Le Cid Study Guide

Le Cid by Pierre Corneille

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Introduction

The play relates the events of Le Cid coming of age. Le Cid's father asks his son to restore the elder man's honor by challenging Le Cid's future father-in-law to a duel. Le Cid immediately understands that no matter what he does, he is doomed. If he does not make the challenge, both he and his father will be dishonored. If he does make the challenge, he will lose the love of his future bride. The manner in which he solves this dilemma, and the events that unfold as he does so, takes the young man from untried warrior to triumphant hero.

Author Biography

Corneille is one of France's most outstanding playwrights of the seventeenth century. Although he was considered a prolific writer for his time and is best known as a playwright, literature was not his main career.

Born on June 6, 1606, in Rouen, France, to a family that had a tradition of producing lawyers, Corneille was destined to follow in his father's footsteps. He studied law under the training of Jesuit priests and, at the early age of twenty-three, entered parliament. For the next twenty-one years, Corneille practiced law (under King Louis XIII and King Louis XIV) as the king's counselor in the department of waterways and forests. Fortunately for many Parisians, law was not the only thing that interested Corneille. No sooner was he established in parliament than he decided to try his hand at writing and soon discovered he had another fruitful talent. By the time he stopped practicing law, he had written twenty plays. But he was not finished yet. While in retirement, Corneille would go on to write some of his most influential dramatic plays.

Corneille's first six plays were comedies, beginning with *Mélite* (1625). A year later, this comedy was presented in Paris and from that point on, Corneille's reputation as a playwright took off. In the next seven years, Corneille wrote almost a play a year, eventually catching the attention of Cardinal de Richelieu (prime minister of France, 1585—1642). The cardinal, a very influential figure in the king's court, wanted to use Corneille's gift of writing to promote his own political ideas. So Corneille was sponsored by the cardinal and supplied with concepts about which to write. This did not set well with Corneille for very long. After many disagreements, Corneille and the cardinal parted company. Corneille left Paris and returned to his hometown of Rouen, where he took up a private practice in law.

Immediately following his return to Rouen, Corneille did not write. This fallow period lasted for several years, but the time was not wasted. As a matter of fact, it was during this period that Corneille decided to lay aside the genre of comedy and try his hand at writing tragedy. Today, many scholars believe it was through the writing of tragedies that Corneille reached his full potential as a playwright.

Corneille's first tragic piece was *Médée* (1634), which met with only mediocre success. Corneille next produced what many critics believe was his first masterpiece, *Le Cid* (1636). The many performances of this play were cheered by packed audiences in Paris. Even King Louis XIII sent Corneille congratulations. But not everyone was happy with Corneille's play. Cardinal de Richelieu harshly criticized *Le Cid* because it broke away from the traditional classical rules of drama. Richelieu's harsh commentary against Corneille's work so belittled Corneille's skills that the playwright did not write another play for the next three years.

But this was not the end of Corneille. During those three years he advanced his art. And when he next produced a play, it equaled, if not surpassed, the mastery demonstrated in *Le Cid*. The year 1641 was a remarkable time for Corneille. First, he married Marie de

Lampérière. Next, he enjoyed back-to-back productions of two more well-received tragic plays, *Horace* (1640) and *Cinna* (1641). With these plays, there was no doubt of Corneille's talents. He would go on to write many more plays before his death and for his innovations in the writing of dramatic tragedy, he is honored, today, with the title of the Father of French Tragedy.

Corneille died in Paris on October 1, 1684.

Plot Summary

Act 1

In the first scene, Chimene is talking to her lady-in-waiting, Elvire. Chimene is excited because she has heard rumors that her father, Don Gomes, has accepted Don Rodrigue as a suitor for Chimene's hand in marriage. Elvire confirms that the rumors are true. When pressed to answer her, Elvire tells Chimene that she told her father that Chimene has no preference of suitors and will do only as her father commands. Chimene's father is proud to hear such devotion and states that he believes that Don Rodrigue is well suited for her. Elvire then tells Chimene that the king is to choose a tutor for his son today. Elvire is sure he will select Chimene's father. Once Don Gomes is chosen, Elvire believes, Don Rodrigue's father will also propose the match between Chimene and Don Rodrigue. Despite this news, Chimene says that her spirit is perturbed, although she does not know why.

In the next scene, Infanta appears with her lady-in-waiting, Leonor. In this scene, Infanta reveals her love of Don Rodrigue, but through her conversations with Leonor, she also acknowledges that she will never be allowed to marry Rodrigue because he is below her social status in the court. She also confesses that she has purposefully brought Chimene and Rodrigue together and encouraged their love. She has done so because if they are married all hope of her being with Rodrigue will be extinguished.

Count Don Gomes enters with Don Diegue in the next scene. These men are respectively the father of Chimene and the father of Don Rodrigue. They are discussing the fact that Don Diegue has won the title of tutor for the king's son. Don Gomes is stunned by this action of the king's, having expected that he would have been chosen. Don Diegue tries to dismiss Don Gomes haughty statements stating that the king probably chose him based on love not on merit, allowing that Don Gomes may have deserved it more. This does not satisfy Don Gomes, however, and by the end of the scene, Don Gomes slaps Don Diegue in the face out of indignation. Don Diegue draws his sword but Don Gomes easily disarms him.

In the next scene, Don Diegue despairs by himself. He has been insulted by Don Gomes and is humiliated because he is not strong enough any more to defend his honor. He must find someone younger and stronger who can.

Rodrigue, whose courage his father questions, enters the scene. When Rodrigue asserts that he is brave enough to do whatever his father asks, Don Diegue tells him to seek out Don Gomes and avenge his honor. When his father leaves, Rodrigue must weigh this heavy matter alone. If he does as his father has requested, it means he must kill Chimene's father. If he does this, Chimene will hate him. If he does not do as his father has asked him to, his father and therefore he, himself, will remain disgraced. If he is disgraced, then Chimene will not be able to love him. Rodrigue decides that he has no choice. He must challenge Don Gomes.

Act 2

Act 2 begins with Don Gomes discussing what has just happened between himself and Don Diegue. Don Arias is with him and suggests that Don Gomes should not expose his anger concerning the king's choice of tutor. Unfortunately, Don Gomes, having not been chosen, believes that he has lost his honor among his men. He feels disgraced, and he wants the king to know. In the following scene, Rodrigue enters and challenges Don Gomes, who thinks Rodrigue a fool to do so. Don Gomes is insulted that such a young and inexperienced warrior should dare to even think he might challenge him. But Don Gomes also realizes that Rodrigue must surely be an exceptional young man and he praises himself for having chosen Rodrigue for his daughter. Don Gomes tells Rodrigue to go away. There would be no honor in Gomes's killing of such a young man. But Rodrigue insists and the two men leave to fight.

The next scene involves Chimene and Infanta, who have heard of Don Gomes's and Rodrigue's duel. They are concerned for both men but do not yet know the outcome. Chimene leaves to find them.

Infanta is left with Leonor. Infanta hopes that Rodrigue will win because then he could not gain Chimene's love and might possibly love her instead.

The king□Don Fernand□discusses with Don Arias and Don Sanche the arrogance of Don Gomes. The king is furious that Don Gomes has defied him. Don Sanche, a suitor of Chimene, attempts to defend Don Gomes, asking that the king be lenient with him. The subject is not fully discussed as the king is worried about a navy of Moors that has been seen sailing near the shores of their empire. They discuss which path they should follow to protect themselves. Then Don Alonse enters to bring the news that Don Gomes is dead.

In scene VI, Chimene and Don Diegue beg the king to hear them out. Chimene wants her father's death avenged. Don Diegue wants the king to spare his son's life. After each pleads their case, the king asks that Don Rodrigue be brought to him.

Act 3

Rodrigue shows up at Chimene's house. He first runs into Elvire who tells him to run away. When she sees Chimene coming, she tells Rodrigue to hide. Chimene then enters with Don Sanche. Don Sanche promises to avenge her father's death. When Sanche leaves, Chimene admits that she is completely torn apart. She must regain her father's honor by seeking Rodrigue's death. But her heart cannot bear the thought of Rodrigue dying. Rodrigue then enters and tells Chimene to kill him. Chimene insists that she must seek his death but she cannot do it. Rodrigue says he knows that he must die and prefers that it is by her hand.

In scene 5, Don Diegue is alone. He is worried for his son. He thanks the heavens when Rodrigue enters. He tells Rodrigue to go fight the Moors and keep them from the

kingdom. If Rodrigue does this, all his problems will be solved. He will be a hero, and Chimene will then be able to marry him without dishonor.

Act 4

Scene 1 opens much as the play began with Chimene and Elvire discussing rumors about Don Rodrigue, who has defeated the Moors and saved his empire. The people are rejoicing for their champion whom they now call Le Cid. Then Infanta enters the scene. Chimene confides in her that even though Rodrigue is now proclaimed a hero, she still cannot forgive him. Infanta reminds Chimene that she should make careful considerations as this is not just a personal decision but a public one. The people need a hero.

The king meets with Le Cid in the next scene, along with Don Diegue, Don Arias, and Don Sanche. Le Cid relates the details of the battle with the Moors. When Chimene shows up, the king asks Le Cid to leave, but only after giving him the highest praises for his bravery. Chimene tells the king that she still cannot forgive Le Cid and pretends not to love him. She still wants revenge, and when Don Sanche says that he will avenge her father, Chimene agrees. Whoever wins, she says, she will marry.

Act 5

Chimene and Le Cid face one another. He insists that nothing means anything to him but her. He is still willing to give his life if Chimene declares that she wants him dead. She says she does and so Le Cid goes to face Sanche. Sanche returns later with a bloody sword and Chimene believes that Le Cid is dead. At this Chimene openly declares her love for Le Cid upon confronting the king. The king informs her that she has been misled. Le Cid lives. Le Cid is then led onto the stage by Infanta, who tells Chimene to accept him. Chimene repeats her words of love but tells Le Cid that she cannot marry him or shame will fall upon her for accepting the murderer of her father. The king tries to solve this dilemma by sending Le Cid in pursuit of the Moors in an attempt to win back their land. In time, the king believes, Chimene will be able to accept Le Cid.

Act 1, Scenes 1 and 2

Act 1, Scenes 1 and 2 Summary

This classical French play tells the story of Chimene and Roderick, young lovers driven apart by acts of perceived dishonor done to their respective fathers. This tension between honor and love is developed both dramatically and thematically throughout the play as the lovers confront their simultaneous desires for vengeance and for each other.

Scene 1 - Chimene and Elvire enter, with Chimene repeatedly demanding that Elvire confirm what she's already said - that Chimene's father Don Gomez is indeed in favor of the marriage between Chimene and Don Roderick, a young soldier. Conversation reveals that Roderick had a rival for Chimene's affections in Don Sancho, and that Gomez is likely to be offered the position of tutor to the king's son. Elvire assures Chimene that everything will work out according to her hopes, but Chimene expresses her fears that soon, great sorrow will follow great joy.

