the first true happiness he has felt since the murder of his father. The Fragment ends with the description of Inigo's happiness, and Giulietta is not mentioned again.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Helen – Goldman's wife; she's a "famous shrink" who works with children. She insists that their son, Jason, is overweight because he hasn't decided to slim down yet, and Goldman detests that she constantly tries to psychoanalyze him.

Mrs. Goldman – William Goldman's mother; she appears in the frame story of the novel. She met Goldman's father on the boat to the U.S. from Florin.

Hiram Haydn – William Goldman's editor. In the novel's frame story, he's insistent that Goldman can't add scenes to his abridgement.

Horse – Buttercup's horse in *The Princess Bride*, named thus because Buttercup's imagination isn't expansive.

MacPherson – In *The Princess Bride*, MacPherson is a Scottish fencing master who trained Inigo.

Willy – Willy is Goldman's grandson. He's named after Goldman, which helps Goldman feel even closer to his son Jason, who's Willy's dad. Goldman takes being a grandfather very seriously and showers Willy with gifts and attention. He's also thrilled that Willy loves *The Princess Bride*.

Carl Reiner – A director and Rob Reiner's father; he does not feature in the original novel. Goldman mentions that he passes on a copy of his abridgement of *The Princess Bride* onto his son in the 25th anniversary introduction.

The Old Woman – A woman who appears in Buttercup's dreams in *The Princess Bride* and boos her for choosing to marry Prince Humperdinck instead of Westley.

Mandrake Shog – Kermit Shog's son. Goldman explains in the introduction to *Buttercup's Baby* that he takes over for his father in suing Goldman and Goldman's publishing house about Goldman's abridgement.

The Madman – A man who kidnaps the infant Waverly and throws her off a cliff in the first chapter of *Buttercup's Baby*; he does not feature in the original novel.

Professor Bongiorno – The leading scholar in Florinese history and literature at Columbia University; Goldman consults with him for parts of *The Princess Bride*.

Cary Elwes – The actor who plays Westley in the film adaptation of *The Princess Bride*; he does not feature in the original novel. He attends a script reading that Goldman details in the introduction to the 25th anniversary edition.

Robin Wright – The actress who plays Buttercup in the film adaptation of *The Princess Bride*; she does not feature in the original novel. She attends a script reading that Goldman details in the introduction to the 25th anniversary edition.

The Archdean – The very old Archdean of Florin in *The Princess Bride*. He marries Prince Humperdinck and Buttercup.

Rob Reiner – The director of the film adaptation of *The Princess Bride*; he does not feature in the original novel. He attends a script reading that Goldman details in the introduction to the 25th anniversary edition.

Charley – Goldman's lawyer; he appears in the introductions to *The Princess Bride* and *Buttercup's Baby*.

Peggy – Jason's wife. Goldman mentions that Jason and Peggy get married in his introduction to *Buttercup's Baby*, though she also appears in the introduction to the 30th anniversary edition of the novel.

Evarts Ziegler – Goldman's movie agent; Goldman mentions him in the introduction to *The Princess Bride*.

The Count – Guilietta's father in *Buttercup's Baby*.

Pierre – In *Buttercup's Baby*, Pierre is a doctor on the pirate ship *Revenge*.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

FACT VS. FICTION

Throughout *The Princess Bride*, author (and character) William Goldman sets out to tell two different stories—neither of which are entirely true, yet both of which are presented as factual history. The first is the "classic tale" of *The Princess Bride*, which Goldman claims was originally written by a writer named S. Morgenstern from the country of Florin (both Morgenstern and Florin are entirely fictional, though Goldman refers to them as if they truly exist both in the novel and his introductory material). This tale follows the hero Westley as he fights for his love, Buttercup, against the conniving Prince Humperdinck. Goldman says he is abridging this tale for the reader, deeming his telling "the good parts version." (Again, Goldman is not

actually abridging anything, since the "original" is something he made up.) The second story Goldman tells is one from his own fictionalized life—how Goldman's father, a Florinese immigrant to the U.S., read him *The Princess Bride* as a child, and how Goldman goes on to try to share this story with his own son, Jason. By presenting *The Princess Bride* as a story within a story, Goldman encourages the reader to consider the purpose of literature itself. Ultimately Goldman blends fact and fiction together in a manner that suggests the line between the two doesn't matter all that much, because fiction can contain valuable truths.

Within the world of the novel, Goldman comes down with pneumonia as a ten-year-old, which prompts his father to read him *The Princess Bride*. This experience teaches Goldman how stories can bring people together: apart from their sheer entertainment value, stories provide people with tools to reach out to and more easily interact with each other. Indeed, Goldman grows closer to his father as the latter reads to him; though Goldman never says so outright, it's implied that he and his father weren't close before this experience, if only because of the cultural and language divide between them. He describes his father as unattractive, unlucky, and unsuccessful, and because his father immigrated to the U.S. and never fully learned English, Goldman describes his father's speech as embarrassingly "immigranty." Reading *The Princess Bride* to young Goldman allows Goldman's father to connect with his son in an unprecedented way, as Goldman becomes more forgiving of his father's poor English because he's so caught up in the excitement of the story. This suggests the power of storytelling to transcend cultural boundaries.

Goldman notes that in the years after this, he and his father connect exclusively over their love of *The Princess Bride*, as Goldman would sometimes ask his father to reread him beloved passages. His father would always comply, thereby recreating some of the magic that allowed them to form a relationship when Goldman was a child. Of course, this is entirely fictional: in real life, beyond the world of the novel, Goldman's father was not a Florinese immigrant, because Florin doesn't exist; more tragically, he committed suicide when Goldman was a teenager, meaning any sustained relationship was impossible. Yet the fact that this isn't true to Goldman's actual life doesn't matter; he is making the point that literature has the power to connect people regardless of whether or not it tells a truthful story. Indeed, the story *itself* makes its own kind of truth.

Within *The Princess Bride* itself, Goldman makes much the same point as he explores the power of the tale of the Dread Pirate Roberts. Westley explains to Buttercup that there have been several incarnations of Dread Pirate Roberts in the two decades that Roberts has been terrorizing the seas: whenever a Roberts decides he wants to retire, he passes the ship on to his first mate. This man assumes the name of Roberts while also changing out the ship's crew so that the men aren't aware that *their* captain Roberts isn't the same as that of the previous crew. Importantly, Westley notes that this works because of the power of the *story* of the Dread Pirate Roberts; the name itself carries enough weight to inspire fear—even if the man behind the name is the novel's romantic hero, as Westley is, or retired in Patagonia, as the first Roberts is.

Westley later uses this knowledge to great effect when, in order to storm Humperdinck's castle, he and Inigo dress Fezzik in a holocaust cloak (a cloak that can be lit on fire but protects the wearer from burning) and have Fezzik dramatically announce that he's the Dread Pirate Roberts and will "leave no survivors." Though Fezzik isn't the Dread Pirate Roberts, simply *saying* he's Roberts is enough to send the brute squad—a group of 100 trained fighters standing guard—into a terrified frenzy. This is the power of mythmaking in action.

Taken together, Goldman ultimately suggests that the truth of a story matters much less than whether or not the story itself works to reach a given goal, whether that be scaring brutes, entertaining readers, or connecting people around a shared interest. It doesn't matter whether stories are full of truth, the novel ultimately suggests, because great stories can create their own.

THE VALUE OF CLEVERNESS AND HUMILITY

The core story of the novel, that of *The Princess Bride* itself, revolves around the fight for the hand of Buttercup, the most beautiful woman in the world. After being told that her beloved Westley has met his untimely demise at the hands of the Dread Pirate Roberts, Buttercup agrees to marry the evil Prince Humperdinck—who, in the months before their marriage, concocts an elaborate plot and hires Vizzini, Fezzik, and Inigo to kidnap and murder Buttercup to justify starting a war with the neighboring country of Guilder. Throughout their various exploits, all of these characters prove especially concerned with what constitutes intelligence and cleverness—traits the novel ultimately upholds are far more valuable than brute strength. At the same time, too much pride in one's intellectual leads to foolishness.

The novel suggests that there are a number of different ways to be clever—and that this fact is inconvenient for those who feel threatened by others' independent thought. Such people, in turn, are likely to try to downplay or discredit the intelligence of those they see as being beneath them. This happens most obviously with Vizzini, a Sicilian criminal who treats his employees Fezzik and Inigo with a sinister air of disregard. He clearly does this to maintain his own authority over the group, positioning himself as the most intelligent party and thus the natural leader of his gang. This implicitly elevates the value of cleverness, while also asserting the danger of pride: as the plot

unfolds, it becomes clear that, despite Vizzini's frequent admonitions, neither Fezzik nor Inigo are fundamentally unintelligent, while Vizzini himself is blinded by his inflated sense of importance.

Both Fezzik and Inigo are rather slow on the uptake, but they are still more than capable of learning. Indeed, Inigo spent ten years of his youth studying fencing, something that causes his mentor Yeste to declare him a "fencing wizard" (the highest accomplishment for a fencer) at the age of 22. Through no fault of his own, however, Inigo is unable to track down Count Rugen, the man who killed his father and inspired him to learn to fence in the first place. When Vizzini finds Inigo, Inigo is a drunkard who believes himself incapable of planning things effectively. Vizzini then exploits this lack of intellectual confidence.

Fezzik, a Turkish man who's the size of a giant and incredibly strong, also learns how to manipulate his body in his youth. Yet while his parents push him into wrestling, Fezzik is far more interested in poetry and rhymes. His parents overlook his academic potential and, despite knowing that their son hates fighting, manipulate him into thinking that the only thing he is good for is violence. This lack of faith in his ability to be anything other than a brute destroys Fezzik's confidence and causes him to keep his private thoughts secret. For both Fezzik and Inigo, then, physical prowess is not enough; to feel truly confident, they require faith in their intellectual capabilities.

Vizzini uses what he knows of both Inigo and Fezzik's insecurities to continue to make them feel as though they need someone like him to tell them what to do, thereby causing them to doubt their own intelligence and problem-solving capabilities. He constantly tells Fezzik that he isn't capable of thought, something that the reader knows isn't true (as the narrator reveals some of Fezzik's perfectly coherent inner monologue) but that supports Vizzini's belief that he alone is the intelligent one of the group. However, once the three capture Buttercup and find themselves being followed by Westley, it soon becomes apparent that Vizzini's intelligence isn't as infallible as he'd like to think. Vizzini declares it "inconceivable" that anyone could be following them or that anyone is capable of scaling the Cliffs of Insanity, besting Inigo and Fezzik, or beating him in a battle of wits. All of these things are, of course, perfectly conceivable—Westley does all of them—but because Vizzini refuses to accept that others might be just as smart as he is, he's unable to even entertain the idea of being challenged and meets his untimely end when Westley outwits and poisons him.

On the eve of Buttercup and Humperdinck's wedding, Fezzik and Inigo have the opportunity to demonstrate that they are indeed capable of cleverness. Though they rush Westley's corpse to the miracle man Miracle Max in the hope that a resurrected Westley could make a plan for them to stop the wedding, the three end up getting split up when they storm the castle. Yet both Inigo and Fezzik are successful in their tasks (killing Count Rugen and developing an escape plan, respectively) despite being left to their own devices without a solid plan. All of this suggests that what is truly standing in the way of Fezzik and Inigo's ability to plan and think of themselves as clever is the *belief* that they're incapable of cleverness. With this, the novel suggests that cleverness is a skill that can be learned and developed just like any other. Cleverness is inculcated through encouragement and kindness, and destroyed by cruelty and pride.

LOVE, LOYALTY, AND FRIENDSHIP

Within the frame stories and in *The Princess Bride* itself, the novel's characters are confronted with questions of what it means to be a good friend, parent, or partner. While "abridging" *The Princess Bride*, Goldman must learn to connect with his son Jason, whom he's criticized heavily for years due to Jason's weight. In the core story, Buttercup and Westley's relationship is held up as the epitome of true love only because the nonsensical authorities that Goldman and Morgenstern invoke say it is, while the genuine affection and concern for each other that Inigo and Fezzik demonstrate presents a far more compelling example of what genuine companionship looks like. In this way, the novel begins to pick at the power of these arbitrary rubrics of love and loyalty, while suggesting that a more successful and reasonable way to measure the relative quality of love or friendship is through the actions of the people involved.

In *The Princess Bride*, Morgenstern often references on rankings of things like beautiful women, kisses, and perfect couples. Buttercup, he insists, becomes the most beautiful woman in her early twenties, while her kiss with Westley shoots immediately to the top of the rankings of perfect kisses. The kiss rankings also suggest that Westley and Buttercup's love is true, meant to be, and more perfect than any other kind of love. Of course, such ranking systems—though presented as objective fact within the world of the novel—are patently ridiculous ways to measure subjective qualities like love and beauty. What's more, Westley and Buttercup's actual interactions suggests isn't that their relationship isn't so perfect after all. While Goldman notes that it's normal for couples to fight, Buttercup and Westley don't just fight: Westley is verbally and at times physically abusive towards Buttercup. For her part, Buttercup's treatment of Westley in the beginning of the story—when he works on her parents' farm—is objectively cruel: she dismissively calls him Farm Boy and orders him around for the sake of feeling powerful. Though all of this is presented in a light-hearted and satirical tone, the novel nevertheless implicitly encourages readers to take its rankings and assessments with a serious grain of salt, and to question what really constitutes the "perfect" or "best" of anything.

Though the narrator of *The Princess Bride* says nothing outright

about Fezzik and Inigo (or indeed, about any of the numerous relationships in the novel that are kinder and more functional than that between Westley and Buttercup), their friendship offers readers an example of what true companionship looks like. Fezzik is wildly insecure about everything except his strength. He's not particularly smart, he's embarrassingly fond of rhymes, and his greatest fear is being left alone. While the Sicilian Vizzini manipulates these qualities to his advantage, Inigo gently and kindly meets Fezzik where he is. He happily participates in Fezzik's rhyming games and even makes up rhymes for Fezzik that help him remember Vizzini's instructions. Most meaningfully for both Fezzik and Inigo, the two work together and combine their strengths to infiltrate Prince Humperdinck's **Zoo of Death** so that they can find Westley and accomplish their other goals. During their descent through the Zoo's five levels, Inigo and Fezzik use their knowledge of the other's fears to offer encouragement as they continue, and, importantly, they do this so that they can help each other—not for one or the other's sole gain or for the sake of being cruel.

With this, Goldman crafts a story that offers readers a lesson in how to evaluate relationships, whether romantic or platonic, and suggests that more important than nonsensical rankings is being able to carefully look at how someone treats another person.

AUTHORSHIP AND STORYTELLING

Through Goldman's asides to the reader throughout *The Princess Bride*, he aims to provide a sense of what the "original" book is like: overly complex, far too long, and in all ways unreadable to anyone but a Florinese scholar. Goldman sets out to remedy this by abridging the story and whittling it down to the "good parts," or the parts that relay Morgenstern's narrative and which Goldman insists are the book's only entertaining elements. In doing so, Goldman suggests that while there's certainly an argument for reading 1000-page tomes of political satire and court history, abridged versions like his own are valuable because they transform antiquated or otherwise inaccessible stories into more easily digestible tales that people can read for pleasure. Goldman implicitly makes the case that fun and readable stories have the right to exist simply because they're entertaining; an author's role, in this summation, is to provide for their readers. This, in turn, underscores the novel's broader assertion of the power of storytelling to bring people together. Goldman thus also pokes fun at overly-academic and self-important types like Morgenstern and Count Rugen, whose work, Goldman insists, is interesting to no one but themselves.

In the introduction to *The Princess Bride*, Goldman explains that he wasn't interested in stories or the written word at all until he came down with pneumonia as a child. At this point, Goldman's father began to read him *The Princess Bride* and in doing so showed Goldman that stories could be genuinely entertaining, as well as could help people form relationships with each other; Goldman implies that he and his father weren't close before this experience, but that their relationship deepened after connecting over *The Princess Bride*. Later, he tries to create a similar experience of connection with his own son, Jason. However, after buying Jason a copy of *The Princess Bride* for his tenth birthday, Goldman discovers that his father had only read him "the good parts," and the book as a whole isn't the children's adventure story he'd so loved. This prompts Goldman to embark upon his own formal abridgement process so that he has the opportunity to share his favorite story with his son, as well as with the rest of the world.

In discussing his choice to abridge Morgenstern's work into an entertaining 300-page novel suitable for children, Goldman notes that he can't expect that every reader of his abridgement will have the same life-changing experience that he had as a child. However, he does assert that there's still a lot to gain from the abridgement, as it will make it accessible to—and, ultimately, beloved by—thousands more people than would even think of picking up the original Morgenstern, given the length and specificity of the book. By telling the reader exactly what he's cutting out, from dozens of pages of court history to dozens more describing ladies' clothing, Goldman shows how esoteric and uninteresting Morgenstern's original work would be to a reader like him or like Jason, who just wants to be entertained with an adventure story. Morgenstern's book has clearly lost sight of the preferences of the reader, and instead is presented as a rather selfish endeavor meant to suit only the author's particular proclivities.

Indeed, by calling upon scholars like Professor Bongiorno, who insists that these passages are "deliciously satiric" and the best part of Morgenstern's original, Goldman makes it clear that people like Professor Bongiorno and Morgenstern are out of touch with the general populace—and further, he makes it very clear that because they're so out of touch, their work suffers as nobody reads it. By making these connections, Goldman constantly reaffirms his assertion that books exist to be consumed by others, and that sometimes, the only way to make this happen is through abridgement—which, in his opinion, entails cutting the self-important scholarly passages of a book and leaving only the "good parts."

However, even in those "good parts," Goldman goes to great lengths to point out that the story itself is ridiculous and, by extension, illustrates how so many clichés of romance and adventure stories are also ridiculous. He thus elevates the power of storytelling while also calling for better stories. For instance, by crafting Buttercup's character as one that's self-centered, not particularly intelligent, and valued only for her beauty, Goldman implicitly mocks the stereotypical princesses and damsels in distress that so often populate adventure tales. Westley's callousness and violence towards Buttercup serves a

similar purpose of pointing out the misogyny and male bravado that so often takes center stage in such novels.

Goldman also uses the silly and outlandish nature of the story to satirize "publishing geniuses" and overly self-important writers like Morgenstern. For example, Count Rugen, Prince Humperdinck's evil and pain-obsessed sidekick, notes that he's written several scholarly articles on the subject and hopes to write a book on pain as well. Rugen's obsession takes him so far as to plan on killing Westley for his research, which can be read as a critique of authors who focus excessively on their own pedantic interests—and, in effect, who forget the human element of storytelling. Goldman underscores how snobbish and self-obsessed "scholars" like Rugen (and, he suggests, Morgenstern) are, and by extension, how this sense of superiority alienates them from the rest of humanity to the point where killing another human being for the sake of "research" is simply "annoying," not a tragic loss of life. In this way, the entire novel upholds the immense value of the relationship between the author and reader, and suggests that the true purpose of literature is, above all else, to connect and entertain.

FAIRYTALES AND GROWING UP

One of the points that Goldman makes to the reader over and over again is that life isn't fair. He suggests in one of his asides during *The Princess Bride* that this is one of the most important lessons that children must learn, and that one of the best ways to learn this lesson is through exposure to stories like *The Princess Bride*, in which the "right" or expected thing doesn't happen. By drawing on classic fairytale and adventure story tropes that are predicated on the reader believing that the "good guys" will prevail and live "happily ever after," and then making a point to upend all of them and show how silly some of those tropes can be, Goldman attempts to guide his younger readers towards a more nuanced and mature, yet decidedly hopeful, view of fairytales and their role in the coming-of-age process. The novel subverts conventions of its genre to impart the lesson that growing up essentially means accepting that life isn't fair.

When Goldman's father first begins reading *The Princess Bride* to him, one of the things that the young Goldman struggles with is reconciling what he believes *should* happen, based on how he thinks stories must unfold, with what actually *does* happen in the book. Remembering his own childhood challenges with the story, Goldman includes in his "abridgement" asides to readers in which he shares advice to help them effectively engage with the text and take the "proper" lessons away from it. For example, when Buttercup tries to escape Vizzini, Inigo, and Fezzik by diving into Florin Channel, Goldman insists that storytelling logic dictates that the sharks *can't* eat Buttercup so early in the novel; such a thing would make the story unsatisfactory and far too short. Later, when Westley dies, Goldman prefaces the death scene by reminding young readers specifically that life isn't fair. When compared to his aside about Buttercup and the sharks, Goldman suggests that a hero *can* die, but only when the author feels that the hero's story is close enough to the end. Though Westley does come back to life thanks to a "resurrection pill," Goldman seems to suggest to readers that they must be prepared for anything that life throws at them, while also reminding readers that fairytales like *The Princess Bride* present an idealized, fantastical view of life wherein anything is possible.

However "helpful" Goldman believes his asides might be, they—along with the patently ridiculous things that happen to the novel's heroes—also rob the story of much of its dramatic tension. Explaining that sharks don't eat Buttercup turns a potentially dramatic moment into just another event that, in the grand scheme of the novel, becomes simply a means to show Buttercup being uncharacteristically cunning and brave. Further, by introducing so many absurd creatures, objects, and events—from bloodthirsty Rodents of Unusual Size and "beeping" sharks, to the Machine that makes even Westley giggle—and situating the story in an unspecified time period that's "before stew" but "after Paris," Goldman suggests that it's nearly impossible to take anything in the story seriously. Goldman undercuts his own assertion that the book imparts valuable life lessons by keeping things very silly, and in doing so attempts to poke fun at overly moralistic literature; at the same time, the book seems to suggest that part of growing up is being able to react to the situations at hand not with dread but humor, and to recognize the mechanisms of storytelling at work.

In other ways, by not allowing Westley and Buttercup a conventional happy ending, Morgenstern and Goldman go against the grain of fairytale logic in a way that may feel unfair to readers who, after Westley's experience with the resurrection pill, might expect something deservedly idyllic for the novel's put-upon heroes. Goldman tells the reader that in his mind, the novel has two endings. In one, Westley, Buttercup, Fezzik, and Inigo ride away into the sunset, while in the other, they still ride away—this time pursued by their evil adversary Prince Humperdinck, who's intent on killing Buttercup; during their flight Inigo and Westley's health declines while Buttercup's horse throws a shoe. Goldman explains that his father read him the first possible ending, which he explains points to his father being a romantic who believed fully in fairytales ending happily, no matter how unlikely a real happy ending may seem. Goldman, however, says that he's a realist and, were the story to continue, he thinks that Westley and Buttercup would argue like any normal couple and be constantly on the run from Prince Humperdinck.

With this, Goldman proposes that fairytales are capable of mirroring real life far better than his father wanted to admit,

while also making it clear how ridiculous those stories can be by introducing things that even his own characters laugh at, like the Machine. By illustrating how he himself came of age through his engagement with the story's ending—in that while he bought his father's idealistic ending as a child, as an adult, he craves a more complex and realistic resolution (or lack thereof)—Goldman clearly illustrates the power of stories like his. Ridiculous or otherwise, such tales can reveal different things to readers as they grow up and approach stories from different points in their lives. Ultimately, the book suggests that being able to develop these different readings—to see literature as both silly and meaningful, ridiculous and true, terrifying and hilarious—is the true marker of coming of age.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

THE UNEXPLAINED INIGO FRAGMENT

Goldman refers to one of the sub-chapters of *Buttercup's Baby* as the Unexplained Inigo Fragment, as it appears to serve little purpose in terms of plot and raises more questions than it answers. By including it, Goldman is able to make one of his points regarding the purpose of literature to the reader: it exists to teach people to ask questions and engage with texts critically. Yet, like life itself, literature doesn't always provide neat or satisfactory conclusions. This reflects the novel's broader notion that life is unpredictable and unfair, despite how fairytales may make it seem. By including it as part of *Buttercup's Baby*, which Goldman asserts was written near the end of Morgenstern's career, he also suggests that learning to write things that encourage others to ask questions is part of the coming of age process as a writer. In this way, its inclusion signals Goldman's maturity as a writer, while also encouraging the reader to undergo a similar shift in maturity.

