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SYNOPSIS

Act I, Scene i: Onstage at the Hôtel de Bourgogne in Paris in 1640, the chandeliers have not been lit for Balthasar Baro's *La Clorise*, which is to be performed at a 2:00 matinee.

Scene ii: As rowdies congregate to gamble, a young soldier, Christian de Neuvillette, enters with Lignière, who is drunk. Newly arrived in Paris from Touraine three weeks earlier, Christian plans to enter the Gascon Cadets the next day. He awaits the arrival of Madeleine Robin, known as Roxane, with whom he is infatuated, but he is too shy to court her.

Meanwhile, Ragueneau, baker to actors and poets, searches for Cyrano de Bergerac, a flamboyant swordsman and versifier. Ragueneau fears Cyrano will challenge the actor Montfleury, whom Cyrano challenged three weeks before if Montfleury should dare to reappear onstage. At a box seat, Roxane arrives with her duenna and chats with the Comte de Guiche. A married man, he intends to betroth Roxane to the Viscomte de Valvert, ostensibly to make her more available to de Guiche. Christian sets out to challenge Valvert about the time Roxane notices him.

Scene iii: The play opens on a pastoral scene with the overweight Montfleury costumed as Phedon the shepherd.

Scene iv: Cyrano commands him to quit the stage. Montfleury stutters. The crowd rallies against Cyrano, who menaces them. He flourishes his cane. At the count of three, Montfleury disappears. To his friend Le Bret, Cyrano explains that he hates Montfleury for poor acting. Cyrano tosses his purse to reimburse the audience.

First a meddler, then Valvert ridicule Cyrano's oversized nose. While Cyrano parries his opponent, he composes aloud an impromptu ballade. At the final rhyme, he thrusts home. D'Artagnan, the famed musketeer, shakes his hand.

Scene v: Le Bret realizes that Cyrano has wasted a month's allowance and must go hungry. From a kind orange girl, Cyrano accepts a grape, half a macaroon, and a glass of water. Le Bret warns Cyrano that he is danger of angering too many people, including the Cardinal. Cyrano confesses that he hates Montfleury for flirting with Roxane. Cyrano would woo her himself, but he despairs that she might ridicule a great-nosed man. Le Bret urges him to try.

Scene vi: The duenna requests that Cyrano meet with Roxane. He agrees to see her at seven o'clock the next morning at Ragueneau's pastry shop after Roxane attends Mass at Saint Roch.

Scene vii: As the company begins to rehearse, Cyrano encounters Lignière, who fears ambush at the Port de Nesle. Cyrano looks forward to the challenge. A torchlit parade of actors, comediennes, and violinists follows to view the fun.

Act II, Scene i: At dawn in Ragueneau's shop, Lise, the

baker's wife, brings paper bags made from his friends' poetry.

Scene ii: He accuses her of disrespect for verse.

Scene iii: At 6:00 A. M., Cyrano grows nervous and considers leaving a note and departing. He writes a love letter.

Scene iv: Poets comment on eight bandits felled at the ambush. Cyrano makes a veiled threat against a musketeer for romancing the baker's wife.

Scene v: Roxane arrives masked. Cyrano bribes the duenna, then thrusts her into the street.

Scene vi: Roxane declares that she is in love with Christian, who joined the regiment that morning. She requests that Cyrano protect the youthful Christian in battle and keep him out of duels. Cyrano consents. Roxane departs declaring her friendship.

Scene vii: Carbon, the captain of the regiment, tries to draw Cyrano across the street where thirty cadets drink, but he appears distracted. De Guiche offers the patronage of Cardinal Richelieu, but Cyrano declines. De Guiche admits that he hired assassins to punish Lignière. In a huff, De Guiche withdraws.

Scene viii: While the men eat, Le Bret accuses Cyrano of being Three Musketeers in one. Cyrano orates against patronage, but Le Bret declares that the real reason for his brashness is compensation for losing Roxane.

Scene ix: The cadets ask Cyrano to relate his exploits to Christian, who is a beginner. Christian ridicules Cyrano's nose; Cyrano refuses to take offense.

Scene x: He orders the cadets out of the room and explains that he and Roxane are cousins. Christian apologizes and begs Cyrano to help him compose a love letter. Cyrano hands him the letter he had composed earlier.

Scene xi: Carbon and the other men marvel that Cyrano appears gentle as a lamb.

Act III, Scene i: Before Roxane's house, she compliments the witty letter and claims that Cyrano is jealous of Christian.

Scene ii: De Guiche bids her goodbye before he departs for the siege of Arras, where he intends to punish Christian. She suggests that Christian be left behind. De Guiche intends to hide in the Capuchin monastery. Roxane feeds his ego by calling him Antoine.

Scene iii: Roxane's group leaves for Clomire's house, where Alcandre and Lysimon are speaking.

Scene iv: Cyrano learns that Roxane intends to ask Christian to extemporize.

Scene v: Roxane asks him to speak words of love. He is so clumsy that she closes the door.

Scene vi: Christian begs Cyrano to help win her back.

Scene vii: After posting pages as lookouts, Cyrano hides in the shadow of the balcony to feed romantic lines to Christian. Christian impresses her by repeating Cyrano's rhapsodies. The situation grows so cumbrous that Cyrano

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addresses her directly. Christian demands a kiss.