Scene 2 - The Infanta (Princess) comes in with Leonora, and tells a messenger to give Chimene the message that the Infanta wants to see her. Conversation between the Infanta and Leonora reveals that every day the Infanta waits for news of how the relationship between Roderick and Chimene is going. She is passionately in love with Roderick herself and believes that once he and Chimene are betrothed her pain at not being able to marry him will end. Leonora says the Infanta would be wise to forget Roderick sooner rather than later, since his social stature is too low to allow him to marry a princess. The Infanta says she would rather kill herself than dishonor her family, and admits to encouraging the relationship between Roderick and Chimene so that she could be freed from the torture of her love. She then speaks poetically about the way that their wedding will simultaneously mean death and life to her - death because her hopes of love from Roderick will end, and life because she will be free from those hopes. The messenger returns with news that Chimene is waiting for the Infanta in a nearby gallery. The Infanta tells both Leonora and the messenger to go to Chimene and say she'll be with her shortly. When they're gone, the Infanta prays for the restoration of her peace and honor, and for finding joy in the happiness of others.

Act 1, Scenes 1 and 2 Analysis

There are two main purposes to this section of the play. The first is exposition, or establishing the situation. This means that rather than focusing on dramatic action, Scenes 1 and 2 focus on explanation and information, much of which also serves to foreshadow future plot developments. The references to the love between Roderick and Chimene, and to the King's search for a tutor for his son, foreshadow later events in the story. Meanwhile, the references to Sancho's feelings for Chimene and the Infanta's feelings for Roderick foreshadow their later roles in how that plot unfolds and define their motivations for playing those roles. Another element of foreshadowing, which

comes in the form of a premonition, is Chimene's comments at the end of Scene 1 in which she refers to great sorrow following great joy. This is, in fact, almost exactly what happens - her joy in this scene at learning Gomez approves her relationship with Roderick is quickly overtaken by sorrow at the upcoming negative developments in the relationship between her father and Roderick.

The second purpose of this section is to define the play's central conflict between love and honor. This is done through the introduction of the secondary plot, or subplot, involving the Infanta. Her inner conflict is the same as that experienced later by Roderick and Chimene - should action be ruled by love or by honor? This is the play's central question, and is explored in both dramatic and thematic terms. It's interesting to note that the initial choices of both the Infanta and Roderick are governed by honor, and that they both end up miserable. This is the first example of a thematic point made several times throughout the play - that acting too much out of a sense of honor leads to misery and ultimately destruction. The introduction of the theme through a subplot is a good example of how such plots, are often used - to define the play's main plot, or theme, through repetition.

This play was written at approximately the same time as the plays of William Shakespeare, who wrote within a similar linguistic framework and style - that is, in language that is generally more complex and poetic than that in common use today. That being said, the language in this play is, for the most part, fairly straightforward. Although characters express themselves with more words, in richer imagery and at greater length than characters in more contemporary plays, their language is less imagistic than that in Shakespeare, giving the text a certain sense of directness, urgency, and immediacy suited to the story. This is because the action of *Le Cid* focuses on confrontation, debate, and external manifestations of feeling, rather than on poetic explorations of internal emotional states of being as in Shakespearean history plays which contain similar contexts and themes.

Act 1, Scenes 3, 4, 5 and 6

Act 1, Scenes 3, 4, 5 and 6 Summary

Scene 3 - Gomez and Diego enter, arguing politely over whether the King made the right choice in choosing Diego, rather than Gomez, to be the prince's tutor. As they shift the focus of their argument to whether Diego's son, Roderick, should marry Gomez's daughter, Chimene, their mutual politeness quickly disappears. Gomez speaks with pointed resentment of how Roderick's ambitions should be higher now his father's been appointed to a high status position. He also says, ironically, that the prince couldn't have a better tutor - the implication is that Gomez thinks he was much better suited for the job. There is an echo here of Act 1 Scene 1, in which Elvire assured Chimene that her father, Gomez, was a shoo-in for the job.

In response, Diego arrogantly says that all the prince needs to do to learn to be a good warrior is study his record. Gomez makes even more pointed comments referring to how he is a renowned warrior in the present, and that the prince could learn much more from him as opposed to Diego, who was renowned long ago and whose expertise must be learned from books. After a long speech in which Gomez brags about his military prowess, Diego agrees that Gomez serves the king well, but adds that when it came down to making the choice of a tutor, the king still chose the better man. Their argument escalates to the point where Gomez strikes Diego. Diego draws his sword to defend himself, but Gomez takes the sword from him and says ironically that this is the perfect moment for Diego, disarmed as he is, to show the prince what a great warrior he is.

Scene 4 - After Gomez goes out, Diego speaks in a long soliloquy about how miserable it is to weaken as the result of old age. He wonders if his honor will be avenged, refers to the uselessness of his arm, and metaphorically urges his sword to take revenge.

Scene 5 - As Roderick appears, Diego asks whether he has courage. When Roderick says he does, Diego reacts with angry gratitude and passion, saying he wants Roderick to avenge a slight to his honor. He gives Roderick his sword, warning him that the man who slighted him is himself a great warrior. Roderick demands to know the warrior's name and Diego tells him that it is Chimene's father. Roderick reacts with shock, but Diego tells him that avenging the family honor is more important than love, urges him to act quickly, and goes out.

Scene 6 - In a long soliloquy written in rhyming verse, as opposed to the other scenes written in blank verse, Roderick speaks of the dilemma in which he finds himself. On the one hand, if he avenges his father in the way he is honor bound to do, he will lose Chimene because he's killed her father. On the other hand, if he doesn't avenge his father, he'll lose Chimene anyway because he's betrayed himself and his family, losing their honor. At the soliloquy's conclusion, he resolves to take revenge in the way his father demands, and goes out in search of Gomez.

Act 1, Scenes 3, 4, 5 and 6 Analysis

Both the play's main plot and theme are set in motion in this sequence of scenes, as the impulsive, defensive, arrogant choices made by Gomez and Diego place Roderick squarely in the middle of exactly the same dilemma as the Infanta in Scene 2. Faced with the choice to acting out of love (spare Chimene's father) or out of honor (kill him because he humiliated Diego), the question of what Roderick will do and what will be the consequences motivates and defines both the story and the theme of honor versus love. It is important to note at this point that without it actually being said, the play makes it clear that Gomez acts the way he does because he feels his honor has been insulted by the King's choice of Diego to tutor the prince. This is another way in which slighted honor is placed at the core of the play's story, triggering a chain of events that leads to the death of one character and the near-death of another.

Diego's sword is the play's principle symbol, representing not only the spiritual violence done to Diego's honor but also the physical violence done later in the play to Gomez, as well as the emotional violence done to Chimene and Roderick. In all cases, this violence results from a self-important defense of honor by each character, and as a result of the defense being unmitigated by love, forgiveness or compassion. Meanwhile, the sword being struck from Diego's hand signifies both his loss of honor and his inability, because of his age, to resort to violence. The fact that he hands his sword over to Roderick signifies that Diego is passing the right to both honor and violence to his son.

A soliloquy is a narrative device defined by a character being alone on stage, meaning that only the audience hears what he or she is saying. The device is used here to explore a character's inner feelings or dilemmas. The two soliloquies in this section function from each of those perspectives. Diego's soliloquy in Scene 4 serves the former function, allowing him to reveal his anguish at being insulted by Gomez in a way he couldn't when Gomez was actually there. Roderick's soliloquy, on the other hand, serves to explore his thought processes as he considers his dilemma - to avenge his father or to lose his honor, both of which would result in losing the affection of the woman he loves.

It's interesting to note that this is one of only two occasions in the entire play when the writing becomes more structured verse, as opposed to the rest of the play which is written in blank verse. The second occasion is Act 5 Scene 2, in which the Infanta speaks of being in a similar dilemma as Roderick is in Act 1 Scene 6. This repeated use of verse in such similar circumstances reinforces the previously discussed idea that the Infanta and Roderick are in the same situation both dramatically and thematically, forced to choose love or honor. Also, the poeticism of their two soliloquies, the fact that they speak about their feelings in the language of emotion rather than of honor suggests that their true inclinations are towards acting out of love rather than duty. This reinforces the play's central thematic statement, that love, with all its manifestations including compassion, and not honor should be the primary focus of one's life.

This scene, and much of the play, is constructed in what are called "French Scenes," the beginnings and endings of which are defined by the entrances and exits of characters. This is a uniquely French technique. Analysis of how scenes change when a character enters or leaves can be useful in determining meaning. In this case, the implication of the French Scenes is that Diego, who speaks his innermost feelings alone, is reluctant to express those feelings to his son, since as soon as Roderick comes onstage, the pain of the soliloquy is immediately concealed by anger.

Act 2, Scenes 1 and 2

Act 2, Scenes 1 and 2 Summary

Scene 1 - Gomez speaks with Arias, a gentleman of the court, about what passed between him and Diego. Conversation reveals that the King is angry with Gomez, that Gomez believes his service as a warrior will cause the King to overlook what happened, that Arias believes Gomez' arrogance will get him into even more trouble, and that Gomez has no fear of the King's punishment. Finally Gomez says that even if he were reduced to poverty he could still live, but "life without honor [he] could not endure."

Scene 2 - As Arias leaves, Roderick comes in and challenges Gomez to a duel. Gomez angrily comments on Roderick's arrogance, saying that Roderick has never swung a sword in battle before. Roderick brags that even the trial swings of his sword are master strokes, adding that others might tremble in fear at the thought of Gomez' reputation, but that because he is fighting for his father's honor he feels nothing but determination. Gomez comments on how impressed he's always been with Roderick, saying his courage is the reason he agreed to the marriage with Chimene and that he's glad to see that duty is a more powerful influence over him than love. The implication is that Gomez is glad to see Roderick's determination to fight for his father's honor is stronger than his fear of losing Chimene's love after challenging her father. Gomez then says he can't, and won't, fight with someone not his equal because there is no honor in it. Roderick mocks him for having pity and challenges him to fight. Gomez suggests that Roderick withdraw, Roderick challenges him again, and finally Gomez agrees.

Act 2, Scenes 1 and 2 Analysis

The play's central theme is defined further through the development of its central conflict between Gomez, Diego, and Roderick over whose honor has been more besmirched. As Gomez spars verbally, first with a well-intentioned courtier and then the vengeful Roderick, it becomes clear that he is the embodiment of one side of the play's thematic premise - that honor is the most important value in life. His determination that in challenging Diego he did the right thing, albeit in the wrong way, combines with his evident respect for Roderick to reinforce this perspective. Later in the play, however, Gomez' death at Roderick's hands, who is acting from essentially the same honor-based value system, combines with Roderick's increasingly remorse at his actions, to present the other side of the play's thematic premise. This is the idea that honor is in fact an empty, destructive value, and that compassion, tolerance, and forgiveness should be the ethics at the core of a good, respectable life.

The image of the sword appears again in Scene 2, with Roderick's boasts of his prowess reinforcing the sword's value as a symbol of honor's blindness and the angry spirit of vengeance. It's worth noting that while it's never mentioned in the text, the

sword now being wielded by Roderick is in fact his father's sword, handed to him in Act 1 Scene 5.