THE ZOO OF DEATH

The Zoo of Death is a five-level, underground creation built by Prince Humperdinck and Count Rugen. It's filled with all manner of animals for Humperdinck to hunt, and he chooses an animal to hunt and kill daily. Morgenstern insists that Humperdinck and Rugen constructed the Zoo of Death to fix the problem of Humperdinck's absences (he needs to be around in case Lotharon dies and he becomes king) and while this may be technically true, it also offers Humperdinck a place where there's no chance of him failing to kill any of his targets. In this way, the Zoo of Death becomes symbolic of Humperdinck's cowardice and his belief that he's above rules of fair conduct. is especially true with regard to Westley's death. While Humperdinck does catch Westley out in the wider world, the process of actually killing Westley gives Westley no chance at a fair fight because he's caged and chained—Humperdinck is guaranteed to be successful against a helpless victim, as all the animals in the Zoo are. The Zoo thus also contrasts the cruel Humperdinck with Inigo and Fezzik, both of whom are presented as honest men who go out of their way to ensure a fair fight against Westley.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Houghton Mifflin edition of *The Princess Bride* published in 2013.

Prologue Quotes

❝ When I was twenty-six, my first novel, *The Temple of Gold*, was published by Alfred A. Knopf. (Which is now part of Random House which is now part of R.C.A. which is just part of what's wrong with publishing in America today which is not part of this story.)

Related Characters: William Goldman (speaker), Count Rugen, Westley/Farm Boy/The Man in Black

Related Themes:

Page Number: 4

Explanation and Analysis

As Goldman prepares to offer an anecdote about publishing his first novel and sending out advance readers' copies, he makes a point to share "what's wrong with publishing in America today." However, while he insists that this isn't part of the story, his narration—and the story of *The Princess Bride*—counteracts this in a number of ways. First, Goldman later explains to the reader that he believes Morgenstern uses parentheses in his text to signify that something didn't happen or isn't actually true. Following Goldman's logic, then, all of his own parentheses should be considered through a similar lens—and in this case, it's certainly not true that this book isn't about the publishing industry; indeed, Goldman actually goes to great lengths to describe his dealings with his publishing house, while, within the specific story of *The Princess Bride* itself, Count Rugen wants to publish a book on the nature of pain and is already a published author of scholarly articles on the subject. Westley also notes that he could make a fortune writing about his experience of being dead, a reminder that the

publishing industry is, first and foremost, an industry that allows people to make money. This aside, then, starts the train the reader how to read Goldman's book effectively and properly, and makes it clear just how important the publishing industry is to understanding the book's underlying logic. At the same time, this introduction establishes the novel's playful tone, as well as the way in which it blends fact with fiction to the point that they're difficult to distinguish; Knopf and Random House are in fact publishing companies in the real world, and Goldman is a real person—though he has fictionalized much of his own life for the purposes of this story.

> The more I flipped on, the more I knew: Morgenstern wasn't writing any children's book; he was writing a kind of satiric history of his country and the decline of the monarchy in Western civilization.
>
> But my father only read me the action stuff, the good parts. He never bothered with the serious side at all.

Related Characters: William Goldman (speaker), Jason, Goldman's Father, S. Morgenstern

Related Themes:

Page Number: 30

Explanation and Analysis

After learning that Jason never made it past the first chapter of *The Princess Bride*, Goldman opens up the book himself for the first time to figure out why. He discovers that his father read him an abridgement of sorts, as he left out hundreds of pages of Morgenstern's observations about Florinese culture. In this moment, Goldman discovers the power and the purpose of abridgement. While he realizes that Morgenstern's original book isn't something that can be enjoyed by the masses, he also realizes that by picking out "the good parts" and not making readers struggle through the more difficult or specific passages, the book will be able to reach a wider audience. Importantly, he also recognizes that an abridgement would be able to reach children, just like it reached him when he was a child. With this, he suggests that one of the best parts of abridging novels like this is that it will enable parents or caregivers to share books like this with children they care about, thereby allowing them to form the same kind of close relationship through the book that Goldman eventually formed with his father.

> I know I don't expect this to change anybody else's life the way it altered mine.
>
> [...]
>
> Anyway, here's the "good parts" version. S. Morgenstern wrote it. And my father read it to me. And now I give it to you. What you do with it will be of more than passing interest to us all.

Related Characters: William Goldman (speaker), Goldman's Father, S. Morgenstern

Related Themes:

Page Number: 32

Explanation and Analysis

At the end of Goldman's introduction to the actual tale of *The Princess Bride*, he very clearly sets up the purpose of the novel and details the lineage of his abridgement. Goldman's assertion that he doesn't expect his abridgement to change other people's lives as much as it changed his own speaks to the personal nature of literature. He recognizes, in other words, that his experience of hearing *The Princess Bride* read to him by his father was something unique and special to him; it's not something that he can just gift to others by abridging the novel in the way his father read it. However, it also implies that he does expect the novel to have some effect on the reader's life, or at least to entertain them.

Then, by laying out the novel's transformation over the years, Goldman situates his novel (both the fictional and historically accurate elements of it) as well as the characters he creates as all being part of the same overarching system of publishing and sharing stories. In particular, by bringing in the fact that Goldman's father first read this version to him as the reader will go on to read it, it suggests that Goldman isn't even abridging *Morgenstern's* work, per se: he's recording *his father's* abridgement. Finally, by expressing interest in what the reader does do with *The Princess Bride*, Goldman invites the reader to have a more personal experience with this book than they might with others, thereby situating *The Princess Bride* as a beloved tale with the staying power that will allow it to be passed down from generation to generation.

Chapter 1 Quotes

❝ Either Morgenstern meant them seriously or he didn't. Or maybe he meant some of them seriously and some others he didn't. But he never said which were the seriously ones. Or maybe it was just the author's way of telling the reader stylistically that 'this isn't real; it never happened.' That's what I think, in spite of the fact that if you read back into Florinese history, it did happen. The facts, anyway; no one can say about the actual motivations. All I can suggest to you is, if the parentheses bug you, don't read them.

Related Characters: William Goldman (speaker), S. Morgenstern

Related Themes:

Page Number: 43

Explanation and Analysis

After Morgenstern includes several asides in parentheses that are especially fantastical (such as everything being "after stew" or this story taking place "before Europe"), Goldman levels with the reader about what these asides might mean. In particular, the fact that Goldman offers his own advice for how to read Morgenstern's parentheses offers the reader a way to interpret the parentheses that Goldman himself includes in his asides. It suggests that there are nuggets of truth in all of these asides (as, within the logic of the novel, Morgenstern's tale is a historical one), while also reminding the reader that there's still an element of fantasy to them. Finally, when Goldman tells readers to skip the parentheses if they don't like them, he puts the act of reading squarely in the reader's court and encourages them to do whatever works for them. In this way, Goldman gives the reader permission to essentially abridge his abridgement in a way that makes sense for the reader and helps them to better enjoy his novel.

Chapter 2 Quotes

❝ When this version comes out, I expect every Florinese scholar alive to slaughter me. (Columbia University has not only the leading Florinese experts in America, but also direct ties to the *New York Times Book Review*. I can't help that, and I only hope they understand my intentions here are in no way meant to be destructive of Morgenstern's vision.)

Related Characters: William Goldman (speaker), S. Morgenstern

Related Themes:

Page Number: 71

Explanation and Analysis

After justifying some of the cuts that he made to the second chapter of *The Princess Bride*, Goldman notes that these cuts won't help him market the book given the politics of the publishing industry. With this, Goldman again reminds the reader that one of his primary subjects of this book is actually the publishing industry, not the story of *The Princess Bride*. What he says about the publishing industry here reminds the reader that the industry is out for money, not to promote books just because they're good or entertaining (as Goldman believes this book to be). Instead, the publishing industry is guided by a complex political system that also has ties to the university system.

Tying the publishing industry to the university system in particular lays the groundwork for Count Rugen's later assertion that he's a published author of scholarly articles, publishing that in many cases is done with the help and the patronage of the university system. In this way, Goldman continues to tie together his world to the world the characters inhabit and suggests that they're not so far apart as the reader might think.

This moment also further blurs the lines between fact and fiction, as the industry of which Goldman speaks is very real—but Morgenstern, and his unabridged novel—are entirely made up.

Chapter 5 Quotes

❝ "I just feel better when I know what's going on, that's all," the Turk mumbled. "People are always thinking I'm so stupid because I'm big and strong and sometimes drool a little when I get excited."

"The reason people think you're so stupid," the Sicilian said, "is because you are so stupid. It has nothing to do with your drooling."

Related Characters: Vizzini, Fezzik (speaker), Buttercup, Inigo Montoya

Related Themes:

Page Number: 101

Explanation and Analysis

As Fezzik, Inigo, and Vizzini prepare to scale the Cliffs of Insanity, Fezzik and Vizzini argue over whether or not Fezzik is intelligent. First, it's important to note that

Vizzini—here referred to as the Sicilian—uses the power he thinks he has because he's intelligent to make Fezzik feel as though he's not smart. This abuse in turn makes Fezzik feel even *less* capable of thinking for himself, given that whenever he tries to do so or asks to be included in plans, Vizzini insults him. This scene helps establish Vizzini as a conceited bully and Fezzik as an easily manipulated man with low self-esteem, rather than a true villain's accomplice. Such characterization, in turn, encourages the reader to sympathize with Fezzik and to loathe Vizzini. The reader can then feel satisfied with Vizzini's impending death and pleased when Fezzik and Westley, the hero of the story, join forces.

"I can feel him," Fezzik said. "His body weight on the rope."

"He'll never catch up!" the Sicilian cried. "Inconceivable!"

"You keep using that word!" the Spaniard snapped. "I don't think it means what you think it does."

Related Characters: Inigo Montoya, Vizzini, Fezzik (speaker), Westley/Farm Boy/The Man in Black, Buttercup

Related Themes:

Page Number: 114

Explanation and Analysis

When Westley, in disguise as the man in black, starts to climb up the rope after Fezzik, Vizzini declares this to be "inconceivable." Inigo's response, in turn, is one of the first clues that he's not as unintelligent as others think he is; at the very least, he can interpret information and use what he discovers to make sense of the world around him. Vizzini, on the other hand, is too caught up in his own sense of self-importance to consider that he might be wrong. Indeed, his bold claim that it's "inconceivable" that anyone could catch up to him means he cannot even entertain the *possibility* that someone could best him. Vizzini is not as smart as he thinks he is, and in fact seems quite foolish. This begins to cast Inigo and Fezzik as unlikely voices of reason, further separating them from their prideful leader.

Inigo lay flat, staring down, trying to pierce the moonlight and find the climber's secret. For a long while, Inigo did not move. He was a good learner, but not a particularly fast one, so he had to study.

Related Characters: Westley/Farm Boy/The Man in Black, Inigo Montoya

Related Themes:

Page Number: 101

Explanation and Analysis

After Vizzini leaves Inigo to deal with the man in black at the edge of the Cliffs of Insanity, Inigo takes the time to sit down and learn how exactly the man in black is scaling the Cliffs. Importantly, the way Inigo's learning style is described opens the novel up to explore the many ways a person may be intelligent. In particular, the idea that Inigo has to study hard in order to learn reminds the reader that most people aren't born knowing how to do things, yet they can learn to do things if they put their mind to it. However, it's also worth noting that Inigo spent ten years prior to this learning how to fence and doing nothing else, which suggests that at the same time that Inigo was learning to fence, he was also learning how to *learn*—a very important skill for someone in this novel who wants to appear intelligent and capable.

He might also have whispered heavable thievable weavable but that was as far as he got before the Sicilian started talking again, and that always meant he had to pay very strict attention. Nothing angered the hunchback as quickly as catching Fezzik thinking. Since he barely imagined someone like Fezzik capable of thought, he never asked what was on his mind, because he couldn't have cared less.

Related Characters: Vizzini, Fezzik

Related Themes:

Page Number: 153-53

Explanation and Analysis

When Fezzik notices that the man in black has beaten Inigo, he begins to rhyme things to himself like he might've with Inigo, but stops when he remembers that Vizzini doesn't want him to think. The way that Goldman describes Vizzini here suggests that Vizzini thinks that only *he* (Vizzini) is capable of intelligent and reasonable thought. This, of course, will prove to be his downfall when Westley later outwits him.

Vizzini bullies his followers and earns their loyalty only by insisting that they can't think for themselves; as such, he

finds indications that Fezzik is, in fact, capable of thought threatening. As far as Vizzini is concerned, it's better to keep Fezzik own by reminding him of his lack of intelligence. Through its portrayal of the prideful and doomed Vizzini, the novel upholds the importance of thinking for oneself and embracing curiosity.

> This was just like any other hunt. He made himself think about the quarry. It did not matter if you were after an antelope or a bride-to-be; the procedures held. You gathered evidence. Then you acted. You studied, then you performed. If you studied too little, the chances were strong that your actions would also be too late.

Related Characters: Buttercup, Prince Humperdinck

Related Themes:

Page Number: 188

Explanation and Analysis

Prince Humperdinck observes the Cliffs of Insanity and decides to be matter-of-fact about how he goes about tracking Buttercup. By suggesting that hunting is something logical that a person can learn and follow a specific procedure to complete, the novel shows that in his own way, Humperdinck is also intelligent. However cruel he turns out to be, he still displays a certain admirable sense of cunning.

Important here is the procedure that Humperdinck lays out for hunting. This applies to everything else in the novel, as one of Goldman/Morgenstern's main points about learning and being clever is that if a person doesn't properly study or gather information, they won't be able to act appropriately when the time comes. By pointing this out through Humperdinck, Morgenstern starts to humanize him and show the reader that even bad guys like Humperdinck sometimes have good ideas and are able to effectively navigate their world and teach readers things, just like the heroes. This complicates shallow adventure tales in which good and evil are presented in stark contrast.

> If you're going to abridge a book in the author's own words, you can't go around sticking your own in. That was Hiram's point, and we really went round and round [...] But I got Hiram to agree that Harcourt would at least print up my scene [...] So please, if you have the least interest at all or even if you don't, write in for my reunion scene. You don't have to read it—I'm not asking that—but I would love to cost these publishing geniuses a few dollars, because, let's face it, they're not spending much on advertising my books.

Related Characters: William Goldman (speaker), Buttercup, Westley/Farm Boy/The Man in Black, Hiram Haydn, S. Morgenstern

Related Themes:

Page Number: 195-96

Explanation and Analysis

After explaining to the reader first why Morgenstern didn't include a scene in which Buttercup and Westley reunite on the bottom of the ravine, Goldman notes that he wrote his own version of such a scene and planned to include it, but his editor insisted that this is outside the bounds of what a person can do with an abridgement. By telling the reader that they should write in for the reunion scene—specifically so that Goldman can get back at the publishing house for not properly advertising his books—he again reminds the reader that he's on their side, while the publishing industry and its outdated ideas of what abridgements should contain is standing in the way of the reader's satisfaction. This underscores Goldman's broader assertion that stories exist first and foremost for readers to enjoy.

Of course, the scene in question does not actually exist, and Goldman again blurs the line between fact and fiction—this time, in order to pokes fun at the stodginess of the real-world publishing industry.

Chapter 6 Quotes

> It's one of my biggest memories of my father reading. I had pneumonia, remember, but I was a little better now, and madly caught up in the book, and one thing you know when you're ten is that, no matter what, there's gonna be a happy ending. They can sweat all they want to scare you, the authors, but back of it all you know, you just have no doubt, that in the long run justice is going to win out.

Related Characters: William Goldman (speaker), Westley/Farm Boy/The Man in Black, Prince Humperdinck,

Buttercup, Goldman's Father

Related Themes:

Page Number: 237

Explanation and Analysis

In an aside to the reader, Goldman explains that he was shaken when his father read the dream sequence in which Buttercup and Humperdinck marry. As a kid, Goldman didn't think the characters could possibly do that; this was not in keeping with the typical way in which adventures tales were meant to unfold. With this, Goldman begins to set up the idea that children and young readers come to a novel like his with distinct ideas about how stories like *The Princess Bride* work: namely, that the bad guys get punished, the good guys always win, and everyone has a happy ending. Goldman subverts many of these expectations throughout his novel, as he satirizes the adventure genre and instead weaves a tale that—however lighthearted—in many ways does reflect the more complicated nature of real life.

Understanding that life is not always so black and white is an essential part of growing up, Goldman ultimately suggests. Indeed, when Goldman goes on later to describe his own coming of age process, he argues that this came about mostly because he learned that life isn't fair. He thus positions his novel as an unfair book that will help his young readers come of age as well.

> And that's what I think this book's about. All those Columbia experts can spiel all they want about the delicious satire; they're crazy. This book says 'life isn't fair' and I'm telling you, one and all, you better believe it.

Related Characters: William Goldman (speaker), Edith Neisser

Related Themes:

Page Number: 240

Explanation and Analysis

After being told that life isn't fair, Goldman finally understands that that's the main point of *The Princess Bride*. He positions his novel as one that can teach readers such a lesson, and as one that shows them how to deal with the unhappy or unexpected things that life can offer, just as the characters do within the world of the novel. Though fantasy, then, the novel thus contains truths about real life.

When Goldman suggests that this reading of the novel is far more important and valid than what the expects at Columbia University can pull out of the book, he democratizes the act of reading. One doesn't have to be a scholar to understand or draw important lessons from a book, and there should not be gatekeepers who determine what a book definitively does or does not mean to its readers. Though Morgenstern's "original" novel contains extensive satire of Florinese nobility, there are simpler lessons to be gained from the story of the novel itself—and these lessons, Goldman insists, are just as important as any academic interpretation. In mocking so-called experts, Goldman empowers readers to engage with the book on a more personal level.

> "I'm very interested in pain," the Count said, "as I'm sure you've gathered these past months. In an intellectual way, actually. I've written, of course, for the more learned journals on the subject. Articles mostly. At the present I'm engaged in writing a book. My book. The book, I hope. The definitive work on pain, at least as we know it now."

Related Characters: Count Rugen (speaker), William Goldman, Westley/Farm Boy/The Man in Black

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 261

Explanation and Analysis

As Count Rugen prepares to torture Westley with the Machine, he shares that he's a published author of scholarly articles and is also in the process of writing a book. This admission situates Count Rugen within the very same publishing world that both Goldman inhabits. This moment again serves to satirize an industry more concerned with academic pursuits than human feeling, and which prioritizes supposedly highbrow intellectual engagement over simpler life lessons. Rugen's fascination with pain casts him as a villain, and the fact that he is depicted as a public intellectual again allows Goldman to present a subtle jab at such figures in the real world. These figures miss the forest for the trees, in a way; Count Rugen is an extreme example of someone so obsessed by his own intellect that he overlooks things that actually matter—in this case, the fact that he is literally torturing people in the name of supposed academic enlightenment.

"I understand everything," he said.

"You understand nothing, but it really doesn't matter, since what you mean is, you're glad to see me, just as I'm glad to see you because no more loneliness."

"That's what I mean," said Fezzik.

Related Characters: Inigo Montoya, Fezzik (speaker), Westley/Farm Boy/The Man in Black

Related Themes:

Page Number: 278

Explanation and Analysis

As Inigo and Fezzik formulate their plan to find Westley so that he can help them get to Count Rugen, Fezzik and Inigo affirm their friendship with each other. Fezzik's initial response—that he understands Inigo's plan—shows that he recognizes that in order to make some people feel like he's being a good friend or a good listener, he needs to pretend that he understands things that he doesn't. This is something that he learned from Vizzini, who became regularly upset with Fezzik both for not grasping his meaning and for trying to think of things on his own. Inigo's reply, on the other hand, suggests that more important than understanding a person's intellectual meaning is understanding what they mean on an emotional level. This upholds the value of emotional intelligence, which Goldman has presented as a virtue throughout the novel.

"Westley dies," my father said.

I said, "What do you mean, 'Westley dies'? You mean dies?"

My father nodded. "Prince Humperdinck kills him."

"He's only faking thought, right?"

My father shook his head, closed the book all the way.

"Aw shit" I said and I started to cry.

"I'm sorry," my father said. "I'll leave you alone," and he left.

"Who gets Humperdinck?" I screamed after him.

He stopped in the hall. "I don't understand."

"Who kills Prince Humperdinck? At the end, somebody's got to get him. Is it Fezzik? Who?"

"Nobody kills him. He lives."

"You mean he wins, Daddy? Jesus, what did you read me this thing for?"

Related Characters: William Goldman, Goldman's Father (speaker), Prince Humperdinck, Westley/Farm Boy/The Man in Black

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 285

Explanation and Analysis

In another interruption to the main story of the novel, Goldman relates how he took the news when his father told him that Westley dies and Humperdinck lives. Goldman understands that this is a difficult thing for a young kid, as he was then, to swallow, as he believes that children come to stories like this believing that good will prevail in the end, no matter what. Though this a heart wrenching experience for young Goldman, adult Goldman also suggests that this is an important moment in his coming-of-age process. It shows him that life isn't fair, and that he can't expect Morgenstern to give him a novel that represents the kind of fairness and equity that Goldman expects to see in the world. With this, Goldman indicates that while his novel's primary purpose is to entertain, it's also capable of helping young readers come of age and come to terms with the difficult aspects of life.

Chapter 7 Quotes

"Down is our direction, Fezzik, but I can tell you're a bit edgy about all this, *so*, out of the goodness of my heart, I will let you walk down not behind me, and not in front of me, but right next to me, on the same step, stride for stride, and you put an arm around my shoulder, because that will probably make you feel better, and I, so as to not make you feel foolish, will put an arm around your shoulder, and thus, safe, protected, together, we will descend."

Related Characters: Inigo Montoya (speaker), Fezzik

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 299

Explanation and Analysis

As Fezzik and Inigo prepare to descend down the stairs in the Zoo of Death, Inigo suggests that they walk together so they can give each other confidence and strength. With this, Inigo shows that while he's more of a thinker than he or

anyone else in the novel gives him credit for, he's also a truly great friend. Further, he recognizes that being kind and compassionate to his friend is one of the most effective ways to accomplish his goal of reaching the fifth level of the Zoo of Death. Though Goldman offers no asides to the reader here, by presenting Inigo and Fezzik's success and attributing it to the strength and quality of their friendship, Goldman is also able to encourage readers to call on their friends when they need help and in doing so, to embody the kindness of Inigo and Fezzik.

"I wish I could remember what it was like when I was dead," the man in black said. "I'd write it all down. I could make a fortune on a book like that. I can't move my legs either."

Related Characters: Westley/Farm Boy/The Man in Black (speaker), Fezzik, Inigo Montoya

Related Themes:

Page Number: 333

Explanation and Analysis

After Inigo and Fezzik resurrect Westley with Miracle Max's resurrection pill and explain that he had been dead, Westley laments that he's losing out on a book opportunity because he doesn't remember the actual experience of being dead. Once again, this reminds the reader that Goldman's book as a whole is extremely interested in the publishing industry, how it functions, and what it can do. It also continues to illustrate how the world Goldman creates in *The Princess Bride* is in fact connected to the real world that the reader inhabits. Goldman again satirizes the shallow nature of the publishing industry by asserting that it's more concerned with making money than it is with telling good stories or asking meaningful questions: Westley doesn't want to write a book to share insight about his miraculous experience, but instead to make a buck.

Chapter 8 Quotes

"Fezzik, I *need* you," Inigo screamed.

"I'll only be a minute," Fezzik said, because there were some things you did, no matter what, and when a friend needed help, you helped him.

Related Characters: Fezzik, Inigo Montoya (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 346

Explanation and Analysis

When Inigo asks, Fezzik abandons his post to break down a door so that Inigo can pursue Count Rugen. The reasoning that Fezzik gives for why he does this suggests that as Fezzik becomes more confident, thanks to the fact that he's no longer suffering Vizzini's verbal abuse all the time, he's now able to fully apply himself to being a good friend. Notably, though Fezzik is doing what he's told to do, he's also having to think for himself here: he was told to not abandon Westley, which he does anyway to help Inigo. This suggests that as Fezzik continues to gain confidence and forms happier and healthier relationships with his friends, he'll also discover the confidence to think for himself.

Buttercup's Baby: An Explanation Quotes

I felt all this, exciting and moving as a lot of it is, to be off the spine of the story. *I* went with true love and high adventure and I think I was right to do that. And I think the results have proved that. Morgenstern *never* had any audience for his book—except in Florin, of course. I brought it to people everywhere and, with the movie, to a wider audience still. So, sure, I abridged it.

But, I'm sorry, I *shaped* it. *I also brought it to life*. I don't know what you want to call that, but whatever I did, it's sure *something*.