Scene viii: As a Capuchin approaches, Cyrano directs him away from the house and continues to romance Roxane.

Scene ix: Cyrano and Christian confront the fact that they must allow him to deal directly with his love.

Scene x: Christian climbs up to kiss her.

Scene xi: The Capuchin returns with a letter from de Guiche. Roxane pretends that the letter insists on a marriage without delay and promises a thousand francs for the monastery.

Scene xii: Cyrano agrees to stall for the fifteen minutes needed for a wedding.

Scene xiii: He pretends to fall from the moon and poses as a harmless lunatic by describing seven ways of flying to the moon.

Scene xiv: De Guiche realizes that the ruse delays his arrival. Angered at the trick, he forces Christian to report for immediate duty. Roxane makes Cyrano promise to protect Christian and to write often.

Act IV, Scene i: At Arras, the French run out of food. Cyrano manages to cross enemy lines before dawn to mail love letters to Roxane and to return by daylight.

Scene ii: At dawn, the men awaken and threaten mutiny to end their hunger.

Scene iii: At Carbon's call for help, Cyrano asks Bertrandou the fifer to play Gascon music.

Scene iv: De Guiche complains that the men jeer at him and declares that he eluded the Spanish by leaving his white scarf behind. Cyrano produces the scarf, which De Guiche waves to a spy to indicate where the enemy should attack. He reports that the Marshal left the previous night to get supplies in Dourlens. He predicts that the Spanish will attack in an hour and orders the Gascons to fight to the death.

Christian fears dying and mourns for his wife. Cyrano produces a tear-stained letter written for the desperate situation. Before Christian can pursue the matter, a carriage delivers Roxane.

Scene v: To questions about her fearful trip, she explains that she smiled her way past Spanish sentries and claimed to visit a lover. She learns that de Guiche intends to sacrifice the regiment. She calls to her driver, Ragueneau, who produces food for the men.

Scene vii: The men hide the food from de Guiche. Because of Roxane's bravery, de Guiche stays with the endangered men. The Gascons invite him to join their dinner.

Cyrano confesses that he has been writing twice daily. Christian is moved by his bravery.

Scene viii: Roxane praises Christian for sending a month's worth of ardent letters.

Scene ix: He realizes that her love depends on Cyrano's tender words. Cyrano admits that he loves Roxane. Christian begs him to tell her.

Scene x: She declares that she would love Christian even if he were ugly. Le Bret whispers to Cyrano that Christian has been wounded by the enemy's first shots. As she mourns, the attack worsens. She receives his last letter and faints. Le Bret is hit in the forehead; Carbon, wounded twice, reports that the French are losing. To inspire the cadets, Cyrano hoists her handkerchief.

Act V, Scene i: Fifteen years later on a Saturday evening on October 26, 1655, Roxane sews a tapestry in the convent of the Ladies of the Cross in Paris.

Scene ii: De Guiche, now advanced to the Duke de Grammont, visits her after many months away. She grieves for Christian and bears his last letter in a small bag next to her breast. Cyrano, her old friend, visits weekly to recite court gossip. Le Bret worries that Cyrano fights false nobles with his writings. De Guiche admires the way the Cyrano refuses to compromise his principles. He whispers a warning to Le Bret that enemies plot a violent end for Cyrano.

Scene iii: Ragueneau confides that a lackey dropped a log of wood on Cyrano's head.

Scene iv: Roxane admires the autumn. A nun announces Cyrano's arrival.

