

# **The Princess Bride Film Summary**

## **The Princess Bride by William Goldman**

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## Context

*The Princess Bride* is the story of true love between Westley and Buttercup. Their story is told in a book that is read by the Grandfather to his sick Grandson. At first the Grandson doesn't want to listen to a kissing story, but he soon becomes interested with all the action and romance.

Buttercup and Westley are two young people who fall in love. Westley is very poor and wants to go away to make something of himself so that he can be worthy of Buttercup. When Westley is reported dead from an incident with the Dread Pirate Roberts, Buttercup becomes inconsolable. Prince Humperdinck demands that Buttercup marry him, but he orchestrates her kidnapping by Vizzini.

Westley, now the Dread Pirate Roberts, comes to Buttercup's rescue. They fall in love again, but they are captured by Humperdinck's men. With the help of Fezzik and Montoya, Westley gets free and rescues Buttercup before Humperdinck can murder her. The two run away together, and true love triumphs.

Rob Reiner is one of the top American directors, and many of his films are compelling love stories. Before *The Princess Bride*, Rob Reiner had successfully directed *This is Spinal Tap* (1984), *The Sure Thing* (1985), and *Stand By Me* (1986). Of the three, *Stand By Me* was probably the most commercially popular film. Later films by Reiner include *When Harry Met Sally* (1989), *Misery* (1990), *A Few Good Men* (1992), and *The American President* (1995). If Reiner is directing a film, its success is almost guaranteed.

Cary Elwes is from an old British family. He appeared in *Lady Jane* in 1985 and caught the eye of Rob Reiner, thus securing a spot in *The Princess Bride*. He is best known for his role in *The Princess Bride*, but he has also appeared in *Glory* (1989), *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992), and *Robin Hood: Men in Tights* (1993).

Robin Wright Penn successfully plays the role of Buttercup in *The Princess Bride*. Penn's first major role was in the soap opera "Santa Barbara." She then got this role in *The Princess Bride*. Later roles include Jenny in *Forrest Gump* (1994), *Message in a Bottle* (1999), and *White Oleander* (2002).

*The Princess Bride* was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Music, Original Song for Willy De Ville for the song "Storybook Love." The Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror Films of the USA nominated William Goldman for the Saturn Award for Best Writing and Robin Wright Penn for Best Actress. The film won the Saturn Award for Best Costumes for Phyllis Dalton and Best Fantasy Film.



## Summary and Analysis

As *The Princess Bride* begins, we see a young boy sitting in his bed, playing a video game. His mother comes in, and the boy complains that his grandfather is staying with him. His grandfather comes in and brings him the gift of a book that his grandfather used to read to him. The grandson is not interested, but the grandfather then opens the book and begins reading.

The story starts with Buttercup, a beautiful woman who lives on a farm. There is a handsome helper boy named Westley. Buttercup constantly asks him to do chores and his reply is always, "As you wish." One day she realizes that when he says, "As you wish," he is really saying, "I love you." Then, she realizes that she loves him too.

The grandson stops the story at this point to ask whether this is just a book about kissing. The grandfather asks him to wait to find out what happens.

Westley did not have the money to get married, so Westley goes out to seek his fortune across the seas. Buttercup is scared, but Westley tells her that he will always come back. He is certain because this is true love. They kiss, and he leaves.

While at sea, Westley's ship is captured by the Dread Pirate Roberts. Buttercup locks herself up and decides she will never love again. Five years later, Prince Humperdinck announces that he will marry Buttercup. He introduces her to the people, but she is obviously not in love with Humperdinck; she was simply forced into the marriage. Buttercup was only able to find joy in her daily ride. One day she is attacked and taken captive by Vizzini and Fezzik.

On their boat, Vizzini insults both Fezzik and Inigo Montoya. The three plan to start a war between Guilder and Floren by using Buttercup as lure. As they travel, Vezzini says there is no possibility that anyone is following them; it is "Inconceivable!" When they realize that they are being followed, Buttercup takes a chance to escape the boat, but she finds the waters are infested with shrieking eels.