Related Characters: William Goldman (speaker), S. Morgenstern

Related Themes:

Page Number: 371

Explanation and Analysis

In introducing *Buttercup's Baby*, Morgenstern's (fictional) sequel to *The Princess Bride*, Goldman explains what he left out in his abridgement and why. By suggesting that his abridgement (and later, his screenplay) brought Morgenstern's classic to a wider audience, Goldman indicates that he believes he did Morgenstern a service in condensing the latter's work. Now, in his estimation, Morgenstern is a household name around the world, not just in Florin. This reflects Goldman's assertion that books are primarily for the readers, and that a major goal of literature should be to tell entertaining stories. Goldman also continues to blur the line between truth and fiction by referencing the movie that was made of *The Princess Bride*,

which was a real film that premiered in 1987 and proved extremely successful in bringing the story to a wider audience.

Buttercup's Baby: 4. Fezzik Falling Quotes

❝ We've traveled a long way, you and I, from when Buttercup was only among the twenty most beautiful women on earth (because of her potential), riding Horse and taunting the Farm Boy, and Inigo and Fezzik were brought in to kill her. You've written letters, kept in touch, you'll never know how much I appreciate that. I was on the beach at Malibu once, years back, and I saw this young guy with his arm around his girl and they were both wearing T-shirts that said WESTLEY NEVER DIES.

Loved that.

Related Characters: William Goldman (speaker), Inigo Montoya, Fezzik, Westley/Farm Boy/The Man in Black, Buttercup

Related Themes:

Page Number: 449

Explanation and Analysis

After finishing the first chapter of *Buttercup's Baby*, Goldman thanks the reader for coming along on this journey with him. The journey he's referring to isn't just the journey explored in the story of *The Princess Bride* and in *Buttercup's Baby*. As far as Goldman is concerned, this journey is one that, in the years since he first published *The Princess Bride*, has brought him closer to his readers and ultimately, made *The Princess Bride* a beloved book and an even more beloved movie for millions of people. Goldman suggests that regardless of what the story is, this sense of connection that he's built with his readership is the most important thing that can come from writing and publishing a book. It helps him justify standing up to both the publishing and film industries for what he thinks is right for his novel and screenplay, which went against what the powers that be in those industries thought was right. This offers a look then at what can be accomplished when authors stand up for their work: immortality in the sense that their work does become a household name, as *The Princess Bride* has become.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

INTRODUCTION TO THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

William Goldman addresses the reader and says that until very recently, he wouldn't have told anyone to buy the 30th anniversary edition of this book, as he was still caught up in legal issues with the Morgenstern estate and couldn't get *Buttercup's Baby* published. To explain what's changed, Goldman takes the reader back to 1986, when he was involved with shooting *The Princess Bride* movie. Goldman adored the time he spent with Andre, who played Fezzik. One evening, Andre asked Goldman his opinion on how he was playing Fezzik. Goldman had wanted Andre to play Fezzik since he first saw him on television years earlier, so he truthfully told Andre that he was doing great. As they chatted, Andre mentioned that he did a lot of research at the Morgenstern Museum.

First of all, it's important to note that while parts of Goldman's frame story are true, S. Morgenstern, the "author" of The Princess Bride, *is an entirely fictional character. There's no Morgenstern estate and similarly, no Morgenstern Museum where Andre could've done this research. The way in which Goldman fictionalizes the frame story in his introductions and asides reminds the reader that all sorts of things are fictional, and importantly, that an author like Goldman doesn't owe the reader an entirely truthful story.*

Goldman tells the reader that he never went to Florin and the Morgenstern Museum then; he goes years later while researching *Buttercup's Baby*, about the same time that Goldman's grandson, Willy, turns ten. In the weeks before Willy's birthday Goldman is excited to shower Willy with gifts, but Willy's parents, Jason and Peggy, have no ideas as to what to get him. Willy himself also claims to have no ideas. Goldman knows that Willy just doesn't want to say what he wants, so he whispers his wish in Goldman's ear. Months later, Goldman and Willy wake up in Florin to start the trip in commemoration of Willy's tenth birthday. Willy groans when he learns that the first stop will be the Morgenstern Museum, but he musters up excitement as they approach the building.

Goldman implies at several points that the way in which he arranges his stories in the introductions doesn't make logical sense. Here, it's important to note that Goldman's kind and generous behavior towards Willy is really only remarkable in light of the way that Goldman treated Jason when Jason was a kid (in short, horribly). This suggests that in the 20 or so years since Jason was a child, Goldman has undergone some sort of transformation that's turned him into a more compassionate person.

Willy stops dead when he sees the six-fingered sword in the entryway. He and Goldman inspect the sword with the other museum patrons and Goldman notices that all the children are mouthing Inigo's famous words. He thinks that Morgenstern would be thrilled. They look at a mold of Fezzik's fingers, Buttercup's wedding dress, and the Machine, and then they go to see the Curator. Stephen King wrote a letter to the Curator asking him to admit Goldman to the Sanctuary, which houses Morgenstern's letters and notes. Goldman and Willy find the Curator, who knows Stephen King but doesn't have a letter about Goldman. Goldman tells the reader that this is his worst nightmare; he's always afraid of being forgotten. Willy instructs his grandfather to call King on his new cellphone. Within minutes, the whole thing is resolved.

Again, all of this is fictional, though Stephen King and Goldman did know each other in real life. However, the fact that Goldman wants to research using primary source materials from Morgenstern suggests that there's a proper way to conduct research about prospective abridgement projects (remember, Goldman is getting around to talking about Buttercup's Baby, *the sequel to* The Princess Bride*). Willy's helpfulness offers an example of how positive relationships can function, especially between family members of different generations.*

As the Curator shows Goldman and Willy into the Sanctuary, he says that Goldman was once a wonderful writer. Willy yells at the Curator that Goldman is still a good writer, but Goldman calms him down. The two begin looking through the letters and photo albums, but then Willy says that Count Rugen killed Inigo. He reads out of a notebook labeled "The Princess Bride diary," which contains Morgenstern's musings about how it would change the story if this were to happen. On the next page, Morgenstern decides that Inigo can't die. Willy remarks that Morgenstern nearly messed up his book.

Readers familiar with either the book or the movie will know that Inigo actually kills Count Rugen. By offering the reader insight into the author's decision-making process, even if it's only insight into the fictional Morgenstern's process, the novel begins to introduce the reader to the ways in which authors plan their works and decide how to tell their stories.

Goldman is perturbed that Morgenstern considered changing history for the sake of his novel—the entire story is confirmed Florinese history. Willy reads a passage in which Morgenstern writes about how Shakespeare adapted Danish history to write *Hamlet* but kept the broad strokes and basic historical accuracy. Before long, it's lunchtime. They haven't found a *Buttercup's Baby* journal, and Willy encourages Goldman to not ask the Curator for help so he doesn't get insulted again. They head back to the hotel and as Willy wanders around the hotel suite, he inexplicably asks Goldman what he thinks of a giant talking bird saving Fezzik and Waverly at the end of the first chapter of *Buttercup's Baby*.

By suggesting that the story told in The Princess Bride *is actual history, Goldman introduces another layer to the idea of abridgement and storytelling: the rules a writer must follow when writing what's essentially historical fiction. However, it's important to note that while Morgenstern invokes* Hamlet, Hamlet *is based on legend, not a verifiable historical figure—which reminds the reader again that authors aren't required to be truthful or faithful to their source material.*

Goldman deems this absurd, but Willy darts away and comes back with a book labeled "Buttercup's Journal." In it, Morgenstern writes that he's struggling to deal with the existence of a giant bird, even though he's seen the skeleton. Goldman is shocked that the notebook exists and flips through it. He addresses the reader and says that if the reader turns the page, they'll find the introduction to the 25th Anniversary edition, as well as his abridgement of *The Princess Bride* and a single abridged chapter of *Buttercup's Baby*. Goldman says that he doesn't make promises, but he plans to have *Buttercup's Baby* abridged before the 50th Anniversary edition comes out.

By addressing the reader directly and going on to be so involved in his "abridgement," Goldman draws the reader in and makes them as much a part of the story as any of the characters that appear on the page. This allows Goldman to direct readers towards forming a personal relationship with him and with the story to come, possibly in the hope that then they'll choose to share the story with their loved ones and continue the cycle.

INTRODUCTION TO THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Goldman addresses the reader and says that he wishes he'd written *The Princess Bride*. He has to content himself with the fact that his abridgement, while skewered by Florinese scholars, brought the great Morgenstern to an American audience. The movie is the reason Goldman is writing the introduction for this version. He begins by offering memories of getting *The Princess Bride* turned into a movie. Goldman says that he took time away from writing *The Stepford Wives* to abridge *The Princess Bride*, and the "Greenlight Guy" at Fox liked it. He says that this is the person who has the power to make a movie go or not, and the guy at Fox thought *The Princess Bride* was great book but maybe wasn't a movie. They worked out a deal to not buy the screenplay unless they decided to actually make it.

Here, Goldman makes his purpose clear: he believes that literature exists to be read and loved, not just studied by stuffy scholars. This is one of the main reasons he's so supportive throughout his asides of the process of abridgement, as abridging an impenetrable novel makes it more easily accessible to readers from all walks of life—and in this case, it also makes books easier to then adapt for film. By tying this book to the movie, Goldman makes the movie an essential text of sorts for understanding what he's saying about the book.

Goldman's agent, Evarts Ziegler, came to town. They went out to lunch and then, Goldman suddenly came down with pneumonia. His "superstar-shrink wife," Helen, rushed him to the hospital. At four in the morning, Goldman knew that he once again had the pneumonia that almost killed him as a kid, which was also the reason why Goldman's father read him *The Princess Bride* in the first place. He started yelling for the nurse to bring him *The Princess Bride* and read it to him. Helen and several doctors arrived, concerned, and to appease Goldman's delirium, they read the screenplay to him.

This early morning reading of the Princess Bride *screenplay shows the reader yet another way to experience Goldman's story, while also offering more insight into his process as a writer. The real Goldman did actually contract a rare strain of pneumonia at about the time he wrote* The Princess Bride *screenplay, which suggests that even though Goldman's father never actually read him the book, it's still somewhat true that pneumonia was an inciting incident of sorts for some of Goldman's major life moments.*

The screenplay got enthusiastic reactions from several Greenlight Guys, but either the guys got fired or the studios closed before they could start work on the movie. Eventually, Goldman decided to buy the rights to the screenplay back from the studio so that he was the only person who could ruin it. Stepping back in time again, Goldman says that after *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* came out, he decided to write nonfiction and started sending copies of his books, including *The Princess Bride*, to a writer named Carl Reiner. Reiner gave *The Princess Bride* to his son, Rob Reiner, who would go on to direct the movie years later.

All of this is true. Note that Goldman positions himself as a hero for his work and for his fans, as he wants to be the one responsible for the success or the failure of The Princess Bride. *In this way, he begins to suggest that the film industry, represented here by the Greenlight Guys and the shenanigans with the studios, aren't at all in the business of doing what's right for a particular story. Instead, they're in it to make money, something that Goldman finds distasteful.*

In the spring of 1986, Goldman attends the first script reading in London. Everyone is there: Cary Elwes, Robin Wright, Mandy Patinkin, and Andre the Giant. Getting Andre was a struggle; at that time, Andre was wrestling most of the year and it was only by chance that Rob was able to meet up with him in Paris. Rob cast Andre despite the fact that Andre has a heavy French accent and an exceptionally low voice. He gave Andre a recording of his part so that he could practice before this script reading.

When Rob Reiner chooses to cast Andre despite the things that would make him a poor choice for the part, it begins to bring the idea that people can learn anything—something that Goldman explores mostly in The Princess Bride *itself—into the frame story. With this, he illustrates how a person can use the ideas from the story to make decisions in the real world.*

At the reading in London, things go smoothly. After lunch, Andre and Mandy Patinkin rehearse some of their scenes and Andre recites his lines very slowly. Finally, Mandy slaps Andre in the face and tells him to go faster, and miraculously, it works. After the movie is done, Goldman realizes that in his entire film career, he's only really loved *Butch Cassidy* and *The Princess Bride*. Even better, *The Princess Bride* brought the book to life and has brought people together. Goldman says he does regret the troubles he's had with the Morgenstern estate, as well as that his marriage with Helen ended. Most of all, he regrets that the Cliffs of Insanity have become the biggest tourist attraction in Florin, which is tough on the Florinese forest rangers.

It's telling that Goldman asserts that the best part of The Princess Bride *movie is that it brought—and still brings—people together. This suggests that though he believes the main purpose of books and movies is to entertain, there's also the possibility that these works will be able to help people form bonds with their loved ones. By also making his loyalty to his work clear, Goldman indicates that loyalty isn't just important between people; it's also important to be loyal to one's projects and work.*

PROLOGUE

Goldman explains that this is his favorite book, though he's never read it. To explain, he takes the reader back to when he was ten years old. Goldman—a.k.a. Billy—loves games and hates school. His teacher, Miss Roginski, has regular meetings with his mom, Mrs. Goldman, about how poorly he's doing in school. He fails tests because instead of taking them, he thinks about football players. Miss Roginski declares that he's just a late bloomer. Goldman explains that he worshipped Miss Roginski and spent a lot of time trying to figure out how she could be his real mother, but couldn't make it work out.

Note that in describing young Billy, Goldman makes it very clear that though Billy isn't interested in academics, he's still smart and constantly thinking. The possibility that someone can be intelligent and yet not a big reader becomes important in the story of The Princess Bride, *as both Fezzik and Inigo are bullied because they're either uninterested or unable to throw themselves into their pursuits of learning.*

Skipping ahead to age 26, Goldman publishes his first novel, *The Temple of Gold*. The publicity people ask him whom he wants to send advance copies to and Goldman asks them to send one to Miss Roginski. Goldman realizes he doesn't know her first name, but asks them to send it to his elementary school and labors over what to write in the accompanying note. The book is a disaster according to critics and it takes a long time for Goldman's publisher to get Miss Roginski's reply letter to him. He feels awful when he reads it: she says she hasn't read it but she's sure it's fine. Then, he flips it over and sees that she wrote that she feels more paternal than even S. Morgenstern.

Goldman's nervousness and desire to impress Miss Roginski illustrates the power of a positive relationship with a mentor and suggests that inherent to such a relationship is a desire to please. Going forward, Goldman wants to please his son Jason, as well as his fans, and in setting up these similarities he shows that the entire reason he's in the industry is so that he can properly honor these people he cares about.

Returning to age ten, young Goldman is cranky because his radio won't pick up the football game. Mrs. Goldman reminds him that it's Friday, not Saturday; the game isn't on until the next day. Billy feels humiliated for a bit and then returns to trying to pick up the football game. After a few more rounds of this, they discover that Billy is delirious with pneumonia. He spends ten days in the hospital and then a month at home, recuperating. On his first night home, Goldman's father comes into Billy's room, sits down, and opens up a book to chapter one. Billy is surprised; his father, a Florinese immigrant, is hopeless, unsuccessful, and can barely speak English.

Billy's surprise that his father would come and sit with him, let alone read to him, suggests that he and his father aren't close. When he notes the way his father speaks English, it suggests that one of things that keeps them from connecting to each other is the language barrier. With this, it's possible to read Goldman's father's desire to read this book to his son as an act of love and possibly, a great struggle, given that the book is in English.

Goldman's father explains that he's going to read *The Princess Bride* by S. Morgenstern, a great Florinese writer, to young Goldman so he can relax. He says it has fencing, torture, revenge, pain, death, and miracles in it. Goldman says that he didn't know then that this moment would change his life: for the first time ever, he wanted to know what happened next in the story. Goldman's father reads the book to his son every night and makes it through twice in the month that Billy is in bed. Years later, Goldman continues to ask his father to read passages to him, but never reads the book himself.

By skipping ahead and explaining exactly how this moment impacts his life, Goldman suggests that the reason for writing this book is in part to honor his father and the relationship they formed by reading this book together. Note too that Goldman only ever lets his father read the book to him. This reminds the reader that part of the magic of this particular book is the magic of being read to and sharing the book in this way.

Following this, young Goldman develops an insatiable passion for adventure stories. Miss Roginski recommends everything that she can, and Billy's his love of adventure continues into adulthood. He connects all of his successes back to Goldman's father introducing him to Morgenstern as a kid. Parts of it even influenced *Butch Cassidy*, and he says that *The Princess Bride* was the best thing to happen to him. It's even better than his wife, Helen.

By suggesting that The Princess Bride *was more meaningful to him than Helen, Goldman foreshadows their eventual divorce and implies that their relationship wasn't that strong to begin with. This sets up a litmus test for Goldman's life, wherein anyone who wants to be close to him must be willing to share in his love of the book.*

Goldman knows from the beginning that he wants to share *The Princess Bride* with his son, Jason, when Jason turns ten. He forgets this desire until, on the eve of Jason's birthday, Goldman is in California working on *The Stepford Wives*. He calls Helen and Helen tells him that they're giving Jason a bike for his tenth birthday. Goldman asks Helen to call one of their local bookshops and ask for *The Princess Bride*, a "kids' classic."

By situating the narrative in terms of the other projects that Goldman is working on, Goldman reminds the reader that while this frame story is fictional, he's still a part of a wider community made up of film and print media companies. In other words, he's always a part of this world and is always contributing to it.

The next afternoon, while Goldman is swimming, a gorgeous "starlet" joins him at the pool. She introduces herself as Sandy Sterling and compliments Goldman's novels. Before they can talk more, Goldman is called away to take a call. It's Helen with the news that two bookshops didn't have *The Princess Bride*. She seems suspicious that there's something going on but agrees to call one more shop. Goldman starts to feel guilty about Sandy and goes to his lounge chair. Sandy joins him and tries to engage him in more conversation. She implies that she'd sleep with him in exchange for a part in *The Stepford Wives*, but Goldman is interrupted by another phone call from Helen. Helen, being a psychiatrist, knows that something is up, so she snappily says she can't find the book and hangs up.

Sandy Sterling is a symbol for what's wrong with the film industry. Her offer to trade sex for a part speaks to the corruption of the film industry, while her flattery of Goldman mimics the ways that Goldman suggests film studios try to take control of stories in unsavory ways. The fact that Goldman feels guilty about paying any attention to Sandy suggests that he's not entirely comfortable with his involvement in the industry, something that is true of the real Goldman: he was consistently critical of the film industry.

Sandy tries to comfort Goldman but seems less excited when Goldman starts to talk about Helen. Goldman explains he needs to get his son a particular book and steps away to make another phone call. He speaks to New York Information and a few bookstores and finally, his publishing house, where the secretary is able to give Goldman the names and numbers of every bookstore in his New York neighborhood. As Goldman calls bookstore after bookstore, Sandy gets upset and leaves the pool. Finally, Goldman speaks to one shopkeeper who has a copy of *The Princess Bride* in Florinese and in English. The shopkeeper angrily refuses to do anything with them until Goldman pays him.

Goldman's inability to find a copy of The Princess Bride *begins to call into question whether or not it's truly a "kids' classic," as he told Helen. This indicates that there was something missing in the way that Goldman understood or interpreted the book as a kid, something that he'll later tie back to the idea of abridgement. He'll soon learn that his father basically abridged* The Princess Bride *orally when he read it out loud, which reminds the reader that abridgement can take a variety of forms.*

Goldman calls his lawyer, Charley, and asks him to buy the books and take them to his house. Charley agrees and Goldman calculates that the books cost him about $250, Sandy Sterling, and two hours. At dinner the next night, Helen calls and says that Jason loves the bike and received the books. Goldman then speaks to Jason, whom he says has no sense of humor and is extremely overweight. He tells Jason that he'd appreciate it if he tried to read the books before Goldman gets home.

By suggesting that he sacrificed Sandy Sterling in pursuit of the books—which he suggests are symbolic of his love for his son and his desire for a connection with him—Goldman indicates that the film industry isn't in the business of connecting people, especially given that it takes Goldman another two weeks to get home.

Two weeks later, Goldman gets home. As usual, Jason goes through Goldman's pockets for the small gifts he knows are there, and Goldman marvels at what he'll do to feel loved. Helen greets Goldman and explains that the new maid is just about ready to serve dinner. Goldman tells the reader that Helen cannot keep a maid because she scares them off. A bit later, the family sits down for the pot roast dinner. Goldman doesn't like pot roast, but he digs in. Helen calls the maid in and tells her to make the roast beef rare next time. Goldman knows that this maid won't last long.

The fact that Goldman fills his pockets with things for Jason indicates that though he's not close with him at this point. He wants to be—he just doesn't know how to get there. This reminds the reader that having a loving and loyal relationship, no matter the relationship, takes work, as well as trial and error to find the best ways to connect.

Goldman turns his attention to Jason, who's ladling mashed potatoes onto his plate, and suggests that he go easy on the carbs. Jason decides he won't eat and Helen chastises Goldman, insisting that Jason will decide to slim down when he's ready. She turns to Jason and encourages him to eat. After a few minutes, Jason says that he loved *The Princess Bride* and that the first chapter was his favorite. Goldman is surprised; the first chapter is boring in comparison to the rest of it. After some questioning, Goldman ascertains that Jason hasn't actually read the book. Helen explains that the second chapter was impossible.

The way that Goldman speaks to Jason suggests that he takes Jason's weight seriously, but isn't going about trying to get Jason to change in an effective or kind way. The way that Helen speaks, however, indicates that Goldman isn't alone in being cruel to his son—talking about Jason as though he's not there isn't kind and certainly makes Jason feel even worse. Jason's attempts to bring up The Princess Bride *can then be seen as a bid to talk about something that has the possibility to help along these relationships.*

Goldman excuses himself from dinner and goes for a walk in Central Park. After a while, he goes home and finds Jason's copy of *The Princess Bride*. He notes that he and Morgenstern have the same publisher, though this book was published before one of the mergers. On the title page, Morgenstern declares his novel a classic, which Goldman finds funny. The first chapter is as Goldman remembers it, but then he realizes the problem: before the good parts in Chapter Two, there are 60 pages of Florinese court history. Goldman discovers that the book isn't a kids' book; it's a satirical history of Florin and of the decline of Western monarchies. Goldman's father only ever read him the action parts.

Again, by noting that he and Morgenstern have the same publisher, Goldman is able to situate himself and his fictional world within the same system of organized knowledge production. His allusions to mergers of publishing houses indicates that the publishing industry is becoming more concentrated as time goes on, which, given how he feels about the industry, suggests that he might think they have too much power over their authors.

Goldman calls his editor, Hiram Haydn, at two in the morning and asks if he could abridge *The Princess Bride*. He pretends that he's still in California so that calling at such a time doesn't look so silly, but asks Hiram to talk to the head of the publishing house. Goldman then calls Evarts Ziegler, his movie agent in California, and asks him to postpone his involvement on *The Stepford Wives* so he can have time to write the abridgement. The abridgement is the book the reader is currently reading.

The time of night makes it exceptionally clear how important this project is to Goldman, as it shows that he's willing to ignore all standards of polite conduct in the name of getting this project started. Now, Goldman realizes that his father essentially abridged the book for him; in a way, Goldman's "abridgement" is actually his father's abridgement, and he's just relaying it to a reader.

Goldman says that Helen encouraged him to think about why he went to such lengths to publish the abridgement of *The Princess Bride*. He says that he doesn't expect the book to change anyone's life like it changed his, but he says he used to truly believe in the "high adventure" and true love as represented in the book. He doesn't think that high adventure or true love exist anymore, but he hopes the reader will enjoy it.

Goldman's answer suggests that even if a reader doesn't have the same kind of life-changing experience with The Princess Bride, *he still wants them to experience the joy and the fun of reading such an exciting and romantic book. This, he suggests, is the true purpose of reading, and of abridgement in particular.*

CHAPTER ONE: THE BRIDE

In the year that Buttercup is born, the most beautiful woman in the world is a French scullery maid. She attracts the attention of the duke she works for, and the duchess sets about foiling their romance by plying the maid with chocolate so that she'll gain weight. When Buttercup turns ten, the most beautiful woman lives in Bengal but loses her status after the pox plague hits. When Buttercup is fifteen, an Englishwoman is the most beautiful until, one day, one of her suitors points out how perfect she is. She spends hours looking at herself in the mirror before it occurs to her that her beauty won't last. This thought makes her develop worry lines and then wrinkles.

The idea that there's an international list of the most beautiful women is, of course, absurd, but including it reminds the reader that this is a story of fantasy and elements like this shouldn't be taken seriously. It does, however, show that appearances are a big deal to the characters and to the narrator of this book, if only by presenting a narrator who is very interested in others' appearances.