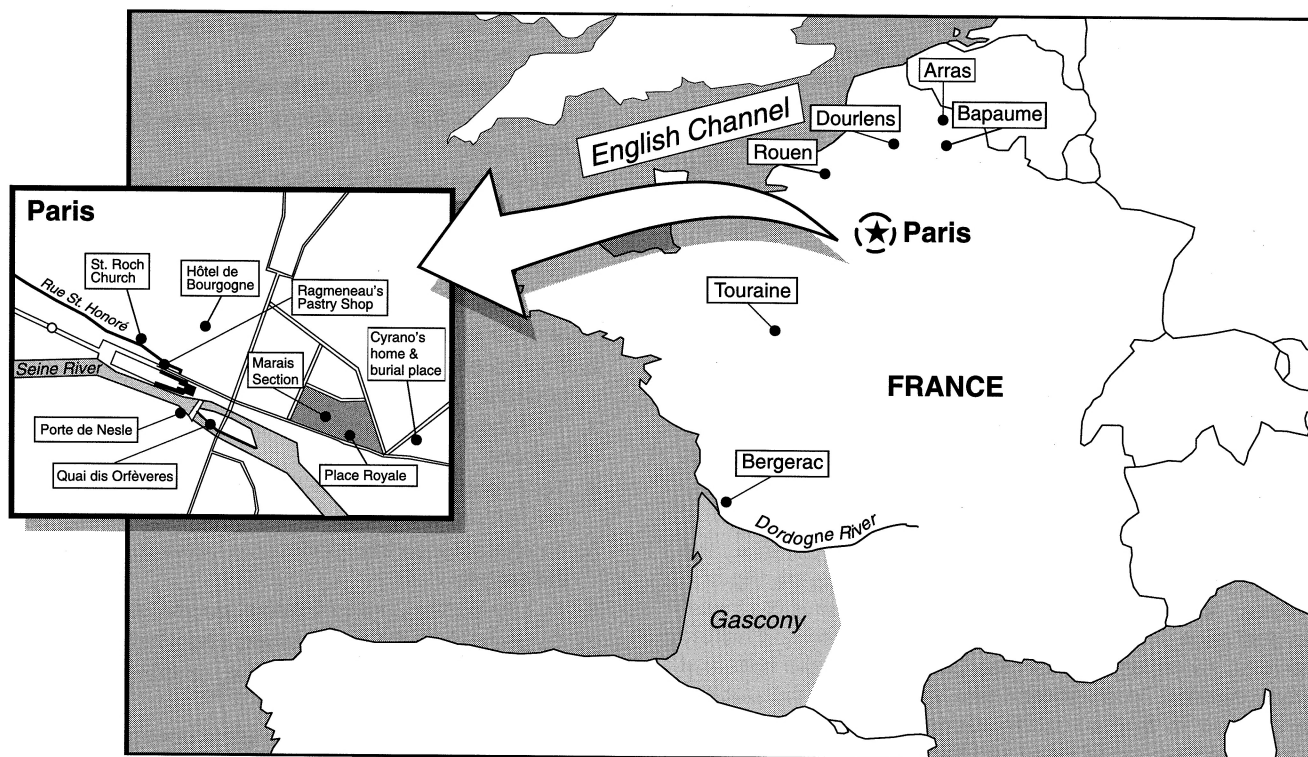
Scene v: Cyrano is tardy for the first time in fourteen years. Leaning on his cane, he promises to eat a bowl of soup and allows Sister Marthe to pray for him. He faints and keeps his hat pulled over a head wound. Roxane rhapsodizes about her emotional wound and gestures toward Christian's letter. He requests permission to read it. The passion of his recitation under a darkened sky indicates that he is reciting his own words. She realizes that Cyrano has been her lover from the beginning.

Scene vi: Le Bret and Ragueneau run to aid Cyrano, who has inadvisedly left his sickbed. Roxane realizes that he is dazed. Concerning Molière's theft of one of his scenes for *Scapin*, Cyrano regrets that he has spent his life supplying words for other men. As the chapel bell rings for vespers, Roxane vows that her widow's dress will symbolize love for two stalwart men. Bold to the end, Cyrano stands in cavalier pose with white plume aloft, then crumples dead at her feet.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE PLAY

- 1610** Louis XIII becomes king of France
Madeleine Robin (Roxanne) is born in Paris.
- 1618** The Thirty Years War begins. Austria, later joined by Spain, goes to war with a group of German princes.
- 1619** Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac is born near Paris.
- 1624** Cardinal Richelieu becomes first minister of France.
- 1625** France begins aiding German princes at war with Austria.
- 1626** Cyrano is sent to a school in the country where he becomes friends with Henri Le Bret.
- 1631** Cyrano's father sends him to school in Paris.
- 1634** Spanish troops invade central and northern Europe. The Comte de Guiche marries Richelieu's niece.
- 1635** France declares war on Austria and Spain. Roxanne marries Baron Christophe de Neuvillette (Christian).
- 1638** Le Bret persuades Cyrano to join the Cadets of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux, a company in the guard regiment commanded by de Guiche.
- 1639** Cyrano is wounded at the siege of Mousson.
- 1640** At the siege of Arras, de Neuvillette is killed and Cyrano is seriously wounded.
- 1641** Cyrano leaves the army and takes up literature as a career.
- 1642** Richelieu dies; Cardinal Mazarin becomes first minister.
- 1643** Louis XIII dies; Louis XIV becomes king. De Guiche is promoted to general and made Duc d'Grammont.
- 1648** The Treaty of Westphalia ends the Thirty Years War.
- ca.1649** Cyrano writes *Agrippine*.

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- 1653 The Duc d'Arpajon becomes Cyrano's patron.
- 1654 *Le Pedant Joue*, a comedy, is published. Cyrano is seriously injured after a wooden log is dropped on his head.
- 1655 Cyrano dies from injuries suffered the previous year.
- 1657 Roxanne dies.
- 1659 Le Bret edits and publishes Cyrano's *Les Etats et empires de la Lune*.
- 1661 Cyrano's *Les Etats et empires de la Sol* is published.
- 1671 Moliere's *Scapin* is performed.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Dubbed the last great romantic dramatist, Edmond Eugène Alexis Rostand is sometimes classed as old-fashioned because he followed in the wake of the Parnassian poets—the trio of Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Verlaine, France's famed symbolists. In a reaction against lyricism that saw the rise of realism and naturalism, Rostand continued the tradition of French romance, particularly the novels and plays of Pierre Corneille, Alexandre Dumas Père, Alfred de Musset, and Victor Hugo. Born to wealth and culture on April 1, 1868, in the seaport of Marseilles, Rostand was the son of Eugène Rostand, an economist, newspaperman, and hobby poet who belonged to the Institut de France and the Marseilles Academie. While studying at the École Thedenat and the Marseilles Lycée, the boy wrote poetry and plays for the marionette theater, but his father groomed him for a judgeship or diplomatic post.