The French Scene technique here can be seen as a useful illustration of how different Gomez is with different people. With Arias he's arrogant and patronizing, but with Roderick he's almost an equal, recognizing right away the honorable warrior spirit by which he himself is so driven.

Act 2, Scenes 3, 4 and 5

Act 2, Scenes 3, 4 and 5 Summary

Scene 3 - The Infanta comforts Chimene, who is upset that her hopes for happiness have been so quickly destroyed. The Infanta says the King is trying to make peace between Gomez and Diego, adding that once Chimene and Roderick are married the quarrel between their fathers will be forgotten. Chimene says she hopes, but does not believe, that that will happen. Infanta says that because Roderick loves Chimene so much, all she has to do is tell him to be merciful to her father and everything will be fine. Chimene says she can't do that because if she does, Roderick's honor will be destroyed. The Infanta offers to use her authority as princess to imprison Roderick until the danger of a duel is past. Chimene gratefully agrees to the plan.

Scene 4 - The Infanta summons a messenger and tells him to bring Roderick to her. The messenger tells her that Roderick and Gomez have both left the palace, and were arguing as they went. As the messenger leaves, Chimene gives voice to her belief that the duel is being fought, and runs out in tears.

Scene 5 - Leonora comes in, and the Infanta tells her that in spite of Chimene's evident distress and because she believes Roderick will win the duel and therefore lose Chimene, the Infanta is hoping again that Roderick can be hers to love. Leonora refers again to Roderick's relatively low status, leading her and the Infanta to agree that loving Roderick makes no sense, and that that love has the power to transcend sense. The Infanta speaks at poetic length about the way that the Roderick's courage in conquering Gomez will lead him man to conquer kingdoms. Leonora bluntly asks whether reality will equal the fantasy, and the Infanta confesses that she's let her imagination run away with her.

Act 2, Scenes 3, 4 and 5 Analysis

This brief section focuses on the play's secondary plot, or subplot, illustrating again the main conflict between love and honor through the development of the secondary conflict focusing on the Infanta. The point worth noting here is the way the Infanta moves between the two extremes of duty and love. In the scene with Chimene, her actions are defined by duty because the Infanta knows she must marry someone of royal blood, she is continuing with her previously discussed plan to get Roderick out of the picture so she can do what duty and honor require her to do. As soon as she hears that the duel is being fought, however, she immediately reacts out of love and desire, making the assumption that Roderick's triumph will be enough so that his lower birth will be overlooked. Later in the play she manages to find the balance between the two extremes, with her letting go of Roderick being both an act of love (letting her beloved be with the woman he truly wants to be with) and an act of duty (marrying according the requirements of her status). It's possible to see, therefore, that the Infanta is the

embodiment of the play's thematic statement that it is possible for love and honor to live in balance with each other.

There is an ironic piece of foreshadowing in the Infanta's comments that the man who conquers Gomez will be able to conquer kingdoms. This foreshadows the final moments of the play in which Roderick conquers Gomez and receives orders from the King to conquer a kingdom. The irony, of course, is that the idea originates in the Infanta's fantasy, her love-struck hope that she and Roderick can have a life together. She believes it's impossible, and then when her fantasy actually comes true, it's too late because by then, Roderick and Chimene have agreed to marry.

Once again the technique of the French Scene defines character, as different aspects of the Infanta's personality - her capacities for practicality, command and fantasy - are each in the forefront of a different scene.

Act 2, Scenes 6, 7 and 8

Act 2, Scenes 6, 7 and 8 Summary

Scene 6 - The King, accompanied by Arias and Sancho, complains about Gomez' arrogance, saying he knows a way to teach him respect - imprisonment. As a messenger enters and waits in silence, Sancho suggests that Gomez be given time to calm down, saying it's difficult for someone with Gomez' combative spirit to submit to even the King's orders. The King thanks him for being honest, but says that because Sancho is young he doesn't understand the full implications of what Gomez has done. He explains that in dishonoring Diego, the prince's tutor, Gomez has dishonored the King's judgment, and therefore must be punished. He abruptly changes the subject, saying that several ships from an invading kingdom have been sighted. He and Arias discuss the reasons for the invasion, referring to the arrogance of the invaders. He says that announcing an actual invasion without any real confirmation might panic the people, and so until an invasion can be confirmed, only a small additional guard will be posted.

Scene 7 - The messenger finally speaks up, telling the King that Gomez has been killed by Roderick. As the King comments that he was afraid something like this would happen, Alonzo announces the arrival of Chimene, weeping and ready to plead for justice. The King comments that he feels justice has been served by Roderick's action, and also that he grieves the loss of a warrior like Gomez at a time when he might need his services more than ever.

Scene 8 - Chimene and Diego come in, each pleading for the King's attention. In rapidly paced dialogue, Chimene begs that Roderick be punished for killing her father, while Diego protests that Roderick was merely acting according to the dictates of honor. The King tells them to speak more calmly, orders Diego to be silent, and gives Chimene permission to state her case first. In poetic language Chimene refers to the service Gomez did to the King and the Kingdom, speaking in detailed length about how the blood spilling from his body at the moment of his death cried out to her to take revenge. She also says that the wrong done to the King by Roderick, in executing such a great warrior, is even greater than the wrong done to her as a daughter. When she's finished, the King gives Diego permission to speak. Diego talks about how he has been weakened by age, how that dishonor prevented him from avenging the dishonor done to him by Gomez, and how Roderick's honorable actions proved him worthy of praise and position. He concludes by saying that the might of a man like Roderick should be preserved to fight for the honor of king and country, rather than destroyed to slake Chimene's thirst for vengeance. He offers to die in Roderick's place, if the King decides that Roderick's actions must be punished. The King promises that justice will be served, and that he will meet with his council to decide what that justice should be. He tells Sancho to take Chimene home, imprisons Diego in the court, and summons Roderick.

Act 2, Scenes 6, 7 and 8 Analysis

The play's theme, that honor is less important than those who fight for it believe it to be, is developed from a different perspective in the first part of this section. In the face of imminent attack, the King's somewhat dismissive attitude towards the battle between his two courtiers indicates there are more important things to him, to the play, and to the world than whether one arrogant man was slighted by another. This idea seems to have not occurred to Chimene, however, who comes screaming into the second part of the scene without any thought or perspective beyond the slight done to her father's honor, and therefore to hers. Yes, her father has just been killed by the man she loves, and yes she's got every right to be overwrought. Still, because her point in this scene is the same as that of other characters who do not have her emotional reasons for being so insistent, the play seems to suggest that the quest for honor, no matter how calmly it is pursued, is at its core as unreasonable as Chimene is here.

Act 3, Scenes 1, 2, 3 and 4

Act 3, Scenes 1, 2, 3 and 4 Summary

Scene 1 - Roderick comes to Chimene's home, and reveals to Elvire that he's come to accept the judgment from Chimene the he feels he deserves. As he protests that he deserves to die, Elvire struggles to convince him that Chimene is too upset to see him. She also says if anyone sees him they'll ruin Chimene's honor by saying she gave refuge to her father's killer. She then sees Chimene coming, and goes into hiding with Roderick.

Scene 2 - Chimene and Sancho come in, with Sancho reassuring Chimene that her grief is just and saying if she needs someone to avenge her father's death on her behalf, he'd be willing to do so. She reminds him the King has promised to dispense justice, but Sancho says that kind of justice moves slowly and she deserves justice now. Chimene says she'll keep his offer in mind, and Sancho says that's all he can ask and goes out.

Scene 3 - Elvire comes out of hiding, and Chimene allows her feelings of grief to run freely. She speaks of grieving for not just her father but for Roderick too, saying in a long speech that she still loves him but will nevertheless do what duty demands and seek revenge. She concludes by saying that once Roderick dies, she will die as well, out of misery. Elvire urges her to leave the pursuit of justice to the king and not be so insistent, but Chimene insists she's only doing as honor dictates, repeating that it's her intention to pursue Roderick, kill him, and kill herself afterwards.

Scene 4 - Roderick comes forward. Chimene cries out in anguish and urges him to go away, but he takes out the sword and suggests that she use it to take her revenge on him. She refuses to even look at it, but in a long speech, Roderick says that even though he loves her, he would do what he did again because of the demands of honor. He speaks of his belief that without honor, he wouldn't deserve her love. Chimene agrees with him, saying that she's in a similar position, having to follow the dictates of honor but in her case needing to do so to prove herself worthy of her father's name. She speaks of having been able to find comfort in Roderick's love but only if her father had been killed in any other way, and adds that under the circumstances there's no way she can ever find comfort in him again. She vows that her love for him will not soften her resolve, and Roderick says it shouldn't, again offering to let her kill him then and there. She refuses, saying the job of actually killing him must fall to someone else. He urges her to take the revenge to which she has a right. Again she refuses, he calls her stubborn, she again refuses, and he suggests that if she doesn't take her revenge, the rumor that she's too weak to properly avenge her father will spread, and her family will lose their honor anyway. Chimene says the real damage to her family's reputation will come if someone finds out he's been there, and demands that he go. For a moment they speak together of how miserable they are, and of how their joy has so quickly become unhappiness, and then Roderick goes, wishing again that Chimene would kill

him. Chimene promises to kill herself the moment he dies. After Roderick is gone, Elvire tries again to comfort Chimene, but she says she wants to be alone.

Act 3, Scenes 1, 2, 3 and 4 Analysis

The impossible and paradoxical demands of honor that anchor the play's dramatic conflict and thematic tension are never more vividly apparent as they are in this scene, the writing of which bears out the previously discussed idea that debate is a key element of the play's narrative structure. Just as in the previous section with Diego and Chimene, the views, perspectives and attitudes of both central characters are presented clearly. The result is that there is clear tension between what might be called the intellectual arguments they both put forward about honor and the emotional context in which they're making those arguments. In other words, they're talking and acting in the way they think they're supposed to, as opposed to acting in a way anchored in how they feel. This is a vivid dramatization of a key aspect of the play's theme - the tension between honor and emotion, a tension developed further when the appearance of the sword is considered.

The sword appears here again as a symbol of honor, and the violence done in its name. The important thing to note is Chimene's refusal to use it, and her coming up with increasingly far-fetched reasons not to. This again illustrates the play's thematic point that honor, and fighting to maintain/establish/avenge it, are of questionable value. This point is also illustrated by the way the action makes clear that above her desires for revenge, Chimene is governed by feelings of love. She clearly wants Roderick to live as long as he can - this is why she doesn't give Sancho permission to hunt Roderick down right away and also why she doesn't kill him herself. It's easy to understand from this scene that in her arguments in favor of honor, she's only posturing, saying what she believes she must. Once again the tension between honor and emotion comes into play, once again emotion wins, and once again the play makes its thematic point.

Act 3, Scene 5

Act 3, Scene 5 Summary

Diego appears, speaking in soliloquy about how there's no such thing as perfect happiness, referring to how the man who insulted him has been killed but how he's no longer able to see Roderick, whom he says acted so bravely in avenging the insult. He also refers to imagining that he sees Gomez' ghost, to believing that Gomez' friends are pursuing him, and to his fear that he's losing his mind.

