

## QUICK THOUGHTS

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## AUTHOR BACKGROUND (William Goldman)

- Screenwriter for "Butch Cassidy & the Sundance Kid," "All the President's Men."
- Academy Award-winning screenwriter
- *Butch* went on to become the highest-grossing film of 1969 and won four Oscars, including Best Screenplay.
- Written several works of non fiction, including two books about his experiences in Hollywood, *Adventures in the Screen Trade* and *Which Lie Did I Tell?*

## DEVELOPMENT/CONCEPTION (BOOK)

- *The Princess Bride* is presented as Goldman's abridgment of an older version by "[S. Morgenstern](#)", which was originally a satire of the excesses of European royalty. The book, in fact, is entirely Goldman's work. Morgenstern and the "original version" are fictional and used as a literary device.
- Goldman's personal life, as described in the introduction and commentary in the novel, is also fictional. In *The Princess Bride*, Goldman claims to have one son with his wife, a psychiatrist. In reality, Goldman has two daughters, and his wife is not a psychiatrist. The commentary is extensive, continuing through the text until the end
- The book's actual roots are in stories Goldman told to his daughters (aged 7 and 4), one of whom had requested a story about "princesses" and the other "brides"
- Goldman describes the earliest character names from the "kid's saga" as "silly names: Buttercup, Humperdinck"
- The countries are both named after coins. The florin was originally an [Italian gold coin](#) minted in [Florence](#), and later the name of various currencies and denominations. The [guilder](#) was originally a [Dutch gold coin](#), and later the name of various currencies used mainly in the Netherlands and its territories. The two names are often interchangeable.
- Goldman says he wrote the first chapter about Buttercup which ran for about 20 pages. Then, he wrote the second chapter, "The Groom", about the man she was going to marry; Goldman only managed to write four pages before running dry. Then he got the idea to write an abridged novel:
  - "And when that idea hit, everything changed. Tennessee Williams says there are three or four days when you are writing a play that the piece opens itself to you, and the good parts of the play are all from those days. Well, *The Princess Bride* opened itself to me. I never had a writing experience like it. I went back and wrote the chapter about Bill Goldman being at the Beverly Hills Hotel and it all just came out. I never felt as strongly connected emotionally to any writing of mine in my life. It was totally new and satisfying and it came as such a contrast to the world I had been doing in the films that I wanted to be a novelist again."
- Goldman says he was particularly moved writing the scene where Westley dies
- In the novel's commentary, Goldman writes that he added nothing to the "original" Morgenstern text. He did write one original scene, a loving reunion between Buttercup and Westley, but, he says, his publisher objected to this addition. He invites any reader who wants to read the "Reunion Scene" to write to the publisher (formerly Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; now Random House) and request a copy. Many readers wrote in to

the publisher and did receive a letter, but instead of an extra scene, the letter detailed the (obviously fictitious) legal problems that Goldman and his publishers encountered with the Morgenstern estate and its lawyer, Kermit Shog. This letter was revised and updated periodically; the 1987 revision mentioned the [movie](#), while the 25th Anniversary Edition publishes the letter with an addendum about Kermit's lawyer granddaughter Carly. The 30th Anniversary Edition has a footnote at this point saying that one can now find the three pages of the reunion scene online. However, if one goes to the linked website, all they send via email is the text of the three letters

## FILMIC ELEMENTS

- Sword Fights
- Cliffs Of Insanity
- Zoo Of Death
- Castles
- Medieval times

## REVIEWS/RECEPTION (BOOK)

- *“Goldman's wild ride evokes virtually every emotion possible, and the plot moves so quickly in most parts that readers may need to remind themselves to breathe.” -Ellen Dendy*