A natural scholar, Rostand studied law, history, philosophy, and classic literature, but his heart turned to romantic verse, which he published in *Mireille*, a college journal. In 1887, he won the Marechal de Villars prize for a critical essay on novelists Emile Zola and Honoré d'Urfé. Although Rostand graduated from the Collège Stanislas in Paris with a

law degree, he never opened an office or tried a case. Having no need to make a living or to cater to literary fashion, he wrote what pleased him and crafted each work at a slow, painstaking pace. His first volume of poetry, *Les Musardises*, prefaced two stage failures. His later writing turned primarily to the theater and initiated a quarter century of successful stage works. The most enduring was *Cyrano de Bergerac*, completed in 1897.

Rostand lived in Paris with his wife, author Rosemonde Gérard, daughter of a count and granddaughter of Napoleon's grand marshal. In 1894, Rostand earned both popular and critical acclaim as well as the Toirac prize for *The Romancers*, a frivolous comedy based on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and produced by the venerable Comédie Française. The play was translated in English in 1900 as *The Fantasticks*, a smash hit set to music in 1960 by Tom Jones.

For Sarah Bernhardt, the mistress of the French stage, Rostand composed sophisticated plays — *The Faraway Princess*, *The Woman of Samaria*, and the six-act historical drama *The Eaglet*. In the latter she played the breeches role—the part of the Duke of Reichstadt, the sickly son of Napoleon I and his second wife Marie Louise. *The Eaglet*, produced in 1900, pleased audiences at the same time that it boosted nationalism.

For Benoît-Constant Coquelin, legendary comic star of the French national theater, Rostand composed his anti-realist masterwork, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, a five-act heroic romance dedicated to Coquelin and produced on December 28, 1897, starring Margaret Anglin as Roxane. Rostand based the play very loosely on the life of a daring, cavalier hero and poet, Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac (1619-1655). With Coquelin in the lead, the play was one of theater history's most astonishing international success stories. The public's love of the

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hero assured Rostand an appointment as Officer of the Legion d'Honneur in 1900; the following year, he became the youngest member of the French Academy.

In a country villa at Cambon on the French Riviera in 1899, Rostand, in delicate health, resettled his wife and sons Maurice and Jean. Rostand produced *Chantecler*, a witty, satiric animal fable, the second stage vehicle for Coquelin, who died before the work was complete. By the time the play appeared in 1910, starring Sacha Guitry, it was a dismal failure. When World War I began, Rostand was too frail to join the army. His death in Paris on December 2, 1918, during an influenza epidemic ended a career that might have attained more artistry, as displayed in his study of Don Juan, produced posthumously in 1922. The trenchant ironies and self-criticism of Rostand's last work suggest that he died a bitter man, perhaps disillusioned from swimming against the current of realism by maintaining the stage traditions of the dashing romantic hero. His son Jean, a writer and moralist, attempted to uplift his father's literary reputation.

CRITIC'S CORNER

The play *Cyrano de Bergerac* is filled with paradox, the result of self-abnegation and a commitment to daring and romance. A classic drama based on strong currents of passion and pride, it has produced a character based on history who is far more familiar than the playwright or the historical Cyrano himself. In stage and film versions, in the original French and in English translations, the yearning of the swordsman's unrequited love and the strength of his promise to Roxane undergird the romantic conflict, which has become a significant addition to world drama.

Cyrano de Bergerac was reprised in numerous languages and revived so frequently that it evolved into a classic of stagecraft and theatricality. The panache and daring of the hero assures the part a following of would-be stage heroes seeking an opportunity to strut, clash swords, challenge authority, and romance the winsome Roxane. In 1900, Richard Mansfield added the play to his repertoire. Two years later, Coquelin teamed with Sarah Bernhardt in an American production.

The play has had many lives arising from new treatments of the original. The freshness of Brian Hooker's English translation again pleased audiences in 1923, when Walter Hampden and Carroll McComas paired in the roles of the swordsman and his cousin. Hampden reprised his stage hero in 1926 and 1936, playing the part 991 times. In 1946, Ralph Richardson revived the play in London. Wearing an overblown rubber nose, Jose Ferrer assumed the Cyrano persona on Broadway that same year; in 1950, he starred in the United Artist cinema version, co-starring Mala Powers as Roxane. Christopher Plummer performed the part in Stratford, Ontario, in 1962. In 1987, the plot returned in a Columbia Pictures comic take-off, *Roxanne*, featuring Steve Martin as the bumbling hero and Darryl Hannah as the heroine. Gerard de Depardieu resurrected the original soulfulness of the hero in a 1990 film remake.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To discuss the nature of tragedy
2. To characterize individual expectations of romance
3. To evaluate motifs of envy, jealousy, lechery, and spite
4. To list ways in which 17th-century women are sheltered and protected

5. To elucidate examples of obscure allusions to history, literature, and mythology
6. To discuss the nature of adventure, camaraderie, and male boasting
7. To characterize the superficiality of 17th-century Paris
8. To analyze the use of scene and act to separate actions and motifs
9. To contrast major and minor figures in the cast
10. To summarize the love complaints and writing style of the era