The story reverts back to the grandfather and grandson. When the boy looked a little nervous, his grandfather tells him that Buttercup is not eaten by the eels. The boy does not believe this, but he begs his grandfather to keep reading.

Fezzik saves Buttercup from the waters as the other boat gets closer. Vezzini is confident that since they are so close to the Cliffs of Insanity, they are safe. They get to the cliffs and Fezzik carries Buttercup and the others to the top. A strange man dressed in black follows them up the cliff. Vezzini cuts the rope, but the man latches on the cliff and continues climbing. Inigo Montoya decides to stay and fight the man while the others go ahead.

Montoya tries to talk to the man as he climbs, but the man tells him to drop a rope if he's in such a hurry. Montoya promises not to kill the man until he reaches the top - he



swears on his father's soul. The man climbs the rest of the way up the cliffs, and Montoya gives him a few moments to rest so that it will be a good fight. As they wait, Montoya asks the man if he has six fingers on his right hand. He then explains that his father was killed by a six-fingered man, but the man shows him a hand with only five fingers. . He says that someday he will go up to that man and say, "Hello. My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die." The other man wishes him luck. They begin to fight.

After an impressive sword battle, the Man in Black wins the fight. Vizzini sees the Man in Black coming, and tells Fezzik to hit him in the head with a rock. Fezzik offers to let the Man in Black fight him in hand-to-hand combat. At first Fezzik is winning, but the Man in Black eventually conquers by knocking Fezzik out.

At the cliffs, Prince Humperdinck replays the sword fight based on the footprints. Humperdinck is convinced that the people of Guilder are behind the plot, but he also realizes that it could be a trap. He prepares to follow.

Finally, the Man in Black catches up with Vizzini and Buttercup. The Man in Black challenges Vizzini to a battle of wits to the death with Buttercup as the prize. The Man in Black puts a deadly poison in a cup of wine and puts one in front of each of them. Vizzini tries to discern which goblet has the poisoned wine. Vizzini chooses the goblet after he switches the glasses while the "Man in Black's" back was turned. Vizzini dies. The Man in Black had put poison in both goblets, because he had immunity to the poison.

Buttercup and the Man in Black go away. Buttercup offers a ransom price to the "Man in Black." She tells him that Humperdinck is not her dearest love, but he tells her she must be incapable of love and is a liar. They continue as Humperdinck finds Vizzini. Buttercup finally recognizes the Man in Black is the Dread Pirate Roberts. She tells him that she hates him for killing her one true love. She says that her farm boy was poor and perfect. She becomes angry with him for mocking her pain, and he says, "Life is pain. Anyone who says different is selling something." He then tells her that the farm boy died saying only, "Please." He then went on to speak of true love and the woman he left behind. The man accuses her of getting engaged to the Prince an hour later. She pushes him and tells him to die. As he falls down the hill, he cries, "As you wish," and Buttercup throws herself down the hill after her sweet Westley. As they embrace Westley says, "Death cannot stop true love. It can only delay it for awhile."

The film then switches back to the Grandfather and the Grandson who was tired of all the kissing.

Westley and Buttercup hurry into the Fire Swamp. No one has ever survived the Fire Swamp, and they face many challenges. First, they have to deal with exploding fires coming out of the ground. While in the forest, Westley explains how he became the Dread Pirate Roberts. There had been a number of people known as the Dread Pirate Roberts. The man named Roberts that he met decided to retire and handed the name over to Westley. Now that Westley has riches, he plans to retire as well. Next, Buttercup



falls into the quicksand and barely makes it out alive. A moment later they see a huge Rodent of Unusual Size that attacks Westley. However, he survives and they continue to make their way out of the forest.

As soon as they get out of the forest, they are surrounded by Prince Humperdinck's men. Buttercup asks if Humperdinck will promise to keep Westley safe if they surrender. Humperdinck promises and in the same breath tells his men to kill Westley. The man who is supposed to kill him is Count Rugen, the man with six fingers.