Roderick appears, and for a moment Diego believes he has lost his mind, but soon realizes that Roderick is fully real. He speaks proudly of what Roderick has done, saying that with his first sword thrust Roderick has equaled the achievements of Diego's entire lifetime. Roderick says he's glad Diego's proud of him, but feels remorse for having driven Chimene away. Diego tells him to stop worrying, saying honor is more important than love and that women are plentiful. Roderick angrily tells him it's equally dishonorable to be a violence-hungry soldier and an undutiful lover, saying that he deserves to die for what he's done. Diego tells him the country needs him to defend it from the invaders sighted earlier, saying that attack is imminent. He refers to how frightened the people are becoming, and to hundreds of friends and fellow soldiers who had at first been prepared to fight to defend Diego's honor but are now pledged to defend the city. He says these soldiers are calling for Roderick to be their leader, and Diego encourages him to accept the offer, saying that if he does and if he successfully repels the invaders, the King will pardon him and Chimene will no longer demand revenge. He also says that if he proves strong enough, Chimene will love him again. He takes Roderick out to see the King and prove to him his worth.

Act 3, Scene 5 Analysis

The play's thematic point about the relative emptiness of honor as a value is pointed up in a different way by the first part of the scene in which Diego seems to be suffering from a guilty conscience. His fear and remorse are quickly covered up when he sees Roderick, first by joy at actually seeing his son alive and second by anger when he hears Roderick speak of his own guilt. As a result of the first section, Diego's subsequent arguments in support of honor, and his insistence that Roderick should fight to prove it, ring somewhat hollow, almost as though Diego is trying to convince himself as much as he's trying to convince his son. In short, in this scene belief in honor is again revealed to be a mask. In the same way that Chimene and Roderick, at the end of the previous scene, dropped their shallow, intellectual arguments about honor to reveal the truth about how deeply miserable they are, the first part of the scene reveals a truth that Diego's equally shallow arguments about honor can't fully conceal.

Meanwhile, another subplot moves into focus with the second mention of the approaching invaders. Roderick's role in the upcoming battle serves as an important

element in the main plot, illustrating another important aspect of subplots in general - to trigger change or movement in the main plot.

Act 4, Scenes 1 and 2

Act 4, Scenes 1 and 2 Summary

Scene 1 - Once again, Chimene repeatedly asks Elvire to say again what she has previously said - that Roderick's leadership successfully and triumphantly repelled the invaders. Elvire refers to two invading kings that have been captured, to the way the people are rapturously receiving Roderick as he returns, and to Roderick's fear of appearing before the King. It can be understood at this point that he still fears punishment for killing Gomez. Chimene comments that her joy echoes that of the people and that her faith in Roderick's strength and courage echoes theirs, but then says that she still feels a great desire to take revenge on Roderick for killing her father.

Scene 2 - The Infanta comes in, offering sympathy for Chimene's grief over both her father and Roderick. Chimene urges her to be happy like everyone else, saying she's the only one who has any right to be upset. She goes on to explain that she loves Roderick more than ever now she's seen what a true, good and strong man he is, but still has to hunt him down because of what he did to her father. The Infanta tells her circumstances have changed, saying the King agrees that Gomez' glory as a warrior lives again in Roderick and that for Chimene to pursue her vengeance means danger and imminent destruction for the city. She urges Chimene to let Roderick live for the good of all, but Chimene says she doesn't have the right to make that decision, adding that honor demands she do the opposite. The Infanta says it's a greater honor to sacrifice an individual desire in the name of fulfilling the public good, but Chimene is unmoved.

Act 4, Scenes 1 and 2 Analysis

Aside from it being unlikely that the untrained, unpracticed Roderick suddenly becomes a great military hero, the most noteworthy element of this scene is the appearance of the Infanta and her pleading for Chimene to have mercy. Interest here lies not in the fact that Chimene remains unmoved, something that is so unreasonable that it again points out how "blind and blinkered" pursuit of honor can make a person. No, the interest here arises from the Infanta's plea that Roderick's life be spared. This is noteworthy because earlier in the play (Act 1 Scene 2), the Infanta admitted that she loved Roderick. It's possible, even likely, that her reasons for pleading with Chimene have less to do with the needs of the state and more to do with her own desires. If Chimene lets Roderick live, she will never have a relationship with him, which would leave him free for the Infanta. The thematic relevance of this is that once again, an argument in favor of honor turns out to be hollow - specifically, the Infanta's position that sacrificing personal desire for the honor of the community as a whole is a greater good. The Infanta doesn't care at all about the community; all she wants is her lover. Honor to her, and increasingly to the play, means nothing when placed next to love.

Act 4, Scenes 3, 4 and 5

Act 4, Scenes 3, 4 and 5 Summary

Scene 3 - The King comes in with Diego, Roderick, Sancho and Arias, speaking extravagantly and proudly about Roderick's achievements. He refers to the way the two captured kings refer to Roderick as "Le Cid," saying that in their language "Le Cid" means "the king," and that from then on he will be known by that name at home as well. When he talks about how much he owes Roderick for saving the kingdom, Roderick protests that he really didn't do anything, that he only did his duty. The King says not everyone who "does his duty" does so with such distinction, and asks Roderick to recount the full story of his victory. Roderick apologizes for taking over the leadership of the defense without the King's permission, saying that because he believed he was going to die anyway he thought he might as well do so with honor. The King tells him that everything to do with Gomez has been forgotten, and that from now on Chimene will only be listened to politely, without intent to do as she asks. Roderick then goes into a long and detailed explanation of how he defeated the invaders, referring at one point to how the invaders felt they were about to lose, but the possible shame of being defeated without fighting back drove them to defend themselves with spirit. He then says that even that spirit failed when the invaders saw defeat as even more imminent, that many of them fled, and that the battle ended because there was no one to fight.

Scene 4 - As Roderick is about to continue, a messenger comes in with news that Chimene is on her way to plead for justice for her father. The King tells Roderick to go, saying that for Chimene to see him would only make her more upset. When he's gone, the King comments that he's heard Chimene still loves Roderick, and decides to test her.

Scene 5 - Chimene rushes in, accompanied by Elvire. The King tells her that although the battle was won, Roderick was killed. As Chimene reacts, the King comments to Diego on how upset she seems. Diego comments that this means she still truly loves Roderick. When Chimene asks whether Roderick is truly dead, the King tells her he's actually alive and still loves her. Chimene rejoices, saying that because Roderick is still alive she can still have her revenge. She demands that Roderick be executed, saying that his new glory makes him a fitting sacrifice for her father, who was himself a glorious warrior. She then realizes that because Roderick is such a hero and so necessary to the continued well-being of the state, that there's no way he'll ever be executed. The King reminds her that her father was the aggressor in the argument with Diego, and suggests that because she still loves Roderick, she's secretly thankful that his life is going to be spared. Chimene quickly becomes angry, saying that her pain at losing her father is not something that can so easily be forgotten, asking that any one of the warriors in the room take up their swords in her behalf, and promising to marry whichever of them kills Roderick. The King refuses to sanction her plan, even though such ways of settling disputes are traditional. Diego suggests that for the King to go against tradition would displease the people, and says that Roderick has the right to defend himself and his

family's honor in the same way as he defended it against Gomez' original insult. The King changes his mind and agrees, but urges Chimene to choose her champion, saying that there will be hundreds of men eager to fight on her behalf for the chance to marry her. Diego says that there will be no one who dares to challenge Roderick after his recent victory, but Sancho, who had originally been Roderick's rival for Chimene's affections, steps forward. Chimene accepts him as her champion and the King sets the fight for the next day, but Diego insists that Roderick, even though he just won a major battle, is strong enough to fight immediately. The King announces that he will not be present to watch the duel, appointing Arias to be the judge, ordering him to make sure that both combatants fight with honor, and commanding that whoever wins the fight will be Chimene's husband. Chimene realizes that if Roderick wins she'll have to marry him, even though he is the man who killed her father. She protests, but the King insists.

Act 4, Scenes 3, 4 and 5 Analysis

Aside from the detailed description of the battle and the explanation of the meaning of "*Le Cid*," the main point of interest in Scene 3 is the way that elements of Roderick's story echo his own developing situation. These elements appear at the end of his tale, in which his reference to the invaders' distaste for the idea of being defeated without fighting can be seen as an explanation of why he chose to defend his father's honor. If he refused to fight, he too would have been defeated without fighting back. The implication here is that defeat under those terms has no honor, and is therefore not an option.

The second element of resonance with Roderick's situation is actually a foreshadowing - his reference to the fight ending because there was no one left to fight refers to the fight between Chimene and Roderick coming to an end when Chimene gives up her desire for revenge (Act 5 Scene 1) and urges Roderick to fight to win her. As a result of these two points, it's possible to see the invaders as being a symbol, throughout the play, of the invasive power of honor, and of the way honor interferes in the normal, human, loving, compassionate functioning of relationships. By defeating the invaders, Roderick is defeating the influence of honor, meaning that the title of "*Le Cid*" is bestowed not so much because Roderick is a conqueror of armies but a conqueror of convention and honor. His victory clears the way, on a symbolic level, for Chimene to let go of her desire for honor-based revenge and admit her love. It also allows Roderick to admit that his desire to die has less to do with allowing her to retain her honor and more to do with not wanting to cause his beloved any more suffering by remaining alive. Both of these aspects to the story also emerge in Act 5 Scene 1, and again at the end of the play. This is when the King tells Roderick to live up to the title of Le Cid, conquer the invaders in their homeland, and return home to begin wedded life with Chimene, the invasive and domineering power of honor having been subdued.

At first glance the King's test of Chimene's feelings seems perverse and a little sadistic. Its point becomes clear at the end of the scene when he changes the conditions of the duel to admit the possibility that Chimene and Roderick can actually be together. It's useful to remember it was the King who dismissed the honor-based quarrels of the two

courtiers and insisted that the focus be on the impending invasion. Also, it was the King who decided that in view of Roderick's military achievements, the relatively less significant dispute with Chimene would be disregarded. All of this suggests that the King's test is less perverse than it is wise, and it becomes possible to see his role throughout the play as offering the reason, wisdom, and perspective that the other characters don't share.

This idea is reinforced by his astute comments about how relieved Chimene must feel that Roderick is still alive, comments met with an immediate burst of outrage from Chimene that is such an overreaction that the oft-quoted line "Methinks she doth protest too much (Shakespeare's *Hamlet*), would seem to apply. The King has put his finger squarely on the truth about Chimene's feelings. She is not ready to face those feelings, and as a result reacts with an extreme version of exactly the opposite feeling in order to cover up the truth. It's possible to see at this point that this King knows what he's about, and more importantly what people are about. He is able to see the love that exists between Chimene and Roderick, and acts out of his belief that that love is more important than anything else. As such, he provides a defining contrast to the other characters, who react throughout the play without such knowledge and wisdom. This is particularly true of Roderick and Chimene, but in the last act they finally develop at least some of that perspective and, as mentioned, come to a place of finally being able to act according to their desires, as opposed to their beliefs about how they should act.