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the roles of the duenna, Sister Marthe, Lise, and the orange girl
2. To outline Cyrano's relationships with comrades and enemies
3. To recount how and why Christian falls in love with Roxane
4. To explain why Cyrano and Roxane have become favorite romantic roles
5. To characterize the relationship between de Guiche and the cadets
6. To summarize Cyrano's letters, poems, and speeches
7. To account for Cyrano's doubts about himself
8. To discuss the lighting, music, costumes, props, and scenery of the final scene
9. To predict the effects of Cyrano's death on the Gascon cadets and the nuns
10. To contrast Christian, de Guiche, Montfleury, Valvert, and Cyrano in their love of Roxane
11. To explain the purpose of the man-from-the-moon scene
12. To contrast Cyrano with other great fighters in literature, for example, Achilles, Robin Hood, Hercules, Samson, El Cid, King Arthur, the Three Musketeers, the Count of Monte Cristo, and Beowulf

LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

For a better understanding of Edmond Rostand's style, present the following terms and applications to the novel:

allusion a reference to a known figure, place, or event from mythology, the Bible, history, folklore, or common knowledge. In *Cyrano de Bergerac*, references to Ulysses and Penelope of Homeric fame precede the concluding image of Roxane as a pensive widow sitting in the convent garden embroidering her tapestry. Just as Penelope sewed a winding cloth for her father-in-law Laertes to keep suitors from forcing her into marriage, Roxane remains content and safe in the convent and rebuffs de Guiche's repeated offers of marriage. The device works for Roxane as it did for Penelope. Fifteen years after Christian's death, Roxane is surprised to reunite with her love in the form of Cyrano, but, unlike Ulysses and Penelope, she enjoys no extended romance. The tragedy ends with Roxane becoming a widow twice over.

climax the height of an action, a turning point from which all behaviors or attitudes are permanently altered and nothing can ever be what it once was. In *Cyrano de Bergerac* the tragedy reaches its focal moment in Act III, when the Capuchin monk unites Roxane with Christian. Reduced to the japes and babbling of a lunatic, Cyrano poses as a man from the moon, a symbolic gesture to Diana, goddess of

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chastity. From this point on, Cyrano dons numerous poses to conceal his passion for Roxane so that he can fulfill his promise to protect her husband from harm.

comic relief a witty exchange, skit, interlude, or soliloquy that the author deliberately inserts to ease tensions and lighten a dark or grim mood within a serious work. Despite the heartache that Cyrano experiences as Roxane marries Christian, he continues his babbling charade of the man fallen from the moon as a means of hindering de Guiche from interfering.

melodrama a romantic or sensational plot carried to the extremes of emotion in weeping, consternation, dismay, disillusion, or resignation to circumstance. The final act of *Cyrano de Bergerac* has been labeled high romance and also melodrama for its exotic setting, multiple images of death and unrequited love, and the exquisite timing of the reading of the love letter and Cyrano's final swoon. The most frequently ridiculed segment of the drama is the gallant defense of the white plume, which Cyrano clings to as he falls dead.

milieu an historical or geographic setting that influences character action or attitudes. The play reflects the turmoil that besets Europe as the Spanish defend Arras, a territory of the Spanish Netherlands which the French besieged and took from the Hapsburgs in 1640. Unsettled times precipitate a hasty wartime wedding as well as bold heroism in Cyrano and Roxane, both of whom successfully elude Spanish sentries. The challenge of imminent attack is also the salvation of de Guiche, who ennobles himself by remaining with the Gascon cadets at the height of the conflict.

symbol a concrete object that stands for a complex or abstract idea or relationship. Many items carry multiple meanings in *Cyrano de Bergerac*. The tears that stain the letter and the double widow's weeds enhance the dual role of Cyrano as tutor to a would-be lover and failed suitor who advances to the role of husband and fallen warrior. The handkerchief and white plume both represent issues of honor, which separate de Guiche and his ilk from the real fighting men who are likely to die at the siege.

tragedy a serious drama in which the main character, usually a prominent, noble, or royal person, falls or dies as a result of some human failing. In Cyrano's case, his unrequited love for Roxane and the misery of courting her for another man result from Cyrano's low self-esteem. Ironically, he dares to face a mass of assassins at the Porte de Nesle and to lead a charge against the Spanish at Arras, but he lacks the courage to face a beautiful woman. Fearful of ridicule, he conceals his love until she is won by another man, then continues to woo her in love letters delivered from behind enemy lines. His loss grieves Roxane doubly because she realizes too late that his passion is the soul of her husband's letters.

ROSTAND'S USE OF SETTING

The milieu of *Cyrano de Bergerac* contrasts two distinct regions—the sophisticated metropolis of Paris in north central France and Gascony, a province on the southwest border of the home of Iberic peoples bounded by the Atlantic Ocean and the Pyrenees. Once the heart of the Roman province of Aquitania, Gascony passed to the Basques in the sixth century until it was seized by the Franks. They created the independent Duchy of Gascony, which survived from the eighth to the eleventh centuries. A formidable military stronghold during tense relations with Spain, the area was famous for its fighters, including Alexandre Dumas's fictional Three

Musketeers—Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, joined by the romantic figure of D'Artagnan. While stationed far to the northeast during the siege of Arras, the Gascons reflect on their homeland and the sweet Dordogne River, which flows into the Garonne near the town of Bergerac.

