Cyrano de Bergerac Study Guide

Cyrano de Bergerac by Edmond Rostand

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Contents

Cyrano de Bergerac Study Guide....1

Contents....2

Introduction....5

Author Biography....6

Plot Summary....8

Act 1, Scene 1....12

Act 1, Scene 2....13

Act 1, Scene 3....14

Act 1, Scene 4....15

Act 1, Scene 5....17

Act 1, Scene 6....18

Act 1, Scene 7....19

Act 2, Scene 1....20

Act 2, Scene 2....21

Act 2, Scene 3....22

Act 2, Scene 4....23

Act 2, Scene 5....24

Act 2, Scene 6....25

Act 2, Scene 7....26

Act 2, Scene 8....27

Act 2, Scene 9....28

Act 2, Scene 10....29

Act 2, Scene 11....30

Act 3, Scene 1....31

Act 3, Scene 2....32

Act 3, Scene 3.....33
Act 3, Scene 4.....34
Act 3, Scene 5.....35
Act 3, Scene 6.....36
Act 3, Scene 7.....37
Act 3, Scene 8.....38
Act 3, Scene 9.....39
Act 3, Scene 10.....40
Act 3, Scene 11.....41
Act 3, Scene 12.....42
Act 3, Scene 13.....43
Act 3, Scene 14.....44
Act 4, Scene 1.....45
Act 4, Scene 2.....46
Act 4, Scene 3.....47
Act 4, Scene 4.....48
Act 4, Scene 5.....49
Act 4, Scene 6.....50
Act 4, Scene 7.....51
Act 4, Scene 8.....52
Act 4, Scene 9.....53
Act 4, Scene 10.....54
Act 5, Scene 1.....55
Act 5, Scene 2.....56
Act 5, Scene 3.....57
Act 5, Scene 4.....58

Act 5, Scene 5.....59
Act 5, Scene 6.....60
Characters.....61
Themes.....66
Style.....69
Historical Context.....71
Critical Overview.....74
Criticism.....76
Critical Essay #1.....77
Critical Essay #2.....81
Critical Essay #3.....83
Adaptations.....84
Topics for Further Study.....85
Compare and Contrast.....86
What Do I Read Next?.....87
Further Study.....88
Bibliography.....89
Copyright Information.....90

Introduction

When *Cyrano de Bergerac* was first produced at the Porte Saint-Martin Theater in Paris, France, on December 28, 1897, the audience applauded for a full hour after the final curtain was drawn. A classic was created on that night, and an unforgettable hero of literature was born

The play is based loosely on the life of playwright Savien de Cyrano de Bergerac (1619-1655), Edmond Rostand's favorite writer. Actor Constant-Benoit Coquelin had asked Rostand to write a play to showcase his versatile acting abilities. Rostand, though writing in the 1890's, set his action in the 1640's; during the last two decades of the real de Bergerac's life. This "heroic comedy" uses rhymed Alexandrine verse to combine romance, heroic action, and humor to give life to one of the most enduring characters in modern literature: Cyrano de Bergerac, a hero who is not only a swashbuckler but a poet, using words as effectively as weapons.

Cyrano was first published in France by Charpentier et Fasquelle in 1898; and first translated into English by Howard Thayer Kingsbury for Lamson, Wolfe, and Co. the same year. The play has been produced all over the world. In 1950 it was brought to movie screens in the United States by the United Artists studio with Jose Ferrer starring in the title role. Noted writer Anthony Burgess (A Clockwork Orange) translated the play in 1971: this translation was used as the basis for the subtitles forthe 1990 French film version directed by Jean-Paul Rappmeau and starring Gerard Depardieu

A modern interpretation of *Cyrano de Bergerac, Roxanne*, was produced by Columbia Pictures in 1987. This film, loosely based on Rostand's play, was written by and starred comedian Steve Martin as a modern Cyrano. The success of this film was due in part to its loyalty to the central themes of love, loyalty, sacrifice, and independence of Rostand's original classic. The hero, again with a very large nose, woos the woman he loves for another, more "handsome" man.

Edmond Rostand's mix of humor, romance, and heroic action in *Cyrano de Bergerac* has captured audience imagination for almost 100 years. Its recurring themes of love, loyalty, sacrifice, and friendship continue to have resonance for audiences of many generations.

Author Biography

Edmond (Eugene Alexis) Rostand was born on April 1, 1868 in Marseilles, France. The son of a prominent journalist and economist; Rostand was encouraged to write from a very early age. In his teens he began creating plays for marionette (puppet) theater, and, at the age of sixteen, had several poems and essays published in the literary magazine *Mireille*. At the College Stanislas in Paris he studied literature, philosophy, and history before going on to study law at the local university. Rostand's ambition, however, was to be a writer, and though he completed the coursework, he never practiced law.

Rostand's first play, *Le gant rouge* (1888), and his first book of poetry, *Les musardises* (1890), were largely ignored by both critics and the public. It was *Les romanesques* (The Romancers, 1894) which served as his breakthrough. Produced at the Comedie Francaise in 1894, its romantic style stood in contrast to the naturalism and symbolism practiced by many of his contemporaries such as Henrik Ibsen and Maurice Maeterlinck

On April 8,1890, Rostand married Rosemonde Gerard, who was herself a poet. Their marriage produced two children, Maurice and Jean.

La princesse lointaine (The Princess Far-Away, 1895) solidified Rostand's reputation and its production marked the beginning of his professional alliance with the famous French actress Sarah Bernhardt. Known for her passionate performances, Bernhardt went on to star in several of Rostand's later plays, including *Cyrano de Bergerac.* Though she did not create the role of Roxane, she did portray it on the French stage during its initial run.

It was Rostand's alliance with renowned French actor Constant-Benoit Coquelm, however, which resulted in his masterpiece: *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1897). Coquelin had asked Rostand to write a play that would both challenge and showcase the numerous facets of his acting ability. Rostand delivered a heroic comedy about a swashbuckling poet with an abnormally large nose, a tale based on his own favorite writer. The real-life Cyrano was, like his fictional counterpart, both a soldier and a writer, his famously large nose, however, was Rostand's invention.

Just two years after the critical and popular success of *Cyrano de Bergerac,* illness forced Rostand to move back to his country estate. His last two finished plays: *L'Aiglon (The Eaglet, 1900)*, and *Chanticler* (1910), were critical disappointments. *L'Aiglon* (about the life of the Duke of Reichstadt, son of Napoleon I) was, according to most critics, considered too simplistic and predictable. *Chanticler* (about a barnyard rooster who defends the importance of his role in the world) had critics divided: while some found it obscure and too long; some found its allegorical verse profound, and view it as a poem to be read and not performed.Rostand's final play *La derniere nuit de* Don Juan (The Last Night of Don Juan, 1922), was left unfinished upon his death in 1918.

Rostand was the youngest member ever elected to the Academic Francaise (one of the highest honors France bestows on scholars of letters) in 1901. He is remembered for his skillful verse and the robust theatricality of his plays, most notably, *Cyrano de Bergerac.*

Plot Summary

Act I: A Performance at the Hotel de Bourgogne

Act I of *Cyrano de Bergerac* opens at the famous Hotel de Bourgogne in France, where a troop of actors are setting up for a matinee performance. Joining the actors and stagehands is a cross-section of seventeenth-century Parisian life: cavaliers, pages, pickpockets, peddlers, and even Marquises bustle about the stage. The audience is introduced to Christian de Neuvillette, a handsome young man who has come (with his friend, Ligniere) to catch a glimpse of Roxane, a beautiful woman who may be attending the performance. Christian complains of his inability to speak to her: "I have no wit," he states, and he fears embarrassing himself if he is given the chance to confront her, A greater obstacle, however, is the fact that the Comte de Guiche, who is married to the niece of Cardinal Richelieu, also desires Roxane, and has been pressing her to marry his friend, Valvert, so that he can be near her whenever he wishes. Roxane is, naturally, averse to the idea.

The play truly begins when its title character, the soldier Cyrano, enters and chases Montfleury, an actor whose pomposity and unskilled bombast the swordsman despises, off of the stage. After giving the theatre's manager a purse of gold (to compensate for his closing the play), Cyrano banters with some minor charactersuntil Valverl, goaded by de Guiche, attempts to mock Cyrano for his most striking feature: his gigantic nose. He taunts Cyrano with, "your nose is ... rather large," to which Cyrano replies with a fifty-four line oration in which he details all of the insults Valvert could have said, had he "some tinge of letters, or of wit." As if this speech is not proof enough of Cyrano's quick mind and sense of humor, he immediately duels Valvert while simultaneously composing a ballad that describes his actions. He states that when he completes his verse, he will strike with his sword, which he does, killing Valvert. Clearly, the "Performance at the Hotel de Bourgogne" is Cyrano's own, which the crowd on stage (and in the audience) watch, spellbound. After the hall empties out, Cyrano reveals to his friend, Le Bret, that he is in love with (of course) a woman named Roxane. Like Christian, he is afraid of humiliation, although his problem is not his lack of wit but "the shadow of rny profile on the wall." Roxane's lady-in-waiting asks Cyrano if she and Roxane might meet him tomorrow to discuss "certain things." Cyrano agrees and continues his pursuit of making himself " in al 1 things admirable." He ends the Act by dueling one hundred men to save Lignierc's life, a brave and noble act, although it has already been revealed to the audience that Cyrano's private self is lovelorn and insecure.

Act II: The Bakery of the Poets

The action shifts to Ragueneau's pastry shop, where the baker (and aspiring poet) feeds a host of local artisans in exchange for their verse and conversation, Cyrano enters, for it is here that he will meet Roxane, and he is eager to hear what he hopes

will be a pronouncement of her love. Roxane tells him that she is in love, with someone "who does not know," who "loves me too," and "never says one word." However, when she describes this man as "beautiful," Cyrano knows that she cannot be speaking of him. Roxane confesses that she loves Christian, and has come to ask Cyrano to watch over him, as he is to enter the Guards (of which Cyrano is a member). Cyrano reluctantly agrees, saying nothing to Roxane about his own feelings.

Cyrano tells Christian of Roxane's love and that she expects a letter from him. Delighted yet distraught, Christian tells Cyrano that he cannot write, fordoing so "would ruin all": "I am afool!/ Stupid enough to hang myself." The two men speak of their own deficiencies: Christian, placing his hand on his heart, cries, "Oh, if I had words/To say what I have here." Cyrano wishes he was "a handsome little Musketeer." Finally, Cyrano devises a plan to help Christian: the young soldier can "borrow" his wit by allowing Cyrano to write theletter to Roxane. After some prodding, Christian agrees, causing Cyrano to exclaim that, with their combined forces, "we two" will "make one her of romance!"

Act III: Roxane's Kiss

Act HI takes place in front of Roxane's house. Cyrano enters and speaks to Roxane about "Christian's" letters, which she describes as the work of "a master," but which Cyrano is forced (by virtue of his secret role in their creation) to criticize. De Guiche enters, again asking Roxane to consider his offer; she responds with indifference. When he reveals that the Guards have been ordered to besiege Arras, Roxane's concern for Christian motivates her to trick de Guiche into leaving Cyrano and Christian behind, while the rest of the regiment marches off to glory. He agrees, convinced that this is a sign of Roxane's love. Christian and Cyrano enter and discuss their agreement, which Christian wants to end by speaking freely and openly to Roxane. "I am no such fool! You shall see," the young Cadet promises, only to flounder when he does attempt to speak eloquently to Roxane. She runs into her house, shutting the door in his face and leaving Christian more heartbroken than before. However, Cyrano again devises a plan: he will stand under Roxane's balcony and pretend that he is Christian; this way, the illusion that they have created will be sustained. Hidden by shadows, Cyrano "rhapsodizes" under her window until she begs him to climb the trellis and receive her kiss. Christian does, leaving Cyrano on the ground, comparing himself to Lazarus, the Biblical beggar who waited outside the gates of a rich man who dined on the finest foods.

A Capuchin monk enters with a letter for Roxane from de Guiche, explaining that he has secretly remained in Paris for a day while his regiment is preparing for war. Roxane, however, pretends to read a very different letter to the Capuchin, claiming that she and Christian are to be immediately married by order of Cardinal Richelieu. Roxane and Christian arrive for the ceremony, while Cyrano, again finding himself an outcast, waits outside. When de Guiche enters, Cyrano manages to stall him long enough for the ceremony to conclude; when it does, Roxane and Christian enter and announce their

marriage. Furious, de Guiche commands Cyrano and Christian to report to the front. As they leave, Cyrano promises Roxane that "Christian" will write her every day.

Act IV: The Cadets ofGascoyne

Act FV occurs at Arras, the front of France's war against Spain. Cyrano has risked his life every day by crossing the battlefield to ensure that Roxane receives her daily letter. All are shocked when a carriage arrives at the camp containing Roxane and Ragueneau, she has come to see Christian, and he has come to supply the hungry men with food and wine. In a conversation with Christian, Roxane asks for his "forgiveness. "She feels that she has sinned, that she has fallen in love with him only because he was "beautiful." She tells him that even if he were "less charming" or "ugly even," she would still love him. Of course, this is terrible news to Christian, who tells Cyrano that he is "tired of being/ [His] own rival." Christian wants Roxane to know the truth: "I want her love/For the poor fool I am or not at all!" He asks Cyrano to tell Roxane the entire story in the hope that she will choose the man whom she loves more dearly. Christian exits the stage, entering the battle that rages outside.

Cyrano now has the opportunity for which he has been hoping: a chance to reveal himself to Roxane, to show her that it is his soul and his words that she loves. Just as he is about to tell her, however, Christian is brought on stage, mortally wounded. Rather than deny happiness to a dying man, Cyrano tells Christian that Roxane chose him: "I have told her; she loves you." As he watches Roxane weep over Christian's body, Cyrano realizes that he will never be able to tell her the truth: "I am dead and my love mourns for me/And does not know." Inspired to fight, Cyrano rushes to the front, announcing, "I have two deaths to avenge now Christian's/And my own!" The act ends as Cyrano enters the fray.

Act V: Cyrano's Gazette

The scene shifts to fifteen years later. Roxane has entered a convent and is visited by Cyrano every Saturday. During these visits he informs her of the week's events, giving her a dose of the town's gossip. Le Bret tells the nuns that Cyrano is penniless and lonely due to his caustic attacks ("satires") on hypocrites of all kinds: "He attacks the false nobles, the false saints/The false heroes, the false artistsin short/Everyone!" De Guiche, whose passion has been cooled by time, visits Roxane to tell her of a rumor he heard at Court concerning the possible murder of Cyrano for offending a "false noble." Ragueneau runs on stage and informs everyone that Cyrano was hit on the head with a log that "accidentally" fell from a window. He and Le Bret run off to aid the dying swordsman.

Cyrano, however, appears after they leave to see Roxane before he dies. Although he tries to make jests and tell Roxane the "gazette" of news at Court, he is obviously in pain (yet too proud to admit it). Confessing that he is dying, he engages in his last swordfight, a battle with death itself. While his previous clashes with death allowed him

escape, this one will not, and he stumbles in exhaustion, Nearmg death, Cyrano's last wish is to read the letter that "Christian" wrote to Roxane on the day of his death, which she keeps in a locket around her neck. As he reads it aloud, the irony of the situationand Cyrano's lifeintensifies: "Farewell, Roxanne, because to-day I die ... and my heart/ Still so heavy with love I have not told,/And I die without telling you!" When he continues reading the letter after the sun sets, however, Roxane realizes that Cyrano knows the letter by heart; she realizes that it was he, not Christian, who composed the words with which she fell in love. Roxane is so moved by the many sacrifices and selfless acts performed by Cyrano that she professes her love for him. Cyrano thanks her for a life of "sweetness" and collapses while offering Roxane "One thing without stain/Unspotted from the world, in spite of doom/[His] own!" As Roxane leans toward him, asking him what he is leaving her, he smiles and says, "My white plume": a symbol of his honor in a world that seemed to have little regard for such a quality.