One last element to note are Sancho's feelings for Chimene, first discussed in Act 1 Scene 1and referred to in the context of Act 3 Scene 2, reappearing again here as his motivation for stepping forward to take on the challenge of being her champion.

Act 5, Scene 1

Act 5, Scene 1 Summary

Chimene encounters Roderick, and immediately demands that he leave, saying, "This boldness will cost [her] honor." Roderick says that before he dies he needs to see her again. Chimene angrily asks why he, who conquered so many invaders so handily, believes he's going to die at the hands of a weak warrior like Sancho. Roderick says that because Chimene desires his death so much, he loves her to the point where her desire is his, and is therefore prepared to die. Chimene tells him that if he dies, his brilliant victory in the war will quickly be forgotten, and his honor will be destroyed. She then suggests that he should be as determined to defend his own honor as he was to defend his father's by killing her father. Roderick says that after he dies, people will say only that he died for love, avenging the wrong done to his mistress' honor. Seeing he's prepared to die, Chimene begs him to save her from Sancho, and fight to win her. She then quickly leaves, admitting that she's embarrassed to have such feelings. Roderick, in a brief soliloquy, says that nothing can defeat him now that he knows Chimene still loves him.

Act 5, Scene 1 Analysis

The King's intuition about the love that still exists between Chimene and Roderick in spite of everything that's happened proves to be correct in this scene, which becomes almost comic in the intensity with which Chimene and Roderick both cling to their positions. Their arguments become more and more desperate, not to mention appear to become more and more ridiculous, as they steadfastly proclaim their determination to honor their honor as opposed to their feelings. It's a relief to them, and presumably to any audience watching, when Chimene finally admits that she wants Roderick to live and Roderick resolves to go out and fight for her. Thus the play's thematic point about the relative emptiness of honor as a value is made fully and clearly.

Act 5, Scenes 2 and 3

Act 5, Scenes 2 and 3 Summary

Scene 3 - The Infanta appears and speaks a soliloquy written in verse similar to that in Act 1 Scene 6 that refers to the tension between Roderick's noble acts and his relatively low birth, saying that not even a victory such as that won by Roderick is enough to make him good enough for her to marry him. She speaks about being torn between duty and love, and finally acknowledges that in spite of everything that's passed Roderick and Chimene are still in love, commenting on how love outlasts and transcends hate.

Scene 3 - Leonora comes in, suggesting that the time has come for the Infanta to find peace since, one way or another, Roderick will never be her lover - either he will die or be married to Chimene. The Infanta says that because she loves Roderick so much, she's still imagining ways that their relationship could work out. Leonora tells her plainly she has no hope, and that Chimene's love inspired her to choose a champion, Sancho, who is completely outmatched by Roderick. The Infanta says she no longer loves Roderick but Le Cid, king and conqueror, but then turns around and says she wouldn't take him if he was offered to her because of the feelings that he and Chimene have for each other. She tells Leonora to go with her and reassure Chimene that Roderick is hers.

Act 5, Scenes 2 and 3 Analysis

As previously discussed (Act 1, Scene 6 Analysis), the fact that Roderick and the Infanta speak in verse at similar key points in their lives suggests that they're in the same situation - having to choose between love and honor, even though their inclination is towards acting out of love. What's interesting to note is that in the first instance of verse, Roderick resolves to act out of duty, while here, the Infanta ultimately chooses to act out of love - selfless love for Roderick that enables her to let him go so he can be with the woman who he loves. Also, as previously discussed, it becomes possible to see the Infanta in this scene as embodying the play's thematic premise, that it's possible to find a balance between acting out of love and acting out of honor. Here, the Infanta does both - doing what honor demands at the same time as she's doing what love demands. There is perhaps the suggestion that acting out of love is more honorable than acting out of what honor, in the form of reputation and status, demands. By the end of the scene the Infanta certainly seems to be more at peace than she has been in the play before, an aspect of her growth as a character that is perhaps a reinforcement of the thematic premise that acting out of love is more honorable than acting out of honor.

Act 5, Scenes 4, 5, 6 and 7

Act 5, Scenes 4, 5, 6 and 7 Summary

Scene 4 - Chimene complains to Elvire that no matter what happens as the result of the duel between Roderick and Sancho, she'll be unhappy - either her father will be unavenged or her lover will be dead. Elvire tells her that the opposite is true - whatever happens she can be happy that either her father has been avenged or her lover survives. Chimene says that either way, Roderick's honor will be stained with murderous blood, and cries out that there be no winner in the duel. They debate their respective points of view at length, with Elivire finally telling Chimene she's only making herself miserable, that she's making herself unworthy of both her lover and of happiness. Chimene tells her she fears being Sancho's wife more than she fears dishonor at her father being unavenged and so hopes that Roderick will win. She then sees Sancho coming, and happily proclaims that the duel must be over.

Scene 5 - Sancho lays his sword at Chimene's feet. Chimene immediately launches in to an overwrought reaction to what she believes to have been her lover's death, talking about how in killing Roderick, Sancho has avenged her father but ended her life. Sancho repeatedly tries to interrupt her, but she's too wound up to listen.

Scene 6 - The King and Diego come in, and Chimene turns her emotion on them, saying she feels she's been destroyed now that Sancho has killed Roderick. She asks that she not be forced to marry Sancho, but that he is given all her wealth and she be allowed to retire to a monastery and grieve for the rest of her life. Diego comments that at last Chimene is able to speak her heart's desire, and the King tells her that Roderick lives. Sancho explains that when Roderick had defeated him, he let him live rather than shed the blood that risked itself for Chimene's sake. He explains that Chimene saw him and jumped to the conclusion that he'd killed Roderick, and admits that he's happy to accept defeat as long as it allows Chimene and Roderick to honor their love. The King tells Chimene, who can be understood from his speech to be deeply embarrassed, that her honor is saved, her father is avenged, and that she can live happily with her beloved.

Scene 7 - The Infanta comes in with Roderick and presents him to Chimene. Roderick once again offers to die so she can complete her revenge, suggesting that the dishonor done to her father might not have been avenged enough. Chimene tells him to stand, apologizes to the King for speaking so rashly, and asks that he bless her marriage and release her from the dishonor caused by her father's actions. The King decrees that for all duty to be served, including Roderick's to the King, Chimene's to her father and Roderick's to Diego, the marriage must be postponed for a year while Roderick leads more military campaigns. The King says Roderick must assume the title, role and responsibilities of Le Cid, conquer the invaders in their home land, and then return to claim Chimene as his bride. Roderick accepts the responsibility with pride. The King tells him to rely upon his courage, his word, and time.

Act 5, Scenes 4, 5, 6 and 7 Analysis

Once again in this section, as she has throughout the play, Chimene comes across as a drama queen, enjoying intense emotion for its own sake rather than looking with any perspective at the situation in which she finds herself. Once again, Roderick shows himself to be almost foolishly devoted to the ideals of honor, and once again the King to provides perspective for both of them, his wisdom and good judgment bringing them both down to earth and guiding them towards a sensible, realistic solution to their situation. In other words, the play's thematic point about the foolishness of acting solely out of honor is reiterated by its narrative action.

The previously discussed metaphoric value of the title "*Le Cid*," as a symbol of Roderick's victory over honor, reappears here as it becomes clear that Roderick has rejected what honor demands by sparing Sancho. As a result, both Roderick and Chimene, who have both loosened honor's hold over their lives, admit their true feelings and move forward into their life together. It's interesting to note that in the play's final moments there is no reference to Roderick's sword, only to his courage and his love for Chimene. This is because the sword, which as discussed had been a symbol of the divisive and dangerous powers of honor, is no longer relevant. What's at work now in the lives of Roderick and Chimene is a king-inspired sense of integrity, truth to oneself and one's feelings. Meanwhile, the title's metaphoric value takes on another level of meaning when it becomes clear that Roderick, by his actions, has also conquered Chimene's heart. Thus in the play's final moments, the thematic premise is brought to fruition - honor and reputation, in all their shallowness, are of less value than truth, honesty, and courage to both admit and face one's true feelings.

Characters

Don Alonse

Don Alonse is a nobleman whose role is minor but who provides a way of filling in information about the activities that are going on behind the scenes.

Don Arias

Don Arias is also described as a nobleman. He is used in this play much as the ladies-in-waiting are used, as a way for the main male characters to expose their interior dialog.

Chimene

Chimene is Don Gomes daughter, and she is in love with Don Rodrigue. In the beginning of the play she learns that the king has approved her union with Don Rodrigue. But shortly after this, Don Rodrigue slays her father, and Chimene begs the king to punish Don Rodrigue in the name of her father. She insists that Don Rodrigue be killed even though her heart does not agree. She is torn between her love of her father and her love of Don Rodrigue. Even after she hears that Don Rodrigue has returned home a hero and is being called Le Cid, Chimene cannot forget her duty as a daughter. How can she marry the man who has slain her father? She returns to the king and begs him to punish Don Rodrigue. She proposes that Don Sanche represent her in a duel with Don Rodrigue. Whoever is victorious in this battle, she will feel that her father's honor has been avenged and she will marry the victor. When Don Sanche returns with a bloody sword, Chimene believes that Don Rodrigue is dead and she declares her love for him. The king, having seen proof that she still loves him, sends Don Rodrigue away to fight the Moors and tells Chimene to allow time to heal her wounds before she fulfills her promise to marry Don Rodrigue.

The Count

See Don Gomes

Don Diegue

Don Diegue is the father of Don Rodrigue (Le Cid). He was once a great warrior and served the king well. Because of this, the king, Don Fernand, honors him by appointing him the tutor for his son. This action angers Don Gomes, a younger man who is also a great warrior. Don Gomes insults Don Diegue by slapping him in the face and telling him that he is not worthy of such an appointment. When Don Diegue raises his sword to

defend his honor, he is too weak to challenge the younger warrior. Don Diegue therefore tells his son, Don Rodrigue, that he must defend the honor of his father. When Don Rodrigue kills Don Gomes, Don Diegue fears for his son's life. He tells his son that the Moors are planning a surprise attack on Seville and he must go stop them. If he conquers the Moor, Don Diegue believes that his son will then be honored by this feat and threats to his life for having slain Don Gomes will have been dissipated. Later, when Chimene begs the king to punish Don Rodrigue for having taken the life of her father, Don Diegue also pleads, but he begs for Don Rodrigue's life. Don Diegue tries to prove to the king that Chimene really loves his son.

Elvire

Elvire is lady-in-waiting to Chimene. It is through Elvire's conversations with Chimene that the audience is able to explore how deep Chimene's feelings go for Don Rodrigue and to understand the challenges that Chimene must face.

Don Fernand

Don Fernand is the king of Castile. He is a level-headed, compassionate leader who must decide the fate of several characters in this play. In the beginning of the play, Don Fernand selects Don Diegue as tutor for his son. His choice is the catalyst for most of the action in the play. Later he must decide whether Don Rodrigue should be considered a hero to be honored or a criminal to be punished. He also forces the hand of Chimene, as he tries to decide if she truly loves Don Rodrigue. In the end, Don Fernand comes up with a solution that saves Chimene's honor and Don Rodrigue's life.