Act I opens at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, once a prestigious residence, that has served as a tennis court and theater since 1548. The ambush of Lignière occurs at Porte de Nesle, further south across the Seine River between the Pont des Artes and the western tip of Isle de la Cité, the heart of Paris. The romantic intrigue of the play centers a few blocks southwest on the Rue St. Honoré. Roxane attends mass in the neighborhood of Ragueneau's bakery at the intersection of the Rue de l'Arbre Sec, where she meets Cyrano to ask for him to protect Christian. East of the center of action is the Marais section, home of Roxane; the Place Royale (now called Place des Vosges), where she first hears of Christian; the Rue d'Orleans, where de Guiche intends to hide in a monastery until the war is over; and, further east, the home and burial place of the historical Cyrano de Bergerac, who lived at 105 Rue de Roquette.

During the spy-counterspy scenarios and bloody religious wars of the era known as the Thirty Years War, Cardinal Richelieu, a powerful prelate who headed the royal council, dominated French military might from 1630-1642. The siege that forms the historical backdrop to Cardinal Richelieu's show of power, Cyrano's heroism, and Christian's untimely death occurred at Arras, a city in the modern department of Pas-de-Calais, north of Paris. A wealthy center of trade and grain exporting, Arras remained a Hapsburg territory until the French captured it in 1640. As a major triumph for Richelieu's anti-Hapsburg policy, the newly acquired land passed from the Spanish Netherlands into France. In 1659, it was officially annexed as part of crown holdings. During the play, de Guiche brags of a show of bravery at Bapaume, a city south of Arras. He reports that the Marshal left the previous night for a supply center at Dourlens (currently called Doullens), a town southwest of Arras.

Touraine, the magnificent Loire Valley and location of France's prime chateaux, is the home of Christian de Neuville, Roxane's husband and Cyrano's rival. The area was famous from the Middle Ages as a Christian stronghold. The valley was the home of Abbé Alcuin, biographer of Charlemagne. At the height of its development into a silk-weaving center in Cyrano's day, Touraine boasted 8000 looms, 20,000 weavers, and 40,000 assistants.

THEMES AND MOTIFS

A study of the central issues and situations in Edmond Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* should include these aspects:

Themes

- arrogance
- heroism
- alienation
- innovation
- ineptitude
- loyalty
- unrequited love
- guile
- sacrifice
- confession
- redemption

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Motifs

- asserting independence
- the consequences of pride and low self-esteem
- battlefield heroics
- daring and foolhardiness
- righting of wrongs
- confrontations between extreme evil and innocence
- the rewards of purity
- perseverance during harsh times
- a mature acceptance of regrets and lost opportunities

MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, sentences or thought units that have a particular meaning in the play. Explain the meaning of each. Act, scene, and page numbers will guide you to the context from which the item is taken.

1. He's a man who knows how to handle a rapier. (Act I, Scene ii, p. 22)
(Cyrano has an established reputation for brandishing the light, sharp-tipped, two-edged sword that had come into fashion in the previous century. Protected with a cup-shaped hand guard on the hilt to prevent loss of grasp or finger control, the rapier was the weapon of choice for dueling and self-defense and, as such, became an everyday part of a man's costume. The rapier was notorious for paring flesh and for inflicting the fine-lined disfigurement that became the badge of honor for a duellist and swordsman.)
2. With his triple-plumed hat, his billowing doublet, and his cape majestically held out behind by a sword that rises like the insolent tail of a cock, he carries his nose above a punchinello ruff, a nose that . . . Ah, gentlemen, what a nose! (Act I, scene ii, p. 23)
(Cyrano's distinctive costume is a contrast in implication. The sharp thrust of his sword underneath the billow of his cape suggests a man of flamboyance, assertiveness, and valor. The ruff, part of the dress of Punchinello or Pulchinello, a stereotyped comic hunchback from commedia dell'arte and Europe's popular Punch and Judy puppet shows, inserts a ridiculous element.)
3. My lady wishes me to ask her valiant cousin where she can see him in private. (Act I, Scene vi, p. 52)
(A duenna carries Roxane's message discreetly to Cyrano. The purpose of the duenna was to serve a young unmarried woman as companion, chaperone, governess, or mature adviser to protect her virginity and reputation and to supervise behavior on visits, while shopping and dining, or during extended travel. The Spanish title designates respect and authority and derives from the latin for mistress.)
4. Mounds of brioches and vast arrays of petits fours are being carried on wicker trays and sheets of metal. (Act II, Scene i, p. 59)
(The atmosphere of the second act shifts from Cyrano's hunger to ample food, which is fresh and fragrant from the morning's baking. Brioche is a crusty glazed bread, bun, roll, or pastry made from linking or stacking balls of lightly sweetened yeast dough in a mold before baking. The petit four can be a bite-sized piece of pound cake or sponge cake, a macaroon, shortbread, or biscuit. It is covered in icing and fancy toppings, such as marzipan, sprinkles, or crystallized violets. The two foods contrast

in style and purpose: the first is a common bread served in most establishments for commoners; the second is a formal dessert of the aristocracy that can be served on a silver tray at parties and receptions or wrapped in tissue and arranged in an elegant box for formal presentation.)