Act 1, Scene 1

Act 1, Scene 1 Summary

Cyrano De Bergerac begins as a play within a play. It begins as if the cast members are entering the "great hall" of the Hotel de Borugogne, the oldest and most famous stage in Paris during that time. The first scene involves "the audience" arriving to see La Clorise, by Balthazar Baro which was staged at the actual Hotel de Bourgogne in 1631. The year Cyrano De Bergerac takes place is described as being 1640, thus, the period is set, by Rostand, as taking place in the 17th century, during the real De Bergerac's lifetime. Many attendees, who have arrived early, are proceeding to drink, gamble and carry on, talking and singing, while waiting for the play to begin. Chaos and comedy ensue as the dark hall fills up with cavaliers, pickpockets, lackeys, marquises and other spectators. Cuigy enters and talks with a Marquis just before Christian and Lignière enter, arm and arm, and thus ends the first scene.

Act 1, Scene 1 Analysis

Cyrano De Bergerac begins as an uproarious comedy set in the time period of the real De Bergerac. Rostand was fascinated with that time frame and wanted to create a play about one of his boyhood idols. There are many historic references such as the Act One "play" being one of the most popular and longest running plays of De Bergerac's day, La Clorise, and held in the most well known theater of his day. It was a clever twist on Rostand's part to begin his own play with the cast of De Bergerac attending one.

Act 1, Scene 2

Act 1, Scene 2 Summary

The start of second scene focuses on the arrival of Christian De Neuvllette and his friend Lignière; followed by Ragueneau, aspiring poet and famous chef, and Le Bret, friend and supporter of Cyrano. The house begins lighting the chandeliers, signifying that La Clorise will soon begin. Lignière begins introducing the handsome Christian to various dignitaries and friends of his, many of whom comment on Christian's good looks. Christian and Lignière converse about Christian's, true love, from a distance, who is yet to arrive, and who he has obviously come to the theatre to get a glimpse of. The chef Ragueneau then enters and Lignière converses with him and introduces him to Christian. Ragueneau wonders at the absence of Cyrano De Bergerac and the men discuss the possible trouble to follow if De Bergerac arrives to find the actor Montfleury taking the stage. Le Bret, being Cyrano's close friend, is called over by the men to clarify things. Roxane, the girl of Christian's desires, and then enters her box, and the Marquis' comment, to one another, on her beauty; Christian hears this discussion and then notices her presence. Lignière, slightly drunk, leaves the great hall, and his friend Christian, to drink in the pubs. The audience calls for the play to begin.

Act 1, Scene 2 Analysis

The audience is quickly introduced to Christian and know that he is very handsome and in love with Roxane. The mere sight of her makes him nervous and flustered, even though it is obvious that they have not formally met. He has dragged his friend, the slightly inebriated Lignière, along to the play to tell him who she is. Indeed, many other audience members seem to be taken with Roxane, from the Marquises, to De Guiche, and later, Cyrano De Bergerac himself. Roxane is noted to be a précieuse, which means that she is a student of this particular art of love that was studied in salons in 17th Century France. Précieuse involves the wooing of a woman with deep and meaningful poetry, both written and spoken. It is also learned in Act One that Ragueneau, the cook chef, has a fondness for poets, and trades his famous pastries with famous poets for verse. Cyrano, the audience discovers, in addition to being in the military, is also a fine poet and intellectual.

Act 1, Scene 3

Act 1, Scene 3 Summary

De Guiche, Valvert then Montfleury enter the hall in this scene. De Guiche is seen leaving Roxanne's box with his entourage and the gentleman De Valvert. They exchange pleasantries with some of the marquises and then De Guiche announces that he is leaving for the stage. The marquises follow him as do a large group of others. Christian catches a pickpocket trying to steal his money; the pickpocket tells him if he does not turn him in he will tell him a secret about his friend Lignière. Christian agrees and the pickpocket tells him that his friend is in danger and that Christian must warn him. Christian, although loath to leave Roxane, exits the hall in search of his friend. It does not seem that Cyrano will be coming to the play, however, when Montfleury takes the stage, a "voice" is heard in the pit, shouting to him to leave the stage at once. Cuigy and Le Bret realize that the voice belongs to De Bergerac before the rest of the audience does. The scene ends with Cyrano continuing to berate Montfleury with the audience in an uproar over his alarming temper.

Act 1, Scene 4 Analysis

Comte De Guiche is also introduced in this Act as a Gascon, or a native of Gascony, France who are known for their boasting, but it is also noted that he is an ambitious Gascon, and someone who the marquises feel they should ingratiate themselves to. De Guiche is described as powerful and as always having a "court" about him. It is explained that De Guiche is married, but is so enamored with Roxane that he seeks to set her up with his friend Valvert. Cyrano is first introduced as "A Voice" from the middle of the pit. This adds to his mystery, which has already been established by Le Bret, Lignière and Ragueneau during their previous conversation. The fact that he did not reveal himself to any of his friends until Montfleury has taken the stage insinuates that he is there for only one purpose---to keep the actor from performing. Montfleury disgusts Cyrano, who finds him to be an inept actor and unworthy of his role. Cyrano had previously told Montfleury, after a confrontation between the two men, that he was to not perform for thirty days; and if he tried, Cyrano promised to ensure that he would not be successful in his attempt. In addition to his contempt of Montfleury's acting, it is also revealed that he has a "secret" reason for disliking the actor so much. The extreme measures he goes through to remove Montfleury from the stage establishes his passionate nature to the audience.

Act 1, Scene 4

Act 1, Scene 4 Summary

The occupants of this scene are the same as the last, with Cyrano's identity fully revealed to all present, and the entry of Bellerose and Jodelet. Montfleury begs the Marquises to put an end to Cyrano's raving, but Cyrano will not back down. The crowd tries to side with Montfleury, so Cyrano turns on the spectators, telling them to be quiet. Cyrano finally frightens Montfleury enough that he leaves the stage. Bellerose then takes the stage only to be told, by the audience that they want Jodelet, who then joins Bellerose. Jodelet speaks to the audience, who are calling for the return of Montfleury and the start of the play. Bellerose complains to Cyrano about having to return money to the patrons, and Cyrano responds by throwing a bag of gold onto the stage. Jodelet and Bellerose pick up the bag and are very happy with this turn of events; they tell the audience to leave the theater at once. Cyrano than has words with a "Bore" in the audience, as the man is angry at having missed the play on Cyrano's account, and begins berating Cyrano. Cyrano suddenly accuses the Bore of staring at his nose, which dumbfounds the poor man. Cyrano intimidates the snobby, irritating Bore who, in the end, runs off in search of "The Guard" for protection.

De Guiche, who is now stepping off the stage with Valvert and the rest of his entourage, is very annoyed with Cyrano and the cancellation of the play. Valvert, in order to impress De Guiche, throws a lame insult at Cyrano. Cyrano than taunts and abuses Valvert verbally and then the two men duel. Cyrano recites a poem as they spar and Cyrano finally runs Valvert through with his sword at the end of his verse. Valvert, wounded, but alive, is carried off the stage by his friends. The crowd is awed by Cyrano's swordplay and poetry; many shout congratulations to Cyrano. A Mousquetaire (or a Musketeer) shakes Cyrano's hand and complements him before departing the great hall. Le Bret soon finds out, that Cyrano threw his entire month's income on the stage when he tossed the bag to Bellerose and Jodelet to cover the lost tickets, and thus has no money to eat. A female sweetmeat vender overhearing this offers Cyrano anything he desires from her cart, without charge.

Act 1, Scene 4 Analysis

Cyrano's confrontation with the bore sets the stage for two elements; the first being his incredible insecurity over his appearance and secondly a weakness that Valvert proposes to use against him to start a fight with him. However, Valvert is shocked to realize that Cyrano is not as inflamed or insulted as he had hoped by his insult: "Your . . . your nose is . . . err . . . Your nose . . . is very large!" stammers Valvert to Cyrano. Cyrano not only seems blasé about this inept insult but uses Valvert's obvious lack of command to proceed to verbally humiliate him and run intellectual rings around him. The audience is then treated to a poem, made up at the spur of the moment, and recited by Cyrano as the men dual; Cyrano promises to strike Valvert in the last verse;

which he does, much to the spectators' delight. Those remaining in the theater are so enamored with Cyrano's wit and swordsmanship that any who were angry at his earlier outburst against Montfleury quickly forgive him. By the end of Scene Four, both the real audience and the cast "audience" are enamored with De Bergerac.

Act 1, Scene 5

Act 1, Scene 5 Summary

Cyrano and Le Bret discuss Cyrano's dislike of Montfleury and the incident in the great hall, their conversation then turns to Roxane, who is Cyrano's cousin, and whom he is, along with Christian, infatuated with. Le Bret implores him to tell her of his feelings but Cyrano fears her rejection more than anything else and is self-conscious of his overly large nose and lack of good looks. Towards the end of this scene, the doorkeeper of the hotel admits Roxane's Duenna (or chaperone) who seeks to speak with Cyrano.

Act 1, Scene 5 Analysis

Le Bret sees in Cyrano all the good qualities he does not see in himself. He points out to him that he should not be so insecure and uses the example of the sweetmeat vendor who, in her admiration, offers anything on her cart to him. It is obvious to Le Bret that she has more than just a passing interest in Cyrano, but Cyrano does not notice this. It takes Le Bret pointing this out for him to even acknowledge that it may be true.

Act 1, Scene 6

Act 1, Scene 5 Summary

Roxane's Duenna relays to Cyrano that Roxane wishes to see him in private. Cyrano is overcome by the news that the woman he loves desires a meeting with him. They are to meet at Ragueneau's shop at seven o'clock, in the morning.

Act 1, Scene 5 Analysis

Roxane's Duenna announcing to Cyrano that she wishes to see him in private sends him into emotional ecstasy. It is clear that he hopes that Roxane wants to see him because she shares his romantic interest. This hope is not deterred by Le Bret who, seeing greatness in his friend, believes that Roxane could love him in return, further he encourages this notion in Cyrano.

Act 1, Scene 7

Act 1, Scene 6 Summary

Scene Six, which is the last in Act One, has Cyrano fretting over his meeting with Roxane and Le Bret trying to calm his nerves. As they go to leave the great hall Cuigy, Brissaille and several officers enter the door supporting Lignière who is completely drunk. Cuigy tells Cyrano that Lignière has been looking for him. Lignière, being alerted by Christian, is now aware of the danger he is in and slurs a plea to Cyrano to allow him sanctuary at his home to hide from the "one-hundred men against me." Cyrano, outraged, tells Lignière that he will defend him against attack and that he will escort Lignière home. The actresses, officers, and all others still in the theater, overhear this declaration by Cyrano and all want to witness the battle. The whole lot of them head of to the Porte de Nesle in a long procession, Lignière staggering at the front.

Act 1, Scene 6 Analysis

Act One ends with more outlandish bravado and bravery from Cyrano, as he pledges to help his friend Lignière combat the "one-hundred men" who are after him. Again the crowd can't help but be captivated by Cyrano. His quick decision to come to the aid of his fellow poet friend and vow to kill them all even inspires the violinists to leave the pit and follow along in the procession, playing a merry tune of accompaniment.

Act 2, Scene 1

Act 2, Scene 1 Summary

Act Two takes place in Ragueneau's shop "The Cookshop of Poets." In Scene 1, it is early in the morning, and Ragueneau is doing paperwork at his small table in the shop while assistants and other chef's prepare food to sell for the day. Ragueneau is a generous and romantic figure and his chef's apprentices try to please him with special creations which they know will be rewarded.

Ragueneau's wife Lise enters the shop with paper bags for wrapping food for customers and Ragueneau is happy at this until he realizes that the "wrappers" are the torn poetry of his friends and patrons, "The Poets," for whom he provides food in exchange for their verse. He becomes very irate with his wife and calls her names for this indiscretion. She is not moved, however, and only shows contempt for his love of the poets.

Act 2, Scene 1 Analysis

Ragueneau is kind and generous to his employees and patrons and he is a romantic figure trapped in a baker's profession. His wife does not share his fondness for the poets which is obvious as she has torn up his books of poetry gifts to use for wrapping. The audience is given a glimpse of Ragueneau's deep love of verse as he gets so angered at his wife's actions and her disregard for his interest.

Act 2, Scene 2

Act 2, Scene 2 Summary

Ragueneau suffers over the decision of which of the poems to wrap patties in for two children who come into the shop. He cannot decide, so, when his wife's back is turned he gives away free patties to the children if they will leave with them unwrapped; they happily accept his offer. Cyrano enters the shop at this point.

Act 2, Scene 2 Analysis

This is a quite comedic scene, showing again Ragueneau's love of poetry and the poets. He is in agony at wrapping the children's patties in any of the poems, he cannot decide because he loves them all equally. He would rather loose money giving up free patties than give away the poems.

Act 2, Scene 3

Act 2, Scene 3 Summary

The fist thing that Cyrano asks Ragueneau is "What time is it?" He is quite emotional and distracted by the upcoming meeting with Roxane. Ragueneau congratulates him on his wonderful fight at the Hotel de Bourgogne. Cyrano does not even recall the fight as he is so distracted. Again, Cyrano asks Ragueneau the time. Lise, Ragueneau's wife notices a wound upon Cyrano's hand as he absently shakes hands with her. She asks him what it is from and he replies that it is nothing, just a scratch. Ragueneau is curious about the cut on his hand but Cyrano is not interested in discussing it; his only worry is that he will have privacy when Roxane arrives. He asks Ragueneau if this can be arranged. Ragueneau tells Cyrano that his poets will be arriving shortly and Cyrano tells him to have them clear out when he gives a sign, he then asks for the time again and requests a pen. A Mousquetaire enters the shop and Lise hurries over to him to chat. Cyrano sits at Ragueneau's table and begins trying to write a letter of love to Roxane; he looks up suddenly at Ragueneau and asks, yet again, for the time. Ragueneau replies that it is "A quarter past six." Roxane and Cyrano are to meet at seven; he begins to write furiously.

Act 2, Scene 3 Analysis

Cyrano is so nervous and excited about his meeting with Roxane, he can think of thinking else. He is so in love with her he, literarily, cannot think straight. He, however, is planning and thinking even in his obvious state of near panic. He knows that Roxane is a student of précieuse and that he must create a poetic proclamation of his love in order to woo her.