Don Gomes

Count Don Gomes is the father of Chimene and one of the king's best warriors. When the king appoints Don Diegue as tutor of his son, Don Gomes is insulted and infuriated. Don Gomes believes that he outranks Don Diegue who once was a great warrior but now has lost his power. In his frustration, Don Gomes, a very conceited man, slaps Don Diegue across the face, dishonoring him. When Don Diegue takes out his sword to save his honor, Don Gomes quickly dismisses the older man and walks away. In order to preserve his father's honor, Don Rodrigue challenges Don Gomes to a fight. Don Gomes is killed and his last words to his daughter are to seek his revenge.

Infanta

See Doña Urraque

The King

See Don Fernand

Le Cid

See Don Rodrigue

Leonor

Leonor is lady-in-waiting to the Infanta. Her character allows the playwright to fill in missing information through her private conversations with Infanta. Through Leonor, the audience learns how much the Infanta loves Don Rodrigue and how she has sacrificed this love.

Don Rodrigue

Don Rodrigue is Le Cid, a legendary hero. He is the son of Don Diegue, and he is in love with Chimene. In the beginning of the play, Don Rodrigue's father tells him that he must challenge Don Gomes in order to save Don Diegue's honor. Don Rodrigue is torn by this request. He knows that if he does as his father has requested, he will lose the love of Chimene. If he does not avenge his father's honor, he himself will be dishonored and therefore would lose Chimene's love also. He decides that he has no choice in this matter and challenges Don Gomes and wins. Upon killing Don Gomes, Don Rodrigue begs Chimene to kill him. Don Rodrigue believes that the only way to solve the dilemma is to die, and he would rather Chimene kill him. Chimene refuses but nonetheless continues to persuade the king to punish Don Rodrigue. His father provides a possible solution for Don Rodrigue and tells him to go save the kingdom by killing the Moors, which Don Rodrigue does. He returns a hero, with the people now calling him by the honorific title of Le Cid. But Don Rodrigue does not feel this is enough to win back the love of Chimene. He accepts her challenge of fighting Don Sanche, a rival suitor, to the death. Whoever wins this battle, wins Chimene is marriage. Don Rodrigue wins although he spares Don Sanche's life, but he still knows that this is not enough to wipe out his deed of having killed Chimene's father. He knows Chimene loves him, but this awful deed keeps the two lovers from coming together. The king suggests that Don Rodrigue rid the country of the Moors. Upon his conquest and with the passage of time, the king assures Don Rodrigue that Chimene will forgive him.

Don Sanche

Don Sanche is in love with Chimene, but Chimene does not love him. When Don Sanche realizes that Chimene wants her father's death avenged, he promises her that he will do it. When the time for that challenge arrives, Don Rodrigue dishonors Don

Sanche by defeating him but not killing him. Don Sanche returns to Chimene with a bloody sword after the challenge. Chimene believes that Don Sanche has killed Don Rodrigue and declares her love for Don Rodrigue. Don Sanche tries to explain that this is not true but his words do not make sense to Chimene until the king intervenes.

Doña Urraque

Called Infanta throughout the play, Doña Urraque is a princess who loves Don Rodrigue. She cannot hope to marry him, however, because Don Rodrigue is below her in nobility status. In order to rid herself of any remaining hope, Infanta forces the hand of fate by introducing and promoting the development of love between Don Rodrigue and Chimene. Infanta adds an intriguing element to the play as she is torn between her heart and her social status. She longs for Don Rodrigue and at the same time pushes him closer to Chimene. Toward the end of the play, when Don Rodrigue proves to be a hero in saving the kingdom from an invasion of the Moors, Infanta's hopes rise when she realizes that his heroism exalts Don Rodrigue's station in life. If he is a hero who has brought the Moor kings to their knees, then there is a chance Don Rodrigue might properly ask for Infanta's hand. But her hopes are dashed when she realizes how much Don Rodrigue loves Chimene.

Themes

Honor

Much of the action of this play is stimulated by honor. It is for his father's honor that Don Rodrigue challenges his future father-in-law to a duel in the very beginning of the play. Before doing so, Rodrigue contemplates honor and how it affects his life. His father was dishonored by a slap in the face and the fact that his arm was too weak to challenge Don Gomes. Rodrigue is left with little choice. Honor dictates that he must fight Don Gomes. If his father is dishonored, then he too is dishonored. And honor, in this play and during this time, was more important than love. For if Rodrigue is dishonored, then it follows that he is unworthy of the love of Chimene.

Chimene also must deal with the concept of honor. She believes that her own father was dishonored by the duel with Rodrigue during which Don Gomes lost his life. In order to protect her father's honor (and thus her own), Chimene insists that the man she loves, Rodrigue, must be killed.

During all this discussion of honor and the reactions in defense of it, it is interesting to note that the only modern act of honor in the play is the one in which Le Cid spares the life of Don Sanche. In modern times, a slap in the face might be humiliating but it is not worthy of a duel. A duel would be considered illegal. And a father might be sentenced to a jail term if he sends his son to kill a man who has merely insulted him. But when Don Sanche agrees to save Chimene's honor by challenging Le Cid to a duel; and Le Cid, in turn, does not take the life of Don Sanche, although he easily could have, then a true sense of honor, at least in reflection of modern mores, is practiced.

Love

There are many different kinds of love displayed in the play. First there is the love of Rodrigue for his father. Rodrigue is willing to sacrifice his own love for Chimene in order to avenge his father. The love between Rodrigue and his father is strong but it is not as deep as Rodrigue's love for Chimene. And yet Rodrigue is willing to lose Chimene in order to protect his father. This is because Rodrigue realizes that he has no choice. He knows he will lose Chimene no matter what he does. If he kills her father, his honor will be restored but Chimene will not be willing to marry him. If he doesn't kill her father, his honor will not be restored and Chimene will not be willing to marry him. Although Rodrigue loves his father, it is for his father's (and his own) honor that he faces Don Gomes. But it is for his love of Chimene that Rodrigue is willing to lose his own life. He feels there is no way out of his quandary and would rather die than live without Chimene. And he would rather die by her hand than any one else's. His love for Chimene is greater than his love of his own life, in other words.

Chimene also loves Rodrigue deeply. But despite her love, she would see Rodrigue dead in order to restore her father's honor. Her love for her father and her love for Rodrigue are closely linked to one another. She cannot chose which man she loves more. These are different kinds of love but both of them run deep.

The Infanta also displays a love, one that she keeps all but secret. Only her lady-in-waiting knows that she loves Rodrigue. But Infanta is torn between her love of her role as a noble woman, a woman who cares very much about the welfare and stability of her kingdom, and her love of Rodrigue. If she exposes her love of Rodrigue she would be going against the rules of nobility, which declare that she must marry according to her social stature. She must marry someone who is in line to become a king. So she inspires and encourages the love between Chimene and Rodrigue. In this way, Chimene becomes Infanta's alter ego; and Infanta can love Rodrigue through Chimene.

Chivalry

Chivalry is exemplified by Rodrigue. He displays his great skills as a soldier and a leader in battle in the defense of his land and protection of his king as well as his abilities as a chivalrous gentleman in his relations with Chimene. He has the brute strength and courage of a wartime hero but is equally strong enough within himself to expose his most intimate feelings toward this woman and be willing to sacrifice his life for her. Don Sanche is also chivalrous but in a much more diminutive form. He promises to defend Chimene's honor by challenging Le Cid to a duel, a duel that Don Sanche surely must have seen as one in which the odds were stacked against him.

It is interesting to note that although chivalry is a major theme in this play, there is the undercurrent of a debate going on. Chivalry is matched with the law and order of the court, as represented by the king. In one incident, that of Don Gomes disagreeing with the king about his choice of tutor for his son, the audience of this play watches a very distinct confrontation between chivalry of old with the unfolding new power of the court. Don Gomes is chastised for believing that he is more powerful than the king. Despite his many victories in battle (without which the kingdom may not have survived), Don Gomes is warned not to let the king hear his criticism. Whereas chivalry might have been more powerful in an earlier time, this play insinuates that the court of law is now the supreme authority. This is also demonstrated when Chimene must go to the king and beseech him to use the laws of the court to punish the man who has killed her father. The king, who recognizes the chivalry of Rodrigue in having protected his father's honor by killing Don Gomes, must find some way to reconcile the old customs of chivalry and the new laws of the king's rule.

Style

The Three Unities

The three unities, as they were called, influenced much of seventeenth-century French drama. This concept of the three unities was taken from Aristotle's *On the Art of Poetry*. But in truth, the way Aristotle's work was interpreted by neo-classic dramatists was faulty. The three unities, as interpreted by Jean Mairet (1604—1686), a dramatist of Corneille's time, stated that a drama should take place in one location only (unity of place); that the plot of events should unfold over the period of one day (unity of time); and that the focus of the play should be narrowed to the main events with no side plots developed (unity of action). Actually Aristotle only presented the unity of action and the unity of time as suggestions. Unity of place, he never mentioned. But the three unities, in Corneille's time, were considered mandatory in the construction of a drama. These unities of Aristotle's made plays rather predictable, and they confined the imaginations of dramatists. Although Corneille used the unities as a foundation, he stretched their boundaries.

Corneille, especially in his play *Le Cid*, was considered a bit of a renegade in the way he constructed this tragedy. In order to see how Corneille's play adheres to these rules of the Unities, one has to use an expansive imagination. For instance, in reference to place, one could possibly say that all the action took place within the general area around the center of the kingdom. When looked at more closely, which is what Richelieu did when he criticized Corneille for breaking the three Unities, audiences will notice that the play's scenes move from one house to another, one court to another. Corneille also stretched the time factor. He packed as many events into a day and a half as he could; and some critics have stated that there was no way humanly possible that everything could have happened during that time. For instance, poor Rodrigue must fight his intended father-in-law, confront his lover several times, travel to the seacoast, gather his military forces, plan an attack, surprise and defeat the Moors upon their landing, return to the kingdom, fight yet another challenger, console his lover once again, and face the king. If he accomplished all that in a day and a half, it is no wonder Le Cid was regarded as a medieval superhero.

Finally, there is the action. Although the main focus of the play is on Rodrigue and his relationship with Chimene, there is also the unfolding story of Rodrigue and his father; Chimene and her father; the Moors and their threat to the kingdom; as well as Le Cid's heroic efforts to save the kingdom. On top of this there is the character of Infanta and her love of Rodrigue and the self-sacrifice and sense of duty that she must face. There is also the jealousy between old rivals and the demonstration of the power of the courts.

In his stretching of the three unities, Corneille presented his Parisian audiences with a more complex work, adding more depth to his characterizations of the legendary hero's tale. The workings of Corneille's imagination shone through the old form, opening it up to new possibilities. And for his efforts in reducing the confinements of the three unities,

Corneille changed the face of dramatic presentation in France and is often credited as being the Father of French Tragedy.