Westley is taken to a little Albino man in the Pit of Despair. He begins to torture Westley on his machine. In the meantime, Buttercup wanders sadly around the castle, and Humperdinck tries to pretend that his father's failing health was the problem. That night the King dies, and Humperdinck marries Buttercup the next morning. She meets her subjects as their Queen, but she looks absolutely dismal. An old lady in the crowd yells at her for letting true love go. She calls her the "Queen of Slime," because Westley is alive and she married another. However, suddenly Buttercup wakes up from this nightmare. She is supposed to marry Humperdinck in 10 days.

Buttercup goes to Humperdinck and says that she plans to kill herself in the night. Humperdinck tells her that he may not still want her, but he says he will send men to find him. He makes a deal with her: she can write four copies of a letter and send out for ships to find Westley, but if Westley doesn't reply, she will consider marrying Humperdinck.

In the forest, Humperdinck and Count Rugen discuss Humperdinck's brilliant plan to have Vizzini to kill her. Humperdinck decides that strangling Buttercup on their wedding night will be much more impressive. The country will definitely want to go to war against Guilder.

Rugen goes down to torture Westley, and he begins to suck away years of his life. Humperdinck tells one of his men that the soldiers from Guilder are staying in the Thieves' Forests are planning to kill Buttercup. Humperdinck demands that the Thieves' Forest be emptied before his wedding day. Montoya doesn't want to leave, but Fezzik finds him and takes care of him since he is too drunk to do anything himself.

Montoya wants to find the Man in Black so that he can plan revenge. At the castle, Humperdinck is sharpening his knife, and he is told that the Thieves' Forest is emptied. He also demands that the castle be locked up tight. He tells Buttercup that the next morning they will leave on their honeymoon with his entire Armada that's waiting. She realizes that he never sent the ships, and she calls him a coward. Then, he escorts her back to her room and locks her up. Humperdinck goes downstairs and turns up the torture on Westley in his anger.

Fezzik and Montoya meet the Albino and find the hidden lair with help from Montoya's dead father's spirit. They see Westley's condition and take him to see Miracle Max for some help. Max says that Westley is only, "MOSTLY dead" so they can try to wake him up. He tries to wake Westley up by getting him to think of what is worth living for, and



Westley answers, "True love." When they tell Max that Humperdinck's wedding will be stopped if Westley wakes up, he agrees to help since Humperdinck fired him. They give Westley medicine, but he will still be partially paralyzed for several hours.

They prepare a plan as Westley continues coming back to life, and they get started on stopping the wedding. Inside the castle, Buttercup continues to be convinced that Westley will save her. As the wedding begins, Fezzik, Montoya, and Westley get in the castle gates by scaring off the guards and lighting Fezzik on fire and having him yell, "There will be no survivors." The minister inside continues talking about true love as the three heroes get into the building.

Westley is still partially paralyzed, but they are able to get him inside. Humperdinck speeds up the wedding, but Buttercup never officially says, "Yes." Count Rugen meets the three men and has his men attack them. They overcome the soldiers and Montoya faces Rugen and says, "Hello. My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die." Rugen runs away, and Fezzik knocks down the door for Montoya. He chases Rugen, but Rugen tries to kill him first. Montoya gathers his strength long enough to kill Rugen.

Buttercup returns to her room after the wedding to kill herself. She finds Westley is waiting in the room on her bed, and she is ecstatic to see him. At this point she realizes that she never said, "I do," so she's not really married. Humperdinck then appears in the room and challenges Westley to a fight to the death. Westley counters that they should fight "to the pain." In this method, you lose pieces of your body - one at a time. Westley continues talking as long as possible so that he can regain movement. Westley then gets up, faces Humperdinck, and Humperdinck gives up. Buttercup ties up Humperdinck, and Montoya arrives to help them.

Fezzik has brought four white horses beneath the window, and he catches each person in turn so that they can escape. Montoya and Westley are at the top of the window and Montoya says, "It is very strange. I have been in the revenge business so long, now that it's over, I don't know what to do with the rest of my life." Westley responds, "Have you ever considered piracy? You'd make a wonderful Dread Pirate Roberts." The four ride to freedom as the sun rises, and Westley and Buttercup share a kiss described in this way: "Since the invention of the kiss there have been five kisses that were rated the most passionate, the most pure. This one left them all behind."

As the Grandfather prepares to leave, his grandson asks him to come over again the next day to read the story to him.