Act 2, Scene 4

Act 2, Scene 4 Summary

The same cast, as the previous scene is in the pastry shop, with the addition of the five Poets. They are dressed all in black and their "stockings" are sagging; they are covered in mud. Lise is irritated at their arrival, alternately, Ragueneau is elated. The poets proceed to compliment their patron Ragueneau, in turn, likening him to great poets of days past. They mention they are late due to the crowd at the Porte de Neslie, the place of Cyrano's stand against the one-hundred men who were after Lignière. They tell Ragueneau that eight men lay ripped open upon the ground with a crowd gathered around them. Ragueneau asks Cyrano if he knows anything about this and he replies that he does not and continues writing. The poets continue to charm Ragueneau while his wife speaks intimately to the Mousquetaire in a corner. Cyrano, who has finished his love letter to Roxane and tucked it in his jacket, now turns to the scene at hand. He asks Ragueneau if he realizes that the poets are stuffing themselves as Ragueneau recites his own poetry to them. Ragueneau tells Cyrano that he does, indeed, know this and feels it is an even exchange. Cyrano then walks over to Lise and the Mousquetaire and warns them of their indiscretion telling them that if it continues he will take matters into his own hands in the defense of his friend Ragueneau. Lise is angered by this and tells her Mousquetaire to defend their honor, but, he is not given the opportunity to do so, as Cyrano walks to the door and sees that Roxane and her Duenna are outside; he motions to Ragueneau to rid the area of the poets.

Act 2, Scene 4 Analysis

Once Cyrano finishes his letter of love his is somewhat subdued and can pay some attention to the goings on around him. This is not a man who is comfortable with keeping his feelings inside. He also feels his communication of love should be written and he will now have something to give Roxane if the need arises. Ragueneau explains to Cyrano that he recites his verse to the poets and that they get to eat when they are hungry. This attitude of chivalry wins Cyrano over and he now feels the need to protect Ragueneau. He immediately notices that Lise and the Mousquetaire's conversation is not one of innocent friendship. He feels compelled to defend his kind hearted friend and let them know that he is aware of their indiscretion.

Act 2, Scene 5

Act 2, Scene 5 Summary

Cyrano vows that if he thinks Roxane might be interested in him he will give her his letter; he then opens the door for her and her Duenna. He calls the Duenna to the side and offers her pastries wrapped in poet paper, if she will eat them outside and give him and Roxane privacy inside the shop. The Duenna takes the bundle and leaves the shop. Cyrano then turns his full attention to Roxane, removing his hat in respect.

Act 2, Scene 5 Analysis

Cyrano somewhere in his heart, does not believe that Roxane could possible be in love with him, so he writes the letter and tucks it away, just in case she *does* indicate interest in him. He adeptly gets the Duenna out of the way by keeping her busy outside; he wants a chance to speak with Roxane in total privacy without distraction.

Act 2, Scene 6

Act 2, Scene 6 Summary

Cyrano begins speaking with Roxane, and she thanks him for teaching manners to Valvert, in the theater, the night before. She tells him that De Guiche was trying to force Valvert upon her as a husband and that she was not interested in him. Roxane then reminds Cyrano of their childhood as cousins together and they banter in conversation together. Cyrano is being lulled by this conversation. Roxane than says that she is in love, but that the man does not know it. At this point Cyrano only replies "Ah!" to her every exclamation. However, when she says that the object of her affection is a handsome cadet in Cyrano's own regiment, Cyrano rises from his seat and becomes aware that she is not talking about him. She notices his unease and asks him what is wrong, but Cyrano brushes this off and questions her about this man. He asks her if she would love him still if he was stupid, she insists that he could not be, but if he were she would die. Roxane asks Cyrano to be-friend the cadet and protect him for her. Cyrano swears that he will. Roxane leaves the shop in good spirits and tells Cyrano to tell the cadet she admires to write to her.

Act 2, Scene 6 Analysis

The conversation between Roxane and Cyrano about their childhood is very intimate and tender. Roxane's words to him are loving and romantic. It is no wonder that Cyrano is surprised in the end that it is not him she is speaking of when she says she is in love. The build-up is so deceiving that even the audience is fooled.

Act 2, Scene 7

Act 2, Scene 7 Summary

Cyrano does not move after Roxane and her Duenna leave the shop. Ragueneau asks him if he and his poets may come back into the shop area. Cyrano tells him yes and as they return Cyrano's captain, Carbon De Castel-Jaloux, enters the shop, obviously looking for Cyrano. The Captain tries to lead Cyrano off telling him that his presence is requested outside, but Cyrano will not leave with him. The Captain goes to the door and tells the crowd that Cyrano is not in the mood to join them. Shortly, Cyrano's fellow Cadets enter the shop, followed by, his friend, Le Bret, a Burgher and a large crowd of Parisians. They are all anxious to speak with him and congratulate him on his heroic fight against the one-hundred men, the remainder of which ran off in fear after he laid eight to rest. Le Bret notices immediately that his friend is upset and inquires about his meeting with Roxane. Cyrano hushes him and cuts the subject short, not wishing to discuss it further. Cuigy enters announcing the arrival of De Guiche, the crowd his hushed by this news. De Guiche addresses Cyrano and tells him that he is amazed by his heroic actions and offers his rich uncle Richelieu as a patron for his poetry; if he would be allowed to make edits to the work. Cyrano turns down this offer stating that none shall ever alter his work for any amount of money. De Guiche, insulted by this stands to leave the shop, referring Cyrano to the book *Don Quixote,* the hero of which was both an idealist and madman.

Act 2, Scene 7 Analysis

Cyrano is so stunned and disappointed at Roxane's love for someone else that he is immobilized; only the surprise of seeing his captain enter the shop unexpectedly breaks him out of his revere. Still, he does not have any desire to be congratulated and is still only wishing to wallow in his pain. Le Bret knowing his friend well is the only one of the visitors who sees the deep aguish Cyrano is in and knows that it must be due to his meeting with Roxanne. The reference De Guiche makes to *Don Quixote* his own insult to Cyrano, essentially indicating that he thinks Cyrano mad and fighting against nothing worth fighting for.

Act 2, Scene 8

Act 2, Scene 8 Summary

Le Bret cannot believe Cyrano's blatant disregard of De Guiche's offer, he does not understand his friend's idealism in the face of such possible wealth. Cyrano goes off on a rant of all the reasons he should not compromise himself for money. Le Bret asks him again about Roxane but he is cut short by Cyrano on the subject. Christian, Roxane's love comes into the shop to meet up with his regiment and tries to mingle with his fellow cadets, but they ignore him. He goes and sits at a table by himself.

Act 2, Scene 8 Analysis

Le Bret is initially upset about Cyrano losing a great opportunity for himself, but realizes at some point that Cyrano's angst centers on the unhappy outcome of his conversation with Roxane.

Act 2, Scene 9

Act 2, Scene 9 Summary

Cyrano, Le Bret, the Cadets and Christian are the only ones left in the shop. The Cadets are begging Cyrano to tell the story of his fight, particularly to the new recruit, Christian, so that he might learn how to be brave. One Cadet goes over to Christian and explains how sensitive Cyrano is about his nose and that only a very stupid or brave man would dare mention it to him. He then brags about how brave his group of cadets is, from the South, and how Christian is a novice and is sickly looking.

Cyrano walks over to the group of Cadets and begins to tell his story to them, Christian, wishing to prove how brave he is, he insults Cyrano's nose. Cyrano, about to run him through, asks who his is; he realizes that this is Roxane's love who he has sworn to her to protect. Cyrano ignores the insult, but Christian, determined to get a rise out of Cyrano and prove his bravery continues to insult his nose as Cyrano fights the impulse to beat Christian in order to fulfill his vow to Roxane.

Act 2, Scene 9 Analysis

Christian is at the very least a brave man with great pride. He cannot stand the fact that he is being insulted by his fellow Cadet's and will risk life and limb to prove his own bravery. Cyrano shows a great deal of restraint and, again, his love of Roxane by not attacking Christian for his repeated insults.

Act 2, Scene 10

Act 2, Scene 10 Summary

Finally, he tells the rest of the Cadet's to leave to be alone with Christian. He tells the young, handsome Cadet that he is Roxane's cousin and that she is in love with him. Christian is overjoyed by this news and hugs Cyrano. Cyrano tells Christian that he is to write Roxane and tell her of his feelings but Christian cannot do this, he is not up to the task and is not able to speak or write well to beautiful women. Cyrano then gets the idea that he will do the writing for Christian and they will not inform Roxane of their charade. Christian thanks Cyrano and the two embrace on their pact.

Act 2, Scene 10 Analysis

Christian does not realize that Cyrano is in love with Roxane and that he wants to write the letters not so much to help Christian but to be able to, if even indirectly, communicate his love to Roxane.

Act 2, Scene 11

Act 2, Scene 11 Summary

The Cadets, who are still outside, look into the door to see if Christian is dead, they are surprised to realize that he is not. Lise's Mousquetaire seeing his chance at getting back at Cyrano for his challenge to him and his insult to Lise earlier swaggers over to Cyrano and insults his nose; Cyrano begins beating the Mousquetaire and the Cadets are delighted that he has returned to his former self.

Act 2, Scene 11 Analysis

The Cadets are baffled by Cyrano's strange behavior, which again shows how much he was willing to go against his own nature for the love of Roxane.

Act 3, Scene 1

Act 3, Scene 1 Summary

Act Three opens in front of Roxane's house. Her Duenna is seated on a bench beside the doorstep. Ragueneau stands by the Duenna crying and telling her about his recent bad luck. His wife Lise has eloped with a Mousquetaire and he, in a terrible state over her abandonment tried to hang himself, only to be saved by Cyrano. The Duenna, though sympathetic to Ragueneau, calls to Roxane to hurry or they will be late. She explains to Ragueneau that they are to go across the street for "A disquisition upon the Softer Sentiments to be read." Cyrano enters at this point, followed by two pages or musicians. He has won a bet against the men and they must provide him with their services for a day. Roxane comes out of her house to greet Cyrano speaking dearly of Christian and his wit. A discussion of Christian's letters and wit follows between Roxane and Cyrano. She is exclaiming over Christian's tender courtship through his poetic letters and Cyrano, pretending to think Christian a dim-wit, challenges her in order to hear her compliments over the writing that is really his own given to Christian. De Guiche appears at the end of this act, Roxane knows that he loves her and, in fear of his power, does not want him to find out about her and Christian. She spirits Cyrano into the house so that De Guiche will not be suspicious of his presence.

Act 3, Scene 1 Analysis

When Roxane's Duenna speaks of the Softer Sentiments, she is speaking of Roxane's devotion to précieuse. The disquisition upon the Softer Sentiments means that they would be attending a reading of the Map of Tenderness, a map that was made for those who followed the précieuse, or art of courtship popular in the 17th Century. The map outlined the steps that must be followed by gentlemen in order to properly court the woman of their desire. Cyrano is so delighted that Roxane is enormously pleased by his letters, that she believes are coming from Christian, he almost gives himself away.

Act 3, Scene 2

Act 3, Scene 2 Summary

De Guiche has come to tell Roxane that he is leaving for a war in Arras, and that he has been made commander of the Guards to which Cyrano and Christian belong. He tells her that he looks forward to getting revenge on Cyrano in Arras. Roxane realizes that this means that Christian will also be sent to war. To avoid this fate for her love, Roxane cleverly pretends disregard for both Cyrano and Christian and convinces De Guiche that the ultimate revenge would be to not send Cyrano to war but to force him to stay behind in Paris. De Guiche takes the bait and decides that she is right and he will not send the order for Cyrano and Christian's company to report for battle. De Guiche mistakes Roxane's charade for affection for him and tells her that he will not go to war but hide with the monks in a convent so that he might sneak away to see her. Roxane deters him again by telling him she could only love a man who is heroic in battle. He acquiesces and takes his leave, supposedly to Arras and the battle.

Act 3, Scene 2 Analysis

De Guiche is so blinded by his love for Roxane that he does not even realize that he is being tricked. Roxane shows her devious side with this ruse to save her true love from war and possible death; she is not beyond leading De Guiche to believe that she might love him if it will convince him to do her bidding.

Act 3, Scene 3

Act 3, Scene 3 Summary

Roxane tells her Duenna that she is not to tell Cyrano about what she has done. He would never forgive her making him miss his war; she then calls Cyrano out of the house. Roxane and the Duenna head to the neighbor's door to hear the reading. Before she enters the other house Cyrano tries to get her to divulge what she might next be expecting from Christian. She tells him that she wishes for Christian to improvise his talk of love at their meeting, but she makes Cyrano swear that he will not share any information with Christian as she does not want his conversation to be contrived.

Act 3, Scene 3 Analysis

Cyrano is interested in finding out what she expects of Christian so that he might better help him to woo her. He is also delighted at her request and the opportunity to let his poetry and expression of love have free reign.

Act 3, Scene 4

Act 3, Scene 4 Summary

Cyrano calls to Christian and he enters the scene. Cyrano tells him he has gotten information from Roxane at that he knows exactly what to do to prepare him for their meeting. Christian declines this invitation. He has come to feel that it is time for him to attempt to woo her on his own. Through Cyrano's letters he believes she loves him sufficiently for him to remove Cyrano from the picture now. Cyrano tries to tell him that this is a mistake but he will not be dissuaded.

Act 3, Scene 4 Analysis

Christian is beginning to feel left out of this love affair, realizing that what is really happening is that Cyrano is wooing Roxane through Christian. He feels that if she truly loves him that she will not need the deep poetry to be won.

Act 3, Scene 5

Act 3, Scene 5 Summary

Roxane and the Duenna leave the neighbors house and she sees Christian. They sit together on the bench by the doorstep. She urges him to talk love to her and Christian, in his own words, says "I love you." She tells him that she knows this and asks him to elaborate to which he replies "I love you so much. . ." Roxane starts to become annoyed with these inept proclamations. Christian continues with more of the same in-eloquence and Roxane has had enough. She insults him and then leaves him with the advce to re-collect his persuasiveness. Cyrano overhearing this is not surprised at Christian's lack of success.

Act 3, Scene 5 Analysis

Roxane's serious study of précieuse is highly offended and bored by Christian's sudden lack of poetry. She also is insulted as she takes it as a sign that he is no longer interested in wooing her properly.

Act 3, Scene 6

Act 3, Scene 6 Summary

Christian is devastated by his mistake and begs Cyrano, who has reveled himself, to help him. Cyrano does not want to take on trying to rectify the terrible situation Christian has put himself in of his own accord. Christian claims he will die if Cyrano does not help him and suggests that they speak to her through her balcony window. Cyrano is still reluctant and feels that Christian does not deserve Roxane's love or his help; but he relinquishes in the end to help him fix things with her. He tells Christian that he will hide and cue him while he stands in the front of the balcony and "speaks" to Roxane. Cyrano then sends his, still present, pages to either end of the street, as lookouts to play a warning tune if anyone is to arrive on the street to catch them. He instructs them to play a happy tune for a woman approaching and a sad tune if it is a man. The two men then position themselves below Roxane's balcony; Christian throws pebbles at her window to get her attention.

Act 3, Scene 6 Analysis

Cyrano is first annoyed with Christian and then angry at him for fouling things up so terribly by not taking his advice. It is partly his desire to help Christian who claims he will die otherwise and partly his yearning to partake in the wooing of Roxane that propels him to change his mind.