Contrast and Juxtaposition

With the construct of contrast and juxtaposition, a play's action alternates between different elements. At one point the audience is shown a point of view from one character's vision. At another, the opposing, or at least a contrasting, vision is exposed. This emphasizes the tension that creates dramatic effect, which is the reason that the audience wants to continue to be engaged in the play and find out what the final outcome will be or how the tension will be resolved. In *Le Cid* Corneille provides several different contrasting positions. The play begins in a neutral zone, with characters providing exposition, or narrative that offers the audience a foundation upon which the story of the play will rest. In this particular work, the tension begins to rise when Infanta announces not only her love but also her willingness to sacrifice that love for the sake of her kingdom. Then the contrasts between what characters need and want escalates as Don Diegue and Don Gomes conflict. Their disagreement provides the catalyst for the highest tension of this play, which is the juxtaposition of Chimene's need to honor her father and Rodrigue's need to honor his. More subtle contrasts include the old role of chivalry and battle as opposed to the new role of court rule as represented by the king.

Without conflict, the play would fall flat and the audience would become disinterested. Contrast pulls the audience into the play as they either try to figure out ahead of the action how to solve the problems or sit on the edge of their seats and watch as the characters themselves unfold the answers to all the questions that the play presents. Conflict is often the starting point for many writers as they begin to develop a work. Many writers are stimulated by a particular conflict, and they explore many possible solutions as the story progresses. Corneille, with his experience in Louis XIII's court, might have wondered how the old world of brave soldiers and military heroes would evolve under the new world order of a powerful king. *Le Cid* may have been the result of that question.

Historical Context

Eleventh-century Spain

From the eighth until the eleventh century, Muslims (or Moors as they were once called) controlled most of the Iberian Peninsula (which contains the present-day Spain, Portugal, and Andorra. The first Muslim leader, Abd-al-Rahman, settled his forces in Cordoba in southern Spain, and it was from this city that he and his descendents ruled for almost three hundred years. At the turn of the eleventh century, Cordoba had become one of the largest metropolitan areas in the Mediterranean. But as the eleventh century neared, the Iberian Peninsula was in no way united. Allegiance to the rulers in Cordoba deteriorated and then completely fell apart when the last leader in Cordoba died in 1036. At this time, small kingdoms (called *taifas*) declared their independence. Among the most significant of these *taifas* were Seville, Cordoba, Granada, Toledo, Lisbon, and Valencia.

In the meantime, Christian communities in northern Spain began to fight back against the Moors. In the eleventh century, as Muslim control of the peninsula began to deteriorate, Christian armies proved more successful than they had been in the past and eventually regained control of northern and central Spain. But when Christians were victorious in the city of Toledo, which marked their largest triumph, Muslims became very concerned and asked for reinforcements. Their requests were honored, and troops from northern Africa soon arrived on Iberian shores. In 1086, Muslims again controlled many of the kingdoms on the peninsula; however, they were not able to keep control. In 1094, El Cid, Spain's first legendary hero, recaptured the prominent kingdom of Valencia. Unfortunately for the Christians, upon El Cid's death in 1099, the Muslims once again took over Valencia.

El Cid (also referred to as *El Campeador*, "the champion") was born Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar in 1043 in Vivar, Castile. He was of minor noble lineage on his father's side and part of the landed aristocracy on his mother's side. Raised at the court of Ferdinand I, he was a child with many privileges. At the age of twenty-two, under the rule of Sancho II, El Cid was appointed commander of the royal troops. In 1067, he was critically involved in the fall and annexation of the Morish kingdom of Zaragoza, thus signaling both his military and political prowess.

Sancho was not happy with the way the kingdom had been divided in his father's will. He began to wage war against his brother Alfonso, who ruled the other half of the land. El Cid, although he might have done so reluctantly, supported Sancho in these endeavors. When Sancho died in 1072, El Cid lost most of his political power. Some historians believe this caused El Cid to brood. And this brooding may have been the source of El Cid's attack on the Moorish kingdom of Toledo. El Cid was victorious, but since the kingdom of Toledo was under the protection of Alfonso, El Cid was exiled from all of Alfonso's lands.

It was during his exile that El Cid decided to help the Moors; and for ten years he served the leaders of the kingdom of Saragossa. His experiences with the Moors helped him to understand the Muslim world, something that would later assist him in his most victorious battle against the Muslims in Valencia.

When the wave of Muslim reinforcements from Northern Africa reached the shores of the peninsula and enjoyed a crushing victory over some of Alfonso's territory, the Christian king swallowed his pride and requested that El Cid return to help him defeat the Muslims. After recapturing Valencia in 1094, El Cid made himself the chief magistrate of both the Muslims and the Christians who lived there.

El Cid died in Valencia in 1099; many years later, the epic poem *El Cantar de Mio Cid* ("The Song of Cid") helped to popularize him as a legendary hero. Because of this, it has sometimes been difficult for historians to separate fact from fiction when it comes time to understanding and relating the events that made up the life of this powerful warrior.

Seventeenth-century France

Louis XIII (1601—1643) became King of France at the age of nine, after the assassination of his father, King Henry IV. He was raised and counseled by his mother, Marie de Médicis, and Cardinal de Richelieu. Under Richelieu's influence, Louis XIII enjoyed a very authoritative rule. The king's word was to be followed by one and all. To ensure his own power, the young king had his mother exiled in 1617.

King Louis XIII was married in 1618 at the age of fourteen to an Austrian princess, Anne. One child was born to them twenty years later despite the fact that they rarely lived together. Some suggest that their son, who was to become Louis XIV, was not fathered by the king.

Although a very religious man, King Louis XIII believed in the right to commit murder, which he did. He was also a hypochondriac, almost always claiming to be sick. This did not stop him, however, from leading his army in battle. He was also bald and started the new fashion of wearing wigs.

King Louis XIII's son was only four years old when his father died. So the actual running of the country fell to his mother, Queen Anne.

Cardinal de Richelieu (1585—1642), Armand-Jean du Plessis, was the man who most influenced King Louis XIII and is still considered to be one of France's most notable politicians. Richelieu received his education (he began college at the age of nine) both at a military institution and a college of theology. At the early age of twenty-one, he was appointed bishop to a small, poor French diocese. Because of his outstanding abilities to organize and his devout religious beliefs, he was noticed by King Louis XIII's mother and brought to court. He was soon given the title of secretary of state of war and foreign affairs. In 1617, when Marie de Médicis was exiled from the Royal Court, Richelieu acted as liaison between the king and his mother. Five years later, much owed to the

influence of Richelieu, King Louis XIII allowed his mother to return. After that, Marie pushed her son to award Richelieu with more power, which King Louis XIII did, giving Richelieu the title of chief minister of the royal court.

Richelieu lifted France to become a major European power. But this came at the expense of most of France's citizens. Richelieu's view of common citizens was that their role in society was strictly one of obedience to the king. This obedience involved everyone, including French artists. Richelieu believed that the king should control not only the military, financial, and social affairs of state but also the arts. Creative works without the approval of the king suffered public criticism and censorship.

Because of his political success, Richelieu is considered the founder of French Unity. He is credited with having taken France out of medieval times and making the country a powerful leader in the seventeenth-century world.

Critical Overview

When *Le Cid* was first produced in 1936, people in France recognized the name of its author but not his ability to write tragedies. Corneille was better known at that time for his comedies, which were only moderately successful. However, with the production of *Le Cid*, Corneille's reputation took a dramatic turn. It was, according to John C. Lapp, translator and author of an introduction to this play, "a tremendous popular hit, combining all the elements calculated to please its aristocratic audience: the pangs of youthful love, heroic derring-do, tender lyricism and violent declamation."

Corneille was a writer of "exuberance of invention," writes Lapp. The success of this play, as well as much of criticism, was due in part to Corneille's departure from the accepted form of drama that was considered unbendable at the time□the unities of time, place, and action□classical rules based on what Lapp refers to as "an erroneous interpretation of Aristotle's *Art of Poetry*." Instead, Corneille emphasized the "feeling of *admiratio* or wonder he considered an essential element of tragedy," Lapp writes. Corneille wanted to keep the audience "puzzling over what will happen next, or listening to the poetry."

Despite Corneille's later successes, in which he continued his "love of intricate situations, or surprise, of grandiose word and deed," Lapp writes, Corneille never again attained "the high lyricism, the sheer youthful exuberance, the heights of exultation and depths of melancholy," as he did in *Le Cid*.

Today, *Le Cid* is still considered Corneille's best play. Although it has not been performed recently, an opera written by Jules Massenet in 1885 based on *Le Cid* continues to be performed internationally. The most recent production of the opera was held at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., in 1999 and starred tenor Placido Domingo in the leading role.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1

Critical Essay #1

Hart is a freelance writer and author of several books. In this essay, Hart studies the act of sacrifice as portrayed in Corneille's Le Cid*.*

Pierre Corneille's *Le Cid* focuses on a legendary hero of eleventh-century Spain and his feats of heroism, chivalry, and honor. But a more pervading element of this play, one that is acted out by not only the protagonist but many other characters is that of sacrifice. A sense of sacrifice lies beneath the surface of many of the events of this play, whether it is portrayed through a deed of love, honor, or respect.

The first sacrifice, which is not the noblest of them all but rather one that sets off the motions of Corneille's play is the willingness of Don Diegue to forfeit the life of his son, Le Cid, in order to restore honor to the family name. Of course, if Don Rodrigue were to lose his duel with Don Gomes, the pain would be great for Don Diegue, but it is one thing to sacrifice another person's life and another to offer up one's own. So although this sacrifice is great, it lacks a noble edge. Don Diegue not only is offering up his son's life, he is doing so without there being a substantial reason behind his efforts. Yes, one's honor was of immense purpose in the past, but the consequences were relative only to a limited number of family members. And cost to that family could be measured maybe in a diminished livelihood but not in serious punishment. Don Diegue might have lost his honor if he had not potentially sacrificed his son, but he still could have gone on living and probably living well. So the significance of this sacrifice was not great in itself except for the fact that because of it, the rest of the actions of the play fall into place.

Don Gomes is the next victim of sacrifice, and his sacrifice was much greater. He lost his life. The reasons for losing his life were not insignificant but they were rather trivial. Could he have refused to fight Don Rodrigue? Probably. One of the main reasons he gave in was because Don Gomes thought the whole thing was a joke. Who was this young man who dared to challenge the great warrior? Don Gomes thought he could wipe Don Rodrigue out as easily as swatting a fly. And the consequences for his actions would not have mattered much. If he killed Don Rodrigue, Don Diegue would have mourned the loss of his son, and Don Gomes's daughter, Chimene, would have mourned the loss of her lover. And that would have been it. The kingdom would have hypothetically gone on as before. But that is not how events unfolded. As it turned out, the duel was very significant because Don Gomes sacrificed (albeit unknowingly) his life and therefore greatly affected the kingdom.

Because of Don Gomes's sacrifice, Don Diegue's honor was restored, the love between Don Rodrigue and Chimene was compromised, and the whole legend of Le Cid was born. If Don Rodrigue had not killed Don Gomes, he would not have gone off and stopped the Moors from coming ashore in the kingdom in an attempt to take over the land. He would not have been renamed Le Cid. Don Rodrigue might not have been ready for such a remarkable feat as that. He was propelled, one could argue, because of Don Gomes's death to prove that he was a fearless warrior even greater than the

warrior that he defeated in the duel. As Don Rodrigue outdid the older warrior in a one-on-one fight, so too would he outshine him on the battlefield. And he did.