# Characters

## Westley, played by Cary Elwes

### Description

Westley is a young farm boy when we first see him. He is strong and dependable but very poor. Westley is very much in love with Buttercup, but she does not recognize his love at first. Westley is purportedly killed by the Dread Pirate Roberts, but he actually becomes the Dread Pirate Roberts.

Westley returns to find that Buttercup is about to marry Prince Humperdinck. Westley rescues her from the kidnapers and finally reveals his identity to her. They profess their love once again and plan to run away together. After being captured by Humperdinck, Westley struggles to stay alive. He eventually saves Buttercup, and the two live happily ever after.

### Analysis

Westley is a strong, dependable man. He believes that true love can never fail him and Buttercup. Throughout all his travels, Westley holds on to the hope that he and Buttercup will eventually be together forever because of true love.

Westley has skill, strength, and wit. As he traverses the different games set forth by Vizzini and the other men, Westley proves that he has these qualities in abundance. In this effort, he also shows that he is worthy of Buttercup's love.

## Buttercup/The Princess Bride, played by Robin Wright Penn

### Description

Buttercup is a young girl who falls in love with the farm boy, Westley. After Westley is reported dead, she is completely heartbroken. She decides never to love again, but she is forced by law to submit to a marriage with Prince Humperdinck.

When Buttercup meets Westley again, she despises the Man in Black, especially when he insults her understanding of true love. Buttercup tries to save Westley by giving herself up to Prince Humperdinck, but she does not realize that Humperdinck will hold Westley prisoner and torture him. When she is finally rescued by Westley, Buttercup is preparing to kill herself. Eventually, they escape Humperdinck and live happily ever after.





## **Analysis**

Buttercup seems at first to be a selfish girl, but her love for Westley softens her. She falls in love and plans to spend the rest of her life with Westley. Her devastation is great when she hears of Westley's death. Buttercup is inconsolable, and is forced to marry Humperdinck because he is prince of the land.

Buttercup finally finds her true love again when Westley returns to her. She loves him dearly, and she is happy to find that she can spend the rest of her life living "happily ever after."

## **Inigo Montoya, played by Mandy Patinkin**

### **Description**

Inigo Montoya is a Spaniard who has spent his life focusing on seeking revenge against his father's murderer, a six-fingered man. Montoya works for Vizzini but after being defeated by Westley, Montoya helps Westley save Buttercup.

### **Analysis**

Montoya has spent his all life focused on revenge. When he finally gets revenge against the six-fingered man, Montoya, with Westley's help< decides to become the next Dread Pirate Roberts

## **Prince Humperdinck, played by Chris Sarandon**

### **Description**

Prince Humperdinck is a self-centered man who is only focused on his own good and wants only to start a war with a nearby nation. Humperdinck is willing to use anyone, including Buttercup, to get his way.

### **Analysis**

Humperdinck is a man with an inferiority complex. He bosses other people around so that he can prove that he is in charge. Humperdinck's entire life is simply focused on himself. He wants a war, so he has his bride kidnapped in order to start it.



## **Count Tyrone Rugen, played by Christopher Guest**

### **Description**

Count Rugen is the six-fingered mean who killed Montoya's father when Montoya was a boy.

### **Analysis**

Rugen loves torture and tries out his methods on Westley. He is then murdered by Montoya who seeks revenge for his father's murder.

## **Vizzini, played by Wallace Shawn**

### **Description**

Vizzini is a smart con artist who believes that he can outsmart Westley. As they play the game, however, Westley ends up duping Vizzini.

### **Analysis**

Vizzini's character helps to instigate part of the plot when he kidnaps Buttercup. Also, Westley is shown in contrast to Vizzini and is shown to be stronger and more worthy of Buttercup's love.

## **Fezzik, played by Andre the Giant**

### **Description**

Fezzik is a strong giant who at first tries to kill Westley and later comes to his rescue.

### **Analysis**

Fezzik's first run in with Westley serves to show that Westley has a lot of strength and brains. Later, Fezzik helps defeat Humperdinck so that he can help Wesley save Buttercup and help Montoya get revenge against Count Rugen.