Act 3, Scene 7

Act 3, Scene 7 Summary

Roxane appears at the window inquiring of the person below to reveal himself. She is annoyed to find out that it is Christian; she tells him to go home. Christian, prompted by Cyrano sputters out a line to her and she, who is just about to close her window stops to listen. Christian continues to speak the words fed to him by Cyrano and Roxane becomes more and more interested in his conversation. She is interested but notices that his sentences are staggered with many pauses and offers to come down so that they may speak more freely. Trying to avoid this disaster Cyrano takes Christian's place at the balcony, speaking low and staying in the shadows so that she will not see it is him or recognize his voice. Cyrano convinces Roxane to stay at her balcony and they continue to banter. As he continues to speak with her he becomes more fluid and she more enamored, when he realizes that it is him making her so happy, directly, he falters for a time and almost reveals himself. Roxane is so wooed by Cyrano's words that Christian feels that this is the opportune time to request a kiss from her and interjects this, to Cyrano's great alarm. Cyrano tries to undo this damage to Christian's objections. They then suddenly hear the pages playing a tune and realize that a monk is headed their way. Cyrano tells Roxane that someone is coming and she closes her window.

Act 3, Scene 7 Analysis

If not for Cyrano Roxane would have certainly turned her back on Christian. Cyrano, not meaning to end up in front of the balcony is never-the-less completely intoxicated with the opportunity to speak directly to Roxane of his love for her. He is so successful in his endeavor at wooing Roxane that she is adrift on his words of love and trembles at his poetry. It is the confusion and complete joy he is feeling over her reaction that causes him to stammer and nearly give himself away. Christian, again, feeling left out of the love affair interjects with his request for a kiss, hoping that his physical prowess will win Roxane over and the charade can finally end. Cyrano, however, understanding the method of précieuse, knows that this is not the right time to proceed with this request. Christin in his ignorance of précieuse, his anxiousness to win Roxane and desire to remove Cyrano from the picture will not be deterred in his request for a kiss.

Act 3, Scene 8

Act 3, Scene 8 Summary

The monk comes upon Cyrano and Christian and inquires if this is the house of Magdeleine Robin, which is Roxane's sur name. Cyrano distracts the monk by telling him she lives the other way and the monk thanks him and leaves.

Act 3, Scene 8 Analysis

The appearance of the monk serves as a minor distraction and a hint of trouble to come.

Act 3, Scene 9

Act 3, Scene 9 Summary

After the monk takes his leave, Christian demands that Cyrano "Insist upon the kiss!" Cyrano admitting that he understands that it must happen at some point does not want to proceed. They are interrupted by Roxane's reappearance at the window.

Act 3, Scene 9 Analysis

Cyrano does not want to go forward with the request for the kiss because he is hoping still to make Roxane realize that it is he that she loves. Cyrano also knows that the kiss may be the beginning of the end for him.

Act 3, Scene 10

Act 3, Scene 10 Summary

Roxane re-initiates the conversation of the kiss. Cyrano, having a change of heart, proceeds to convince Roxane to accept the kiss. He is, again, successful and once her permission is given, he sends Christian to climb up the balcony to collect his prize. Christian has last minute doubts, but Cyrano pushes him to go, even though it does nothing but cause him pain to witness their joining. He laments "Roxane kisses the words spoken by me!. . ." At this point, the monk returns again and Cyrano pretends that he has just appeared running to her house and calls to her for Christian. Roxane and Christian come down from the balcony as the monk appears at the back.

Act 3, Scene 10 Analysis

The audience, at this point, must wonder at Cyrano's insecurity and fear that is so enormous that it allows him to let Christian claim the love that rightfully belongs to him.

Act 3, Scene 11

Act 3, Scene 11 Summary

The monk is determined to speak to Roxane and upon her questioning, tells her that he has a letter for her. The letter is from De Guiche, she opens the letter thinking that he will soon be out of her life for good only to find out that he has ignored her request to leave for war and has hidden in the convent of the monks so that he might sneak off, masked, to her house to see her once more. Knowing that the monk holds De Guiche in very high esteem, she again uses her cleverness to trick the monk into believing that De Guiche has sent the letter ordering him to marry her and Christian, right away, and she pretends to be upset by this. She whispers to Cyrano to detain De Guiche so that the monk may marry them before he arrives to stop them. Cyrano inquires of the monk how long the vows will take and is told a quarter of an hour. The couple and the monk then enter the house while Cyrano is left outside to wait for De Guiche's appearance.

Act 3, Scene 11 Analysis

Cyrano was correct in his fear that the kiss would be the beginning of the end. Roxane wastes no time in seizing the moment and foiling De Guiche by marrying the man that she thinks that she loves. Cyrano, however, does nothing to stop the union from taking place.

Act 3, Scene 12

Act 3, Scene 12 Summary

Cyrano contemplates how he will be able to detain De Guiche for a quarter of an hour. He devises an idea and climbs upon the balcony to wait.

Act 3, Scene 12 Analysis

Cyrano does not seem distracted by the wedding taking place inside Roxane's house, and busies himself with the task at hand. He has either resolved himself to the impossibility of winning her for his own or loves her so much that he wishes only to see her happy.

Act 3, Scene 13

Act 3, Scene 13 Summary

Cyrano does not have long to wait as De Guiche soon enters the scene, masked as promised and feeling around in the dark for Roxane's house. The dark and the mask are making it very difficult for him to see anything. Cyrano takes advantage of this situation to spin a yarn that will distract De Guiche for the time required. Upon seeing Cyrano drop to the ground in front of him he wonders out load where he came from. Cyrano, disguising his voice tells him he has fallen from the moon. De Guiche is on a mission to see Roxane and is not easily distracted. Cyrano continues to block his way and become more outrageous with his tale. Finally, he says something that captures De Guiche's attention and is able to lead him away from her door long enough for the vows to be completed. He then tells De Guiche in his normal voice that Roxane and Christian are married. De Guiche recognizes the voice and upon Cyrano removing his hat, also recognizes his nose.

Act 3, Scene 13 Analysis

Why Cyrano goes to such great lengths to keep De Guiche from interrupting the wedding of Roxane and Christian is bewildering, to say the least. The audience can only assume that it is his sense of nobility and love of panache, or elegance that drives him to act as protector of their vow so cheerfully. Given his sense of pride it would never be in his nature to come between two who are in love and to help untie them, in fact, would be splendid beyond compare.

Act 3, Scene 14

Act 3, Scene 14 Summary

De Guiche is amazed to realize that it is Christian that Roxane has married. He then complements Cyrano on his clever deceit. He then tells Roxane that she may say goodbye to her husband; he will be sending Christian off to war after all. Roxane and Christian take long to part and Roxane clings to him to keep him from leaving. In great distress she implores Cyrano to look out for Christian, keep him from harm, make sure he will be true to her and make sure that he writes.

Act 3, Scene 14 Analysis

De Guiche thinks that he is spiting Cyrano by making the two separate. However, Cyrano, says to himself "He thinks that he is giving me great pain!" This is the first indication that he would be glad of Roxane and Christian not being able to consummate their marriage. As Roxane pleads with Cyrano to mind Christian he humors her only until she admonishes him to make sure that Christian will write; at this request he is delighted and assures her that he will make sure he will.

Act 4, Scene 1

Act 4, Scene 1 Summary

Act four finds the Gascony Cadets at their post in Arras with Carbon De Castel-Jaloux, their captain in charge. Most of the men are sleeping while Carbon and Le Bret stand watch. Cyrano has left the camp to send out Roxane's letter and is just returning to the camp. Le Bret admonishes him for risking his life repeatedly for the sake of writing to Roxane. Le Bret urges him to sleep but Cyrano returns to his tent to write yet another letter to Roxane.

Act 4, Scene 1 Analysis

Cyrano has returned to his feverish wooing, via poetry, of Roxane, perhaps because they are so far apart or because it is what he knows best. It is also surmised that this will be his only opportunity to ever write to her about his feelings again. When the war ends and Christian returns to his wife, Cyrano will no longer have the chance to woo her, from a distance, ever again.

Act 4, Scene 2

Act 4, Scene 2 Summary

Morning is quickly approaching the camp and reveille is sounded to awaken the sleeping soldiers. They are all, disheartened, hungry, tired and frustrated. Captain Carbon calls for Cyrano to come from his tent to cheer the cadets.

Act 4, Scene 2 Analysis

France is losing against the Spaniards and the men are starving. They are turning on one another and only Cyrano keeps them from revolting.

Act 4, Scene 3

Act 4, Scene 3 Summary

Cyrano come out of his tent and attempts to rouse the cadets, while they are languishing from hunger he remains steadfast. He advises them to read, as he does and distract themselves from their physical discomfort. He proceeds to give them a speech on honor which brings them all to tears. Carbon is upset that he is making the men weep from homesickness but Cyrano advises him that they can be quickly roused to fight. De Guiche enters and it is clear that the cadets despise him. Le Bret notices that De Guiche is pale and languishing as they are, although he acts as if he is fine. Cyrano implores the men to act the same and not let De Guiche see they are suffering.

Act 4, Scene 3 Analysis

The men are close to revolt and their lack of provisions is wearing them down. Cyrano, beyond being brave, is not as forlorn because he is literally living on love. He is so distracted by wooing Roxane with verse that he seems not to be affected by the degradation around him. The pride of all to appear brave to one another is glaring.

Act 4, Scene 4

Act 4, Scene 4 Summary

De Guiche address the Captain merrily and with false bravado, both men notice the others weakening state of health thinking the other worse off. De Guiche prompted by Cyrano, braggingly, tells the camp of his clever action in a recent skirmish, where-in he removes his white scarf signifying his position in the military so as to trick the Spaniards, allowing him to withdraw unharmed from their midst. Cyrano undermines De Guiche's pride by telling him he is not truly brave for hiding his position. His rebuke of De Guiche's war story raises the moral of the cadets. Cyrano tells De Guiche to give him the scarf and that he would proudly wear it so he could be a target for the enemy to draw fire away from the other troops. De Guiche tries to insinuate that this is false bragging on Cyrano's part as everyone knows that the scarf is gone forever. Cyrano then pulls the scarf from his jacket. De Guiche takes the scarf happily and walks to the hill to signal a spy with it. He then informs the men that the signal was to alert the Spaniards that they might attack this camp, thus distracting them so De Guiche can manipulate the situation in his favor. He essentially set them up for attack for strategy. Christian realizing that they may all soon be dead exclaims "Roxane!" He then states his wish to say a last goodbye to her properly. Cyrano tells him that he already has and hands him the recently finished letter. Suddenly, a carriage appears coming towards the camp of men, the driver is exclaiming that they are in service of the King. They all salute the carriage, and the steps are let down. Roxane steps from the carriage and surprises everyone with her presence on the battlefield.

Act 4, Scene 4 Analysis

Cyrano's deep dislike of De Guiche propels him to discredit him. Cyrano aptly exclaims that De Guiche has chosen their camp for the strategic distraction as revenge against him and Christian. De Guiche admits that while it could have been any of the camps, he did favor that it would be theirs to take the fight, as much for Cyrano's bravery as for his wish to be rid of both men. When Christian takes the letter from Cyrano he notices a mark on it that can only be a tear stain. He accuses Cyrano of feeling more for Roxane than he is admitting, but Cyrano brushes it off as poetic emotion. The camp is stunned by the arrival of Roxane, particularly, Cyrano, Christian and Di Guiche, the three men who love her most.

Act 4, Scene 5

Act 4, Scene 5 Summary

Roxane proclaims that she is in service of the King of love. Christian cannot fathom why she is there, nor can Cyrano. None can understand how she made it through enemy lines safely. She explains, proudly, that she did so by slowing her carriage and smiling sweetly at the Spaniards and tells them that their chivalry rivals that of French men. They all let her pass, nobility and quickly. When she was questioned she told them she was going to her lover, as if she had said her husband they would have not let her pass. They are all amazed by this but they all implore her to leave right away. She flatly refuses to leave to any who suggest it even after they tell her of the upcoming battle that is to take place at their camp. De Guiche is abashed at the irony of his decision and Roxane's sudden arrival. He leaves the camp vowing to return and make her leave.

Act 4, Scene 5 Analysis

If is indeed ironic that De Guiche in his earnestness to be rid of Christin and seek revenge against Cyrano may lose the woman he loves. Roxane's appearance changes the landscape considerably. Cyrano so deep in his love of her from writing his letters, cannot even look at her for fear that his admiration will show on his face.

Act 4, Scene 6

Act 4, Scene 6 Summary

The men continue to try and convince Roxane to leave the camp, but she remains steadfast and the men realizing that she will not be leaving rush about to fix their appearances for her. Captain Carbon requests her handkerchief for use as their flag. One of the men comically proclaims that he could now die happily upon having glimpsed her beauty if he had but a bit of food in his stomach. Roxane surprises and delights them by producing a complete feast for them from her carriage; she further astounds them by pointing out that her driver is none other than the great chef Ragueneau himself. The men applaud her and eat and drink merely. Cyrano is in further awe of her and cannot belive her bravery and kindness. Cyrano tries to get Christian's attention several times, with no luck, telling him he must speak to him about an important matter before he converses with Roxane. At the end of this scene of eating and drinking by the gloriously happy cadets of the doomed camp, De Guiche is spotted making his way back as promised. Cyrano prompts them to hide the provisions quickly and they do.

Act 4, Scene 6 Analysis

The men are torn between wanted Roxane to go for her safety and wanting her to stay for her entertainment and distraction, on this, what they believe to be their final hour. It was a grand gesture on Roxane's part proving to Cyrano she herself possesses his cherished panache. Christian remains ignorant of why Roxane would go to such lengths to be by his side.

Act 4, Scene 7

Act 4, Scene 7 Summary

De Guiche knows something is amiss in the camp, he questions several of the men about their cheerful mood when they are about to die. He has bought them a cannon to use in their battle. He again attempts to make Roxane leave the camp, when she refuses; he decides that he to will stay to protect her. Cyrano is appreciative of this true act of bravery coming from De Guiche as are the other men. They claim happily that he is one of them and invite him to join them in their feast. Cyrano finally gets Christian alone and tells him that he has been writing to Roxane much more often than he thinks; twice a day.

Act 4, Scene 7 Analysis

De Guiche is just as surprised as the others that he is truly a Gascon, and seems happy at this news. Christian is incredulous at Cyrano's news of the letters and that he has been risking his life twice a day for his sake; he correctly, finally guesses at Cyrano's love for Roxane.

Act 4, Scene 8

Act 4, Scene 8 Summary

Christin and Roxane get to speak alone and he asks why she has come. She tells him it is because of the letters. She explains that the letters have propelled her from love to worship of him and that what she feels for him goes beyond any superficial love. She tells him that she would love him even if he were ugly or disfigured. Christian is alarmed at this news and pulls away from her. He sends her to lighten the hearts of the Cadets so that he may go and speak to Cyrano.

Act 4, Scene 8 Analysis

It has fully become clear now to Christian that not only is Cyrano in love with Roxane but that she is in love with Cyrano as well. He becomes increasingly upset with her words, as she is telling him that his physical appearance means nothing to her anymore, indicating that she has no love for him at all, since that was all that he had to offer her; the rest of what she loved was from Cyrano and that is all that she loves now.

Act 4, Scene 9

Act 4, Scene 9 Summary

Christian heads directly to Cyrano's tent and confronts him. He insists that Cyrano must tell Roxane that he loves her so that she can choose between them. Cyrano is loath to do this even though he is glad that she has told Christian that she would love him no matter what he looked like. Christian states that he wants to loved for his whole self and that their marriage can be annulled. Cyrano wants no part of disclosure; he feels that she would not forgive him for deceiving her all this time. Christian insists that she be told the truth so that she may decide who she truly loves. Christian calls Roxane to them and tells her that Cyrano has something important to tell her and then takes his leave of them.