## MOVIE(S) DEVELOPMENT

- Director Rob Reiner first read the book "The Princess Bride" back when he was starring in All in the Family (1971). His dad, Carl Reiner, was friendly with William Goldman, and thought Rob would like the book. William Goldman is Reiner's favorite author and "The Princess Bride" is his favorite novel
- Took fourteen years to make it to the big screen
- François Truffaut, Robert Redford, Norman Jewison, & John Boorman tried to make the film, all had failed attempts
- Courtney Cox, Meg Ryan and Uma Thurman were among those who auditioned to play Buttercup, while Danny DeVito was the first choice to play Vizzini
- \$15 million budget
- Most of the movie was filmed on location in England.
- FENCING:
  - Cary Elwes and Mandy Patinkin trained for months with Peter Diamond and Bob Anderson, who between them had been in the Olympics. When they showed Rob Reiner the swordfight for the movie, he was underwhelmed and requested that it be at least three minutes long rather than the current one minute. They added steps to the set, watched more swashbuckling movies for inspiration, re-choreographed the scene, and ended up with a three minute and 10 second fight which took the better part of a week to film from all angles.
  - The two learned each other's parts in the fencing routine. "He said, 'If you learn the other guy's part, you know what you are going do and so there's no chance of an accident.'"
  - To help the actors appear ambidextrous, two identical, but mirrored, sets were constructed, to make it appear that the pair were just as good with their other hand.

- Director Rob Reiner left the set during Billy Crystal's scenes because he would laugh so hard that he would feel nauseated.
- The giant rodents were created with diminutive actors inside rat suits.
- In the closing credits, it shows the production company as Buttercup Films.
- Film was released in theaters on September 25, 1987
- Distributed by 20th Century Fox
- The sword fighting was mostly done without stunt doubles, and shot on two mirrored sets to allow the cast to fight left-handed

### **SIMILARITIES/CHANGES/ADDITIONS/RETRACTIONS**

- The book uses shark-infested waters, not shrieking eels
- (Movie) The story is being read by a grandfather to his sick grandson
- Pit of Despair (Zoo Of Death) is just a hidden room underneath a grove of trees
- Backstories of Fezzik, Vizzini, & Inigo in book, not in movie
- A Lot of the dialogue is lifted straight from the novel, although some of it is in slightly different order. Almost every classic and quotable film line is in there (except Miracle Max, but even that's closer than you'd expect to Billy Crystal's improv)

### **WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE PORTRAYAL FOR EACH CHARACTER?**

- Cary Elwes - Westley
  - Christopher Reeve was considered for the lead role of Westley.
  - Colin Firth was first choice
  - Wrote the 2014 book "As You Wish: Inconceivable Tales From the Making of 'The Princess Bride.'"
- Robin Wright - Princess Buttercup (Princess Bride)
  - Robin Wright was a regular on the soap opera Santa Barbara (1984). In exchange for allowing her time off to film the movie, they required her to extend her contract by a year.
  - Uma Thurman auditioned for the role of Buttercup. She was deemed too exotic looking for the part.
  - Courteney Cox and Meg Ryan auditioned for Princess Buttercup.
- Mandy Patinkin - Inigo Montoya (The Spaniard)
  - Mandy Patinkin has said that the role of Inigo Montoya is his personal favorite over the course of his entire career.
  - Mandy Patinkin claims that the only injury he sustained during the entire filming of this movie was a bruised rib due to stifling his laughter in his scenes with Billy Crystal. His attempt at holding back his laughter is obvious from his facial expression during his line, "This is noble sir."
- Chris Sarandon - Prince Humperdinck
- Christopher Guest - Count Rugen
- Wallace Shawn - Vizzini (The Sicilian)
- Andre the Giant - Fezzik (The Giant)
  - When Goldman was first trying to get the movie made in the 1970s, a then-unknown Arnold Schwarzenegger wanted to play Fezzik. He was strongly being considered because Goldman could never get his first choice, André the Giant, to read for the role. By the time the movie was made about twelve years later, Schwarzenegger was such a big star they could not afford him.

- Kareem Abdul-Jabbar was offered the role of Fezzik and was extremely interested in taking the role but was unable because shooting conflicted with his NBA schedule.
- 7'4," 519-pound wrestler
- Fred Savage - The Grandson
  - 10 Years old when he filmed
  - 41-year-old father of three has enjoyed sharing "Princess Bride" with his kids. "They love seeing me as a kid, but they love the movie."
- Peter Falk - The Grandfather

### **THEMES**

- True love
- Courage
- Existentialism
- Humor
- Strength of a person
- Outer appearances (Humperdinck, Pirate Roberts, etc)

### **NEXT ADAPTED:**

- Peter Pan - J.M. Barrie (1902)