Buttercup doesn't care about any of this. She's somewhere in the top twenty most beautiful women, but only because of her potential, and she cares more about riding her horse, Horse, and taunting the farm boy, Farm Boy. Both Horse and Farm Boy do everything that Buttercup asks them to, and Buttercup's father vows to leave Farm Boy an acre in his will. Buttercup's parents annoy her by asking her to bathe, and she gets especially upset when they note that boys don't like smelly girls. Regardless, about the time that Buttercup turns sixteen, the girls in the village stop talking to her. One girl finally accuses her of stealing the village boys, which Buttercup resents: she doesn't want anything to do with the boys and refuses to play their flirty games.

Calling the farm boy Farm Boy suggests that on some level, Buttercup is a cruel person—especially since there's no indication that she even knows the Farm Boy's name. However, when she learns that the village boys all want to flirt with her, it again reminds the reader that this is a novel that pays close attention, and gives power to, those who are beautiful. Because of this power, it suggests, Buttercup is better able to be cruel to the Farm Boy and treat him as though his life doesn't matter.

Some evenings, Farm Boy beats a few of the boys so they'll leave Buttercup alone. She always thanks him, and he replies with the same answer every time: "as you wish." When Buttercup is about seventeen, the first rich man stops to look at her ride and he mentions Buttercup to Count Rugen.

The Farm Boy's actions show that no matter what Buttercup thinks of him, he is a loyal servant to her and will do what it takes to make her happy and keep her safe from annoying suitors.

The narrator explains that before Europe, the country of Florin existed between Sweden and Germany. This note is in parentheses. The king, King Lotharon, is technically in charge, but he's very old and senile. His son, Prince Humperdinck, is the real ruler. He only trusts Count Rugen, whom he made a count as a birthday present. Rugen's wife, the Countess, buys her clothes from Paris. In parentheses, Morgenstern notes that this is after Paris, but only just after the invention of taste. She spends her time being rich and glamorous.

By situating this story as being "before Europe" but "after taste," Goldman/Morgenstern can get at the idea of "once upon a time" without having to say it outright. This differentiates The Princess Bride *from other fairytales and suggests that it's not its own thing that exists in an entirely different universe—in this case, it exists in the same world as the reader, with publishing houses and mergers.*

In an aside, Goldman tells the reader that he'll leave his comments in italics and just wants to explain how Morgenstern uses parentheses. He says that his copy editor was in tears over the parentheses. He doesn't even know if Morgenstern meant for people to take them seriously, and he believes that they signify that something didn't actually happen.

Again, when Goldman adds this aside to explain how to interpret "Morgenstern's" parentheses, it reminds the reader that the logic of the story isn't something that should be taken seriously. Rather, the reader should consider things like this as opportunities to think critically about what Goldman or Morgenstern is actually trying to say.

Returning to the story, Buttercup's father looks out the window of their house and begs Buttercup's mother to come to the window. They argue, but then Buttercup's mother goes to the window. They ooh and ahh at whatever is out there and after a minute, Buttercup joins them. She's also awed and watches Count Rugen and the Countess, along with their procession, go by on the road. The procession turns to enter the farm, which concerns Buttercup's parents. They go out to meet Rugen, who asks to see Buttercup's father's cows and learn the secrets of good dairy farming. This is strange, as Buttercup's father is well aware that people hate his milk.

The fact that Buttercup's father is a horrendous dairy farmer tells the reader that this isn't at all about dairy farming; Count Rugen is presumably on the farm to look at Buttercup. While Buttercup's parents are aware that there's something fishy going on, this does illustrate how Count Rugen is able to manipulate people less powerful than he is for his own gain. This begins to show that Rugen himself is a clever character capable of making effective plans.

Count Rugen asks to speak to Buttercup about the cows. She suggests that Rugen speak to Farm Boy, which piques the interest of the beautiful Countess. The Countess snaps her fingers at Farm Boy, who introduces himself as Westley, and asks him what he does to the cows. When he says he just feeds them, she takes his arm, follows him to the barn, and watches him feed the cows. Buttercup follows, as does Rugen.

By only giving the reader Westley's name because the Countess asked for it, Morgenstern is able to illustrate how Buttercup's cruelty and self-absorption has kept her from being able to connect with someone else.

After dinner later, Buttercup's father remarks that Westley didn't do anything special to the cows. Buttercup's mother gives Buttercup a bowl of stew to give to Westley. Buttercup gives it to him, but coldly tells him that she wants him to bathe, braid, and massage Horse until he's glistening. Her mother calls her out on her rudeness. Buttercup goes to bed but every time she closes her eyes, she sees the Countess staring at Westley. Buttercup rolls in bed feeling feverish and thinks of how handsome he is. She decides that the Countess must just like Westley's teeth and remembers that Westley looked back at the Countess. Weeping and thrashing, Buttercup's jealousy overtakes her and takes the fourth-place spot for historical fits of jealousy.

Buttercup's jealousy indicates that she is, on some level, in love with Westley. This shows that for Buttercup—whom the novel implies isn't especially intelligent—it takes drastic events like what took place earlier for her to understand her own feelings. It also suggests that where Buttercup is truly lacking is in emotional intelligence, as it appears she didn't know she had feelings for Westley until those feelings were threatened by someone else. This suggests that as she becomes kinder and less cruel, she'll also become smarter.

Before dawn, Buttercup wakes up and knocks on Westley's hovel door. He's beautiful. Breathlessly, Buttercup tells Westley that she loves him more every minute and will do whatever he wants her to do to earn his love. Westley closes the door in Buttercup's face. She runs back to her room and flings herself on her bed. She thinks about Westley and tries to tell herself that he said nothing because he's dumb, but she knows it isn't true. This decided, Buttercup tells herself that he must not love her back. She spends the whole day crying.

When Buttercup tries to tell herself that Westley is stupid, she does so to try to make herself feel better about putting her heart on the line. Again, this is a matter of emotional intelligence and knowing oneself, which shows both that Buttercup is still in the process of growing up—just like the reader is—and that she also is capable of making these leaps when given the opportunity and the impetus.

At dusk, Westley knocks on the door. Buttercup adopts a fancy tone and apologizes for playing a joke on him earlier. He ignores this and says that he's here to say goodbye. This shocks Buttercup, but she sticks to her attempts at being fancy and says that she won't take Westley back when the Countess finishes with him. Westley again ignores this and says he's going to America to seek his fortune. He's already trained himself to not need sleep, so he'll be able to take multiple jobs and buy a farm and a house. Buttercup points out that the Countess won't be happy on a farm.

Buttercup's inability to understand that Westley is going to America to seek his fortune for her shows how when someone is hurt and trying to protect themselves, they're even less likely to be open to new ideas. This tells Buttercup that as she moves forward, she should try to be more open and engage more critically with what she sees and hears.

Westley tells Buttercup that he loves her and has done everything for her. He says that when he told her "as you wish," he was actually saying, "I love you." Buttercup promises that she'll love nobody else. Westley starts to step away but turns back and kisses Buttercup. The narrator notes that there have only been five great kisses in the last four millennia, but this kiss was greater than all of those.

Again, while the reader has no way of knowing how spectacular this kiss really was, noting the rankings of kisses mostly functions to tell the reader that the guiding logic at play in this story is something very different than what's at work in the real world.

Buttercup spends a while moping before realizing that Westley could meet a beautiful girl in London or America who would be prettier than her if she keeps crying. She runs downstairs and asks her parents for advice on how to make herself look nicer. They suggest bathing and brushing her hair and Buttercup immediately sets to work. She gets up every morning, does the farm chores, and then dedicates her afternoons to her appearance. She exercises, bathes, and brushes her hair a thousand strokes per day. Almost immediately, Buttercup starts jumping up in the ranks of beautiful women. A letter from Westley catapults her from ninth to eighth and she talks about him endlessly.

By deciding to actively attend to her appearance, Buttercup starts to become more independent and come of age. This suggests that part of coming of age has to do with learning how to properly care for oneself, whether that be in an emotional or a physical sense. By deciding to work for Westley's love, Buttercup also demonstrates awareness that her romance will take effort on her part, either in the form of attending to her physical beauty or by trying to be a better partner to Westley in the future.

Then, one morning, Buttercup gets home after delivering milk and finds her parents sitting still at the table. Buttercup's father whispers that the Dread Pirate Roberts attacked Westley's ship and killed him. Buttercup hurries to her room and stays there for days. When she finally emerges, Buttercup has clearly transformed from a girl into a woman, and she's finally become the most beautiful woman. The narrator notes that this is because she now knows pain and suffering. She tells her parents that she'll never love again.

When the narrator notes that Buttercup knows pain and suffering after Westley's death and after becoming a woman, it reminds the reader that in order to come of age, a person must experience difficulties and loss, something that Goldman suggests readers can begin to experience by reading books, like this one, without perfect endings and that don't treat their characters especially well.

CHAPTER TWO: THE GROOM

Goldman explains that this is the first place where he seriously cut Morgenstern's material. Morgenstern opened this chapter with 66 pages of Florinese history, and Goldman can't understand his reasoning. He suggests that Morgenstern might have just been interested in the story of the monarchy, and he accepts that cutting this out is going to earn him the ire of every Florinese scholar in the world. He says he'll have to accept that the Florinese scholars at Columbia have ties to the *New York Times Book Review*.

When Goldman ties the Columbia Florinese scholars to the New York Times Book Review, *it again reminds the reader that both he and Morgenstern are part of a wider publishing community—one that depends on advertising and making money, which he suggests this book won't do given that the Florinese scholars will keep it out of the review.*

Back in the story, Morgenstern writes that Prince Humperdinck is shaped like a barrel and is pure muscle. The only thing he loves is hunting, and he doesn't go a day without killing something. He used to travel the world to hunt, but once King Lotharon's health started to decline, Humperdinck and Count Rugen built the **Zoo of Death**. It's five underground levels full of creatures to hunt. The fifth level is empty and was designed to hold something as dangerous and powerful as Humperdinck.

The Zoo of Death is something that allows both Humperdinck and Rugen to feel especially intelligent. It solves the problem of Humperdinck's absences, while also giving Humperdinck the ability to practice hunting in a controlled environment—in other words, he can slowly build up his skills until he's ready to tackle something on the fifth level.

One afternoon, Prince Humperdinck is near the end of a fight with an orangutan. The creature is finally beginning to weaken as Count Rugen interrupts and tells Humperdinck that he has news. Prince Humperdinck cracks the orangutan's neck, killing it, and then Rugen explains that the doctor has declared that King Lotharon is dying. Prince Humperdinck is annoyed; this means he has to get married.

Prince Humperdinck's annoyance at hearing that King Lotharon isn't doing well speaks to the kind of person he is: he's not especially caring, especially when the people around him make it so that Humperdinck has to take time away from the things he loves best—in these case, killing endangered animals.

CHAPTER THREE: THE COURTSHIP

Prince Humperdinck, Count Rugen, King Lotharon, and Queen Bella meet in the council room to discuss Humperdinck's marriage. King Lotharon mumbles his belief that it's time to find a bride, and Bella kindly pats his arm and translates his mumbles: she says that he said that the lucky woman will be getting a handsome husband. She notes that Lotharon is doing better these days because they just fired Miracle Max and found a new miracle man. The conversation turns to Princess Noreena of Guilder, who'd be a politically perfect match. Guilder is across Florin Channel and is Florin's main enemy. Humperdinck insists that Noreena needs to be able to hunt with him, but Bella says that Noreena probably won't do that. She talks about Noreena's beauty and famous hat collection and decides to visit her.

Though there's no reason to suspect that Queen Bella is anything but kind and gentle to her husband, it's worth noting that she doesn't exactly "translate" his mumbles correctly. This represents another form of abridgement, and one that Goldman suggests could have real consequences, depending on how or what Queen Bella "translates" Lotharon's words. The fact that Humperdinck initially wants a wife to share in his hobbies suggests that he does have the ability to meaningfully connect with someone—in other words, he's not all bad.

Goldman cuts in and says that the next 56 pages has to do with packing as Bella packs her wardrobe, travels to Guilder, unpacks, and invites Princess Noreena to visit. The rest of the passage details the voyage of both women back to Florin, where Noreena then unpacks all *her* clothes. Goldman says that he spoke to Professor Bongiorno at Columbia, who said that this chapter is the most satirical chapter in the book. Apparently, Morgenstern was trying to show that Guilder is more civilized than Florin by describing the superiority of the ladies' clothes. Goldman suggests that the chapter is a good cure for insomnia. However, Noreena arrives in Florin, is beautiful, and does indeed have an extensive hat collection. The story picks up at the evening meal.

Goldman's tone when he talks about what he cut out and what Professor Bongiorno said about the passage reminds the reader of Goldman's thoughts about the original Morgenstern: namely, that it's too dense and complex for anyone other than a Florinese scholar to be able to appreciate. Thus, by snidely insulting Professor Bongiorno, Goldman also suggests that he's on the reader's side and will fight for fun books, even though he and the professor are still part of the same publishing world.

Dinner is held in the Great Hall, which is a massive and so drafty that winds sometimes reach gale force. At 8:23, things are looking good for the prospective marriage, but this all changes a minute later. In that minute, the servants prepare to serve essence of brandied pig and open a huge door to bring in the pig. Another door opens to bring in the wine, and this creates a strong crosswind. Then, King Lotharon enters the hall through the King's Door, which makes the wind even stronger. Candles blow out, setting a few people and parts of the table on fire, and Princess Noreena's hat blows off. She puts it back on, but it's too late: Prince Humperdinck saw that she's bald and angrily storms out of the hall.

It seems likely that things would've been just fine between Humperdinck and Noreena, and yet, he looks heartless and selfish because of the way he refuses to marry her for this physical quality. This shows that Humperdinck will make assumptions about others that make him feel superior when it's convenient.

Queen Bella runs after Prince Humperdinck, who declares that he's not going to marry a bald princess and have people talking about him behind his back forever. He insists that he'll conquer Guilder sometime and this alliance isn't even necessary. Count Rugen steps forward and asks if Humperdinck would be interested in a commoner who can't hunt. Humperdinck says he really just wants a drop-dead gorgeous wife.

Again, by insisting that Humperdinck just wants to marry a beautiful woman, he shows that he doesn't even value intelligence—his or anyone else's. Count Rugen's suggestion implies that he's actually more intelligent than Humperdinck is, as he's clearly able to gather information and look past first appearances as he does so.

At dawn, Count Rugen and Prince Humperdinck ride to the hill by Buttercup's farm. Humperdinck isn't sure he'll be able to marry a milkmaid, but when Buttercup comes out of the house she shocks him with her beauty. He sends Rugen away so that he can court Buttercup. When he gets close to Buttercup and Horse, he tells her that he commands her to marry him and if she says no, she'll die. Buttercup says no and notes that marriage means love, and she's had bad experiences and doesn't want to love again. Humperdinck lays out his case: he has no interest in love; he just needs a woman to give him a son. Buttercup agrees to marry him.

Prince Humperdinck's sudden desire to marry Buttercup, even though she's a commoner, shows again that he's not interested in anything but surrounding himself with people who will make him look and feel good. In this case, he doesn't want an intelligent wife, as she might make him look less so, and he wants a wife who's beautiful to make others jealous.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE PREPARATIONS

Goldman tells the reader that he never knew this chapter even existed until he started abridging, as Goldman's father always just said that three years passed. In the original Morgenstern, however, this is the longest chapter and details how Prince Humperdinck declares Buttercup a princess to appease some persnickety nobles. The new miracle man works on King Lotharon, and then there are 72 pages detailing Buttercup's princess training.

The simple fact that Buttercup spends three years going to princess school makes it clear to the reader that, though Buttercup isn't emotionally intelligent, she is capable of learning the proper way to behave. This reminds the reader that there are multiple different kinds of intelligence, and most people are capable of learning.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE ANNOUNCEMENT

People fill the Great Square in Florin City to see Buttercup for the first time. At noon, Prince Humperdinck steps onto a balcony, addresses the crowd, and introduces Buttercup. Now 21, Buttercup is extremely beautiful thanks to her hairdressers and lady's maids who keep her hair and skin glowing. After a moment on the balcony, Buttercup asks to walk among the people. Humperdinck starts to refuse, but lets her go. The crowd parts to let her walk through and she lets the people touch her. She doesn't know that three people in the crowd have plans to kill her, and that the man in black is also watching.

By letting the reader in on the secret that the man in black (Westley) exists, and that there are people planning to kill Buttercup, Morgenstern guides the reader towards making their own assessments about what's going to happen and shows them how to gather information. Clearly Buttercup hasn't learned this skill yet, as she isn't able to identify these four people from among the teeming crowd.

Later in the day, Buttercup saddles up Horse for her daily ride. Though she's not a great thinker, she decides there's no harm in thinking if she keeps her thoughts to herself. She feels moved by her experience walking among the people, and she realizes she doesn't like Prince Humperdinck since he's never around. She decides that she has two questions: whether it's wrong to marry without liking your partner, and if so, whether it's too late for her to do anything about it. Buttercup tells herself to be satisfied with her beauty, riches, and power, and to make peace with the lack of love.

When Morgenstern lets the reader in on Buttercup's inner monologue, it does begin to create the sense that Buttercup isn't actually as much of a "poor thinker" as Morgenstern would like to think she is. Buttercup's questions are ones that people grapple with every day, which again brings the concerns explored within the confines of the book into the wider world so that readers can identify with them and learn something too.

About a half an hour away from the castle, Buttercup runs into a strange-looking trio. A Sicilian with a humpback (Vizzini) explains that he and his companions, a giant (Fezzik) and a Spaniard (Inigo), are circus performers looking for a nearby village. Vizzini leaps at Buttercup, touches her neck, and she passes out almost immediately. She wakes up in a boat and listens to the men talk. Fezzik suggests they kill Buttercup now as Vizzini leaves scraps from a Guilderian military uniform on the dock and insists that Buttercup's body must end up on the Guilder frontier. Fezzik mumbles that he's not stupid and just wants to know what's going on. Vizzini assures Fezzik that he's actually stupid.

The fact that Vizzini and his crew are leaving scraps of a Guilderian military uniform indicates that he's trying to frame Guilder for capturing Buttercup, which suggests that there's a larger plot afoot that the reader should look out for. The exchange between Fezzik and Vizzini reminds the reader how important it is to be intelligent within the world of the novel—it's implied that Vizzini is in charge because he's smart—and how a person who's not considered intelligent can be abused and manipulated as a result.

Inigo suggests that they tell Buttercup that they're kidnapping her for ransom, but Vizzini declares that she's awake and has been listening for a while. Buttercup thinks that Vizzini is a conceited mind reader, and Vizzini verbally affirms these thoughts. He then proceeds to say that her body must be found dead on the Guilder frontier and touches Buttercup's neck again so that she passes out.

Vizzini's apparent ability to read minds opens up the possibility that there's more to him than just being intelligent, but it's worth noting that Buttercup specifically ties Vizzini's conceitedness to his intelligence. This suggests that in some cases, intelligence can make people extremely self-centered.

Buttercup wakes up and without even blinking, she dives into Florin Channel. Both Fezzik and Inigo refuse to dive in after her and Vizzini listens carefully for the sounds of her swimming. Inigo notes that the sharks will get Buttercup and at this, Vizzini starts to tell Buttercup about how vicious the sharks are and threatens to pour blood in the water to draw them near. She starts to hear fish sounds as Vizzini promises that if she comes back, she'll die painlessly. Vizzini cuts his arm, catches blood in a cup, and prepares to throw the blood in the water. He throws it, and the sharks go mad.

Buttercup's ability to dive in without alerting Vizzini, as well as her apparent skill at swimming, tells the reader again that Buttercup isn't as unintelligent or simplistic as Morgenstern suggested earlier. Rather, she has practical skills and is capable of making a plan that seems reasonable in the moment. Vizzini's threats show how he can use his knowledge of what's around him to manipulate Buttercup and scare her, thereby depriving her of the ability to think.

Goldman interrupts and says that Goldman's father told him at this point in his storytelling that the sharks don't eat Buttercup. Young Goldman had acted offended by this, but Goldman tells the reader he was actually scared. As a kid, he says, he didn't reason that it's way too early in the narrative to kill off Buttercup, and assures the reader that she doesn't die here.

By including this aside, just like his father did, Goldman suggests that young readers must learn how stories function just as they must learn how life works in the real world. This tells the reader that parts of The Princess Bride *will follow a familiar format, if only because it's too early to kill off a heroine.*

Returning to the narrative, Buttercup hears the sharks thrashing and "beeping" and thinks that this is the end. Luckily for her, the moon comes out and Fezzik drags her back into the boat. He gently wraps her in a blanket and explains that Vizzini will kill her later. Vizzini shushes Fezzik, but Buttercup tells Vizzini that she thinks that he's not smart and that Fezzik *is* smart. Vizzini crows that his plan worked, as women scream when scared. Buttercup points out that she didn't scream and Vizzini hits her. Fezzik stands up for her, but Vizzini scares him into silence and points ahead to the Cliffs of Insanity, which rise up a thousand feet. They're the most direct route between Florin and Guilder, but everyone usually goes around them.

Notice how Vizzini behaves when Buttercup points out that he's incorrect about something (she didn't scream). When he greets her comment with violence, it illustrates how someone like Vizzini, whose only skills lie in is mind, can become very threatened by someone else who's capable of thinking logically and observing the world around them. Similarly, Fezzik shows here that he's kind and thoughtful—in other words, emotionally intelligent—something that Vizzini might also find threatening, as kindness can be a useful tool.

Buttercup is confused, as she's never heard of secret passages through the Cliffs and thinks her captors can't climb them. Inigo asks if anyone could be following, something Vizzini deems is "inconceivable." Inigo points out that there's a small black boat behind them and suggests that it's a local fisherman. Vizzini decides that the man in black is definitely not following them. He becomes anxious as Fezzik observes that the black ship is gaining on them. Buttercup decides she's very afraid of the man in black.

For Vizzini, it's so threatening to think that someone could be aware of his carefully thought-out plans that he comes up with absolute nonsense to make himself feel better. In doing so, Vizzini looks less *intelligent and more insecure, especially when he lashes out at Inigo and Fezzik in the coming moments. This suggests that Vizzini is on his way to his downfall, as he's not going to be able to think clearly because of his insecurities.*

As the group reaches the Cliffs, Vizzini leaps and grabs a rope that's affixed to something at the top of the cliffs. He orders his companions to prepare so that *if* the man in black is following them, they can cut the rope before he can use it to climb up. Inigo lifts Buttercup onto Fezzik's shoulders, ties himself to Fezzik's waist, and then Vizzini clings to Fezzik's neck. Fezzik begins to climb, feeling confident in his abilities. While lots of things scare him, he knows his arms are strong and tireless.

The fact that Fezzik is confident in his strength but not in his thoughts suggests that at some point, he was encouraged to focus only on what his body could do and not what his mind could do. Given the way that Vizzini treats him, this could all be from Vizzini. Regardless, it shows that Fezzik is capable of thinking and being smart; he likely just hasn't had the opportunity.

Vizzini is afraid of heights, so he distracts himself by thinking about the man in black, who is indeed getting closer. He tells Fezzik to go faster and Inigo compliments Fezzik's climbing. Vizzini becomes even more frantic when Fezzik says that the man in black is now climbing the rope, and he appears to be climbing just as fast as Fezzik. Finally, Fezzik reaches the top. He remarks that it's a shame to kill such a skilled climber, but Vizzini unties the rope and it flies off the edge of the cliff. Inigo points over the cliff: the man in black let go of the rope and is now hanging onto the rocks. Vizzini is fascinated; he loves studying death and dying and is excited to see this man die. However, the man starts to climb. Vizzini deems this inconceivable, which annoys Inigo since it's clearly happening.

Inigo's compliment to Fezzik shows that these two men care for each other and make a point to treat each other kindly —something that Vizzini seems to never do. Going forward, the novel will explore which is more meaningful for men like Inigo and Fezzik, who are intelligent but who don't think they are: is it more important for them to have a friend who will cheer them on, or a person who tells them exactly how to channel their strengths for a certain purpose?

Vizzini angrily tells Inigo that the man in black isn't following them and then tells him to stay behind and kill the man. After Fezzik, Vizzini, and Buttercup leave, Inigo lies on his stomach and watches the man climb. He's in awe of the man's climbing strategy and wonders who this man could be. He thinks it's a pity to have to kill him, but reasons that he must follow orders. He pulls out his six-fingered sword to practice.

Again, when Vizzini decides to say that something true is untrue and Inigo takes him seriously, it reminds the reader of how heavily Inigo leans on Vizzini to point him in the "right" direction. Inigo's inner monologue also suggests that Vizzini's guidance is depriving Inigo of emotional intelligence, given that he accepts Vizzini's orders without question.