Act 4, Scene 9 Analysis

Cyrano cannot believe that Roxane could be being truthful, even to herself, that she could love someone as ugly as he. Cyrano does not trust that this is really true as lovely as the words are and as happy as they make him.

Act 4, Scene 10

Act 4, Scene 10 Summary

Cyrano waits for Christian to leave and then minimizes the importance of why Christin sent her over to him. Roxane thinks it is because Christian is upset because he does not believe that she loves him for himself; Cyrano questions her about this, and as she talks, he becomes convinced that her words are true; she does love Cyrano and not Christian. Just as he is about to take the leap and tell her the truth, Le Bret calls to him and whispers to him that Christian is dead. Cyrano, upon learning this, vows not to tell Roxane the truth. Roxane notices the bundle that the cadets are hiding and realizes that it Christian; she runs to him as does Cyrano. Christin is still alive and Cyrano whispers in his ear that he has told Roxane all and that she has chosen Christian as her love. Christian then dies in peace. Roxane finds the last letter Cyrano had written and given to Christian earlier, in his jacket. She clings to Cyrano and begs him not to leave her with her grief. The fighting is taking place all around them and Cyrano wants to go to the aid of his fellow cadets. De Guiche reappears and Cyrano instructs him to take Roxane away that none will question his bravery. Cyrano then enters the battle with his brethren.

Act 5, Scene 10 Analysis

Even as Roxane clearly states that she would love Christian no matter his physical flaw. Cyrano questions the reality out of his fear of rejection. The love he so desires is so close to being his, but with the knowledge of Christian's death he cannot deprive the man of a peaceful rest. Cyrano, afterwards, acting out of his sense of honor or panache seals his lips and vows to never tell Roxane the truth. Once he knows she will be safe, he is free to jump into battle.

Act 5, Scene 1

Act 5, Scene 1 Summary

Act five opens in the park of a convent of catholic nuns; it is Autumn and the leaves are falling from the trees. Fifteen years have passed since the war and the death of Christian. Several nuns and the convent Mother are sitting outside in the park chatting. Their talk turns to Cyrano and that he has come every Saturday for the last ten years and longer. He comes to visit his cousin who is in perpetual morning for her husband. They are, of course, talking about Roxane, and they reveal that she has taken up residence with the nuns since the death of Christian. The nuns are all obviously taken with Cyrano and look forward to his visits. De Guiche and Roxane appear, walking towards the nuns. The nuns retreat inside at the site of them.

Act 5, Scene 1 Analysis

This scene sets the stage for the final act of the play. It is Autumn, a time of death before rebirth and the leaves fall from the trees.

Act 5, Scene 2

Act 5, Scene 2 Summary

De Guiche is now the Duke of Grammont and he stands talking with Roxane near her embroidery frame. He asks her if she is still as faithful as always to Christian and she replies that she is. He inquires if Cyrano comes to see her and she tells him he comes often. Le Bret then appears in the park and tells them that Cyrano is ill due to his poverty and his writing bringing him new enemies. De Guiche signifies that while Cyrano has nothing he would still like to shake his hand. He than takes his leave and Roxane walks him to the door. Before he goes he whispers to Le Bret that he has heard rumors that there is a conspiracy to kill Cyrano and that Le Bret should warn his friend to stay indoors. Ragueneau then appears at the convent to speak with Roxane, but she declines to talk with him, and leaves him with Le Bret.

Act 5, Scene 2 Analysis

It is obvious from De Guiche's words that although he always disliked Cyrano and is not surprised by his poverty he respects him for always living by his code of honor. He tries to save Cyrano by informing Le Bret of the plot against him.

Act 5, Scene 3

Act 5, Scene 3 Summary

Ragueneau confides to Le Bret that a lackey dropped a piece of wood out of a window onto Cyrano's head while he was on his way to the convent. He tells him that he is not dead but unconscious and lying in his apartment with his head bandaged. The men rush off as Roxane returns, they do not tell her where they are going.

Act 5, Scene 3 Analysis

Cyrano is attacked before his friend gets a chance to warn him, by a coward that throws a wood block out of a window rather than face his sword.

Act 5, Scene 4

Act 5, Scene 4 Summary

Roxane sits in the park waiting for the arrival of Cyrano who is late. She tries to appear unconcerned but she is growing more and more disturbed with every passing minute that he is late. It is clear that she greatly looks forward to his visits. A nun appears and tells her that he has arrived.

Act 5, Scene 4 Analysis

Roxane is always reserved when it comes to Cyrano, however, she is very attached to him and awaits his appearance anxiously. She is upset that he is late.

Act 5, Scene 5

Act 5, Scene 5 Summary

Roxane turns to her frame and does not look in Cyrano's direction. He arrives very pale with a hat pulled down over his eyes. Roxane comments on his being late after the fourteen years he has been visiting her. He apologizes to her not going into detail about what detained him. Cyrano is not himself and a nun he usually banters with notices that something is wrong, but the ever-valiant Cyrano, whispers to her to not alert Roxane of his illness. The nun takes her leave and Roxane asks Cyrano for her newspaper. He takes the paper out and begins reading it to her, mentioning the day's news. He continues to read, but growing weak from his head wound he closes his eyes. Roxane notices that he has stopped reading, looks over at him and sees that he is still, thinking he has fainted she jumps up and runs to him. Cyrano seeing her alarm tells her not to worry and that he if fine, he is just troubled by an old war wound, it will pass. Roxane talks of her own wound, in her heart, at the loss of Christian. She then touches her breast to indicate the last letter is kept there in her blouse; still visible on it are tear-drops and drops of blood. Cyrano questions her about reading it, and as night begins to fall she hands it to him to read. He begins to read the letter out loud to her. She notices something odd in his voice as he reads and gets up unnoticed by Cyrano and stands behind him. She realizes that it was him all along and tells him so, he denies this repeatedly to her.

Act 5, Scene 5 Analysis

Roxane pretends that she is not anxiously waiting for him and turns to her embroidery, coyly so as not to show him her obvious apprehension at his lateness. She is not aware of the great hardship he has endured to come to see her; she has no inclination that he is near death. The tone of Cyrano's voice is what prompts Roxane to leave her seat; it is a voice she has heard before, below her balcony many years before. When she realizes that it was him all along she is not overly shocked but almost accepting, as if she knew all always that it was him. She tries to wrestle a confession from him, but he will not betray his honor, even to Roxane. She finally asks him why he stayed silent all these years when it was his own tears that stained the letter, he replies "Because . . . the blood was his." She wants to know why today he chose to reveal the truth; as Le Bret and Ragueneau come running towards the pair.

Act 5, Scene 6

Act 5, Scene 6 Summary

Le Bret exclaims that Cyrano could have died leaving his bed and Roxane realizes that he has a fatal wound. He shows her the wounds and comments that in his whole life he never was to have his hearts desire including an honorable death. Ragueneau begins sobbing at this and Cyrano hushes him. Roxane calls to the nuns, but Cyrano stops her, he does not want her to leave him in his last moments. He talks about how grateful he is to have had her love and friendship all these years. Cyrano in the end stands and draws his sword, he seems delirious as he talks; he drops his sword and falls back upon Le Bret and Ragueneau nearly dead.

Act 5, Scene 6 Analysis

Cyrano is lamenting his existence at the end and realizes that he spent his life giving what he always wanted for himself to others. He is glad that Roxane is by his side and shares his love if only for a brief time. He vows though, in his dying speech, that even to then end he will fight his enemies of hypocrisy, compromise and prejudices. He swears that he will enter God's house, despite all his woes, carrying forth unblemished and unbent; his plume. There are many interpretations of what De Bergerac meant by "his plume" but popular philosophy settles upon the idea that his plume was his honor or panache. Some feel, being that Cyrano surely died never having had a sexual or consummated romantic relationship that this might have stood for his virginity. Which ever Rostand meant one thing was clear, he wanted the audience to decide what it meant to *them*.

Characters

Bellerose

The stage manager of the theater where Montfleury was set to perform, he is put in the position of calming the crowd when Cyrano runs Montfleury off the stage. He allows Le Bret and Cyrano to wait in the theater while the mob leaves after the duel with Valvert.

Christian

A handsome but tongue-tied soldier from Touraine; Christian comes to Paris to join the Gascony Guards (Cyrano's regiment) and to find the beautiful Roxane.

So overcome is he with Roxane's beauty that he allows Cyrano to woo Roxane with words when itbecomes obvious that his good looks are not enough to win her heart. Even after he is married to her, it is Cyrano who continues the relationship, composing moving love letters for Christian. When he finds that the words (Cyrano's heart and soul) are what she loves, the starving and sickly Christian begs Cyrano to tell Roxane the truth. Knowing he cannot continue to dishonestly accept Roxane's love, he seeks death in battle. Christian is a man with honorable intentions and a good heart. He is also easily led and a victim of his own desires. He willingly allows Cyrano to act as a kind of "emotional surrogate" to make up for the qualities he lacks. He is truly in love with Roxane but knows that her love for him has not been fairly won. He sees an honorable death in battle as the only solution to this problem. It is Christian's hope that, in his absence, Cyrano and Roxane can find true happiness together.

The Citizen

The Citizen is a member of the audience at the theater. An otherwise insignificant character, he serves as a means by which Rostand illustrates his hero's sensitivity regarding his appearance as well as his rapier-sharp wit. The citizen is caught staring at Cyrano's sizable sinuses and subsequently initiates the play's famous "nose tirade."

Cyrano

See Cyrano de Bergerac

Cyrano de Bergerac

Cyrano de Bergerac is a man who excels at poetry and swordsmanship in order to overcome his "physical limitation"a very large nose. In the words of the character

Ragueneau, "there never walked/stalked rather, strutted, so extravagant, bizzare,/far-fetched, excessive, hyperbolic, droll,/ mad a gentleman-ruffian as this Bergerac."

From the first sight of Cyrano ridiculing the lackluster skills of the actor Montfleury, it is clear that his wit is a weapon as sharp as his sword. When challenged to a duel by the Vicomte de Valvert, he composes a "ballade" (poem) as they fight. He taunts his opponent, "when the poem ends, I hit." It is clear that Cyrano is in complete control, both in the swordfight and in the verbal repartee; as he states, he completes the poem and defeats de Valvert. For Cyrano, composing the poem is an integral part of the fight itself, an illustration that there is littledistinction between his mental and physical prowessand that these powers serve as tools to maintain his individuality and freedom.

Cyrano's dedication to his art (and obsession with independence) is also depicted in his rejection of de Quiche's patronage. His statement, "I might, (take a patron)/if the thought of anyone's changing a single comma/didn't make my blood curdle," shows his revulsion at the thought of anyone meddling in his affairs. In the end, his insistance on being an independent man brings about his death.

Just as he fights with words, Cyrano can also employ them in the pursuit of love. Believing that his beautiful and intelligent cousin Roxane could not love him because of his looks; he offers to woo her for the handsome but tongue-tied suitor, Christian. It is with Cyrano's words that Roxane is won into marriage, not Christian's looks. Cyrano, his self-esteem so low, cannot believe, even after Roxane's letter to the front in the siege of Arras, that she could love him. For fifteen years he keeps the secret, fearing her rejection, until he is, himself, about to die. Cyrano is a passionate man, whose independence eventually leads to his downfall. He does, however, achieve a bittersweet triumph before his death, learning that Roxane does in fact love him for his soul, not his outward appearance. Cyrano's tale illustrates the concept of true beauty coming from within.

Comte de Guiche

A courtier and somewhat foppish aristocrat; de Guiche, though married to the niece of French leader Cardinal Richelieu, is in love with Roxane. He believes that if he cannot have her he will force her to marry his ally, the Vicomte de Valvert. De Guiche will do whatever is necessary to win Roxane, and is determined to crush whomever stands in his way. When Cyrano thwarts his attempt at a late-night meeting with Roxane and enables her marriage to Christian; he sends Cyrano, Christian, and their regiment, the Gascony Guards, to the siege of Arras in retribution. It is only after many years that de Guiche learns to respect Cyrano for his independence and understands the loyalty of Roxane.

Christian de Neuvittette

See Christian

The Foodsetter

The Foodseller is a young woman who shows Cyrano kindness by trying to give him food after he gives his purse to Jodalet at the theater. He refuses her offer but kisses her hand. This illustrates Cyrano's easy and natural charm with women and takes place as he tells Le Bret that no woman will ever want him

LeBret

LeBret is Cyrano's friend in the Gascony Guards and is the perfect foil (a character who offers complementaryoften contrastingbehavior) for Cyrano. He is a staunch supporter and loyal friend to Cyrano, but also reminds Cyrano when he is being reckless (as when Cyrano gives his entire purse to Bellerose, the theater owner). Protective of Cyrano, he tries to keep him safe in the siege of Arras and again at the convent fifteen years later. He has enormous respect and love for Cyrano, and also for Roxane.

Ligniere

A poet and a drunk, Ligniere serves to introduce Christian to all at the theater. De Guiche sends one-hundred "ruffians" to kill Ligniere because he wrote a scandalous song about him. Thanks to Christian's warning, Cyrano protects Ligniere, fights off the hundred ruffians, and saves his life. This victory for Cyrano helps solidify his reputation as a fighter at the pastry shop the next day and wins over the crowd until his disagreement with de Guiche over patronage.

Lise

Lise, Ragueneau's wife, has no patience for her husband's love of poetry. She destroys his books to wrap pastries. Irritated by her husband's poet friends, she eventually runs off with a musketeer. Cyrano warns Ragueneau of Lise's friendliness with the musketeer but it is too late.

Magdeleine Robin

See Roxane

Montfleury

Montfleury is a notoriously overweight and very bad actor on the Paris stage. Defying Cyrano's warning to stay off the stage for a month, he finds himself kicked off and run out of town by Cyrano,

Mother Marguerite de Jesus

The Mother Superior of the convent in which Roxane takes refuge after Christian's death, she is an understanding woman, who tells her young sisters Marthe and Claire not to try to convert Cyrano. She enjoys Cyrano's Saturday visits to Roxane. Her presence serves as a narrative bridge, shading in the events in the fourteen years since the siege of Arras.

Ragueneau

Ragueneau is a baker and would-be poet. A friend to Cyrano, he opens his pastry shop to poets who listen to his verse in exchange for food and drink. He supports Cyrano both in friendship and with food from his shop. He also allows his shop to be used as a meeting place for Cyrano and Roxane. He warns Cyrano of the danger of making too many enemies and tries to help him when he can.

Ragueneau's wife, Lise, leaves him for a musketeer after he bankrupts himself by publishing a book of recipes in verse"Ragueneau's Rhymed Recipes". By the end of the play he works odd jobs to survive, but he remains a loyal friend to Cyrano until the end.

Roxane
Roxane is one of the most sought after women in Paris. Beautiful, intelligent, and fiercely independent, she lives with her duenna (chaperone) in a comfortable home in Paris. She is Cyrano's cousin, and the object of desire for not only Cyrano and Christian, but the Comte de Guiche and the Vicomte de Valvert as well. Described by Rostand as "delicately reared and bookish," she is a lover of words and not men.