## **Miracle Max, played by Billy Crystal**

### **Description**

Miracle Max is a miracle worker who helps bring Wesley back from being mostly dead.



## **Analysis**

Miracle Max and his wife are a hilarious pair, offering comic relief during a stressful time when Westley is about to die.

## **Valerie, played by Carol Kane**

### **Description**

Valerie is Miracle Max's wife. She hounds him into saving Westley when he tries to refuse after being thrown out of the castle by Prince Humperdinck.

### **Analysis**

Valerie is the typical shrew wife. She drives her husband crazy with her screaming, and she gets her way in the end.

## **The Albino, played by Mel Smith**

### **Description**

The Albino is hired by Prince Humperdinck and Count Rugen to torture their captives. The Albino is a master of torture, and he explains his beliefs and techniques to Westley before trying them out.

### **Analysis**

The Albino seems like a very nice person, but he is obsessed with torture devices. He derives pleasure from hurting others and testing his experiments on them.

## **The Impressive Clergyman, played by Peter Cook**

### **Description**

The Impressive Clergyman performs the wedding ceremony of Prince Humperdinck and Buttercup. The Impressive Clergyman has some of the best-known lines from the film: "Mawage. Mawage is wot bwings us togeder tooday. Mawage, that bwessed awangment, that dweam wifin a dweam... And wuv, tru wuv, will fowow you fowevea... So tweasure your wuv."



## Analysis

The Impressive Clergyman provides hilarious comic relief just when the events outside the castle (namely, Westley trying to get in) becomes more stressful.

## The Ancient Booer, played by Marjorie Mason

### Description

Buttercup dreams that she is preparing to marry Prince Humperdinck when a woman begins booing her in the crowd. The woman accuses Buttercup of giving up on true love when her true love is actually still alive.

### Analysis

The Ancient Booer's appearance in Buttercup's dream serves to get Buttercup thinking of Westley's fate. She finally realizes that Prince Humperdinck lied to her, and she promises to kill herself if he forces her to marry him. Little does she know that this fits his plans to begin a war with a neighboring nation over her death.

## The Grandson, played by Fred Savage

### Description

The Grandson is sick, and he has to stay home from school.

### Analysis

The Grandson is not convinced that he wants to hear the story of Westley and Buttercup, but after hearing part of the story, he is totally entranced.

## The Grandfather, played by Peter Falk

### Description

The Grandfather comes to sit with his Grandson while the boy's mother is at work. The Grandfather reads the story of *The Princess Bride* to his grandson.

### Analysis

The Grandfather realizes that a young boy needs to learn to read as well as play video games. He introduces the boy to a book that he truly loves.



# Themes

## True Love

Throughout *The Princess Bride*, we hear the recurring theme of "true love." As Westley leaves, he reminds Buttercup that he has to return because they are experiencing true love. No one can break up true love, so he has to return to her someday.

Although Buttercup never really gives up on true love and always hopes that Westley is returned, she loses hope after she hears that he has been murdered. In addition, she is being forced by the Prince to marry him, and as his subject, Buttercup has no choice. She wishes that her true love would come back for her, but she no longer has any hope.

Westley, however, holds on to the hope of true love. He is angry to discover that she is planning to marry someone else, but even so, he wishes to follow after her. She doesn't recognize him until she pushes him down the hill, and he cries out, "As you wish!" Buttercup then realizes the power of true love to make it through anything.

In a time of uncertainty, the film helps remind viewers that true love is possible. Even though things may not always be easy, people can be swept away by true love and make a relationship work. Buttercup and Westley finally end up together in a true love story with a happy ending.

## Living Life to the Fullest

*The Princess Bride* reminds viewers to live their lives to the fullest. Westley and Buttercup both take chances and risk their lives so that they can hold on to their true love. The two risk all odds and death in order to make their dreams of love and a relationship into a reality.

Although their relationship is difficult and fraught with danger, they both fight for it. Westley survives life on board ship with the Dread Pirate Roberts so that he can return to Buttercup. He spoke up to the captain just as he was about to be murdered so that he would be allowed to live a little longer and, hopefully, one day return for Buttercup.