The narrator steps back in time to offer Inigo's backstory. Inigo is born in Arabella, Spain, which is a small and impoverished village in the mountains. Despite his poverty, Inigo is a happy child and adores his father, Domingo Montoya. Domingo is a sword maker, but everyone who wants a masterpiece of a sword goes to Madrid to visit Yeste, who's famous and an excellent sword maker as well. However, when Yeste gets an order he knows he can't complete, he accepts the order and visits Domingo to talk him into making it for him. Inigo loves Yeste's visits. Domingo always tries to refuse Yeste, but he changes his mind when Yeste threatens suicide. When Yeste leaves he always asks Domingo to come back to Madrid to work with him, but Domingo always refuses.

The contours of the relationship between Yeste and Domingo illustrates that not all good or caring relationships look the same; the men's relationship certainly seems to be lacking in empathy, yet it apparently works for Yeste and Domingo. This again reminds the reader to pay attention to what characters do and say, rather than to what the narrator says, as the characters have the ability to show the reader something that contradicts what the book says is true.

One day, as Inigo is making lunch for his father, a nobleman knocks on the door and asks for the "genius" Domingo Montoya. Domingo tries to insist that he's no genius and can't make swords, but he grows excited when the nobleman reveals that he has six fingers. This means a real challenge for Domingo, as the balance of a conventional sword would be wrong for six fingers. The noble insists on leaving one piece of gold as a down payment, lets Domingo take his measurements, and agrees to return in a year.

Again, the way that the narrator draws Domingo and shows how interested he is in studying sword making reminds the reader that there are multiple ways for a person to be smart and clever. In this case, Domingo is cast as intelligent because he's studied sword making and seems to have enough knowledge to make this specialized weapon.

Domingo spends the year working feverishly. One day he's solved all his problems; the next, he regrets taking the job. He refuses to sleep and only eats when Inigo forces him. One night, Inigo wakes up and sees that Domingo has finished the sword. When the nobleman returns, he's not convinced the sword is worth paying for. Domingo gives the sword to Inigo, insults the nobleman, and the nobleman kills Domingo immediately. Inigo screams. As the nobleman starts to ride away, Inigo lifts the six-fingered sword and challenges the nobleman to a duel. The nobleman agrees, disarms Inigo immediately, and then cuts a vertical line down each side of Inigo's face. Inigo lives with Yeste for two years and then runs away, leaving a note that he "has to learn."

It's telling that Domingo's last act was to bestow a very meaningful gift on his only son and defend his honor. This shows Inigo that he too should prioritize such things and, importantly, that he should endeavor to honor Domingo in everything that he does. Unwittingly, the nobleman—later revealed to be Count Rugen—helps Inigo learn this by scarring him, which means that Inigo will have to confront this pain every time he looks in the mirror.

Yeste makes swords for the next ten years and grows very fat and rich. At that point, Inigo returns. He explains that he's spent the last ten years learning to fence and now, he needs to know if he's ready to take on the six-fingered man. He gives Yeste a rundown of his training regimen for the last ten years, which included sprinting, squeezing rocks, and skipping. Inigo says that he's been preparing so that he can fight and kill the nobleman who killed Domingo. They go to Yeste's courtyard and Yeste spends hours giving Inigo imaginary situations. Finally, Yeste declares that Inigo is no master: he's a wizard, and he's capable of killing the six-fingered nobleman.

Important here is the fact that Inigo dedicated ten years of his life to learning—whatever Vizzini says about his employees' intelligence, Inigo knows how to learn. Then, when Yeste declares Inigo a fencing wizard, it confirms that Inigo is indeed intelligent and capable of interpreting information he takes in and turning it into meaningful action through his sword.

The next morning, Inigo begins to hunt for the six-fingered man. He doesn't think it's going to be hard, but after five years, he starts to drink to excess and three years later, he barely practices because he's bored and drunk. This is when Vizzini finds him and recruits him for his criminal organization. The two of them and Fezzik become feared names, and this is why Inigo does whatever Vizzini asks of him.

By explaining how Vizzini was presumably able to play to Inigo's weaknesses in order to convince him to join his group, Morgenstern shows that Vizzini is indeed emotionally intelligent—but in a cruel way, as he uses what he knows of people to make them feel worthless.

Back in the present, Inigo paces on the edge of the cliff and asks the man in black if he could go faster. The man in black suggests that Inigo help him, but refuses to trust that Inigo isn't going to sabotage him until Inigo swears on Domingo Montoya's soul. Inigo pulls the man in black up. As the man rests, he explains that Inigo has "baggage of much value" but refuses to say more about why he's following Vizzini. Inigo hopes that this man is a real master.

Goldman toys with the conventions of dramatic swordfights by having Inigo help Westley make it up the cliff; clearly, Inigo is overly excited to have a worthy dueling partner. This silliness takes some tension from the scene, and underscores that Inigo is not really a bad person, despite his association with Vizzini.

The man in black declares that he's ready to fence and they begin. Inigo and the man in black start with their swords in their left hands as Inigo thinks that this will make things fairer, since he's not actually left-handed. The man in black fights well until Inigo backs him into a corner, but then, the man puts on a magnificent assault and backs Inigo up to the cliffs. All of Inigo's attempts to block the man in black fail until he switches his sword into his right hand and then backs the man in black into corners again. After a few minutes, the man in black reveals that he too is right-handed and Inigo is shocked and a bit scared. In the open, the man in black disarms Inigo. The man in black knocks Inigo out, ties him up, and runs after Vizzini.

Inigo's excitement at having the duel start out fair again underscores his basic decency in contrast to Vizzini. This indicates that Inigo's heart is still uncompromised by Vizzini's callousness in important ways, as this means that Inigo will be able to go on to form positive and meaningful friendships with people in the future. His insistence on fairness also mimics the way that Goldman effectively stands up for the reader to his publisher.

Fezzik looks behind him and sees that Inigo's been beaten. He's very sad, as Inigo's the only one who doesn't laugh about Fezzik's love of rhymes. He points this out to Vizzini, who angrily spits that Inigo must've been unfairly beaten. Fezzik doesn't dare argue and pays strict attention, as Vizzini hates it when Fezzik thinks. Vizzini tells Fezzik to untie Buttercup and then catch up with them after killing the man in black. Fezzik rubs Buttercup's ankles to wake them up and then panics: he can't fence. Vizzini patiently tells Fezzik to throw a rock at the man's head but loses his temper when Fezzik suggests that that's not sportsmanlike. As Vizzini and Buttercup race away, Fezzik practices his aim with huge rocks and waits.

Everything that Fezzik shares through his inner monologue shows the reader that he has literary aspirations (in other words, is interested in joining the same world as Morgenstern and Goldman), is also interested in fairness, and knows that while he's employed by Vizzini, thinking is dangerous for him. However, all of this does show that Fezzik is capable of thought and, if given the opportunity and the emotional support, could likely come up with good ideas and put them into action. The insistence on "sportsmanlike" conduct again adds to the lightheartedness of the scene.

Going back in time, the narrator explains that while Turkish women are famous for having large babies, Fezzik was an unusually large baby. He weighs 85 pounds by the time he's a year old and is shaving in kindergarten. The other kids are scared to death until they realize that *he's* scared of *them*, at which point they started to bully him. Fezzik rhymes their taunts in his head and runs away crying.

This passage situates Fezzik's love of rhyming and language as something that helps him cope with the cruelty of others. This reminds the reader that literature, as represented by rhymes here, can also provide people an escape and a safe place to deal with what's going on in their lives.

One day, Fezzik's mother and Fezzik's father sit Fezzik down and tell him that they're going to teach him to fight. Fezzik cries and insists he doesn't want to fight, but he makes a fist. His mother praises him as a "natural learner." Fezzik refuses to hit his father and on his first punch, he misses. The second one lays Fezzik's father out flat and breaks his jaw. After Fezzik's father is healed a bit, he and Fezzik's mother chat with Fezzik again and tell him that they're going to train Fezzik to be a famous fighter. Fezzik bursts into tears and spends the next three years training hard. His parents have the time of their lives; Fezzik is miserable and scared.

This passage illustrates how Fezzik has been massively underserved by the adults in his young life. Had they taken his interests seriously and steered him towards poetry or something similar, Fezzik may have turned out to be a far more confident person in the novel's present than he actually is. Fezzik's parents' reasoning for pushing him into wrestling suggests that while literary pursuits don't pay (as Goldman will imply at various points), physical pursuits like acting or wrestling do.

Right before Fezzik's first match, he refuses to go in the ring. Fezzik's mother and Fezzik's father are worried that they're pushing him too far, as he is only nine years old, but they threaten to leave him alone forever if he doesn't fight. This is Fezzik's greatest fear, so he enters the ring. The other fighter seems like he's going to win until Fezzik grabs him and lifts him overhead. He puts the fighter down while complimenting the fighter's skills, but the crowd boos Fezzik and his parents out of town.

Fezzik is again revealed to be a kind and thoughtful soul, even as the outside world continues to pigeon-hole him on the basis of his strength and size.

Fezzik's mother and Fezzik's father drag Fezzik all over Turkey. At every stop, he wins fights and then gets booed out of town. The family heads to Greece and then to eastern Europe and Asia, where the same thing happens. Fezzik's parents die in Mongolia. He hitches rides with passing caravans and during this time, he learns that if he fights groups, people don't boo him. He joins a circus and loves having friends until one day, audiences start booing him again: he's gotten too good. Fezzik cries that night and thinks of his beloved rhymes and the next day, the circus fires him. Alone in the middle of Greenland, Fezzik sits on a rock. Vizzini finds him there, promises to protect him from the boos, and for this reason, Fezzik does whatever Vizzini asks of him.

Just as with Inigo, Vizzini preys on Fezzik's insecurities in order to manipulate him into doing whatever he says—using his strength and generally not thinking for himself. The fact that Fezzik is so sad to have lost his circus friends indicates that Fezzik craves close and meaningful relationships more than anything else, and he's willing to accept simply not being alone as a substitute for true friendship because of his low self-esteem.

Back in the present, Fezzik waits until the man in black is closer and, remembering his parents' insistence on playing fair, he throws a rock so that it lands about a foot away from the man's head. The two men regard each other and Fezzik says that now, they should fight man to man with no weapons. The man in black agrees and Fezzik feels bad for having to kill such an honorable and skilled man. When the fight starts, Fezzik lets the man in black feel as though he has a chance before trying killing moves. The man in black, however, escapes all of them. By the time Fezzik realizes what he's doing wrong, the man in black has him around the neck and chokes him until he blacks out. The man in black runs after Vizzini.

Westley shows again that he's clearly learned how to fight in a variety of different ways during his time away. Fezzik's desire to fight fairly is especially touching here, given that Fezzik easily could've dispatched Westley had he followed Vizzini's orders. This suggests that while there are certainly consequences to not following orders, Fezzik now won't have to live with the pain of having had to behave dishonorably and unfairly.

The man in black comes upon Vizzini at a beautiful spot with a view of Florin Channel. He has a picnic set out and holds a knife to Buttercup's throat and refuses to let the man explain what he wants. Vizzini says that he must kill Buttercup and he cannot allow the man to take Buttercup from them. The man challenges Vizzini to a battle of wits and Vizzini gleefully accepts. He pours the wine per the man in black's request and the man pulls out iocane powder, an odorless, tasteless poison. The man in black turns away to put poison in one of the goblets and then places a goblet in front of himself and Vizzini.

Westley has already shown his skill and strength with physical fighting, and here he rounds out his character by engaging in a battle of wits. He prays on Vizzini's hubris, knowing that the vain criminal will underestimate Westley's own intelligence.

Vizzini is thrilled. He talks through his reasoning as to why the man in black might have put the iocane in each goblet and as he does, the man starts to get nervous. Finally, Vizzini says he's deduced where the poison is. A strange look comes over his face and he points into the distance. The man in black turns to look and when he turns back around, the two men drink from their own goblets. Vizzini starts laughing and admits that he switched the goblets but then keels over, dead. The man in black frees Buttercup and explains that he's built up immunity to iocane; both cups were poisoned. She's terrified of him as he pulls her along the mountain path.

Vizzini is so thrilled because he doesn't believe anyone else could possibly be capable of besting him, a belief that becomes his downfall in the end.

After a while, Buttercup offers to pay the man in black whatever he wants to release her. The man laughs and says that a woman's promise is worth nothing. He then pulls Buttercup off the path and threatens to hurt her if she doesn't keep up. The man lets Buttercup rest after a few minutes, refuses to explain where he's taking her, and taunts her when she insists that Prince Humperdinck will find her. Buttercup insists that Humperdinck isn't her love; she explains that she's loved before but doesn't love Humperdinck. The man in black slaps her for "lying" and then drags her along. He lets her rest every now and again, but they run until dawn.

Pay attention to the way that Westley treats Buttercup here. While it's certainly understandable that he's upset, given that his true love is engaged to marry someone else, this doesn't make it acceptable for him to be physically abusive to her and refuse to take seriously anything that she says. This tells the reader that Buttercup and Westley's relationship is potentially not as ideal or as perfect as Morgenstern insists it is, given how they treat each other.


At dawn, the man in black points out Prince Humperdinck's armada coming after them. The man pulls Buttercup along the edge of a massive ravine and they argue about whether or not Buttercup is heartless for abandoning her first love. As the man in black watches the ships, Buttercup shoves him and he falls down the ravine. From the bottom, she hears "as you wish." She realizes that the man is Westley and throws herself down the ravine after him.

Goldman undercuts the romantic aspects of their reunion by having both Westley and Buttercup throw themselves down a ravine; this is a comedy of errors, rather than a cliched, dramatic romance. When Buttercup throws herself down after Westley, it shows that she has an amazing capacity to forgive Westley for his abuses. This reminds the reader that her loveless engagement to Humperdinck hasn't deprived her entirely of emotion.

From one of the ships in the armada, Prince Humperdinck studies the Cliffs of Insanity and sees that someone climbed 700 feet with a rope and the top 300 feet without a rope. He commands Count Rugen to split up the armada and ready "the whites," his four massive identical horses. He rides bareback and switches between the four of them so that they don't get tired. As soon as his ship lowers the gangplank, Prince Humperdinck is off. He reaches the top of the cliff and discovers the footprints of two master fencers. He finds some blood, but not enough to indicate that someone died. When Rugen catches up, Humperdinck shares his findings and then races off, following the footprints of the victor.

Here, the reader gets a closer look at the way that Prince Humperdinck demonstrates his intelligence. The fact that he can ascertain what happened in the fencing duel between Inigo and Westley shows that he's studied fencing, while his ability to track Westley, Vizzini, and Fezzik shows the reader that he's spent a great deal of time learning how to effectively hunt. While the novel is generally dismissive of his love of hunting, this reminds the reader that it still requires commendable skill. At the same time, his use of four horses suggests his wealth and excess.

When Prince Humperdinck gets to the place where Fezzik and Westley fought, he sees that Westley won and notices Buttercup's footprints. He races away, leaving Count Rugen in the dust, and Rugen catches up when Humperdinck stops to inspect Vizzini's body. On foot, Humperdinck follows Westley and Buttercup's footprints until he gets to the top of the ravine. He notes to Count Rugen that both Buttercup and her captor fell, but he finds it odd that someone as smart and as skilled as Westley didn't know that the ravine opens into the Fire Swamp.

Importantly, Prince Humperdinck is willing and able to recognize the intelligence of his quarry here, which suggests that he has a better chance of actually catching Westley than Vizzini did or someone else more self-centered might.

In an aside, Morgenstern notes that his wife feels cheated because he didn't include a reconciliation scene on the floor of the ravine between Westley and Buttercup. Goldman cuts in and explains that Morgenstern's original is filled with comments about his wife and what she thinks, but he cut most of them because it doesn't add much. In this case, Goldman says he agrees with Mrs. Morgenstern and so he wrote his own reunion scene. His editor, Hiram, thought this pushed the boundaries of what an abridgement should entail, so it's not included, but the publishing house agreed to send the reunion scene to any reader who sends them a postcard requesting it. Goldman implores the reader to write in, if only to cost the publishing house money since they refuse to properly advertise his books.

The fact that Hiram and the publishing house stopped Goldman from including his reunion scene because that's not what abridgement means tells the reader that the publishing world exists, in Goldman's mind at least, to uphold unnecessary and silly standards of conduct. As far as Goldman is concerned, this means that the publishing house and the industry as a whole are against readers, as they don't care enough about the reader's enjoyment to include a scene that would help a reader better enjoy the books. Of course, remember that none of this is real; there is no actual reunion scene, and Goldman is writing a novel, not an actual abridgement.

Returning to the story, Morgenstern says that he didn't include a reunion scene because Westley and Buttercup deserve privacy, what they said was boring, and no information of import was shared. Regardless, the lovers make up and Westley explains that he tried to tell Buttercup not to come after him when he fell, as they can't get back out before it's too late. Buttercup insists that she's not stupid and Westley insults her intelligence. They apologize to each other and then run along the bottom of the ravine.

Remember that within the world of the novel, Westley and Buttercup are historical figures. This means that Morgenstern might have something of a point when he insists that they deserve their privacy, and shows that he does have a degree of emotional intelligence himself. When Westley insults Buttercup's intelligence, it shows that like Vizzini, he might also be blinded by his own intelligence and be unwilling to accept that others have good ideas too.

Westley soon realizes that they're headed straight for the Fire Swamp, but he says nothing in order to avoid scaring Buttercup. Morgenstern breaks off to explain that Fire Swamps are misnamed; they're normal swamps, just with lots of sulfur that bursts into flame. He also says that the Florin/Guilder Fire Swamp is odd because it has R.O.U.S.s (rodents of unusual size) and it has Snow Sand, which is dry and suffocates people. In particular, this swamp is used to threaten children in Florin and Guilder, which is why Buttercup is so terrified of it. A half an hour behind Buttercup and Westley, Prince Humperdinck sees the footprints leading into the swamp. He sets off to the other side in case they make it through.

Morgenstern's explanation of Fire Swamps is, of course, ridiculous, which reminds the reader that the novel's logic does differ from logic governing the real world. However, it does offer some broader ideas that give people something to connect to the story through, such as the common fears of rats and of swamps. With this, Morgenstern crafts a world that magnifies fears from the real world, but in a safe and approachable literary form.

Westley leads Buttercup through the swamp. They both decide that the swamp isn't as bad as they've been told, but suddenly Buttercup disappears into Snow Sand. She does what Westley told her to—spread out on her back like she's trying to float in water—but starts to panic. Westley drops his sword, ties himself to a tree with a vine, and dives in after her. He thinks that the most difficult part of this rescue will be convincing his grandchildren that it actually happened when he discovers that the vine isn't long enough. He lets go, finds a skeleton wrist, and then finds Buttercup's foot. He kicks until he finds the vine and then pulls them both out. Westley clears Buttercup's nose and mouth of the sand.

The fact that Westley's first thought is about how to spin this story for his grandchildren suggests that, like Goldman, Westley is a storyteller who's interested in abridging these stories for future generations. Again, this allows the reader to place Goldman, Morgenstern, and Morgenstern's characters within the same world, bound together by their shared interest in storytelling and in the case of Goldman and Morgenstern, in the publishing industry.

Buttercup sobs for a bit and then is back to normal, but she refuses to follow Westley until he tells her why they have to get through the swamp. He agrees to tell her while they walk and says that on the far side, they'll find the *Revenge*, the Dread Pirate Roberts's ship. Buttercup is shocked as Westley explains that *he's* the Dread Pirate Roberts, even though Roberts has been a pirate for 20 years and Westley has been gone for three. Westley says that when Roberts attacked his ship, he told Roberts all about Buttercup, which piqued the pirate's interest. Roberts decided not to kill Westley.

When Westley introduces the Dread Pirate Roberts to Buttercup like this, it helps to bring a feared entity into Buttercup's real world in a way that makes it less threatening. Through learning about the Dread Pirate Roberts, Buttercup is able to expand what she knows about her world so that in the future, she'll be better able to engage with it and make decisions.

Westley notices the first R.O.U.S. as he says he spent the next year working 20 hours per day and learning everything he could about sailing, piracy, and fencing. At the end of the year, the Dread Pirate Roberts told Westley that he wanted to retire and leave him the *Revenge*, so he sent Westley to capture a Spanish ship as practice. At this point Buttercup notices the R.O.U.S.s. The ship had no fear of Westley and Westley did poorly. Later, Roberts called Westley to his office and told him a secret: his name is actually Ryan, and the original Roberts had been retired for 15 years. When the first Roberts realized that the name alone is what scares people, he devised a plan to change crews at the same time as he passed the name onto his first mate, just as Ryan now plans to do with Westley.

The entire myth surrounding the Dread Pirate Roberts draws on the novel's other ideas regarding storytelling. The first Roberts understood the power of myth, hence why he went to such lengths to ensure that the myth of the pirate's ruthlessness would continue long past the point where he wanted to be a pirate. The encroaching R.O.U.S.s add a sense of humorous dread to the scene.

Westley assures Buttercup that they'll be okay, since he's the Dread Pirate Roberts and she's almost a queen. He doesn't notice her standoffish tone because a R.O.U.S. leaps at him and bites his shoulder. Two more pile on. Morgenstern tells the reader that R.O.U.S.s are pure rats, weigh 80 pounds, and go into a shark-like frenzy at the smell of blood. Westley rolls into a flame spurt, which distracts the rats, and throws his knife into one of the R.O.U.S.s. The others start to eat the injured R.O.U.S. as Westley shouts for Buttercup to help him pack and bandage his shoulder to hide the blood smell. Westley is able to fight off the rest of the R.O.U.S.s with his sword and after six hours, they make it out of the swamp.

During his battle with the R.O.U.S.s, Westley demonstrates more knowledge that he's learned over the years—he clearly knows everything that Morgenstern shares with the reader about R.O.U.S.s, and is able to put together the best plan of action to save himself. Importantly, he's also able to spur Buttercup to help him do this, which suggests that he's also able to effectively able to communicate what he knows, not just keep it for himself. Of course, the R.O.U.S.s are patently ridiculous creatures, which again adds to the humor of the scene and undercuts the sense of terror.

At dusk, Westley and Buttercup reach the edge of the swamp. They can see the *Revenge* in the distance, but Count Rugen and Prince Humperdinck are right there to meet them. Westley refuses to surrender as he watches the armada chase his ship away, but Buttercup asks Humperdinck if he'll promise to not hurt Westley if they surrender. He agrees. Westley accuses Buttercup of betraying him, but she says she'd rather they live than be in love.

This passage reinforces Goldman's later insistence that life isn't fair, given that as far as the reader can tell, the arduous journey through the fire swamp was for nothing. When Buttercup suggests that she'd rather live than love, it shows that she's maturing and after what she learned from losing Westley once, she knows what she needs out of life.

Prince Humperdinck quietly tells Count Rugen to put Westley in the fifth level of the **Zoo of Death** as Buttercup approaches. She takes Humperdinck's hand and the two walk away. Westley watches her go and when Rugen approaches, he notes that he's certainly not going to be allowed to go free. Rugen clubs Westley. Just before Westley loses consciousness, he notices that Rugen has six fingers on his right hand.

The revelation that Count Rugen is Inigo's sought-after six-fingered man suggests that the novel's disparate characters will begin to come together in new ways.

CHAPTER SIX: THE FESTIVITIES

Goldman says that according to Professor Bongiorno, this chapter represents the pinnacle of Morgenstern's "satiric genius." It describes the first 30 days of wedding festivities, but Goldman says that the only important bits are that Prince Humperdinck starts being nice to Buttercup, relations with Guilder sour, the people idolize Buttercup more than ever, and Humperdinck is finally seen as a hero (up to this point, the populace has resented him for hunting and not governing). At the end of 30 days, Morgenstern offers three flashbacks to explain what happened to Westley, Inigo, and Fezzik.

Again, when Goldman implies that he doesn't agree with Professor Bongiorno's assessment and instead finds it boring and excessive, Goldman is aligning himself with the reader and with elements of storytelling that make for a compelling adventure. This allows Goldman to remind the reader that though he's a part of the publishing industry, he's on the reader's side and wants to give them the best tale he can.