While attracted to Christian's good looks, his lack of social skill and clumsy attempts at conversation turn her off. It is only when Roxane hears the words of Cyranospoken through Christianthat she is charmed. Convinced that Christian is both handsome and intelligent; it is she that devises a plan to thwart the Comte de Guiche's late-night meeting so that she may marry Christian. It is her quick thinking that convinces the Capuchin (priest) to marry them; despite this cunning, she is nevertheless fooled by Cyrano's ruse

Roxane proves to be a faithful and loving wife to the end by staying in a convent after Christian's death. She resists the advances of the still-ardent Comte de Guiche, and her only link to the outside world is her faithful cousin Cyrano, who is her regular visitor. It is only when she realizes that the words Christian spoke came from Cyrano that she declares her love for him. Roxane1 s physical attraction to Christianand her enduring belief that it was he who spoke such beautiful words to her blinds her to Cyrano's deep love. As Cyrano lies dying, however, she realizes her true love in Cyrano.

Roxane's Duenna

The duenna is a chaparone who is easily bribed by Cyrano's cream puffs at Ragueneau's pastry shop. She is at times cynical and sarcastic, yet very protective of her charge, Roxane.

Sister Claire

Counterpart to Sister Marthe, she is concerned about Cyrano and expresses her concern to Mother Marguerite.

Sister Marthe

One of the two sisters at the convent who play out a comic moment as each tells the other's sins to Mother Marguerite. Marthe wishes to convert Cyrano, and Cyrano, before his death tells her to pray for him.

Valvert

See Vicomte de Valvert

Vicomte de Valvert

Valvert is the man de Guiche wishes Roxane to marry in the hopes of keeping her from Cyrano and Christian. Foppish and slightly dim-witted, he provokes Cyrano into a duel in the theater. Unable to come up with a witty retort against Cyrano's torrent of poetry, he enters into the fight. He is slain by Cyrano's sword with the line "the poem ended/ and I hit."

Themes

Fear

Cyrano is afraid to declare his love for Roxane, his cousin, because he fears rejection and ridicule he believes that a woman as beautiful as Roxane could never love a man who is not also physically beautiful. This fear drives him to succeed at swordsmanship, poetry, and scathing wit. He dnves the actor Montfleury from the stage, and fights a duel with the Vicomte de Valvert with both his sword and his words. Cyrano fights not only against his foes, but against his own fear of rejection.

Beauty

There is much talk of beauty and and its counterpart ugliness in *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Cyrano believes himself too ugly to be loved by the beautiful Roxane (or any woman). Yet he fails to properly value the more elusive beauty that he possesses in his mind and heart. A beauty that can create his moving poetry and cause Roxane to swoon at his words. Ironically, it is Cyrano's

This nose precedes me everywhere,/ A quarter of an hour m front, to say, 'Beware,/ Don't love Cyrano' to even the ugliest / And now Cyrano has to love the best,/ The brightest, bravest, wittiest, the most/ Beautiful!"

Yet Cyrano fails to recognize the source of his own beauty, his heart and mind. With this beauty he creates moving poetry, summons words that cause Roxane to swoon, and rallies the spirits of starving, dejected soldiers.

There are numerous contrasts between beauty and its opposite in the play: with Christian it is his dashing outward appearance against his limited intelligence, with Cyrano it is the direct opposite. It is only when Roxane writes to Christian/Cyrano during the siege of Arras that the two men realize that words mean more to her than looks: "Your beauty is a barrier to you/If you were ugly.../... I know I should/Be able to love you more." There lies the notion that Cyrano's beauty comes from within, and has more depth than Christian's. Roxane is in love with the wordsCyrano's wordsand not Chnstlan's handsome exterior. The sense that beauty comes from within, from the soul, rather than the body is strong. The play's tragedy comes from its protagonist's failure to recognize this earlier.

Loyalty

Even though aware that it was his words that won the heart of Roxane, Cyrano remains loyal to his friend Christian's memory after the latter's death during the siege of Arras. He does not take the opportunity to romantically pursue Roxane. Christian looks for death in battle rather than struggle on after he realizes that it is Cyrano's soul (his words

and feelings) with which his wife is truly in love. Cyrano, still afraid of rejection, keeps this secret for fifteen years. Rather than tarnish the memories Roxane has of Christian, Cyrano remains loyal to his friend and keeps the secret. It is only when he is about to die that he feels that he can reveal to Roxane that it was he who wrote all of those letters and wooed her while she was on her balcony. Her declaration of love is what Cyrano wanted more than anything in the world, and he dies finally knowing it was his heart and soul that she truly loved.

Le Bret, Ragueneau, and Roxane are all very loyal to Cyrano, Despite being put into sometimes perilous situations by the poet-hero, they continue to offer support and friendship to him. Le Bret and Ragueneau are there until the end, trying to save him from his enemies, but it is too late. This kind of loyalty is fueled by deep friendship, and that is an important theme in Rostand's work. Those who are friends with Cyrano will defend him to the end.

Difference

Cyrano's markedly different appearance is what drives him and fuels his fear. It is his belief that Roxane could never love him that forges his alliance and friendship with Christian. It is also what drives his bravura and wit. Anyone who mentions his unusually large nose (as the unfortunate citizen in the theater in Act I) is open to attack. The only thing that saves Christian from such an attack in the pastry shop is the love of Roxane. Those who learn to look past the differenceLigniere, Ragueneau, Le Bret, and eventually Christian and Roxanerealize that Cyrano's true beauty resides within. His difference is merely physical and does not touch his soul. Even the Comte de Guiche sees and understands the "true Cyrano" by the end: "He/Lives his life as he wants, he's one of those/Rare animals that have opted to be free/ ... Nevertheless,/! think I'd be proud to shake him by the hand."

Freedom

In the end, it is Cyrano's freedom that finishes him. His refusal of the Foodseller's meal in the theater (Act I), de Guiche's offer of Richelieu's patronage at the pastry shop (Act II), and the aid of the Sisters at the convent (Act IE): his wish to be free and independent eventually leads to his death. By believing that he cannot be loved, he wishes to be dependent on no one. This fierce thirst for freedom leads him to say and write things that make him many enemies; he is eventually killed because of his wordsthe words that, ironically, also mirror his inner beauty.

It was Rostand's triumph to create a character so full of bravura, wit, and cunning and yet be so afraid to declare his love to his beloved. It is his difference that drives his fear, but it also drives his quest for freedom and independence. It is his love and friendship that drive his loyalty; yet it is love that he is afraid to declare. This complex character gives rise to a very simple situation. A love triangle that takes fifteen years to play out. *Cyrano de Bergerac* is about many things: fear of rejection; loyalty, love, and friendship;

and freedom and independence. Through Cyrano, all of these themes are realized. Yet, at the end, when our hero dies, the overwhelming feeling is one of vindication: Cyrano triumphed, and, however briefly, knew he was loved.

Style

Romanticism

Rostand idolized the writer Savinen de Cyrano de Bergerac (1619-1655) and, in creating a fictional account of his life, embellished on one of France's most colorful literary figures. The real de Bergerac was indeed both a soldier and a writer, but Rostand added one distinguishing element: a very large nose. While Cyrano's nose is first seen as a comic prop, his romantic heart and heroic stature quickly change that perception. Those familiar with the play see Cyrano's nose as a symbol of his undying love and devotion.

Cyrano de Bergerac falls very easily into the genre of Romanticism. That term is generally defined as "any work or philosophy in which the exotic or dreamlike figure strongly, or that is devoted to individualistic expression, self-analysis, or a pursuit of a higher realm of knowledge than can be discovered by human reason." Cyrano is, beyond anything else, an individual. From his first appearance in the theater to taunt Montfleury, Cyrano'slarger than life personality mirrors his unusually large nose. This physical challenge makes Cyrano an exotic character, one who is more than mere man.

Character

By basing the character of Cyrano on a real historical figure, Rostand was able to use the most interesting aspects of the real de Bergerac and then embellish by adding details such as the incredibly large nose. Rostand created a character that took on a life of his own. Cyrano strives for perfection, both in poetry and in love. The other characters in the play are marvelously written, but it is Cyrano who twists and turns words into tirades and roller coasters. Rostand uses the real de Bergerac's life as a source for some of the verbal virtuosity. Cyrano's speech delaying de Guiche in his late-night meeting with Roxane is based on the real *Cyrano's Histoire comique des etats et empires de la lune etdu soleil,* a comic exploration of the "States and Empires of the Moon and the Sun". It is however, the fictional Cyrano's "nose tirade" in Act I that serves to set the stage for his heroic endeavors. This is a man who refuses to lose and refuses to fail. Even in the end he triumphs as he dies. He wins the love of the beautiful Roxane by remaining true to his character.

Heroic Comedy

G. K. Chesterton wrote in his book *Varied Types that,* "heroic comedy is, as it were, a paradise of lovers, in which it is not difficult to imagine that men could talk in poetry all day long." *Rostand* wrote *Cyrano de Bergerac* in Alexandrine verse: a rhymed verse used by French dramatists and poets. Anthony Burgess, in his English translation in 1971, turned it into Heroic couplets with a rhyming couplet scheme. By writing in verse, Rostand was consciously working against the naturalism and symbolism of his

contemporaries Ibsen and Maeterlinck. For Rostand's heroic comedy, he uses poetry to convey the dreamlike, exotic quality of Romanticism. There is no equivalent to Heroic Comedy in English literature. In the English (and American) tradition, comedies should have a happy ending, yet Rostand's ends with the death of his hero. While the ending is sad and somewhat tragic, Cyrano does, in dying, gain his greatest wish: he is loved by the woman he has always worshipped.

Repartee

Cyrano engages in witty repartee many times during the play. Repartee is a "conversation featuring snappy retorts and witticisms" (*see DfS glossary*). The repartee between Cyrano and the citizen in the theater leads to the infamous "nose tirade" in which the man is humiliated by Cyrano's rapid fire wit. The comedy that results from this exchange and with his exchange with the Vicomte de Valvert later on in Act I is at the recipients' expense, but it serves to focus our attention on Cyrano and to make him a hero as he defeats his foes with means other than his sword.

Point of View

As with many dramas, *Cyrano de Bergerac* is told with a third person point of view. This presents characters and events from outside any single character, but with no special insights into the thoughts or actions of the characters. We see events from a "spectator" point of view, but we do not hear any of the characters thoughts and feelings other than what they tell each other. Shakespeare often relayed characters' thoughts and interior dialogues through a monologue called a soliloquy, which essentially allows a character to speak his mind out loud. Rostand eschews this technique in favor of a straight dialogue method, one that places the burden of illustrating his character's feelings on the poetic words they speak to each other.

Historical Context

Seventeenth Century: Thirty Years War

Rostand wrote *Cyrano de Bergerac* in the late 1890s but set it in the mid-1600s. While the late 1890s was a period of great industrial and technological advancement, the mid-1600s (the beginning of the reign of Louis XIV) was a time of political intrigue and artistic intellectualism. It is important to understand both periods to truly understand the effect on Rostand's Heroic Comedy.

France in the 1640s was still feeling the effects of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648). Fought mainly in Germany, the war saw the German Protestant Princes, France, Sweden, Denmark, and England fighting the Holy Roman Empire (including the Catholic Princes of Germany and the countries of Austria, Spain, Bohemia, and Italy). The war was fought primarily over trade, and control over the various trade routes to the east.

The war itself ended for most countries in 1648 with the Peace of Westphalia. Fighting went on between France and Spain, however, and in 1654 the Spanish laid siege to Arras in northwesternFrance. The real Cyrano de Bergerac fought in this siege, and Rostand uses this historical fact for the setting of Act n.

Seventeenth Century: Civil Unrest

French nobles, upset with the unreasonable taxation, high tarriffs, and road tolls engaged the aid of Spanish troops and staged a rebellion against Cardinal Mazarin in 1648. The Cardinal was running the government for the eight-year-old Louis XIV. The aristocracy allied with the rising middle class in France to put down the rebellion. The public was outraged that the nobles were allied with France's enemy Spain. The conflict provided the opportunity later on for Louis XIV to consolidate his power over France and become an absolute ruler.

Seventeenth Century: Literature

During the reign of Louis XIV (The Sun King), French literature, arts, and philosophy became the standard for all of Europe. The Academie Francaise, founded by Cardinal Richelieu in 1634, sought to protect the French language by guarding against slang and poor grammar in all art and literature. (Edmond Rostand would become its youngest member ever inducted in 1901.) With a strong monarchy, the French had more leisure time for artistic pursuits than ever before.

The audience for theater in the 1600s tended to be the small elite group of aristocrats who could afford to patronize the arts. The refined style of the time period reflected the lifestyle of the patrons, who could afford to "keep" artists in their circle. Writers were generally poor in the seventeenth century and persuaded nobles, landowners, and even

Louis XIV to finance their works (an idea which has formed more organized roots in modern drama in the form of government subsidies and grants for the arts and the grants and fellowships awarded to artists by various private and public foundations). Authors often included extreme flattery of their patrons in their books. The real-life Cyrano de Bergerac was sickened by this flattery but eventually was forced to seek the patronage of the Duke of Arpajon. Rostand depicts de Bergerac's feelings in his play, having his fictional Cyrano state: "Dedicate my works to men of wealth?/ Become a sedulous ape, a fool who waits/For some official's patronizing smile?/No, thank you, ... I prefer to sing, to dream, to play/To travel light, to be at liberty."

Seventeenth Century: Salons

Literary works in the seventeenth century were read and discussed in salons. These salons, or ruelles as they were called, were often hosted by a French noblewoman who entertained aristocrats, writers, and philosophers while sitting on her bed. Meeting in this situation brought a "much needed refining influence on both the manners and language" of the gentlemen in attendance, according to John Lough in his book An Introduction to Seventeenth-Century France. Madeleine Robineau, whom Rostand used as a model for Roxane, was an intellectual who was a fixture and frequent hostess of such events.

1890s: Politics

Rostand wrote *Cyrano de Bergerac* m the late 1890s. The year it debuted the French deposed Madagascar's Queen Ranavalona, ending the one hundred year Hova dynasty; a Franco-German agreement defined the boundary between Dahomeyand Togoland; and Britain and France inched ever closer to a possible conflict over colonial territories. The United States annexed the Hawaiian Islands much to the dismay of the Japanese; who still had 25,000 nationals there. Also, England's Queen Victoria celebrated her Diamond Jubileeseventy-five years of rule. Despite the threat of various conflicts, the world was at a time of relative peace.

1890s: Science

In 1897 English physicist Joseph John Thomson proved that an atom was made up of electrons orbiting a nucleus, and that each element had a different number of electrons, and a different weight. The discovery of the atom opened the door to numerous advances in science and, later in the twentieth century, made everything from space travel to nuclear power possible. The malaria parasite was found to be carried by the Amopheles mosquitoa discovery that would lead to the widespread use of insecticides and the draining of wetlands where the insects bred. Also in 1897, the cathode ray tube was invented; which would eventually lead to the development of television and wireless communication.

1890s: Literature

In literature and entertainment, the Library of Congress was completed in Washington D.C. in 1897. The Invisible Man by H. G. Wells, Captains Courageous by Rudyard Kipling, and *Dracula by Bram Stoker* were all published for the first time in 1897. Other plays that made their debut that year were *John Gabriel Borkman by Henrik Ibsen,* The Devil's Disciple by George Bernard Shaw, and The Liars by Henry Arthur Jones.