After Westley finds Buttercup, they both begin to fight for their lives in the hopes that someday soon they would be able to be together. Buttercup tries to save Westley's life by returning with Prince Humperdinck. Although we realize that the Prince still plans to kill Westley, we also know that Buttercup is sacrificing her life in the slim hope that her true love will survive. Eventually Montoya and Fezzik show up to help fight for Buttercup, and each person in the cast lives their life to the fullest as they fight to save their lives.



## Revenge

Igo Montoya has spent his entire life planning revenge against his father's murderer. Montoya remembers the six-fingered man who gave him a scar that he has carried for years and who murdered his father. Everywhere he goes, he looks for the man so that he can someday kill him and have revenge for his father's murder.

Montoya's plans for revenge have overtaken his entire life. He has never had any other goal, and it has almost destroyed him. In an effort to revenge his father's murder, Montoya has wasted his entire life.

When Montoya finally does get revenge, we watch as he tries to figure out what to do with his life now. He even talks to Westley about his future. Since Westley has decided to quit pirating, he offers Montoya his ship. Many people do not find a new career or new path in life so easily, but Montoya is lucky. Revenge can ruin a life and we see this as we watch Montoya spending his whole life going after revenge.

## Style and Cinematography

The whimsical style of *The Princess Bride* is mostly the work of director, Rob Reiner. Reiner creates a world where anything is possible. Suddenly, the idea that true love exists and that people can be "mostly dead" seems completely plausible. Giant shrieking eels, six-fingered murderers, and eccentric princes may seem to close to the truth for comfort, but Reiner's world makes the terrible things interesting and fun as well.

*The Princess Bride* is primarily a humorous movie. We laugh as we hear Vizzini's speech about the goblets. The priest's discussion of marriage is equally hilarious as is Billy Crystal's performance as Miracle Max. Although romance pervades the film, the humor makes the film appealing to people of all ages.

The strongest points of the entire film are the wonderful performances given by the actors and actresses. Cary Elwes gives a brilliant performance as the brave and daring Westley. We see his hurt feelings when he believes Buttercup has deserted him, and we see his relief and joy when they finally get back together. Robin Wright Penn creates a character that is beautiful, intelligent, and a bit self-centered but still lovable. The performances of the rest of the actors in the film are exceptional as well. These performances make this a truly memorable and lasting film.



# Motifs

## "As You Wish"

Throughout *The Princess Bride*, the saying, "As you wish" reoccurs as we watch the young couple they fall in love and later reunited after a long absence. When we first hear the phrase "As you wish," the farm boy, Westley, is using it to answer Buttercup when she requests that he do something for her.

After many years, Buttercup finally realizes that when Westley is saying, "As you wish," he is not just conceding to her request but rather professing his love. After this realization, Buttercup realizes that she loves Westley too. The two profess their love although Westley is a poor boy. He decides to go and make something of himself so that he will be worthy of Buttercup.

Buttercup hears the news that Westley's ship has been captured and all the men killed by the Dread Pirate Roberts. Although she is heartbroken, she never forgets Westley and chooses to live forever without love. Eventually, Prince Humperdinck sees Buttercup and demands that she marry him. Buttercup is forced into the arrangement, and then kidnapped by several men. A Man in Black chases them.

When the Man in Black finally rescues Buttercup, he accuses her of knowing nothing of true love. Buttercup becomes angry, tells him to die, and pushes him down a hill. As the man falls, he cries out "As you wish." We now know that this is Westley who has come back for her. The two then continue through their journey to be together. "As you wish" is used in other spots as well to help move the story along and reveal their love.

## Games

As Westley, the Man in Black, chases Buttercup and the kidnappers, he is subjected to several games in order to outwit the kidnappers. Westley proves himself worthy of Buttercup during these games, and they help to make the film more interesting and the characters more developed.

Westley's first game is with Montoya when they have a sword fight together. As Montoya waits for Westley to recover from his climb up the cliff, we learn more about Montoya. We learn of his plans for revenge against the six-fingered man and his love of sword fighting. We also learn that Westley is skilled and brave.