Inigo comes to and realizes he's tied up. He uses his feet to pull his sword close and cuts himself free. Now, he must go back to the beginning, which is what Vizzini told him to do if things went wrong. Inigo even made up a rhyme for Fezzik to remember this. However, Inigo isn't excited to go back to the Thieves Quarter in Florin City without Fezzik, as he's a small man and looks easy to rob. He also wonders if he's not a great fencer anymore. Goldman cuts in and says that what follows is a six-page soliloquy on the nature of fleeting glory, as Morgenstern's book before *The Princess Bride* had been a critical failure. Goldman also notes that Robert Browning's first book of poems didn't sell at all. Returning to the narrative, Inigo returns to the Thieves Quarter. He buys brandy, sits on a stoop, and waits for Vizzini.

Inigo's inner monologue shows that he and Fezzik are close and caring friends. Goldman's aside functions to once again place him alongside other writers and make it clear that they're all part of the industry. Robert Browning was a famous 19th-century British playwright and poet.

Fezzik comes to and can remember that Inigo made up a rhyme for him so that he could remember what he was supposed to do, but he can't remember the rhyme. He runs after Vizzini and finds Vizzini asleep. A bit later, Fezzik realizes Vizzini is dead. He panics suddenly and runs back to the cliff to find Inigo, but Inigo isn't there. Fezzik runs for an hour, yelling for Inigo, until he finds a cave outside a village. He rhymes to himself and hides there until the local children discover him.

Though Fezzik is a bit slow on the uptake, it's important to note that he is able to figure out that Vizzini is dead. Further, the fact that Fezzik thinks that Vizzini is just asleep and wants to leave him to rest for a while shows how caring Fezzik is, which reminds the reader that Fezzik is more of a gentle giant than he is a fighter.

Westley wakes up chained in a huge cage. He can hear animal sounds and after a minute, the albino appears. The albino tends to Westley's wounds, feeds him, and refuses to answer questions about who he is, where they are, or if he's going to die. Westley reasons that he's probably going to be killed, but given that Prince Humperdinck and Count Rugen are healing him first, they're going to torture him. Westley starts to prepare his brain so that they won't be able to break him, but Morgenstern tells the reader that, "they broke him anyway."

Morgenstern's decision to tell the reader that Rugen and Humperdinck break Westley helps to create a sense of dread and reminds the reader yet again that this book isn't fair: Westley isn't going to fare well, even though he's a hero. This allows readers to understand that this is more like real life than it could be, given that in most fairytales, the hero always wins.

After 30 days of partying, Buttercup starts to worry that she won't survive the next 60 days of partying. Unfortunately, King Lotharon starts to go downhill and dies. Prince Humperdinck becomes king 45 days before the wedding and suddenly becomes wise as he studies how to rule. He and Buttercup marry quietly because he's so busy. Again, Buttercup requests to walk among the people. Everyone cheers until one old woman starts to boo. Soldiers descend on the woman but Buttercup requests that they bring the woman to her. The woman explains that Buttercup abandoned her true love for money. Buttercup wakes up screaming and has nightmares for several nights.

By not immediately framing this as a dream, Morgenstern keeps his readers on their toes and reminds them that anything can happen and the "wrong" things might just happen. This moment also allows Goldman to underhandedly tell aspiring authors to stick with their true loves and stand up for their work, like he does.

Goldman interrupts and says that this is one of his biggest memories of Goldman's father reading him the book: he knew it couldn't be right that Prince Humperdinck and Buttercup got married. This upset Goldman's father and he ended their reading session for the night. Goldman spent the night feeling so betrayed that Buttercup married Humperdinck and was thrilled the next day when he learned it was a dream. However, he also felt unsettled about what happened, and this didn't resolve until he was a teenager and became friends with the author Edith Neisser. At one point, Edith told Goldman that life isn't fair—a notion that rocked Goldman's world.

Here, young Goldman has a distinct sense of what is and is not supposed to happen in an adventure tale, and having that upended is disturbing for him. This then suggests that this moment of realizing that life isn't fair and that things don't happen the way they're "supposed to" is one of the most important coming of age moments for a young person.

Because of this, Goldman now believes that the entire point of *The Princess Bride* is that life isn't fair. To prove that life's not fair, he says that Jason will always be fat and unsatisfied, and though Helen will always be brilliant, his marriage to her will always be loveless. Addressing young readers, Goldman says that this book is great, but there's a lot of disturbing stuff coming up—including the wrong people dying—and that's because life isn't fair.

This passage suggests that, as a character, Goldman's dismissiveness towards his own wife and son are fueled by his pessimistic—though realistic—notion that life isn't fair.

Back in the story, Buttercup dreams that she gives birth to a baby girl. The baby tells Buttercup that her milk is sour because she betrayed Westley. The baby turns to dust and Buttercup wakes up screaming. The next night, Buttercup dreams that she gives birth to a boy, but the baby refuses to see her: he's afraid she's going to kill him like she killed Westley. The night after, Buttercup stays awake all night until dawn, when she dreams of watching Buttercup's mother give birth to her. The midwife declares that baby Buttercup is beautiful, but has no heart, and suggests that they get rid of her. Buttercup's father and mother strangle baby Buttercup and Buttercup wakes up gasping.

Again, all of these dreams can be read as symbolic representations of what happens when a writer like Goldman gives up their vision for their project for the sake of making money or achieving success, the very things that Goldman refused to do both with The Princess Bride *book (and later with the screenplay). With this, he suggests that just as Buttercup has an obligation to reaffirm her love for Westley, writers have a responsibility to stand up for the heart of their projects.*

With 50 days until her wedding, Buttercup knocks on Prince Humperdinck's door and tells him that she made a mistake: she loves Westley and knows that she has to let Humperdinck kill her rather than marry her. Stunned, Humperdinck kneels next to her and says that he doesn't want to stand in her way. He does point out that because of Buttercup's behavior, Westley might not want to marry her anymore. Buttercup hasn't thought of this before. Humperdinck suggests that if Westley wants to marry her, so be it; if he doesn't, then Buttercup should marry him as planned. He tells her to write Westley a letter and he'll send four ships with them to find the Dread Pirate Roberts's ships to deliver them.

With what the reader knows of Prince Humperdinck, it's reasonable to assume that he's not going to send these letters and instead, wants to manipulate Buttercup into thinking that he cares about her and wants her to be happy. This suggests that he's more like Vizzini than previous scenes have let on, as he's clearly conniving and has no interest in helping her. Buttercup's honesty, however, suggests that she's becoming more like Fezzik and wants to be seen as a caring person.

Prince Humperdinck kisses Buttercup's cheek and sends her away to write her letter. He decides he's going to seem very fond of her in the next two months because he wants all of Florin to feel sad and angry when she dies at the hands of a "Guilderian soldier" on their wedding night—then, they'll all support going to war with Guilder. He can see now that he was wrong to hire Vizzini to kill her. Now, fortunately, the people love her even more than they did before her capture. Humperdinck just has to get over his squeamishness about killing a woman, as he plans to kill her himself.

While the novel offers no real reason as to why Prince Humperdinck wants to start this war with Guilder, it presumably has something to do with wanting to be powerful and in charge of more of Europe. This does, however, prove that Humperdinck is willing to compromise his ethics in order to win, something that Goldman suggests (through his championing of artists standing up for their work) is a very bad thing to do.

Count Rugen begins to torture Westley that night while Prince Humperdinck watches. Rugen studies pain carefully and so he's thrilled to have this opportunity. He begins by having Humperdinck ask Westley about his experiences in captivity and then, asks who in Guilder hired him to kidnap Buttercup. Westley says truthfully that he didn't kidnap Buttercup, so Count Rugen lights Westley's hands on fire. After a while, Rugen puts out the fire and he and Humperdinck leave. They discuss that Westley is telling the truth and wonder if the physical pain will be worse than knowing he's telling the truth and not being released.

Notice that Morgenstern makes it very clear that Count Rugen studies *pain; it's something he wants to learn about and interact with in a scientific context. This reminds the reader that Count Rugen is another character capable of cleverness and planning. Of course, he is also cruelly torturing Westley, putting the story's hero through trials that will ultimately make him stronger.*

Morgenstern notes that Westley isn't suffering at all, as he knows how to "take his mind away" and think of Buttercup. As the albino bandages Westley's hands, he encourages Westley to tell the truth, as the Machine is almost ready. Westley notes that they're clearly going to kill him anyway.

Westley's ability to think of Buttercup instead of the pain at hand underlines both his mental fortitude and immense love for her.

When he gets back to the castle from torturing Westley, Prince Humperdinck finds Buttercup waiting for him. She needs help writing her letter to Westley, which in its first draft just says that Buttercup will kill herself if he doesn't come back. Humperdinck offers to help. Buttercup tells him about how good Westley is at everything and mentions Westley's fear of Spinning Ticks. It takes them four hours to finish the letter. The next day, Count Rugen uses Spinning Ticks on Westley. Perplexingly for Humperdinck, Rugen doesn't seem happy about their progress. Humperdinck starts to get tired of how much Buttercup talks about Westley. Westley tries to hide his smiles, thinks of Buttercup, and knows he's going to get revenge.

The way that Prince Humperdinck interacts with Buttercup here shows that he knows how to weaponize kindness in a way that lets him extract information that's useful for him and for Count Rugen. Again, Westley is presented as nearly perfect—Buttercup's praise has been shown thus far in the novel, as he has beaten his foes with skill, strength, wit, and now grit. This suggests that he will triumph in the end.

Prince Humperdinck starts to struggle under all the pressure to rule, start a war, and look like he's in love with Buttercup. King Lotharon continues to cling to life, which complicates things. Twelve days before the wedding, Humperdinck summons the Chief of All Enforcement, Yellin, to talk to him about his plans. He tells Yellin that he's heard from spies that Guilderian men have been infiltrating the Thieves Quarter and plan to kidnap Buttercup. Yellin hasn't heard anything of the sort, but he grudgingly agrees to form a brute squad and jail everyone in the Thieves Quarter until after the wedding.

The "Chief of All Enforcement" is a rather ridiculous title that underlines the silliness of the story at hand, as it sounds more like something a child would make up than an actual position. By telling Yellin what the reader is led to assume are lies, Prince Humperdinck tests Yellin's own ability to swallow and interpret information he seems to know isn't true. With this, Humperdinck positions loyalty and intelligence opposite each other and suggests that in this case, being loyal to him means choosing to not engage thoughtfully with this information.

As Yellin turns to leave, he and everyone else in Florin City hears a haunting scream. Nobody knows what it is (Morgenstern tells the reader that it's a wild dog in the Machine) but it's horrifying. The sound finally dies when Count Rugen sees that the dog is dead. He races to Prince Humperdinck and tells him that the Machine works. Slowly, Humperdinck thinks about his answer. He knows he can't just send Rugen away, as he's his most trusted underling and he needs his skills, but he's too busy to participate in torturing Westley with the Machine. Rugen isn't at all upset and agrees to torture Westley without supervision.

Once again, by letting the reader in early on what's happening with the Machine, Morgenstern continues to quietly tell the reader that bad things are going to happen to the wrong people. This has the effect of also helping the reader to feel more anxious and involved with the story, which, in Goldman's assessment, makes the experience of reading more enjoyable.

Buttercup knocks on the door and asks if there's any news from Westley. Count Rugen assures her that Westley will come for her. He asks if such a powerful man is capable of crying, and Buttercup answers that he'd cry if a loved one dies. Buttercup kneels by her bed and begs Westley to come for her. Westley spends his time doing much the same thing, as he thinks of Buttercup when he takes his mind away. Because of this, he's not too worried when Count Rugen arrives with the Machine. Rugen excitedly assembles the Machine in front of Westley and then explains that the scream Westley heard earlier was the scream of a wild dog. He says that he writes for scholarly journals and is writing a book on pain.

Count Rugen is again presented as a curious yet cruel character who uses his intelligences for nefarious ends. As expected, however, Westley doesn't take the Machine seriously because he's too confident in his own abilities. Because he's stopped taking in information that might help him, he's unprepared to deal with this challenge.

Count Rugen explains that life is pain and that anticipation intensifies pain. For this reason, Rugen says he's going to leave the Machine overnight for Westley to look at. Westley groans, though he feels giggly because the machine looks so silly. Rugen tells Westley that he'll destroy him with the Machine and says he knows that Westley is taking his brain away during their torture sessions. Westley suddenly feels anxious as Rugen leaves. The albino appears and offers to kill Westley, but Westley assures the albino that he'll be fine.

This exchange speaks to the power of storytelling and of creating suspense. In a basic sense, Rugen is telling Westley a story that completely changes Westley's perception of this silly looking machine and shows him how poorly prepared he is for it.

The next evening, Westley tells Count Rugen that he didn't sleep well. Rugen records this and explains that he's going to record Westley's reactions because his scientific experiments on pain might get him the immortality he's after. With this, Rugen begins to set up the Machine by affixing a number of soft cups to Westley's skin with glue. He covers Westley's skin and then puts tiny cups on the insides of Westley's ears, nose, mouth, and under his eyelids. He then explains that he'll set the dial and they'll be on their way. Westley thinks of stroking Buttercup's hair but once the Machine is on, the pain is so intense that he can't take his brain away. After a minute, Rugen turns off the machine and explains that he just sucked away a year of Westley's life. Westley cries and Rugen records this.

Though Rugen doesn't say so outright, his comment that his experiments will bring him immortality speaks to the power of being a part of the publishing industry, even if one (like Goldman) despises it. Through publishing and sharing stories, a person can become immortal as their words will continue to impact people long after their death. Meanwhile, the fact that even Buttercup cannot distract Westley underscores how truly terrible this Machine must be.

Five days before the wedding, Yellin waits with his brute squad to listen to Prince Humperdinck speak. Count Rugen is unusually preoccupied, as he's trying to figure out how best to suck away the remaining 30 years of Westley's life with the Machine. Humperdinck addresses the brute squad and asks them to empty the Thieves Quarter. Most criminals don't resist as they know they'll be let out in a few days, but a few criminals are afraid that this will be the end. Three days before the wedding, there are only a few criminals left and Yellin is tired and confused, as none of the arrested criminals were from Guilder.

Yellin's mental state speaks to the difficulty of having to prioritize loyalty over doing what one believes is correct—he's learning mostly that Prince Humperdinck is paranoid and wrong; it's doing nothing to increase his loyalty to his employer. This suggests that had Inigo and Fezzik remained with Vizzini, they too may have found themselves in such a situation, suggesting that circumstances like these are untenable.

Yellin goes to Falkbridge's Alehouse with two brutes. Falkbridge is a powerful man and bribes Yellin to keep himself out of jail. Falkbridge lets Yellin in and says that he's not going to let Yellin take him to jail after 20 years of bribery. Yellin signals to a brute, who clubs Falkbridge across the neck and puts him in the wagon. Yellin sends his two brutes to get "the fencer with the brandy." As the brutes come around the corner, they hear Inigo yelling that he's not going to wait for Vizzini forever. The smaller brute tries to talk Inigo into following him and as he does, the other brute—Fezzik—rhymes everything that Inigo says. Inigo realizes it's Fezzik and staggers into his arms. Fezzik hits the brute, puts him in the wagon, and covers him up.

Fezzik and Inigo's heartwarming reunion reminds the reader of how good of friends the two were and apparently, still are. Even in Inigo's drunken stupor, he's still able to identify his friend and despite the month apart, Fezzik is still willing to do what's necessary to protect his Inigo. Importantly, when Fezzik dispatches this brute to save Inigo, he's thinking for himself—though he's not necessarily aware he's doing so. This reminds the reader that Fezzik is capable, he's just not confident in his abilities.

Fezzik puts Inigo in Falkbridge's bed, takes the wagon to the entrance of the Thieves' Quarter for a boot count, and when he's released, he climbs back into the Thieves Quarter and goes to Inigo. Inigo passes out when Fezzik says that Vizzini is dead. Fezzik makes Inigo some tea and a snack and mentions that the six-fingered man, Count Rugen, is in Florin City. Inigo faints again. Fezzik draws a hot bath and holds Inigo in it. He then draws an icy bath and alternates hot water, cold water, and snacks until he's steamed the brandy out of Inigo's body. By midafternoon, Inigo looks almost normal.

Again, Fezzik is clearly competent at caring for Inigo and expelling the brandy from Inigo's body (though the manner in which he does so is rather fantastical, underlining the silly, lighthearted nature of the novel overall). The simple fact that he's able to make this plan and carry it out without a hitch points to Fezzik's ability to plan, though it is worth noting that what he's doing here is caring for someone else. He'll later reveal that he's not confident in his abilities to plan and carry out attacks, which suggests that he's more comfortable performing friendship than violence.

Fezzik tells Inigo that he came to Florin City because he wanted to see Buttercup get married and has been making good money on the brute squad. They discuss that Westley somehow killed Vizzini, probably with poison, and then Fezzik explains that Count Rugen is in the castle with Prince Humperdinck, sealed inside in case of another attack by Guilder. Inigo tries to figure out if they could take the 20 guards in front of the castle, but he suddenly starts to cry. He says he needs a planner like Vizzini. Fezzik cries too and says that he's also stupid. Inigo declares that they need Westley since he's clearly strong *and* smart. Fezzik mentions that Westley is a sailor for the Dread Pirate Roberts, but Inigo reasons that Westley must *be* Roberts given his skillset.

Given Fezzik's behavior over the last day, it's clear that he is able to plan and carry out things. Further, though Inigo is concerned that he's not smart enough to figure out what to do, all the things that he deduces make logical sense and are correct. This is certainly more than could be said for Vizzini, who decided that Westley was a simple fisherman to make himself feel better. This then offers the reader an indication that Inigo is a more reliable hero than even Inigo thinks is possible.

Fezzik points out that either way, Westley/Roberts is gone because Prince Humperdinck banished pirates for fear of another attack or kidnapping attempt by Guilder. Inigo reminds Fezzik that Guilder isn't guilty; *they* kidnapped Buttercup, and he believes that Prince Humperdinck hired Vizzini to do so. He also notes that Count Rugen is probably lying about Westley's whereabouts since he's a known killer. Inigo begins to lead Fezzik through the streets and tells him his thoughts: they need to find Westley, as he's smart enough to get him to Count Rugen. Inigo reasons that since Humperdinck has a horrible temper, Westley is probably in Florin City being tortured. Fezzik and Inigo begin their search with a day to go before the wedding. Deep underground, Westley cries: 20 years of his life are gone.

While Inigo may be right that Fezzik's memory isn't great, it remains clear that Inigo isn't as bad at planning and deducing things as he thinks he is. Again, everything that he decides must be true is correct, which suggests that over the years, Inigo has learned enough to get him through situations like this—it's just likely that through his abuse, Vizzini made Inigo think that he was incapable of doing any of this thinking effectively.

At dusk, Buttercup goes to see Prince Humperdinck. She knocks several times and hears him yelling inside. He finally lets her in. Yellin is inside, and is upset with Humperdinck: there's still no evidence that Guilder is trying to attack Florin, yet Humperdinck talks of nothing else. Humperdinck tells Yellin that to protect Buttercup, he wants 100 men stationed outside the castle. He says he's going to cancel the 500th anniversary festivities and the whole armada is going to escort him and Buttercup to their honeymoon destination. At this, Buttercup corrects him that every ship but four will escort them, but she knows from his look that he's been lying to her.

Just as Morgenstern demonstrated with Inigo that Inigo is more capable of critical thought than he believed he was, here, Morgenstern shows that Buttercup is also capable of putting two and two together.

After Yellin leaves, Buttercup tells Prince Humperdinck to stop lying to her, as she knows the ships were never sent to find Westley. She says that she knows Westley will come for her and calls Humperdinck a coward. Buttercup says that Humperdinck hunts just to prove to himself that he's not weak, and she insists that he'll never be able to catch Westley once she runs away with him. Humperdinck screams at Buttercup, throws her into her room, and runs for the **Zoo of Death**.

Buttercup's insight, which is likely at least somewhat correct, suggests that her true intelligence now lies in her ability to understand how people function emotionally. She also fully believes in Westley's ability to come find her, which indicates that she still believes he's a loyal partner to her.

Goldman cuts in and says that at this point, Goldman's father stopped reading and pretended that what happens next didn't happen. He tried to make young Goldman agree to skipping over the rest of the chapter, but Goldman refused. Goldman's father then told him that Prince Humperdinck kills Westley next, and, in the end, Humperdinck lives. This shook Goldman to the core and he cried profusely.

By telling the reader outright what happens, Goldman is able to prepare the reader to fully understand that life isn't fair—in the real world, the "wrong people" win or live all the time. With this, he offers readers another steppingstone to use as they come of age through reading his abridgement.

Back in the story, Humperdinck runs to the **Zoo of Death** and startles Count Rugen when he bursts in. He shouts at Westley that Buttercup somehow still loves him. He pushes the dial on the machine all the way and Westley's death scream begins immediately. Everyone in Florin hears it, though only Inigo knows that it's the sound of "Ultimate Suffering" and is likely coming from Westley. Fezzik pushes through the crowd so he and Inigo can follow the sound.

The fact that Inigo can identify the scream and who's screaming speaks to his knowledge of emotions and his ability to think logically, again offering more evidence that Vizzini was wrong when he insisted that he *(Vizzini) was the smartest one of the bunch. Fezzik does as Inigo asks so he can show Inigo how much he cares for him and wants to support him in this quest.*

Back in the fifth level of the **Zoo of Death**, Count Rugen declares Westley dead. Prince Humperdinck leaves. Annoyed that he lost his interesting subject, Rugen tells the albino to deal with the body and then leaves. The albino decides to burn the body behind the castle and goes upstairs to fetch a wheelbarrow. After he digs the wheelbarrow out, the albino stops suddenly at the sight of Inigo. Inigo asks for the man in black and learns that he's on the fifth level. Fezzik knocks out the albino and Inigo leads Fezzik down into the Zoo of Death, entering at the wrong door.

Inigo and Fezzik are proving to be true allies for Westley, underscoring their innate goodness; they had been used and abused by Vizzini, and, now free from his criminal influence, can come into their own and be the heroes they were always meant to be.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE WEDDING

Puzzlingly, Fezzik finds that the door is unlocked. Inigo thinks that this doesn't make sense, as Prince Humperdinck should of course lock up his beloved **Zoo of Death**. Morgenstern explains this door is the one intended to foil people like Inigo as it takes them down through all the Zoo's levels, while the real door leads directly to the fifth level. Inigo reasons that the albino would've locked the door when he was done using the wheelbarrow. Fezzik praises Inigo but decides not to mention that the door doesn't even have a lock. He doesn't share that he's scared of the creepy crawlies that he's heard live here.

The way that Morgenstern shapes the reader's understanding of what's going on here shows that he's trying to teach the reader how to properly interact with the text. By letting the reader know that this is the wrong entrance, the reader knows that Fezzik is actually very correct here—there's something fishy about this door without a lock. However, because of Fezzik's desire to impress Inigo, he's learned to suppress these thoughts so that he can keep his friends.

Fezzik and Inigo walk through the first level and go through the doorway labeled "To Level Two." As they start down the stairs, Fezzik admits that he's terrified. Inigo gives Fezzik some rhymes and acts relaxed, but he's actually very upset that someone like Fezzik is so scared. Up to this point Inigo thought that *he* was the only one who was truly scared, but he reasons that they'll just have to avoid "panic situations." Fezzik and Inigo reach the doorway labeled "To Level Three" and notice that the staircase is curved so the bottom isn't visible. Fezzik makes a comment about fear, so Inigo threatens to leave him at the top.

The simple fact that Fezzik feels able to admit that he's afraid speaks to the strength of his relationship with Inigo—such a thing would've been unthinkable to share with Vizzini. Inigo's decision to try to relax Fezzik and avoid "panic situations" shows that he understands that if they can only keep their heads and think clearly, while relying on each other for comfort, they can get through this.

As Inigo and Fezzik start down the stairs, the door locks behind them and the candles go out, plunging them into darkness. Both of them shriek in fear before regaining their composure. Inigo suggests that, since Fezzik is nervous, they walk down with their arms around each other's shoulders, his sword drawn and Fezzik's fist clenched. He notes that most people die without experiencing such an adventure and together, and they start down the stairs. As they start around the curve, something starts to coil around them them. It's an Arabian Garstini snake.

Again, the way that Inigo talks Fezzik into going down the stairs together illustrates the strength of their friendship, while also allowing Inigo to act as though he doesn't need the comfort as much as Fezzik does. This suggests that Inigo isn't yet as comfortable with sharing his emotions, given that he has to disguise the fact that he needs comfort too.