Edmond Rostand wrote *Cyrano de Bergerac* at a time when Naturalism was a major force in the literary world. His heroic comedy was a complete contrast to what most of his contemporaries were writing at the time. While Ibsen was focused on Naturalism and Maeterlinck on Symbolism, de Bergerac used the Romanticism of the 1640's to create a completely different theater experience for his audience. The 1890's was a time of great change in the world, a time of forged alliances, technological and industrial advances, and social, political, and artistic upheaval. By setting Cyrano in the seventeenth century and basing the hero on a real-life character, the playwright was free to explore a more exotic and romatic time. As Lionel Strachey wrote in a review of the play in *Lippincott's*, "Rostand is the preeminent verbalist and sentimentalist of the French drama. He has the perennialtalent of the right word in the right place, and that without prejudice to rhyme." Rostand's talent was to create a heroic character in Cyrano who transcends time.

Critical Overview

When *Cyrano de Bergerac* made its debut at the Porte Sainte-Martin Theater in Paris in 1897, it was an instant success. This heroic comedy in Alexandrine verse had won over the sophisticated Parisian public and was on its way to becoming a modern classic. Though Edmond Rostand, the cast, and the producers (the Fleury brothers) were doubtful that the play would be a success, the audience fell in love with the poetry of the play and the beauty of the story. *Cyrano* is acclaimed as a dramatic masterpiece and is renowned for its unforgettable hero and romantic spirit. Though critics have at times labeled the play shallow, most praise its entertaining theatricality and its heroic protagonist who remains loyal to his ideals.

Cyrano is the poet turned hero. The verbal virtuosity of the play, from the "nose tirade" to Cyrano's admission to Roxane that he is the poet whom she loves, combined with the outbursts and action create a tour-de-force of a play. As William D. Howarth noted in *Reference Guide to French Literature;* "Despite his extravagance, Cyrano is a human character with whom spectators (the audience) and readers find it by no means impossible to reach the necessary degree of sympathetic identification: not because we ourselves aspire to the same sort of heroics, but because he expresses a Romantic idealism, a nostalgia for absolute values, latent in us all." The spectator can relate to Cyrano's dilemma. The insecurities that lead Cyrano to hide his love from Roxane, and to use it to Christian's benefit, are qualities that all humans possess. Rostand's genius was to create a character who is so human that he is tuneless. Max Beerbohm, writing in his *Around Theatres,* said of Cyrano:

Cyrano will survive because he is practically a new type in drama I know that the motives of self-sacnfice-m-love and beauty-adored-by-a-grotesque are as old, and as effective, as the hills, and have been used in literature again and again I know that self-sacrifice is the motive of most successful plays But, so far as I know, beauty-adored-by-a-grotesque has never been used with the grotesque as stage-hero. At any rate it has never been used so finely and so tenderly as by M Rostand, whose hideous swashbuckler with the heart of gold and the talent for improvising witty or beautiful verses . is far too novel, I think, and too convincing, and too attractive, not to be permanent.

As time has passed *Cyrano de Bergerac* has become a beloved play, a classic still performed today in theaters around the world. Critics have, however, found that Rostand as a writer was not a genius as much as a playwright who had a great real-life story to embellish. Beerbohm called Rostand "a gifted, adroit artist, who does with freshness and great force things that have been done before,... It is rather silly to chide M. Rostand for creating a character and situations which are unreal if one examines them from a non-romantic standpoint." Beerbohm makes an excellent point: Cyrano must be seen as the romantic hero in this heroic-comedy drama. To try to viewor read*Cyrano de Bergerac* realistically, is to miss the beauty of the play.

Heroic Comedy has no tradition in English Literature. G. K. Chesterton wrote in *Varied Types* that, in today's world, "the hero has his place in tragedy, and the one kind of strength which is systematically denied to him is the strength to succeed." It seemed strange to some critics that a comedy should have a tragic ending. As Chesteron appraised, "Monsieur Rostand showed even more than his usual insight when he called *Cyrano de Bergerac* a comedy, despite the fact that, strictly speaking, it ends with disappointment and death. The essence of tragedy is a spiritual breakdown or decline.... It is not the facts themselves, but our feeling about them, that makes tragedy and comedy, and death is more joyful in Rostand than life in Maeterlinck."

Though Cyrano dies at the end, he dies loved by his belovedthe beautiful Roxane. It seems appropriate that the hero of a Heroic Comedy should die at the end. Dying for love is one of the most heroic acts a man can commit. Henry James, in the *Critic*, wrote of *Cyrano*: "The tight-rope in Cyrano is, visibly enough, the question of the hero's facial misfortune, doubly great as opposed to his grand imagination, grand manners, and grand soul, the soul that leads his boisterous personality to run riot, for love and for friendship, in self-suppression, in sentimental suicide." As James states, it is the heroism and romanticism that saves *Cyrano de Bergerac* as a play and makes it a masterpiece. James goes on to say: "I wouldn't, individually, part with an inch of Cyrano's nose.... The value of it in the plan, naturally, is that it is liberally symbolic.... Cyrano, for a romantic use, had not only to be sensitive, to be conscious, but to be magnificent andimperial; and the brilliancy of the creation of the author's expression of this."

Writing in *Lippincott's*, Lionel Strachey sums up Rostand's writing ability this way: "Edmond Rostand's genius is of the highest, but not thehighest-----And however deeply our aesthetic senseis intoxicated, however we marvel at his nimble scholarship, into whatever ecstasy we go over his perfect expression of exquisite thoughts, our investigating, speculative, deductive, reasoning faculties remain untouched. Our splendid young Frenchman is, indeed, a great poet and little philosopher." In all of the criticism one point remains clear, though *Cyrano de Bergerac* has no real philosophical enlightenments, it is nonetheless a masterpiece. The character of Cyrano carries the playhis verbal virtuosity and faithful devotion to those he loved and cared for make him utterly unforgettable and absolutely timeless.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3

Critical Essay #1

Moran is an author and educator with extensive experience in secondary education. His essay examines *Rostand's* sharply defined title character and the nature of heroism.

In As You Like It, William Shakespeare offers the famous line, "All the world's a stage," an idea that takes on a literal meaning in Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, his play featuring one of the most theatrical of characters ever created. In the foreword to his translation of the play, Anthony Burgess writes that while "*Cyrano de Bergerac* may not be the best play ever written," its central figure "is surely one of the great characters in all drama." What makes Cyrano such a remarkable and popular character is, primarily, his devotion to his own code of honor, despite the fact that his goals seem unattainable. When asked if he has ever read Don Quixote, Cyrano replies, "I haveand found myself the hero." Like Quixote, Cyrano forever chases the "windmill" (or unattainable goal) of winning Roxane's heart, and the audience's fascination with this "bravest soul alive" resides in his steadfast commitment to this task. When asked if he has "chosen any plans" for himself, the flamboyant hero replies that he has decided upon "The simplestTo make myself in all things admirable!" How Cyrano struggles with his desire to be "admirable" in all things, against his fear of being mocked for his large nose, is the focus of Rostand's "heroic comedy," in which the viewer sees how he plays various roles on the "stage" of the world in order to produce what William Lyon Phelps called "The Triumphant Failure" in his text *Essays on Modem Dramatists.*

The play begins in the Hall of the Hotel de Bourgogne as various actors and patrons await the day's play. Appropriately subtitled "A Performance" by Rostand, the act raises all of the issues of the upcoming play and displays Cyrano (rather than any actor), as the true "performer." First, however, the viewer learns that Ligmere, a friend of Christian, is to be attacked for writing a song that offended someone at court; in addition, Cyrano has commanded that Montfleury, a "hippopotamus" of an actor, be forbidden to perform. Clearly, the imaginary seventeenth-century world of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, is one in which art is taken very seriously, as seen later in Ragueneau's trading pastries for sonnets and his setting recipes to rhyme, as well as in the letters that Cyrano will eventually pen to Roxane (in Christian's name).

Cyrano's entrance, however, is when the play really begins, and it is in his entrance that Rostand reveals his hero's character and concerns. After chasing Montfleury off of the stage, Cyrano assumes the spotlight, managing to turn his worst defect into a "theatrical" asset. To put Cyrano "in his place," Valvert attempts to insult him, saying, "Your nose is... rather large!" This lame jibe only proves to be a springboard for Cyrano's wit- he responds with a list of twenty things that Valvert *could* have said in twenty different styles, such as, "DESCRIPTIVE: 'Tis a rocka craga cape/ A cape? Say rather, a peninsula!" and concludes his monologue with,

These, my dear sir, are things you might have said Had you some tinge of letters, or of wit To color your discourse. But witnot so, You never had an atom and of letters, You need but three to write you downan Ass

Cyrano's catalogue of insults shows his own obsession with his "peninsula," his love of language, and his contempt for the tiny minds that surround him. He is "a soul clothed in armor," and his wit is the "armor" that defends his often-battered pride. When asked by Valvert to duel, Cyrano again "performs," composing (and reciting) a four-stanza ballad the entire time; his mind and his sword are equally sharp, and his "thrusting" at Valvert reflects the "thrusting" of his mind in the previous speech. Imbibing the admiration of the crowd as if it is champagne, Cyrano offers the theater manager a purse of gold in order to compensate for the business he has cost him for this day; when criticized by his friend (and the voice of rationality), LeBret, with, "what a fool," the swordsman rejoins, "butwhat a gesture!" This idea, that "gestures" are as important as the day-to-day cares of the world (Cyrano has just given away his month's salary) resurfaces again and again in the play, with Cyrano constantly making "gestures" in which he displays (albeit without her knowledge) his love for Roxane. He displays what Rostand himself described as true "panache": "not greatness ... but something which ... stirs above it... the spirit of gallantry."

As he leaves the theater to fight the hundred men awaiting Ligniere, he cries, "I want an audience," and as the characters excitedly follow him, Rostand suggests that his play will be one in which various "actors" (such as Cyrano and Christian) perform for an "audience" (Roxane) whose applause they both crave and esteem.

Despite Cyrano's bravado, he does harbor great insecurities about his desire for Roxane. Before he faces (and defeats) his hundred opponents, he tells LeBret that he is afraid to speak to her because "she might laugh," and this "is the one thing in the world" that he fears. Act Two serves as a way forRostand to accentuate this fear and intensify the portrait of Cyrano's pride created in Act One. When told by Roxane that she loves a man who "loves me too,/And is afraid of me, and keeps away/And never says one word," Cyrano (who can always produce a needed remark) can only respond with gasps. When she continues to describe the object of her affections, however, as "beautiful," Cyrano knows that, whoever her love may be, it is not himself. His disappointment grows as he explains to LeBret the reasons for his flamboyance and "growling1 ': "What would you have me do...? Eat a toad/ For breakfast every morning...? Wear out my belly groveling in the dust?" Rather than live in fear of "the common herd," Cyrano explains that he "is too proud to be a parasite"; thus he will not allow De Guiche to alter "one comma" in his tragedy and is even more committed to a life where he will "stand, not high it may bebut alone!"

Cyrano's problem with Roxane now seems hopeless; however, the plan he hatches with Christian allows him to avoid humility while still proclaiming his love from afar. Their meeting is one in which Rostand invites the viewer to recognize how the deficiencies in each can be filled by the other: when Christian points at his heart and says, "Oh, if I had words/To say what I have here," Cyrano laments, "If I could be/A handsome little Musketeer with eyes!" Their scheme is one in which these deficiencies are combined and "canceled out," for together, Cyrano's mind plus Christian's beautyequals the perfect man. Cyrano tells Christian to "borrow" his wit and asks him, "your beautiful young manhoodlend me that." Together, as a unified force in the battle for Roxane's love, these two will "make one hero of romance!" While Cyrano earlier remarks that he

will "render no share to Caesar," that is, not allow anyone else to take credit for his actions, he freely offers his wit (and pen) to Christian, illustrating the play's theme of sacrifice for a higher causewhich reaches its height, of course, when Christian dies and Cyrano does not admit to Roxane (until fifteen years have passed) that it was he who had provided Christian with the words and feelings with which Roxane fell in love.

While such a plan is appealing to Cyrano both practically and aesthetically, Act Three shows the strains of the ruse on the swordsman's noble heart. In an effort to further enrapture Roxane, Cyrano poses as Christian under her balcony, recalling the famous scene from Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, However, Cyrano is delegated to the role of a "mock-Romeo," duplicating only the Italian hero's emotion and not his rewards. The dramatic irony grows almost oppressive, when phrases like, "My heart/Hides behind phrases," and "It is my voice, mine, my own/That makes you tremble" brings Cyrano closer to Roxane but not vice-versa. After Christian climbs the trellis to receive Roxane's kiss, Cyrano is left alone, resembling Hamlet more than Romeo: "I have won what I have won/*The* feast of loveand I am Lazarus!" This Biblical allusion to Lazarus, the beggar who starved at the gate of a rich man who feasted every day, pinpoints Cyrano's anguish and serves as another reminder of the "performance" theme mentioned earlier: Cyrano writes the script, directs the scene, and plays the rolebut Christian receives the applause in the form of Roxane's kiss. Earlier in the Act, we learn that Cyrano has won (in a wager) two pages, whom he commands to play "sad" tunes for a man and "merry" ones for a woman. While this music obviously suits Cyrano (sad) and Roxane (merry), there is a second layer of meaning within them: in his ironic position as Roxane's secret admirer and Christian's successful go-between, both tunes apply equally to himself.

In Act Four, the action moves from a domestic to a military setting where Cyrano fights for love and honor more than any political cause. When all of the soldiers complain of their hunger, Cyrano sings to them a song which makes them weep as it reminds them of their native Gascoyne; his explanation that the men weep "for homesicknessa hunger/More noble than that of hunger of the flesh" raises the issue of the nobility of the spirit when contrasted with that of the body. While this theme has sustained the entire plot, it is emphasized here in several ways. First, we learn that Cyrano has been risking his life "every morning before breakfast" to cross the Spanish lines and deliver one of "Christian's" letters to Roxane. Second, Roxane arrives at the front in order to beg Christian's forgiveness, "for being light and vain" and loving him, as she says, "only because you were beautiful." She, too, has learned the important difference between appearance and reality, between the spirit and the fleshbut, of course, the basis of her knowledge is a falsehood and an even greater example of this difference (Cyrano himself) lies directly in front of her, although she cannot recognize it as such. Christian, like Cyrano before him, now finds himself in an ironic position: feeling guilty about his charade, he urges Cyrano to confess to Roxane. "I am tired of being my own rival," he explains, realizing what Cyrano (and the audience) has known all along about the nobility of the swordsman's heart. However, when Christian dies moments before Cyrano can reveal his true self to Roxane, he forsakes the chance to tell her, highlighting once again his panache in sacrificing his own happiness for hers. He is, essentially, continuing the performance he began when he wrote her his first letter so that Roxane may have the happy memory of Christian as her one true love.

When Act Five begins, the audience learns that Cyrano's nobility has not faded over time: for fifteen years he has visited Roxane (now in a convent) every Saturday, never revealing Christian's secret. LeBret and Ragueneau, however, inform the audience that Cyrano has become embittered, writing satires that attack "the false nobles, the false saints,/The false heroes" and "the false artists." This change can be accounted for by recalling Act Four: nobody knows more than Cyrano what it really means to be "true," and so he attacks hypocrisy in all its forms. The Act is haunted by death: it is autumn, leaves are dying and the sun is settingand De Guiche informs the others that he heard a rumor at court that "Cyrano may die accidentally." The world hates a true and noble soul, an idea emphasized when Cyrano later compares himself to Socrates and Galileo. Like Homer's Penelope, Roxane weaves her embroidery and again like Penelope (although she does notrealize this herself), she is awaiting the return of her love, at war not with the Trojans but with the false and ignoble world.