5. There were pikes and clubs strewn all over the ground! (Act II, Scene iv, p. 66)
(The discussion of violence that occurs while Cyrano composes his love letter mentions two types of personal weapons. The club is useful in close hand-to-hand fighting. The pike, a spike or honed point at the end of a long wooden stave, shaft, or spear, is a primitive weapon used to parry the blows of a more heavily, lethally armed opponent. The pike's length separates the user enough to allow some leverage against blows from a sword.)
6. In fact, he's a Cadet in your company! (Act II, Scene vi, p. 74)
(Christian has just joined Cyrano's company as a junior noncommissioned recruit or trainee. New to military service, he must obtain basic instruction and experience by studying under a valiant veteran like Cyrano.)
7. He's the inventor of the gazette, that printed sheet which tells so many things. They say it's an idea with a great future. (Act II, Scene vii, p. 81)
(The introduction of journalism in the seventeenth century created a demand for the court journals or in-house newsletter that served as public calendar of events, announcement of executions and entertainments, promotion of charity, and extension of honors conferred on public heroes. The term derives from a Venetian coin, a halfpenny that was the price of a single sheet. As Roxane's gazette, Cyrano carries into the closed walls of the convent the titillating details of court trysts and gossip.)
8. But what would I have to do? Cover myself with the protection of some powerful patron? (Act II, Scene viii, p. 87)
(One of Cyrano's most memorable speeches, the rejection of patronage expresses his major strength and weakness—the passionate refusal to lean on anyone or anything. A patron, usually a wealthy or prestigious supporter of the arts, served as sponsor and benefactor by supplying stipend, living quarters, annual salary, supplies, or studio. By championing or protecting an artist, the patron had the right to determine or control the artist's expression of creativity, which could be manipulated into a political, religious, or personal statement.)
9. Roxane won't be disillusioned! Together, we can win her heart! Will you let my soul pass from my leather jerkin and lodge beneath your embroidered doublet? (Act II, Scene x, p. 97)
(Cyrano contrasts his humble background with Christian's wealth and nobility by naming the types of garments they wear. Cyrano wears a coarse sleeveless vest fitted close like a tunic. Christian's vest is a tight garment ornamented with braid, slashed or puffed sleeves, drawstring waist, peplum, and tabs. The contrast suggests Cyrano's attitude to the foppish dress and overblown mannerisms of his day.)
10. Gentlemen, your Gascon coat of arms bears six chevrons, blue and gold. We're about to add one more, of a different color: blood-red! (Act IV, scene iv, p. 154)

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(The assembly of colors and symbolic shapes on a coat of arms carries historical meaning. Cyrano implies that an addition of combat experience will enhance the blue and gold chevrons, decorative patterns in the shape of an inverted V, which derive from past associations with royalty and patriotic quests.)

COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the play.

Questions 1-5 Literal Level.

1. What time period does the book cover?

(According to information in the play, Christian arrives in Paris from Touraine three weeks before his meeting with Roxane—about the same time that Cyrano banishes Montfleury from the stage. Shortly before a 2:00 matinee in 1640 at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, the intrigue of three plots involves Cyrano, Roxane and Christian, and Lignière. Cyrano is expected to halt Montfleury's stage appearance, Christian admires Roxane, and Lignière learns about an ambush to take place at the Porte de Nesle. After the duel between Cyrano and Valvert, Cyrano leads actors and followers to the ambush at the Porte de Nesle.

Act II takes place at dawn in Ragueneau's shop, the day that Christian plans to enlist in the Gascon cadets. Cyrano writes a love letter at 6:00 A. M. After Roxane arrives at 7:00 to meet with Cyrano and beg a promise of protection for Christian, de Guiche offers Cardinal Richelieu's patronage, which Cyrano spurns. The balcony scene and letter from de Guiche of Act III occur that evening in the Marais section of Paris. The act concludes with the marriage of Roxane and Christian and a call-up of the Gascons to Arras.

The fourth act opens nearly a month later at Arras. Before dawn, the French run out of food and Cyrano returns from mailing a love letter to Roxane. At dawn, the men awaken and threaten to mutiny to end their hunger. An hour before the Spanish attack, Roxane and Ragueneau arrive in a carriage laden with food. After Christian realizes that Cyrano writes with the faithfulness of a lover, Christian joins the Gascons and is shot.

The final act returns to Paris, where Roxane withdraws to the convent of the Ladies of the Cross in Paris. We are told that since 1641, Cyrano has visited her on Saturday evenings to share court gossip. On October 26, 1655, he arrives late. He wears a hat to conceal a head wound. While reading Christian's last letter as vespers begin, he demonstrates his love for Roxane by reciting the lines as the light grows too dim for him to read by. Before Roxane can claim him as her love, he stands in cavalier pose, then falls dead.)

2. Describe the tense situation that arouses Cyrano to arms in Act I.

(At the Hôtel de Bourgogne, the audience is rowdy, flirtatious, and thick with gossip. Ragueneau arrives in his baker's apron and searches for Cyrano, who has forbid Montfleury from appearing onstage. At the opening of La Clorise, Cyrano appears, stands on a chair, and orders Montfleury to stop. The crowd rallies against Cyrano. He flourishes his cane and counts to three, at which time

Montfleury withdraws. The crowd's demand for reimbursement prompts Cyrano to toss them his purse.

A second rise in tension occurs when a meddler makes the fatal error of ridiculing Cyrano's overlarge nose, a sore point that tends to rouse the swordsman to serious retort. Viscomte de Valvert carries the badinage to greater lengths and invites a duel. Provoked beyond patience, Cyrano not only fights the duel, but composes a complicated ballade at the same time. The tension relieved, the audience applauds his mastery. D'Artagnan, one of the famed Three Musketeers, shakes Cyrano's hand.