But in killing Don Gomes, Don Rodrigue sacrifices the chances of winning Chimene as his wife. He relinquishes his deep love for her not in fact but in theory. His love for her remains in his heart, but because of what he has done, his love may never be returned. He goes into the duel with Don Gomes knowing this but also knowing that there was no way to avoid the consequences. Because of his father's and Don Gomes's argument and brief assault, Don Rodrigue stood to lose Chimene no matter what he did. And then to underscore the breadth of the price he must pay, Don Rodrigue offers his life□the ultimate sacrifice. What better way could Corneille have demonstrated how much Don Rodrigue loved Chimene? It is as if Don Rodrigue was saying that if he could not have Chimene there was no reason to go on living. He offered her his life so that she could find peace with her father's death.

When Chimene is not willing to kill him, Don Rodrigue volunteers to go fight the Moors. Against all odds, he is victorious in leading his men against the enemies of the kingdom. When he returns a hero, Le Cid's offer to Chimene to take his life has taken on even greater meaning because he is now not just a young man who has killed one brave soldier, he is a young champion who has saved his country. In some metaphoric way, he is not only sacrificing his life but the lives of all those whom he has saved.

Chimene, too, although not quite as chivalrous, offers an enormous sacrifice. She is a dutiful and loving daughter. Her father, a noble knight, has experienced a rather shameful death. He has not died on the battlefield, defending his king. Rather he has been killed in a common field by a young, untried nobody, the outcome of a petty argument. Chimene believes that her father's long years of battles won and the resultant honors that were bestowed on him will all be lost if his death is not avenged. And she is willing, though her heart is breaking, to sacrifice not her love but the life of the man she loves in order to protect her father's name and heritage. Chimene's sacrifice is noble because she does not, or cannot, rid herself of her love for Le Cid. That love is real and cannot be dismissed through a rational decision. She demands Le Cid's life in spite of her love for him. And that is what makes her sacrifice so momentous. She cannot measure her love for Le Cid against her love for her father. Both are weighty. But they come from different parts of her and must be dealt with in different ways. Of course, she does not really want Le Cid's death, but she feels compelled to ask for it because of her love for her father. If she does not respect her love of her father than how can Le Cid respect her love for him?

And then there is Infanta. Here is a woman who has a profound love for a man she cannot have. She cannot have him not because their love would be impossible but because their love would defame the unspoken laws of nobility. Infanta is in love with Le Cid. She was in love with him before his heroism, when he was merely a young and handsome man, the son of a once-brave warrior. But she is a princess, and the love between her and a commoner would show disrespect for her nobility. The kingdom would suffer because of it. So Infanta sacrifices her love for Le Cid by purposefully and actively making Chimene fall in love with him. If Infanta can make Chimene love Le Cid

and see that the two of them are married, Infanta will lose all hope of marrying Le Cid herself. With this loss of hope, she believes that she will better be able to endure the loss of her love. Infanta makes this sacrifice of herself for the king as well as for the stability of her kingdom. She will, as all young princesses do, marry a man of high rank.

Even after Le Cid becomes a hero, meriting another look at his eligibility as the husband of a princess, Infanta resists. Not only does she resist, she goes to Chimene and asks Chimene to sacrifice her pride and her filial duty to avenge her father. Chimene must make this sacrifice, Infanta tells her, to save the country from ruin. The people need a hero, Infanta tells her, and Chimene must cease her bid to see Le Cid's death.

There is one more sacrificial act performed in the play. It is a small one but not immeasurable. Don Sanche promises to play out Chimene's wishes of avenging her father's death. Don Sanche is in love with Chimene, and he hopes this will win her hand. He challenges Le Cid to a duel. Don Sanche is no match for Le Cid either in love or in battle. But he is willing to sacrifice his life, or to at least potentially do so, in order to raise his stature in Chimene's eyes. It is in some ways a silly gesture, but one that must be done. Le Cid easily offsets Don Sanche's advances and in doing so, demonstrates his own high status as a righteous young man. He knows he is a far better warrior than Don Sanche, but he does not have to kill him to prove it. The fact that Don Sanche was willing to sacrifice his life is enough. It is as if Le Cid is saying that there have been enough sacrifices for one day. He sends Don Sanche back to Chimene, who mistakes the outcome and declares her everlasting love for Le Cid. So Don Sanche's ordeal produces the required effects without his having to shed his blood.

It is through these various acts of sacrifice that Corneille not only sets up the tension and dramatic impressions of this play but also adds complexities to his characters. The willingness to sacrifice marks a character as a person with a greater understanding of the truly noble qualities of life.

Source: Joyce Hart, Critical Essay on *Le Cid*, in *Drama for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2005.

Adaptations

The Spanish version of the legend of Le Cid was made into a movie called *El Cid* (1961) and starred Charleton Heston as the hero and Sophia Loren as Chimene.

An animated version of *El Cid* was produced in Spain and called *El Cid: La Leyenda* (2003).

Topics for Further Study

Research the role of Cardinal de Richelieu, who was chief minister of France during the production of *Le Cid*. What were Richelieu's objections or criticisms of the play? What did he do to try to stop this play? How did this affect the play and Corneille?

Read at least two different historical representations of the Spanish hero El Cid. How do they differ in the details of this man's life and his accomplishments? Make sure you find two contrasting sources. One might lean toward a Muslim interpretation whereas the other might be influenced by a Catholic view.

Give a presentation to your class about the political atmosphere of eleventh-century Spain. How much control of Spain did the Moors have at that time? When and how did their power collapse? How did Spain unite all the separate cultures and divided kingdoms?

In his introduction to the play, John C. Lapp states that the concept of worthiness represents Corneille's "belief that the great-souled, the noble-hearted . . . are different from ordinary men. Their passion is more sublime, and makes almost impossible demands upon lovers." Can you think of any other play, movie, or work of fiction in which you might find another set of lovers in a similar situation and with the same "worthiness" that Corneille describes? If so, compare those lovers and the challenges they face and the conclusions they draw with the lovers in *Le Cid*.

Compare and Contrast

Eleventh century: The Muslim government in Spain is in a state of collapse. Small Christian kingdoms, some won through the efforts of El Cid, divide the land.

Seventeenth century: Spain is united and almost entirely Christian as, over the years, non-Christians and Muslims were either persecuted, converted to Christianity, or forced to leave the country.

Today: After many decades of a Franco dictatorship, Spain has a democratic constitution and is a member of the European Union.

Eleventh century: The topic of drama, the costumes, and the actors are reflective of the laws of the Roman Catholic Church. Plays are usually performed by priests, and the subject matter is based on religious topics and church law.

Seventeenth century: Neoclassic tragedies (in which nobility is involved and someone dies) and comedies (which revolved around the common person and domestic affairs) are the two most successful types of drama.

Today: Experimentation influences much of contemporary drama, with theatre of the absurd on one end of the spectrum and social realism and dark comedy on the other.

Eleventh century: The ruling monarchs are relatives of Hugh Capet (therefore the Capetian Dynasty) and include Robert II, Henry I, and Philip I. The French kingdom at this time rarely exceeded jurisdiction beyond Paris and Orleans but through the power of the Capetian kings, the foundation of France's nation-state is laid.

Seventeenth century: The Bourbon Dynasty is in power and includes Henry IV, Louis XIII, and Louis XIV. But one of the real powers is Cardinal de Richelieu who diminishes the authority of the church and increases the authority of the king.

Today: A constitution adopted in 1958 created the Fifth Republic of France. Today France is ruled by an elected president, an appointed senate, and an elected national assembly.

What Do I Read Next?

If you want to read the original text of the poem of the legend of El Cid, *The Poem of the Cid* (1985), by Ian Michael, Rita Hamilton, and Janet Perry, is a good place to go. This is a bilingual publication in ancient Spanish and easy-to-read English.

Molière was a playwright contemporary with Corneille. He wrote what was called high comedy through which he criticized the social standards of his time. In his play *La Tartuffe* (1664), Molière examines the religious hypocrisy of his society. This was a very controversial play in seventeenth-century France.

Although Molière would later top Corneille's prowess as a writer of comedy, Corneille's comic play *Le Menteur* (*The Liar*), produced in 1643, is considered his best in this genre. This comedy also has Spanish roots. It is a comedy of manners about on an eligible bachelor who tries to lie his way out of a match his father has arranged with a woman he does not love.

In 1640, four years after *Le Cid*, Corneille wrote what is considered another masterpiece, *Horace* (1640). This play is also a tragedy. It is about patriotism and the conflict between families during a war between the ancient Romans and their Alban neighbors.

Jean Racine, another contemporary of Corneille, wrote a very impressive tragedy called *Phèdre* (1677). The characters of this play are taken from Greek mythology. It is about a woman who falls in love with her stepson. It is considered one of Racine's best works.

Further Study

Carlin, Claire L., *Women Reading Corneille: Feminist Psychocriticisms of "Le Cid,"* Peter Lang, 2000.

Five different feminist literary critics analyze Corneille's *Le Cid* to explore why this play retains interest in contemporary times. The critics include Julia Kristeva, Carol Gilligan, Jessica Benjamin, and Jane Gallop.

Clarke, David, *Pierre Corneille: Poetics and Political Drama under Louis XIII*, Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Clarke provides an in depth study of the political times that surrounded Corneille as he tried to distinguish his own beliefs from the pressures that were put on him to conform to Cardinal de Richelieu's demands.

Fletcher, Richard, *The Quest for El Cid*, Oxford University Press, 1991.

There are many versions of the legend of El Cid but also many stories that refute the legend. This book by Fletcher is an interesting study of what the author claims to be more reliable historical facts about El Cid. Although claimed as an eleventh-century hero in Spain, Fletcher believes El Cid was not as heroic as some people would believe.

Knight, R. C., *Corneille's Tragedies*, Rowman and Littlefield, 1991.

Corneille's tragic plays, beginning with *Le Cid*, changed the course of French drama. Many scholars have studied Corneille's works to extract the model role that they played, but their focus was on the first three or four tragedies that Corneille wrote. In Knight's work, all of Corneille's tragedies are examined, giving a fuller understanding of the playwright.

Menocal, Maria Rosa, *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain*, Back Bay Books, 2003.

In this book, Menocal displays medieval Spain as a rich culture of literature and science with an unusual tolerance of differences in cultures. She claims that secular poetry rose from this mixing of cultures and spread throughout Europe. She focuses on the Andalusian kingdoms that thrived before Christian monarchs expelled or killed all non-Catholics in Spain.

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Clarke, John, *Pierre Corneille: Poetics and Political Drama under Louis XIII*, Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Lapp, John C., Introduction, in *Le Cid*, Harlan Davidson, 1955, pp. v—xi.

Lyons, John D., *The Tragedy of Origins: Pierre Corneille and Historical Perspective*, Stanford University Press, 1996.

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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.

Citing Drama for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Drama for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from DfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□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.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of DfS, the following form may be used:

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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The editor of Drama for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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