Cyrano's arrival augments the sense of death that pervades the Act and he speaks of "A very old acquaintance" that he dismissed for only an hour so that he could visit the convent; this "most unexpected" visitor is Death himself, and Cyrano's struggle for life is only successful because of the strength of his love for Roxane. She, too, finds herself swept into the tangles of irony that Cyrano and Christian faced earlier: upon discovering that Cyrano wrote all the letters and loved her all the while, she returns his love, saying, "I never loved but one man in my life/And I have lost himtwice." All of the play's issues now come rushing to the surface for a final examination. For example, when LeBret tells Cyrano that his scene was used by Moliere and that the audience "laughedand laughed," Cyrano responds, "yesthat has been my life": as before at the balcony, he has seen others take credit for the depth of his mind and soul. The spirit vs. flesh idea is raised again (for the last time) when Cyrano draws his sword to face Death: at the siege of Arras, he expressed his wish to die "by the sword,/The point of honorby the hand of one/Worthy to be my foeman," but now he is slowly fading out of his life due to a log that someone deliberately let fall onto his head from a window. Clearly, this is not the noble and valorous death that the swordsman had envisioned for himself. However, despite this seeming ignominy, Cyrano is allowed to end his performance before his death, saying that he wishes to now die like a leaf, for "they go down gracefully." Struggling, he swings his sword at Death, remarking that although such a fight seems "hopeless," it is "better to know one fights in vain," as he did throughout the play for Roxane's love. The triumph of this French Don Quixote is his refusal to compromise his ideals or spirit for the "falling logs" and "hopeless" battles of the plain and unromantic world. Offering Roxane his white plume, he dies even more spiritually rich than he lived; since he lived the life of the most exaggerated, "admirable" and noble swordsman in French theater, this is no small achievement.

Source: Daniel Moran, in an essay for *Drama for Students,* Gale, 1997

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay, an anonymous critic focuses on the irony in Cyrano de Bergerac, arguing that Rostand intended the play to be a satire, and not, as it was being hailed, as a serious drama.

I suspect, nay, I believe, that nothing could be aesthetically funnier than [M. Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*] ... is, save the sentiment, au grand *serieux,* that has been lavished upon it as if it were a real drama instead of a satirical extravaganza, (p. 118)

The rollicking hyperbole, the color far too high for reality with which M. Rostand has heightened the effectiveness of all [the] historic part of his material is alone enough to release him from the imputation of having himself taken his Cyrano as seriously as his public has. He has employed his historic sense in the rehabilitation of seventeenth century Paris; but neither merely as a savant nor merely as a poet, nor even as a dextrous playwright, but rather as all three combined, plus the most important factor of all in the worknamely, as a satirist, has he permeated the whole story with irony. This irony peeping out in his clever manipulation of the historical part of his framework is revealed in all its poignant intentionalness in the invented parts, (p. 119)

It is precisely in these invented parts, which are absolutely unsuited to the seventeenth century character of the real Cyrano, of course, that the design of the playwright can be unquestionably traced. In the balcony scene the sentimentality of the artificial lover of the old school and the exacting whims of a *precieuse* are exquisitely ridiculed. The poses of antiquated romance are recalled to mind and they are re-staged here so as to lay bare before the modern eye their archaic quality. The irony is developed to the point of rendering this lapsed sentimentality not merely comical but at times almost farcicalthe levity of the treatment, despite a cleverly contrasting instant or two when Cyrano betrays his own earnestness, being at the opposite pole from the impassioned seriousness of the Shakespearian scene it recalls. To break the fair unity of such a love-passage as the balcony scene in 'Romeo and Juliet,' to cut in two the physical beauty of the youth in Romeo, and the spiritual beauty lent his speeches by the ripe poet, and to personify each of these, is virtually what the French poet has done. He has made of the one half, Christian, the clumsy-tongued, fair and lusty animal, and of the other half, Cyrano, ugly, but mature of phrase if not of mind. Still, further, he has made a Juliet of the Hotel Rambouillet, & *precieuse* enamored not of the artist but of art, hankering rather for the wit which love incites than for love itself. The humor this situationinvolves is tickling to the last degree. Shall we spoil the comedy by taking it in dead earnest? When Christian utters his bald "I love you!" and on encouragement can but reiterate this trite simplicity, and Roxane, with closed eyes, expecting thrills from the rhapsody that halts, cries out impatiently, "That is the subject, work it up, work it up1" and when she bursts scornfully upon his stammering attempts with her, "Oh! Do labyrinthimze your feelings!" are we not to laugh? Again, when Cyrano, acting as Christian's proxy, pours out his dextrously be-rhymed emotions too successfully, till Roxane, mollified, deceived, makes the proposition to descend to him or for him to ascend to her, and throws him into a panic lest she behold him and his nose, are we not to laugh? And when he is made to ask for

a kiss, thanks to Christian's crude desires, interjected in the cooing duet with an unpoetical rushing to the point that again almost threatens to unmask them both and spoil their game, so that Cyrano is forced to ward it off in vain, with outrageous quirks and conceits about a kiss being the rosy dot on the t of the verb aimer, are we to take this petty pretti-ness, ... are we to take this burlesque as poetry meant to be genuinely admired? And, finally, when all these fopperies of verse have frittered themselves out to the purpose both of deterring and goading the deluded Roxane till she bids her gallant up to her to take the kiss she never would have given either one of the precious pair without the assistance of the other, and when the acute Cyrano is made to urge the obtuse Christian to climb up, with his "Get up, get up, animal!" are we to believe that the playwright did not choose this most appropriate epithet with malice prepense? In a word, is it really meant that we should be so naive as to take such double-edged fooling as all this for unvarnished tenderness and fresh-born romance?

If so, and this spectacle-bouffe, circling about a nose as its sole dramatic raison d' *etre*, is to be shorn of its irony, it will be left bare of any literary distinction worth mentioning. If it is to be considered as a serious dramatic or poetic work, it must be perceived that its structure is of the slightest and most casual. It has neither motive, progression nor climax, and but little of the most elementary surprise of situationthe general effect being rather that of light opera than of actual comedy. Its acts are not acts, but a succession of well-chosen, effective, spectacular stage-settings loosely incorporating a string of incidents linked together in the most external way. Its characters are not characters having any inherent individuality or capacity for development,or any relationships with one another save of the most accidental sort. Its poetry, as to either imagery or emotional power, is only far-fetched and superficial .... If, on the other hand, it makes no pretension to high art, but rather to art semi-cynical, all these defects as to depth become effective; on that lower plane its buffoonery gains sparkle and significance, (pp. 120-22)

[Instead] of being hailed as this play has been by certain old-fashioned critics as a palpable evidence of the departure of what they call, with reproach, modern "Realism" and the rebirth of the good old "Romanticism" to smother the world in cakes and ale, and crowd out all new aesthetic forces forever, it is rather a token of the shutting of the door of modem life upon a certain phase of Romanticism, as henceforth impossible to be enjoyed quite in the old-world mood or without the assistance of a cultured historic sensesuch a sign of the natural close of an epoch in literature and life as 'Don Quixote' was of the close of the epoch of the dominance of chivalry in life and in literature. (P-123)

Source: *"Cyrano de Bergerac'* What It Is and Is Not," in Poet Lore, Vol XI, No 1, Winter, 1899, pp. 118-24

Critical Essay #3

In the following essay, which originally appeared in 1898, Beerbohm predicts that Cyrano will be regarded as one of the most noted romantic heroes of all time, asserting that "Cyrano will survive because he is practically a new type in drama."

M. Rostand is not a great original genius like (for example) M. Maeterlinck. He conies to us with no marvelous revelation, but he is a gifted, adroit artist, who does with freshness and great force things that have been done before; and he is, at least, a monstrous fine fellow. His literary instinct is almost as remarkable as his instinct for the technique*thepyrotechnique*of the theatre, insomuch that I can read Cyrano almost as often, with almost as much pleasure, as I could see it played.... It is rather silly to chide M. Rostand for creating a character and situations which are unreal if one examines them from a non-romantic standpoint. It is silly to insist, as one or two critics have insisted, that Cyrano was a fool and a blackguard, in that he entrapped the lady of his heart into marriage with a vapid impostor. The important and obvious point is that Cyrano, as created by M. Rostand, is a splendid hero of romance. If you have any sensibility to romance, you admire him so immensely as to be sure that whatever he may have done was for the best. All the characters and all the incidents in the play have been devised for the glorification of Cyrano, and are but, as who should say, so many rays of limelight converging upon him alone. And that is as it should be. The romantic play which survives the pressure of time is always that which contains some one central figure, to which everything is subordinatea one-part play, in other words-----Cyrano is, infact, as inevitably a fixture in romance as Don Quixote or Don Juan, Punch or Pierrot. Like them, he will never be out of date. But prophecy is dangerous? Of course it is. That is the whole secret of its fascination. Besides, I have a certain amount of reason in prophesying on this point. Realistic figures perish necessarily with the generation in which they were created, and their place is taken by figures typical of the generation which supervenes. But romantic figures belong to no period, and time does not dissolve them.... Cyrano will survive because he is practically a new type in drama. I know that the motives of self-sacrifice-in-love and of beauty-adored-by-a-grotesque are as old, and as effective, as the hills, and have been used in literature again and again. I know that self-sacrifice is the motive of most successful plays. But, so far as I know, beauty-adored-by-a-grotesque has never been used with the grotesque as stage-hero. At any rate it has never been used so finely and so tenderly as by M. Rostand, whose hideous swashbuckler with the heart of gold and the talent for improvising witty or beautiful verses ... is far too novel, I think, and too convincing, and too attractive, not to be permanent, (pp. 5-6)

Source: *Max Beerbohm, "Cyrano deBergerac"* (1898) in his *Around Theatres, Rupert Hart-Davis,* 1953, pp. 4-7.

Adaptations

The earliest film adaptation of *Cyrano de Bergerac* is a silent film from 1925 with Pierre Magnier as Cyrano. Available from Kino on Video.

The most famous film version of *Cyrano de Bergerac* is the one in which Jose Ferrer reprised his famous stage role as the title character. The film was released in 1950 by United Artists and is available on Nostalgia Family Video.

The Royal Shakespeare Company's 1985 production of the play, with Derek Jacobi as Cyrano, is available on video from Turner Home Entertainment.

For a newer adaptation of the play, see Jean-Paul Rappeneau's 1990 version of *Cyrano de Bergerac,* starring Gerard Depardieu as Cyrano, a performance for which he won the 1990 Cannes Film Festival's Best Actor award. Available on Orion Home Video.

Steve Martin's comedy Roxanne (1987) tells the story of *Cyrano de Bergerac* in a modern American setting. Starring Steve Martin as C. D. Bales (Cyrano) and Daryl Hannah as Roxanne. Available on Columbia Home Video.

Topics for Further Study

Research the life of Cardinal Richelieu (whose niece De Guiche is married to in the play) and explain how a knowledge of Richelieu's role in French history can expand a reader's understanding of De Guiche's character.

Look in a historical source to discover what life was like in seventeenth-century France. Then, compare and contrast your findings with the presentation of French life in *Cyrano de Bergerac*.In the play, Cyrano and the Guards fight the Spanish at the seize of Arras. Investigate the causes and effects of this battle and explain why Rostand would use it in his play.

Compare and Contrast

1600s: The real Cyrano de Bergerac *writes Histoire comique des etats et empires de la lune et du soleil,* chronicling his "adventures" on the moon.

1890s: The atom is discovered to be composed of a nucleus orbited by bodies called electrons. This discovery leads to the advent of space Sight and the nuclear age.

Today: The Space Shuttle makes routine visits to Earth orbit, and there is preparation for a future visit to Mars.

1640s: The Thirty Years War comes to an end for most countries with the Peace of Westphalia, but France and Spain continue to fight over territory until the end of the seventeenth century.

1890s: European countries continue to pursue colonization of the Third World in order to compete with each other for power. France deposes Queen Ranavalona of Madagascar, while Cuba demands independence from Spain.

Today: The European Union continues to evolve, making France and Spain member states of a new federation.

1600s: Great plays and books were discussed in the salons of Paris, among the aristocrats and nobles who could afford to spend their leisure time discussing and going to the theater. Most common people did not have this luxury.

1890s: Through the availability of newspapers and magazines, critics all over the world discussed the great works at the turn of the century. Most people have some access to the arts.

Today: People from all over the world and of all social classes can read and discuss art and literature over the internet. Information is more widely available than ever before, and It is accessible almost immediately.

1640s: Society was organized into a strict class structure: aristocrats and nobles, the merchant middle-class, and the rural peasants and farmers who worked the land. A great majority of people went uneducated.

1890s: The Industrial Revolution of the late 1800s drew more people into the cities to work in factories. Society becomes more urbanized, as people leave their jobs in the fields for work these new industries. More and more people are being educated, and there is new emphasis on staying in school.

Today: The Technological Revolution is producing more and more office jobs as workers are being "downsized" and laid off from their factory positions. As society and industry becomes more mechanized there are fewer jobs for unskilled workers, and there is a great demand for those workers with a college education.

What Do I Read Next?

Rostand's 1895 play *The Princess Far Away* is his play concerning Joffroy Rudel, a troubadour who travels to see the beautiful Countess of Tripoli before he dies, despite the fact that they have never met. Like Cyrano, Joffroy is an idealist who commits to a plan of action to realize his dream.

Chantecler, Rostand's 1910 play, focuses on a barnyard rooster who, like his counterpart in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales,* attempts to uphold his dignity among other "animals" of the world.

Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1605,1615) is the renowned novel that follows the adventures of an idealist who lashes out at a materialistic world by engaging himself in various chivalric (and delusionary) adventures. When asked if he has ever read *Don Quixote,* Cyrano replies, "I have and found myself the hero."

Further Study

Burgess, Anthony. Preface to *Cyrano de Bergerac,* by Edmond Rostand, translation by Burgess, Knopf, 1971, pp. v-xiv.

While much of this essay is an explanation of Burgess's methods as a translator, he does offer some valuable insight into the issues of Rostand's play.

Chesterton, G K "Rostand" in his *Varied Types,* Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1903, pp 73-82.

An excerpt from Chesterton's book that characterizes Rostand's work, focusing in particular on *Cyrano de Bergerac* and *L'Aiglon* and their status as heroic comedies

Phelps, William Lyon. "Edmond Rostand" in his *Essays on Modern Dramatists*, Macrmllan, 1921, pp. 229-78. An overview of Rostand's career which traces the theme of the "Triumphant Failure" in several of his plays. This is a good source for nformation about Rostand's thematic concerns

Spiers, A. G. H., "Rostand As Idealist" in *Columbia University Quarterly,* Vol. XX, No. 2, April, 1918, pp 155-69.

Spiers discusses how several of Rostand's characters (including Cyrano) attempt to fulfill their idealistic goals despite the obstacles with which they are faced. The essay features several passages from Rostand's plays as well as his definition of "panache."

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Beerbom, Max. "Cyrano de Bergerac" in his *Around Theatres,* revised edition, Rupert Hart-Davis, 1953, pp. 4-7.

Howarth, William D. "Cyrano de Bergerac" in Reference Guide to French Literature, St. Jame's Press, 1992, pp 165-66.

James, Henry. "Edmond Rostand" m the *Critic,* Vol. 29, no. 5, November, 1901, pp 437-50

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Drama for Students (DfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, DfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of DfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of DfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in DfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by DfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

DfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Drama for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

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□Night.□ Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from DfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of DfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Drama for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

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Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

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