The second game is with Fezzik. Fezzik is simple but strong. The two men embrace the concept of hand-to-hand combat as Westley tries to beat the giant Fezzik with only his strength and brains. Finally, Westley conquers and his strength is proven.

Finally, Westley plays a game of wits with Vizzini. Vizzini is a smart man who believes that although Westley has shown both skill and strength, he cannot win against Vizzini's





brains. However, Westley proves him wrong when he tricks the man into being poisoned by his own folly. Westley once again wins and proves that he has skill, strength, and wit. He has proven himself against the three men while we have seen each of the characters develop during the scenes.

## Partings

*The Princess Bride* is filled with sorrowful partings. The first parting serves as a catalyst for the story. As Buttercup and Westley part, they believe that true love will conquer anything. They believe wholeheartedly that they will come back together, and everything will be okay. They do not know that many years will go by before they meet again.

The next parting of the couple is when Buttercup and Westley are captured by Humperdinck's men. Buttercup naively believes that Humperdinck will let Westley go free simply because she returns with him. Westley, on the other hand, knows better and struggles to remain alive through his challenges.

The final parting is when the couple and their friends depart from the castle. Although they leave together, they bid farewell to all the past. Montoya lets go of his revenge; Westley and Buttercup leave Humperdinck behind for good. The parting brings together everyone in the film, bringing the story to a close.



# Symbols

## Swords

In many films, swords are used to symbolize power and manliness; *The Princess Bride* is no exception. As the men wield their swords, they are really trying to dominate one another and the world around them.

Inigo Montoya uses his skill with the sword to first try to fight off Westley and later to kill his father's murderer. Montoya uses his sword to show his power over others. Since his father's death, he has learned that only by being prepared to fight could he feel safe. Montoya wields his sword and shows that, at long last, he is more powerful than his father's murderer and gets the revenge he has wanted for so long.

Westley also uses a sword with great skill. Unlike Montoya, Westley does not use the sword for revenge but for love. Westley loves Buttercup with the truest of loves, and he seeks to protect her from harm by using his sword to overpower Humperdinck and his men.

## The Fire Swamp

The Fire Swamp is symbolic of the trials that couples must face throughout their life together. Westley and Buttercup have already faced the challenge of separation. She thought him to be dead for many years before he returned to save her. Now that they are reunited, everything does not become easy; instead, things only seem to get worse once they enter the Fire Swamp.

The first obstacle they face in the Fire Swamp are the fire mines that burst all around them. They have to learn to walk carefully so that they can avoid these traps. Working together, they are able to get past this first trial rather easily.

The second obstacle is the quicksand that Buttercup accidentally stumbles into. Westley rescues her quickly, and they go on. The final obstacle is the giant rat. They have to face this outside force before they can continue through the Fire Swamp. Westley ingeniously uses their first obstacle, the fire mines, to destroy the giant rat. After finally getting through the Fire Swamp, they face yet more trials, but their time in the Swamp prepared them to work together to conquer their foes.

## Mostly Dead

Westley is "mostly dead" when Fezzik and Montoya find him in the forest. They believe that he is "all dead" at first, but when they realize he could be saved, they hurry to take him to Miracle Max. Miracle Max is well known for his ability to save people from being "mostly dead."



As Miracle Max works on Westley, he realizes that in order to save him, Westley must have something to live for; the something must be grand and noble so that Westley can come back to life. After several moments, Westley finally calls out "True love!" Miracle Max realizes that Westley wants to survive for true love. This is the most noble reason for living, and Westley survives being "mostly dead."

Being "mostly dead" is symbolic for living a life without true love. True love brings hope and happiness to our hearts. Without love, a person is "mostly dead," and a person can only be saved when true love becomes his or her sole reason for living.



## Essay Questions

How does Buttercup realize that Westley loves her?

Why does Westley go away?

Describe Buttercup's experience after he is gone and believed to be dead.

Describe the three men who kidnap Buttercup.

Who was actually behind Buttercup's kidnapping and why?

How does Westley outwit the three kidnappers?

What happens to Westley after he is captured by Prince Humperdinck?

What is Humperdinck's plans for Buttercup's future?

How does Westley come back to life?

Describe the final events in the castle as the men fight for Buttercup, revenge, and their lives.