As the snake tightens its coils, Inigo tells Fezzik that he had good rhymes planned. He can't say them because the snake is squeezing him too tightly. Not getting to hear the rhymes makes Fezzik so angry, he's able to pull out of the coils and smash the snake's head against the wall. Once free, Inigo admits that he doesn't have rhymes in mind; he just wanted to spur Fezzik to action. Feeling betrayed, Fezzik stomps down the stairs and through the door into the fourth level. Inigo follows Fezzik, apologizing for lying.

While Inigo deserves credit for understanding that tempting Fezzik with rhymes would make him do something, Fezzik's sense of betrayal shows that at this point, he prioritizes being treated like an equal more than he prioritizes getting out alive. At this point, being alive is a nice bonus, but for Fezzik, having a trustworthy friend is better.

When they go through the door leading to the fourth level, Fezzik is suddenly paralyzed with fear at the sound of rabid bats' cries. Inigo slams Fezzik down onto the stairs and kneels above him. He remembers training with a Scot named MacPherson who taught him how to fight on hills and without sight. Inigo listens to the bats above and hears two diving for him. He stabs at them, skewering the bats on the sword. He then skewers five more and the fluttering stops. Inigo heads down the stairs and Fezzik follows. They agree to forgive each other and enter the fourth floor.

When Inigo remembers his training from MacPherson, it again illustrates that he is capable of learning and thinking cleverly; he just needs time to get to that point. The fact that he can use his skill to save Fezzik and encourage Fezzik to forgive his trick suggests that now, Fezzik understands that tricks like this have their place.

The fourth level is disturbing, so Inigo and Fezzik hurry through it and open the door that leads to the fifth level. The staircase is short, straight, and brightly lit. Inigo knows it must be a trap, but after a few steps, nothing happens. Six steps from the ornate door at the bottom, Inigo admits that he's afraid. Fezzik isn't afraid until Inigo starts to panic. Morgenstern explains that Inigo is right to panic; a very poisonous green speckled recluse lives on the door handle at the bottom of the stairs, but she only strikes when someone touches the handle. Fezzik also starts to panic as they get closer to the door. He throws himself down the stairs and crashes through the door, not bothering with the handle. Inigo is puzzled by this and steps on a green spider as he follows Fezzik.

Morgenstern's description of the spider on the handle again shows the reader who they need to identify with and which character is thinking most effectively. The way that he resolves this situation (by having Fezzik bust through the door) suggests that while Inigo may have been correct to suspect a trap, Morgenstern may have wanted to give Fezzik the opportunity to experience some glory in the reader's eyes, thereby garnering him even more sympathy from readers.

Fezzik and Inigo find Westley, the man in black, dead in the cage. Inigo starts to cry at the unfairness of it but then declares that he won't accept this. He asks Fezzik if he has money and says that they're going to try to buy a miracle.

Being able to buy a miracle to resurrect Westley situates The Princess Bride *as being something that operates within an entirely different system of logic.*

Miracle Max yells at whoever's at his door to go away, but Fezzik explains that he's on the brute squad and Inigo says that he needs a miracle. Max notes that King Lotharon fired him, so he's not reliable, but he's interested when Inigo says that the man they need a miracle for is already dead. Morgenstern notes that Max is very touchy about having been fired. Inigo insists that Max was just fired because of politics and begs for help. Max runs down to the cellar to "feed his witch" and closes the door behind him.

Inigo's mention of Max being fired because of politics again brings up the idea that even these characters are operating within a larger and more complex system of politics and relationships that the reader doesn't have access to. However, by doing this, Inigo does suggest that this system is just as corrupt as the publishing system that Goldman is a part of. There is also satire at play here, as Goldman reveals that even in this fantastical world with magic and miracle workers, people are subject to office politics.

Max's wife, Valerie, is downstairs cooking hot chocolate. She's not actually a witch, but since every miracle man needs one, she pretends to be a witch in public. Max frantically whispers that a giant and a Spaniard want to buy a miracle for their corpse. Valerie tries to temper her excitement, as Max is very "good at dead" and hasn't worked since he was fired. Max insists that Fezzik and Inigo will probably try to get out of paying. She insists that he make them pay in advance and sends him back upstairs.

Valerie's habit of pretending to be a witch is its own kind of storytelling. This is also a joke on Goldman's part, as the idea that a miracle man "needs" a witch seems a rather silly requirement that suggests the arbitrary nature of the rules for storytelling.

Valerie listens at the door as Max insists that Fezzik's 65 gold pieces isn't enough and hurries downstairs to "belch his witch." Max tells Valerie that the customers only had 20 pieces, so Valerie points out that they need the money and suggests he find out why they need a miracle. He goes back upstairs. Inigo lies that they need a miracle because Westley has a big family, as he thinks his desire to kill Count Rugen won't go over well. Max accuses Inigo of lying, pulls out a huge bellows, and starts to pump air into Westley's mouth. He explains that there are multiple kinds of dead and Westley is only "sort of dead." After a minute, Max shouts in Westley's ear and asks what's worth coming back for.

The ability to use the bellows to presumably find out, in a succinct fashion, what Westley wants to return for suggests that in every story, there's one small nugget of truth that guides the overwhelming logic of the story. When Max goes straight for this after deciding that Inigo is lying, it shows that he's already learned that people will try to say all sorts of things to get what they want, but he suggests that the truth will prevail in the end.

While they wait for Westley's answer, Max asks Inigo if Westley was ticklish, as tickling can bring people back from the dead. Westley groans "true love," but Max insists that Westley actually said that he wants to come back to bluff and lie. At this, Valerie flies through the door, calls Max a liar, and shrieks that Westley said "true love." She says that Prince Humperdinck was right to fire him and at this, Inigo points out that Westley's true love is engaged to Humperdinck. Upon realizing that bringing Westley back will humiliate Humperdinck, Max agrees to take the case.

When it takes learning that Westley's resurrection will hurt Humperdinck for Max to decide to take the case, it reminds the reader that though these characters are fictional, Goldman and Morgenstern have taken great pains to create characters that are as human-like as possible. Like real people, these characters are guided by emotions that are sometimes unsavory, which again reminds the reader that this book is intended to portray elements of the real world.

When Max and Valerie learn that Inigo needs a "fighting corpse," they say their miracle won't work with so little time. They say they can get Westley talking and possibly walking, but they can't get Inigo a "fantasmagoria" for so little money. Goldman cuts in and says that Morgenstern goes on to describe both the events at the castle and the progress of the miracle. Goldman says the point is that the reader knows the resurrection pill is going to work. He also notes that Hiram insisted they cut this section because Miracle Max sounds too Jewish and contemporary. The story picks up two hours before the wedding.

When Goldman notes that Miracle Max sounds Jewish and contemporary, he's suggesting that he's written too much of himself into the character. This interruption adds to the farcical tone of the story, and reminds readers that everything happening is not really true (not even Goldman's abridgement process).

Inigo is appalled at what the pill looks like: "a lump of clay the size of a golf ball." Goldman notes that this isn't anachronistic as everything that Morgenstern wrote is historically accurate. Valerie takes the pill downstairs to coat it in chocolate as Max thinks that he must've forgotten something.

Again, by suggesting that Morgenstern wrote historical fiction, Goldman asks the reader to remember that the world he's crafted is fictional and shouldn't be taken at face value.

Meanwhile, Prince Humperdinck summons Yellin. Yellin is so fed up with Humperdinck's nonsense that he has a resignation letter in his pocket. Yellin gives a rundown of all the security measures he's put in place, including locking the castle with a single key that can lock from either side, so that a person on the opposite side of the door from Yellin can't get in or out. Humperdinck gestures out the window to the highest spot of the castle wall and says that the Guilderians will climb over at that spot. At this, Yellin says that he has heard nothing of a plot to kill Buttercup and offers his resignation.

Yellin's behavior indicates that at this point, he's no longer able to put up with Prince Humperdinck asking him to sacrifice what he knows is true for the sake of loyalty. This reminds the reader that while it's entirely possible for a person to follow someone like Humperdinck or Vizzini for a while, it's also inevitable that at some point, a person will decide that they have to follow what they know is true.

Prince Humperdinck is stumped, as he'd planned on installing Yellin as the leader of Guilder after the war. He decides to let Yellin in on the secret and says that he's going to kill Buttercup, blame it on Guilder, and put Yellin in charge of Guilder after the war. He tells Yellin to blame muddy boot tracks leading to and from Buttercup's room on Guilder and Yellin agrees to follow orders. As Yellin leaves, Humperdinck mentions that the albino can stand in the back to watch the wedding. Yellin admits that he can't find the albino. Humperdinck knows that this is suspicious and wonders if Guilder really is plotting something. Humperdinck decides to move the wedding from 6:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. just in case. Meanwhile, Miracle Max realizes that he didn't make the pill properly and it'll only work for 40 minutes, not an hour.

By letting Yellin in on the secret, Humperdinck shows that he's able to recognize and value loyalty, even if he is an evil character. This reminds the reader that this novel isn't just split up into good guys and bad guys. Just as Inigo has thoughts that he knows would make others uncomfortable (as when he didn't want to tell Max the real reason for saving Westley), Humperdinck is also capable of behaving like a reasonable and kind person to the people close to him.

Around 5:00 p.m., Fezzik carries Westley's corpse to the wall around the castle. Carrying the corpse is disturbing for Fezzik and he hopes the pill will work. Fezzik leans Westley against the wall while he boosts Inigo to the top of the wall to check on what's going on inside. Inigo can see the albino's body, still passed out, and signals for Fezzik to climb up with Westley. They decide to give Westley the pill now, with 45 minutes until the ceremony. As soon as the pill hits Westley's throat, he starts speaking. Inigo explains that Westley has been dead, and Westley wishes he remembered what being dead was like, because he could make a fortune with a book.

Westley's comment that a book about his experience of being dead would make him rich is another comedic moment from Goldman; it's not the wonder of life after death that fascinates Westley, but the ability to make a buck—a subtle jab at the shallow nature of the publishing industry.

Westley introduces himself to Fezzik and Inigo, and Inigo tells Westley quickly that they have about a half hour to sneak in, steal Buttercup, and kill Count Rugen. He says that there's only one castle gate guarded by 100 men, and they have Westley's brains, Fezzik's strength, and his sword. At this, Westley declares it's not enough and he'd rather die. He says they could do something if they had a wheelbarrow and a holocaust cloak, and Fezzik notes that they have access to both. Standing, Westley says he'll need a sword too, since nobody knows that he can't lift it.

The comment that nobody knows that Westley can't lift a sword shows that Westley truly understands the power of good storytelling. He understands that he has the ability to wreak all manner of havoc without actually doing anything if he can properly spin a tale that will make people think he's capable of lifting his sword. This offers yet another venue for good, convincing storytelling.

Buttercup knows that Westley is coming, so she's not upset to learn that Prince Humperdinck is moving up the wedding. The couple is kneeling in front of the Archdean of Florin at 5:23 p.m. Two minutes later, Buttercup hears screaming outside. This is because Inigo is pushing Fezzik in the wheelbarrow as Fezzik stands in it, on fire, yelling that he's the Dread Pirate Roberts and won't leave any survivors. Yellin is very upset about this, especially when the brute squad starts to panic and scream.

Just as earlier in the novel, using the name of the Dread Pirate Roberts allows Westley, Inigo, and Fezzik to latch onto a particular kind of story that they know will have a specific effect. Letting Fezzik take on Roberts's name shows that Westley also recognizes that appearances matter as much as the name, and nobody knows that Fezzik is a softy.


CHAPTER EIGHT: HONEYMOON

Yellin realizes there's nothing he can do, so he grabs the key to the castle and puts it on his pocket. Westley expected this, so he, Fezzik, and Inigo threaten Yellin until Yellin hands over the key. At this point, Fezzik throws off the burning cloak and the three slip through the castle gate. Before they can make a plan to meet up after stopping the wedding, Inigo races away in pursuit of Count Rugen. At the same time as they're sneaking in, Prince Humperdinck hurries the old and nearly deaf Archdean along in his service. Buttercup knows that Westley is coming as the Archdean declares the couple man and wife. Count Rugen runs away immediately after and is perplexed to see Westley and a Spaniard with familiar scars on his face.

Pay attention to the fact that the heroes are getting split up without a plan, something that Fezzik has already said makes him anxious. This suggests that if the heroes are going to make it through this situation, Fezzik is going to have to become comfortable thinking for himself and coming up with some way to get back to his friends. Yellin's quick surrender suggests that, like Buttercup, he values his life over love or loyalty.


King Lotharon and Queen Bella arrive at the chapel just after the ceremony. Prince Humperdinck asks them to escort Buttercup to his chambers, as he needs to go deal with the attack from Guilder. Halfway there, Buttercup realizes that Westley isn't coming for her. She sighs and decides to commit suicide.

Notice that Prince Humperdinck specifically mentions that this is an attack from Guilder. This allows him to shape the story of what's happening before it's even over, suggesting that he'll easily overcome this setback.

Inigo is so startled when Count Rugen runs that Rugen is able to make it through a doorway before Inigo does anything. Inigo begs Fezzik to break down the door and Fezzik does. In the time it takes Fezzik to do this, however, Westley disappears. Inigo chases after Rugen as Buttercup pulls a Florinese dagger off the wall. As she puts it to her heart, Westley says from the bed that she shouldn't kill herself. Morgenstern notes that at this point, Westley believes he has another half-hour to live but in actuality, he only has seven minutes. A moment later, Count Rugen throws a Florinese dagger at Inigo and hits him right in the stomach. Inigo falls to his knees.

By telling two stories simultaneously (that of Buttercup and Westley and that of Rugen and Inigo), Morgenstern is able to preserve the sense of suspense he's built up so that he can resolve everything at once. The disjointed style of this chapter is something that shows up again in Buttercup's Baby, *and Goldman attributes it to Morgenstern's growing maturity as a writer.*

Buttercup is baffled to see Westley on the bed and not up and running. Westley suggests to Buttercup that she can become a widow just as Prince Humperdinck enters with a pair of muddy boots. Humperdinck grabs a sword and says they'll fight to the death, but he suspects a trap when Westley doesn't move and says instead that they'll fight "to the pain."

Humperdinck is right to suspect that this is a trap, which suggests that this moment is the novel's real battle of wits. Both Humperdinck and Westley are better observers than Vizzini was, which implies that here, they're better matched.

In a different part of the castle, Inigo apologizes to Domingo and Count Rugen remembers who Inigo is. Inigo hears both his father and MacPherson yelling at him in his head and he listens to MacPherson telling him to cover his wound. He stuffs his fist into his wound and weakly fights off Rugen's attempt to stab him through the heart. Inigo slowly stands up and continues to fight off Rugen. Rugen stabs through Inigo's arm and Inigo feels power flow through him. He tells Rugen again and again that he's going to kill him to avenge his father. Inigo makes two vertical cuts in Rugen's face and then stabs through his arm. He starts to cut Rugen's heart out and Rugen dies of fear. Inigo is thrilled as he staggers away.

For Inigo, this moment means that he's completed his lifelong goal of avenging his father—and notably, while Westley certainly helped, as did Inigo's former tutors, Inigo did this part all by himself. This shows, once and for all, that Inigo is capable of thinking, planning, and acting, especially when he's doing so in the name of love and justice.

Pleasantly, Westley tells Prince Humperdinck that if he puts down his sword, Westley will tie him up and run away with Buttercup, but if he chooses to fight, he'll die. Humperdinck believes Westley is bluffing, but Westley points out that there's no way to know if he's bluffing or not. Then, Westley explains what he meant by "to the pain." He says that he's the Dread Pirate Roberts and if they duel and he wins, Humperdinck will live a horrible life. Westley will first cut off Humperdinck's feet, then his hands, then his nose, tongue and eyes. Westley says he'll leave Humperdinck's ears so that he can hear people scream in fear at him. At this, Humperdinck drops his sword.

The fact that this makes Humperdinck drop his sword and let Westley win speaks to the power of storytelling in the hands of someone like Westley, who knows how to use it to manipulate others. He's essentially doing to Humperdinck exactly what Goldman is doing to the reader throughout the entire novel, which again draws similarities between the story of The Princess Bride *and the relationship that Goldman forms with the readers.*

Westley's eyes roll and he crumples. Prince Humperdinck goes for his sword, but Westley opens his eyes again and the look in them makes Humperdinck drop his sword. Westley commands Buttercup to tie up Humperdinck as Humperdinck vows to hunt Westley. Inigo appears in the doorway and he and Westley wonder where Fezzik is. Then, Inigo tells Buttercup to help Westley up since he can't stand himself. At this, Humperdinck starts to thrash, and they hear Fezzik outside the window. Down below, Fezzik has Humperdinck's white horses. He's thrilled to see Inigo, Westley, and Buttercup and explains that he found the horses and thought they'd be perfect in case they needed to escape.

Fezzik's ability to come up with these white horses and decide that they'd be a good escape method shows that, especially when he's fighting for a cause he believes in and for people he loves, he is capable of independent and logical thought. While ending up outside the correct window is something that happens by chance within the logic of the story, because that was actually Morgenstern's choice, it illustrates how authors can easily construct situations that allow their characters to be successful.

Westley, Inigo, and Buttercup jump down one by one, and Fezzik catches them and settles them on a horse. At the gate they come face to face with the brute squad. Westley says he's out of ideas but Buttercup approaches Yellin. She commands Yellin to go save Humperdinck and says that she's the queen. At this, the brutes all race into the castle. Buttercup admits that she's not actually the queen, but it worked. The four horses race in the direction of Florin Channel. Buttercup notes that she and Westley are doomed to be together.

Here, Buttercup also gets to be successful and powerful in a way that Morgenstern has previously suggested was impossible for her. By calling on her power as queen and using it for good, Buttercup shows that she's come a long way from using her power to abuse Westley as the farm boy. Now, she understands that it's better to use her power to help her friends.

Goldman says that at this point, Goldman's father said that they lived happily ever after. He wasn't happy with this ending and only learned while abridging that Morgenstern didn't end the book this way. Morgenstern writes that Humperdinck begins to chase them, Inigo's wound reopens, Westley goes downhill, and Buttercup's horse throws a shoe. Goldman says that his father ended with "happily ever after" because he was a romantic. Goldman thinks that Westley and Buttercup did live, but didn't have an entirely happy life. He thinks that Buttercup and Westley fought like all couples do, and eventually, Fezzik and Inigo started losing fights. He believes, however, that life isn't fair—it's just fairer than death.

By offering these two different endings, one that Goldman learned as a child and one that he learned as an adult, Goldman suggests that as readers mature, they become more interested in endings like the second, which are more complex and leave more things to question. In this way, Morgenstern's ending represents the adult world, while Goldman's father's ending represents a childish and naïve world.

BUTTERCUP'S BABY: AN EXPLANATION

Goldman explains that he only abridged the first chapter of *Buttercup's Baby*, Morgenstern's sequel to *The Princess Bride*, because he wasn't allowed to do more. He reminds the reader of the reunion scene and how he encouraged readers to write to the publisher requesting it. However, nobody ever received the reunion scene Instead, they got a letter detailing Goldman's dealings with Kermit Shog, a sweaty lawyer who represents the Morgenstern estate. Kermit Shog wanted Goldman's publisher to republish the unabridged *Princess Bride*, as well as money. The lawsuits piled up but fortunately, Morgenstern's copyright ran out in 1978, at which point Goldman planned on sending out the reunion scene. However, in Florin, the copyright doesn't run out until 1987 and to make matters worse, Kermit Shog died and his son, Mandrake Shog, is now in charge of the lawsuits.

Goldman's dealings with the Morgenstern estate reminds the reader that even the publishing world is governed by forces beyond its control—in this case, it's governed by the legal world, where there's even more money. Notably, Goldman suggests that both the publishing world as well as the Morgenstern estate want to deprive readers of the reunion scene—something that Goldman insists readers deserve—for their own gain, again suggesting that they don't care about facilitating compelling storytelling.

Goldman says that at the time, he had no interest in reading *Buttercup's Baby*. He says that he was busy writing his own novels and feels especially proud of what he did with *The Princess Bride*. Goldman explains that he got Morgenstern's original down to 300 pages from 1000, and cut out lots of material about Westley's terrible childhood and how King Lotharon went to Miracle Max after Humperdinck's birth, as he knew Humperdinck was a monster and wanted Max to change that. This is why Max was fired; he failed. Goldman says that he went with the "high adventure" parts of the story, which brought the book to a wider audience, shaped the story, and brought it to life.

The way that Goldman conceptualizes his role as an abridger indicates that he sees himself as an advocate for reading, for the readers themselves, and specifically, for a story that he insists is more enjoyable and accessible than Morgenstern's original. Specifically, by crafting a story that focuses on "high adventure," Goldman creates a tale that's appealing specifically to young people.—By drawing them in, he's able to help bring up the next generation of readers.

To explain why Goldman wasn't interested in reading *Buttercup's Baby*, he goes back in time to when his son Jason is fifteen. One night, Goldman gets home late and hears Jason sobbing in his room. He goes in and Jason sobs that because he's overweight, he has no friends, and girls laugh at him. Goldman tells Jason that he loves him, and this becomes the turning point in their relationship.

When Goldman finally embraces Jason and meets him where he is, it shows that now, he's in a place where he can channel Fezzik and be a loving and caring father to his son. This offers an example of how readers can use what they learn in stories like this to apply to their own lives.

The next day, Goldman and Jason walk past a bookstore and see a poster of Arnold Schwarzenegger in a window. Goldman tells the reader that at that point Schwarzenegger wanted to play Fezzik but 20 years later, he was too big of a star for them to afford. Goldman then tells Jason that Schwarzenegger used to be pudgy. He doesn't think it's true, but he says it anyway. Goldman tells the reader that Schwarzenegger and Andre the Giant were friends and relates an anecdote about Andre's sense of humor that he included in Andre's obituary. Goldman buys Jason the poster and in the next two years, Jason loses weight and becomes handsome. Jason goes on to become a sex therapist, marries a woman named Peggy, and they have a son. They name him William Arnold, "Willy," after Goldman.

As with the other questionably truthful stories that characters tell throughout The Princess Bride, *it doesn't matter much whether this story about Schwarzenegger is true or not. The important thing is that the story is compelling and makes an impact on Jason. It's especially telling that, because of these turning points, Jason and Peggy go on to name their son after Goldman. This allows them to show him unequivocally that they care about him and want him to feel loved and respected, something that could only happen once Goldman decided to show the same respect to Jason.*

Goldman takes being a grandfather very seriously. One day, when Willy is about seven, he, Jason, and Peggy are walking through the park. Jason and Peggy tell Goldman that they've just finished reading *The Princess Bride* out loud to Willy, and Willy was upset the book ended. Willy asks Goldman to read him the sequel. Goldman says he won't do it, goes home, and gets drunk. He wakes up before dawn from a dream of having pneumonia and Helen reading *Buttercup's Baby*. Goldman knows then that Morgenstern is going to save him once again and making him a real writer. He explains his process of writing *Marathon Man* from scratch and says he isn't ready for that kind of a commitment, but abridging *Buttercup's Baby* will be a steppingstone to turn him into a novelist again.

When Goldman explains how he fits The Princess Bride *into the way he thinks about his life's work, it reminds the reader how important this story is to him. It allowed him to connect to his father as a child, and it allowed him to connect to his own child as a father. Because of this, Goldman sees that taking the next step—*Buttercup's Baby*—will be another opportunity for him to affirm his connection to his family, as well as reaffirm the power of making stories like these accessible to the masses.*

Later that morning, Goldman calls Charley and asks if the Morgenstern estate would let him abridge *Buttercup's Baby*. Amazingly, Charley explains that a young lawyer from the Shog firm just called and wants to settle the lawsuits. Goldman meets Karloff "Carly" Shog the next morning for breakfast. She's a gorgeous blond. She explains that she's just moved to America and takes Goldman's hand. Carly admits she's read all of Goldman's books, says she likes older men, and gives Goldman a legal document to look over and sign. She explains that it basically says that Goldman wishes them the best on future projects.

Because Goldman is so caught up in his desire to abridge Buttercup's Baby, *he's missing the signs that there's more to this than the Shogs finally being ready to let him take on this project. This aligns this moment with ones from* The Princes Bride, *as when Westley was too confident in his ability to best the Machine and therefore wasn't able to properly prepare for it.*

Goldman says that he's so excited to abridge *Buttercup's Baby* and does wish them the best. Then, Carly says that Stephen King is going to abridge *Buttercup's Baby*. Goldman is lost for words. Carly goes on and says that King is genuinely excited to do the abridgement, regularly visits Florin, and believes that Goldman is too exhausted to take on the project. Goldman leaves and refuses to sign the documents.

Carly's attempts to sow discord between Goldman and Stephen King shows that she understands how to use the particulars of the publishing world to spin stories that allow her to get what she wants—assuming that Goldman will play along. Of course, recall that none of this is true; Morgenstern—and as such Buttercup's Baby*—don't exist, and Stephen King, a real author was certainly not involved. This mixing of real world names with his story blurs the line between fact and fiction—and suggests that such a line isn't all that important so long as a story is good.*

The next morning, Goldman flies to Maine. He adapted Stephen King's novel *Misery* a few years ago and got to know him then. Goldman is prepared to level with King but surprisingly, as they sit down to lunch, King says that Carly lied and said that Goldman didn't want to do the abridgement and he feels like he's being forced into it. Goldman is silent, but follows King's lead as they discuss an actress from *Misery* who was recently in *Titanic*. King mentions that he loves the movie, and Goldman believes he's talking about *Misery*. King clarifies: he likes *The Princess Bride* movie, but doesn't like the novel.

Importantly, Goldman goes to visit Stephen King with the sole purpose of standing up for what he knows is best for Buttercup's Baby *and what he knows will be a hit with fans. King's comment that he didn't like the book is a moment of comedic self-deprecation on Goldman's part, and points to how the film, at this point in real-world history, had perhaps surpassed the popularity of its source material. Though this exact meeting of course never really happened (because, again, Morgenstern and* Buttercup's Baby *are not real), Stephen King did write a hugely successful novel named* Misery, *which starred actress Kathy Bates—who, indeed, was also in the film version of the smash hit* Titanic.

Goldman is defensive, but King insists that Goldman left out too much stuff. Goldman admits that he never went to Florin to research because he didn't think it was important, and King says that this is why he wants to do *Buttercup's Baby*. Mechanically, Goldman thanks King for his time and starts to leave. King offers to let Goldman write the screenplay, but Goldman tells him all about Goldman's father reading it to him, and getting it for Jason, and wanting to abridge Buttercup's Baby for *Willy*. Humiliated, Goldman gets a taxi to the airport to wait for his plane. King follows and tells Goldman that he's right; abridging Morgenstern is his thing. He tells Goldman to try the first chapter to include in the 25th anniversary edition of *The Princess Bride*.

Stephen King's advice suggests that as far as he's concerned, there's a specific way that someone should go about doing an abridgement. While he indicates that his ideas of how to abridge something fall more in line with those of the Florinese scholars that Goldman regularly dismisses, hearing it coming from someone that Goldman respects—a fellow writer—rather from his selfish publishing house makes it more palatable to hear.

King tells Goldman that he expects him to do it right this time and says that he'll send Goldman's abridged chapter to his friends and family in Florin. Goldman leaves for Florin immediately and visits all the sights: the Cliffs of Insanity, the Thieves Quarter, Buttercup's family farm. He even goes to One Tree Island in a helicopter to see where Waverly was born and lived happily until she was kidnapped.

With Stephen King's offer to send Goldman's chapter to his friends in Florin, he suggests that an abridger has the responsibility to properly convey the sense of place, and that the only effective way to do that is through extensive research. (Though, again, none of these places actually exist; Goldman is again blurring the line between reality and fantasy.)

BUTTERCUP'S BABY: FEZZIK DIES

1. Fezzik. Fezzik chases the madman up the mountain. The madman has Waverly, Buttercup's daughter, and Fezzik isn't doing well because he's is having a hard time climbing up the rocky mountain. He's also terrified of falling, even though nobody ever considers that someone as big and strong as Fezzik could have feelings or fears. Fezzik knows, however, that he has to save Waverly. The madman kicks rocks down at Fezzik and Fezzik finds himself hanging by his fingers from some rocks. He realizes that he can scale the mountain using his arms and suddenly, he's flying up the mountain and reaches the top.

When Fezzik mentions that nobody thinks that he's capable of having feelings, it shows that even though time has passed since the end of The Princess Bride, *Fezzik is still on his journey to learn to trust himself and portray himself in a way that shows others how he wants to be treated. When he does learn how he can make it to the top effectively, it does suggest that he's making progress and can now think better in the moment.*

Fezzik is fast enough to get to the top of the mountain and put himself in front of the madman. He demands that the madman hand over Waverly and ignores the madman's threats of using magic. As the madman starts to hand Waverly over, he throws the baby over the cliff. Her eyes snap open and see Fezzik, and she says "Shade." Fezzik dives over the cliff after her.

Fezzik's split-second decision to jump off the cliff after Waverly tells the reader that in the time that's passed, he's formed a powerful bond with this child. This shows that he's beginning to expand his community with the skills he learned before.

Goldman interrupts and says that while he'll give it to Morgenstern that this opener is "a grabber," he objects to calling chapter one "Fezzik Dies." He doesn't think that Morgenstern can or should kill Fezzik straight off, but because this is an abridgement, Goldman couldn't change it. Goldman says that he couldn't decide whether to include the next passage and fought with his publisher about it. The publisher doesn't think it makes sense, but Goldman tells the reader to read it and then he'll explain why he left it in.

When Goldman says that he can't change Morgenstern's story because this is an abridgement, it suggests that he's still chafing under the constraints that his publisher put on him from when he abridged The Princess Bride. *This also suggests that if given his way, Goldman would've given the reader something entirely different here—in other words, when it doesn't make sense, don't blame Goldman.*

BUTTERCUP'S BABY: 2. INIGO

Inigo is in Despair, a place that's almost impossible to find on a map because when cartographers visit to measure it, they get depressed and give up on mapmaking. Everything there is depressing, and the locals talk only about moving but for Inigo, it holds a special place in his heart. This is where, years ago, he won his first fencing championship.

Note that Morgenstern doesn't introduce this subchapter with any sense of what time period this is—there's no indication whether this is after the events of The Princess Bride, *or sometime in Inigo's past. This reminds the reader that Morgenstern isn't required to spin a story that makes sense. The name and nature of the place "Despair" is a joke on Goldman's part, given that to be in "in despair" does indeed mean to be inconsolably depressed.*

Morgenstern goes back in time to when Inigo is 20. Inigo is still wandering the world training to fence so he's prepared to kill Count Rugen and avenge Domingo. He's been in Iceland and the tropics but now, he's in Italy to train with Piccoli. Piccoli is the "king of the mind" and has heard of Inigo, as he's heard that Yeste sometimes takes difficult jobs to Domingo Montoya. Piccoli secretly wants to see the six-fingered sword. He spends his days sitting and going deep inside his mind. One morning, Piccoli is ripped out of his mind by the sudden appearance of young Inigo Montoya with the six-fingered sword.

The fact that Inigo trains in so many different places and with so many different people continues to show that he's very good at learning and in particular, that he's good at identifying what he doesn't know—in this case, he doesn't know how to harness his mind in addition to his body.

Inigo asks Piccoli to help him train his mind, but Piccoli explains that this is useless. To prove his point, he asks Inigo what he wants most in the world. When Inigo says he wants to kill Count Rugen, Piccoli screams that what Inigo really wants is an end to the pain he feels from losing Domingo. He must learn to refocus his thoughts away from revenge, as this will make him vulnerable to Count Rugen. Piccoli agrees to take Inigo on and insists that he must let his body go soft so that he can tune into his mind. Inigo spends his days sleeping and thinking about his mind and every evening, he gets to practice fencing for fifteen minutes.

Explaining that Inigo spent so much time specifically training his mind adds more weight to all the evidence Morgenstern gives that Inigo is actually more intelligent than he gave himself credit for in The Princess Bride. *It also suggests that while Morgenstern overwhelmingly implies that love and loyalty are positive things, here, it's something that can be a liability when there's too much of it.*

One evening, Piccoli goes to the village and leaves Inigo alone. A young woman dressed like a servant appears in the doorway and Inigo inexplicably tells her that he can't marry her. The woman (Giulietta) is confused, says she lives in the castle, and asks Inigo to tell her of his dreams. Inigo explains that he made up companions for himself when he was traveling and a girl who looks just like Giulietta has been his constant imaginary companion. Giulietta is touched, but insists that he must tell this story to lots of girls. She comes back every morning for a few days and tells Inigo how stupid different parts of his dream are until finally, she comes at dusk and asks about Count Rugen. Inigo fences for her and she asks what he plans to do to support them after he kills Count Rugen.

Giulietta's fixation on the practicalities of what their theoretical life might look like together shows that Inigo hasn't yet learned enough from Piccoli to behave in a truly logical way. Indeed, Inigo hasn't thought about what he's going to do after he's killed Count Rugen, as this is what he dedicates his entire life to doing. By illustrating these places where Inigo falls short, Morgenstern offers the reader insight into what Inigo will have to learn next.

Giulietta stays away until the night of a grand ball. She beckons to Inigo and sneaks him into the castle to watch. They take in the splendor for a moment until Giulietta whispers that the Count will see them. She hides him behind a door, but the Count furiously finds Inigo. He's distraught to hear that Inigo is a Spaniard and catches Inigo motioning for Giulietta to run. He roars that Giulietta is his daughter and turns away. Giulietta says that her father likes Inigo.

When Inigo is so taken with Giulietta and tries to protect her, it shows that he desperately wants someone alive to love and to care for—clearly, Giulietta is important enough to distract him from his quest to learn everything that he can so that he can avenge his father.

Giulietta and Inigo dance the night away until Inigo accuses Giulietta of lying about being a Countess. She says that she always dresses as a servant girl so that she can judge the character of the men who visit to ask for her hand. She says that she's thought long and hard about Inigo and has decided that he's won her heart. They kiss and dance all night, and Inigo is happy for the first time since Domingo died.

Giulietta's lie again shows the power of storytelling: she's able to deceive these men by telling them a specific (untrue) story about who she is, which in turn allows her to make better choices about her own life. Per Morgenstern's development of what constitutes intelligence, this is the highest form of it.

Goldman explains that this chapter stops here. He calls it the **Unexplained Inigo Fragment** and his editor didn't want to include it because nothing happens. He believes, however, that this passage is important because Morgenstern shows the reader that Inigo is human. Clearly Inigo and Giulietta part and he ends up in Despair. Goldman says that he thinks this is Morgenstern at his best and Stephen King agreed. King put Goldman in contact with a cousin at Florin University, who insisted that Morgenstern includes symbolism in this passage that indicates that Inigo learns that Humperdinck plans to kidnap Westley and Buttercup's first child, and so Inigo has to race to One Tree Island to save the day. Goldman tells the reader not to worry if they don't get it; he doesn't get it either.

Goldman's explanation of what this passage means speaks to the many different ways of interpreting literature. For someone like Goldman, who's interested primarily in the story, this allows him to develop a better understanding of a beloved character that will then help the plot. Goldman invokes Stephen King's name to give his assertion credence, given how popular and respected King was as an author at the time. Stephen King's cousin, on the other hand, represents the Florinese scholars like Professor Bongiorno, whom Goldman suggests don't actually know what they're saying. By assuring the reader that it's normal to not get this symbolism, he encourages them to not take those scholars too seriously.

BUTTERCUP'S BABY: 3. BUTTERCUP AND WESTLEY

The story picks up at the end of *The Princess Bride*, as Buttercup and Westley declare that they're doomed to be together while they ride away on the white horses with Fezzik and Inigo. Humperdinck is in pursuit and things start to go wrong. Goldman inserts himself to draw attention to what Morgenstern is doing by first offering the chapter in which Waverly gets kidnapped, then presenting the **Unexplained Inigo Fragment** where he (supposedly) says the kidnapping is going to happen, and then goes back to the end of *The Princess Bride*. He says that Morgenstern is "playing with time" and he thinks it's interesting, though he understands that many readers, including Willy, will find it confusing.

At this point, Goldman gets to take his turn as a Florinese or literary scholar of sorts, as now he's the one who understands what Morgenstern is doing when the reader and Willy are still in the dark. While "playing with time" is something that plenty of novels do (including this one, by going back in time to provide backstory, or saying what's going to happen well before it happens), when Goldman doesn't explain what he means by this, it suggests that he's maturing as a writer and as a reader.

Back in the story, Fezzik is riding in the front of the group and finds himself in his worst nightmare: having to make a decision about which fork in the road to take. He knows that there's only one right path. Fezzik tries to ask Inigo his opinion, but Inigo is bleeding badly and can't speak. Fezzik pulls Inigo onto his horse to help him and while he's distracted, the horses take the wrong fork into the forest instead of taking the one that would lead them to the *Revenge*.

Notice that Morgenstern doesn't explain that Fezzik is the one who knows the horses took the wrong path; only the reader knows that they went the wrong way. This allows him to show that Fezzik still has a long way to go, as well as guide the reader towards a fuller understanding of what's going on so that they can root for their heroes.

Fezzik hears Buttercup behind say, "Mr. Giant?" and realizes she's talking to him. Her horse throws a shoe and she says that Westley stopped breathing. Fezzik reaches for Westley just as his horse stops from the weight and the thick trees. Buttercup looks at Fezzik with a hopeful look, and Fezzik writes poems in his head about the troubles he's having in trying to think of a solution. At this moment, Prince Humperdinck shoots an arrow right at Fezzik's heart.

Fezzik's choice to write poems for himself reminds the reader that if given the chance, Fezzik might have led a very different life that had nothing to do with making decisions like this or fighting. It also indicates that Fezzik is likely more intelligent than he believes he is, he just can't think when he's nervous.

Going back in time a few minutes, Prince Humperdinck, Yellin, and the brute squad sneak quietly towards their quarry. Humperdinck notices how beautiful the trees look as Yellin puts the brutes in position and then, they turn the corner and Humperdinck wishes he'd brought the Royal Sketcher to capture the scene. He decides to shoot Fezzik first and as the arrow hits Fezzik and knocks him off his horse, the brutes charge. Buttercup thinks that this is the best place to die: in Westley's arms, surrounded by beautiful Florinese trees.

The emphasis on the aesthetics of what's happening tells the reader that there's more to this passage than the action that Morgenstern is describing. When everyone from Humperdinck to Buttercup is concerned with aesthetics, it indicates that this is a universal concern—likely one of Morgenstern's—and not necessarily one that the characters' honestly care about.

Goldman interrupts and tells the reader what comes next: 65 pages of Morgenstern talking about his beloved Florinese trees. Even Morgenstern's Florinese publishers wanted him to cut this, but he refused. Goldman says that this is because Morgenstern bought a house on the edge of a forest preserve after getting rich from *The Princess Bride*, but soon after, a lumber company started cutting down all the trees. He then became a tree advocate. Goldman says that Morgenstern knew people would read his "tree essay" to find out who lives and dies. Goldman says that in this essay, Morgenstern reveals that Fezzik is fine because he has the holocaust cloak and it saves him from the arrow, and the pirates from the *Revenge* save the day and get the heroes to safety on the *Revenge*.

The "tree essay" is another moment of satire on Goldman's part, as he points to the ability of Morgenstern (again, not a real author) to do whatever he wanted in his work without thinking about what his readers would actually care about.

Pierre, a pirate on the *Revenge*, calls a Blood Clogger to work on Inigo. Buttercup takes Fezzik's thumb as they anxiously watch. Pierre turns to Westley and notes that his life was sucked away. Fezzik explains that the scream they all heard yesterday was from Westley dying in the **Zoo of Death**, and says that he and Inigo got Westley to Miracle Max. This makes Pierre feel better. He asks how dead Max said Westley was and if Valerie coated the pill in chocolate. Goldman cuts in and says that Pierre works on Westley but because Morgenstern hated doctors, he wrote that Fezzik brings Westley back by filling his lungs with seawater and making him cough.

By making it very clear that Morgenstern writes something for a specific reason, Goldman seeks to humanize (the, again, fake) Morgenstern and show how Morgenstern's life influenced his work. When Goldman says that Morgenstern saved Westley with something that's objectively nonsense (even more so than the resurrection pill), Goldman reminds the reader again that Morgenstern is in charge of his own book and he can make his book work however he sees fit.

Late that night, Pierre approaches Westley and Buttercup and says that they need to leave the ship, as Prince Humperdinck's armada is after them. Westley asks Fezzik if he was tired after carrying three people up the Cliffs of Insanity, and Fezzik says he wasn't because his arms are so strong. Westley asks Pierre for chains, a boat, and to get them close to One Tree Island by dawn. When the *Revenge* gets there, Westley, Inigo, and Buttercup, all chained to Fezzik, get in the boat. Fezzik is scared, but he enjoys rowing.

When nobody questions Westley's thinking or his plan, it indicates that he's taking Vizzini's place as the planner of the group—just as Inigo wanted him to. Fezzik's willingness to go along with this plan, even though he doesn't know what's happening, speaks to how much he trusts Westley to keep him safe.

Suddenly, Fezzik realizes that the boat is going fast without his help and he hears a roar. Westley calmly says that the whirlpool has them and that they need to escape Humperdinck by getting to One Tree Island, which is in the middle of the whirlpool. Humperdinck won't be able to get to them and, Westley believes, Fezzik is strong enough to swim through the whirlpool. Everyone is silent as the boat cracks and falls apart. Westley tells Fezzik to save them, but Fezzik sits and shivers. He finally admits that he hates getting water up his nose. Inigo and Westley refuse to hold Fezzik's nose, so Buttercup clamps her hands over Fezzik's nose.

While holding Fezzik's nose is certainly something that Morgenstern includes for laughs first and foremost, it also indicates that there's only so far that Westley and Inigo will go in supporting their friend. This suggests that Buttercup is now the one who has to teach the others how to be a good and caring friend and specifically, that doing so sometimes entails doing things a person doesn't want to do.

The whirlpool grabs Fezzik and shoves him down to the bottom. Fezzik starts to swim to the top, fighting the whirlpool. Eventually, he makes land on One Tree Island. Goldman cuts in and says that Morgenstern includes ten pages on vegetation next, as One Tree Island is supposed to represent what Florin could be if the Florinese would stop cutting trees down. Buttercup also makes Fezzik a clothespin for his nose and with this, Fezzik learns to love swimming.

Goldman's reminder of what Morgenstern is trying to do by writing so much about vegetation keeps the reader thinking about what the author's intent is. It also suggests that the reader is under no obligation to take the author's intent seriously, given that Goldman cuts this vegetation essay.

Months later, when Westley has his strength back, he and Buttercup sit by the fire. Buttercup notes that they've only kissed up to this point. Westley asks what else there is to do, which Morgenstern points out is a lie as "things happened" when he was the Dread Pirate Roberts. Buttercup says she took lovemaking classes at Royalty School and will teach Westley, but in reality, she learned nothing and is terrified. They lie down on a blanket together and Buttercup looks deep into Westley's eyes. Goldman says that Willy liked this scene, though he was curious what "things" Westley did as a pirate. Fortunately, Willy bought Goldman's insistence that Morgenstern would've said what happened if he wanted the reader to know.

The difference in how the reader (and Goldman) interpret "things happen" and how Willy interprets it brings up that readers engage very differently with texts depending on where they are in life. While an older reader is well aware that Morgenstern is referring to sex, because of Willy's youth, he's still willing to take Goldman at his word. As Willy gets older, however, he'll be able to revisit the book and find something new as he grows and changes.

Nine months later, Buttercup declares at breakfast that she's going to give birth at sunset. Nobody argues with her, as they know nothing about childbirth. She knows that the baby is going to be a boy. After dinner, Westley settles her on a bed by a fire. An hour before sunset, her contractions are five minutes apart. The contractions become more frequent as Inigo fences with shadows. Fezzik stays away; he's squeamish and doesn't want to see the "blood and other stuff."

While Buttercup would appear to be the expert on the matter of childbirth, it's worth noting that since she didn't learn anything about sex at princess school, she likely didn't learn much about childbirth either. Everyone's lack of knowledge will prove deadly soon, which makes the point that knowledge is power.

By midnight, they all know that something is wrong. Buttercup's contractions are a minute apart and her back starts to spasm. She gets pale as the pain spreads to her legs and by noon the next day, she's still in labor. She labors overnight, and Westley assures her that a long labor means the baby will be healthy. By that evening, however, Westley knows something is seriously wrong. He and Inigo quietly discuss a "cutting" that could save Buttercup's life, but neither of them knows how to do it. Westley goes to Buttercup to distract her from her pain. They talk about the past and going to America in the future.

The "cutting" Westley and Inigo discuss would be a C-section. Because they don't know anything about it or how to perform one, Westley and Inigo are therefore unable to do anything to alleviate Buttercup's pain—except tell her stories. Here, Westley shows that talking about more pleasant things and essentially telling Buttercup stories is an effective way to distract her from the pain and danger.

Westley holds Buttercup as she grows weaker and weaker. Fezzik gasps and tries to fight as something invades his brain. As the invader takes over, Fezzik begs for it to kill him before it kills Buttercup's baby. In Buttercup's fiftieth hour of labor, Westley cries as she slips away. He and Inigo hear Fezzik coming toward them, saying that he needs to disinfect his hands. He tells Inigo to sterilize his six-fingered sword and says that the baby is backwards and has the cord around its neck. Fezzik skillfully makes a cut in Buttercup's belly and pulls out Waverly.

Were Goldman able to abridge the entirety of Buttercup's Baby, *the reader would likely learn who invaded Fezzik. As it is, however, this is all the reader gets. Because Goldman is the author and he's in charge of what he writes, instead of resolving things for the reader, he can lead them in asking questions.*

BUTTERCUP'S BABY: 4. FEZZIK FALLING

As Fezzik falls after Waverly, he sees the rocks at the bottom. He kicks in the air and starts getting closer to her. He makes silly faces at her and she laughs, thinking that this is just another fun game.

The "messing with time" in Buttercup's Baby *shows the reader that this work is one that will keep them on their toes and make sure they're asking questions every step of the way.*

Going back to right after Waverly's birth, Morgenstern explains that Waverly and Fezzik are strangely connected. Fezzik knows when Waverly is sick or hungry, which makes him the perfect babysitter. Waverly calls Fezzik "Shade," as he sits between her and the sun to shade her. They play games and swim around the whirlpool.

Morgenstern also never notes whether or not Fezzik is somehow still possessed at this point, which could explain the strange connection between him and Waverly. Again, however, the reader can only question and decide for themselves what Morgenstern is trying to do.

Returning to Fezzik and Waverly falling, Fezzik reaches Waverly and pulls her close. He reasons that if he lets his back hit the rocks first, he might save her. They make silly faces one more time and Fezzik closes his eyes. He thanks God he is a giant.

By offering a sense of closure for Fezzik in terms of how he thinks of himself, Goldman shows that by this point in Fezzik's journey, he understands that he can use his body to help those he loves.

Goldman explains that when he reads this to Willy the first time, Willy is silent for a while. Then, Willy insists that Fezzik can't die and asks who invaded Fezzik. Goldman tells Willy that those are great questions. Addressing the reader, Goldman says that, like Willy, he doesn't believe that Fezzik is going to die. He lists a few of the questions he has: what's up with the **Unexplained Inigo Fragment**, who's the madman, and who did invade Fezzik.

When Goldman lists his own questions for Buttercup's Baby, *he shows the reader what he wants them to finish the novel with: the knowledge that one of the main purposes of literature is to encourage readers to think critically and ask questions so that, like Willy and Goldman, readers can come of age and understand their worlds.*

Goldman says that he and his readers have all traveled a long way from when Buttercup wasn't yet the most beautiful woman in the world. He says that readers write him often, and he loves seeing people wearing *Princess Bride* tee shirts. Goldman says he knows that Fezzik, Inigo, Buttercup, and Westley have some hard times coming to them, but he hopes that Morgenstern will let them be happy in the end.

Mentioning the wider community of readers (and movie viewers) helps Goldman end his story by telling the reader that most important to him is that through The Princess Bride, *he's created an international community of people who all love the novel's heroes just as much as he does. The novel, in other words, is bigger than just the novel—it's the combined weight of everything else pertaining to the novel too.*

HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

MLA

Brock, Zoë. "*The Princess Bride*." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 7 Apr 2019. Web. 21 Apr 2020.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Brock, Zoë. "*The Princess Bride*." LitCharts LLC, April 7, 2019. Retrieved April 21, 2020. https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-princess-bride.

To cite any of the quotes from *The Princess Bride* covered in the Quotes section of this LitChart:

MLA

Goldman, William. The Princess Bride. Houghton Mifflin. 2013.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Goldman, William. The Princess Bride. New York: Houghton Mifflin. 2013.