In private, Le Bret divulges that he knows more about Cyrano than outward appearances reveal. He expresses concern that the bag of money is a month's allotment. The orange girl takes pity and offers Cyrano food. The proud swordsman accepts a grape, half a macaroon, and a glass of water. The militancy quelled, Rostand turns to the love interest with a request from the duenna that he meet Roxane at 7:00 the next morning at Ragueneau's pastry shop. Thus, the fighting ceases and the love match takes its place as a source of dramatic interest.)

3. What events in Act II influence the war scene?

(A month before the siege at Arras, Cyrano appears in a favorite haunt—the pastry shop, where poets scribble lines on wrapping paper and the Gascons meet to share news of the failed ambush. While Cyrano composes a serious love letter and halts a flirtation between a musketeer and Lise, Ragueneau's wife, Rostand builds Cyrano's reputation for facing eight bandits at the ambush. The tender meeting between Roxane and Cyrano reveals a friendship between cousins that began in their childhood. Roxane's intense love for Christian impels her to implore the older, more experienced swordsman and fighter to protect Christian. From a mix of love and friendship, Cyrano agrees. Le Bret, who observes his friend with true understanding, urges him to stop being three musketeers in one.

The compact compromises Cyrano's behavior in Act IV. Out of love for Roxane, he sends two letters a day, thus outdistancing the demands that Christian makes on his expertise. After Christian's fall in battle, Cyrano hoists her handkerchief as a rally flag and throws himself into the counterattack. The fact that Christian dies before Cyrano can confess his real reasons for carrying letters through Spanish lines requires him to remain silent out of respect for a brave Gascon.)

4. What aspects of Cyrano's skill assist Roxane in Act III?

(Cyrano is both swordsman and poet in Acts I and II. His daring and competence with a sword are already established by Act III. As the focal characters converge at Roxane's house in the Marais section of Paris, he whispers sweet words for Christian to say. As the ruse grows tedious, he thrusts Christian aside and speaks in his own voice, treading closer to a full revelation of his own love. Under the guise of support for Christian, Cyrano carries off the romantic balcony scene. After Christian demands a kiss and the monk interrupts the three-way love scene, the wedding alters forever Cyrano's relationship with Roxane.

A shift in tone occurs as de Guiche arrives. Cyrano

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must dissemble the witty friend and cousin while concealing his loss of Roxane. He must alter his outward emotion from deep expressions of love to the pose of madman. Wrapped in a cloak and perching on the balcony railing, he acts out the part of the man in the moon and effectively engages de Guiche for the fifteen minutes necessary for the nuptials. Carrying repartee to great lengths, Cyrano describes seven ways to fly to the moon. The act turns back to the emotions of Act II after de Guiche realizes the trick and spitefully orders Christian to leave his wife and report for duty. Cyrano can do little more than promise to keep safe Roxane's new husband.)

5. What change occurs in de Guiche in Act IV?

(Through the first three acts, de Guiche is a reprehensible conniver and would-be womanizer. He sits with fops on the stage and flirts with Roxane, even though he is married. His intention to wed her to the weak-willed Viscomte de Valvert suggests a seamy plot of making her available for an adulterous menage à trois. In Act III, de Guiche demonstrates cowardly behavior by hiding in the monastery on the nearby Rue d'Orleans while his forces fight the Spanish.

In Act IV, de Guiche appears to have changed little. His boasts of defeating the Count de Bucquoi at Bapaume and of leaving his white scarf behind to elude the Spanish falls through after Cyrano produces the scarf, to de Guiche's embarrassment. De Guiche waves to a false Spanish spy to indicate where the enemy should attack. Callously, de Guiche acknowledges Cyrano's habit of fighting a hundred to one and orders the Gascons to fight to the death when the siege begins.

After Roxane arrives in a bullet-riddled coach to distribute cheer and food among the men, de Guiche looks even more ridiculous to his men. They conceal the food while he places a gun nearby. To retrieve his reputation among true fighters, he decides to stay with the Gascons and announces, "An empty belly won't stop me from fighting! . . . I am a Gascon." The men recognize the change in de Guiche and invite him to join their field picnic. After Christian's death, de Guiche joins Ragueneau in carrying Roxane to safety as the fighting grows risky.)

Questions 6-8 Interpretive Level.

6. What themes unite the events in the play?

(Rostand coordinates strong themes and numerous smaller motifs. Essential to an understanding of Cyrano is recognition of his complexity. As a hero, he is proud, vain, overly loud, and bold. As a friend, he remains loyal to his men, to whom he serves as a model of probity and patriotism. In scenes at Arras and at the bake shop, Cyrano values camaraderie and devotion, as demonstrated by his relationships with his men and his interference in Lise's flirtation with a musketeer.

During the balcony scene, Rostand further overlays his protagonist with evidence of estheticism, elegance, and tenderness. Although Cyrano's natural jealousy of men who court Roxane places a wedge between him and Christian, he accepts a deep friendship with his rival out of love for Christian's wife. By struggling to accommodate these conflicting emotions, Cyrano evolves beyond the cavalier image of swashbuckler into a deeply

troubled man who compensates for lack of love by fighting, bragging, self-abnegation, and exhibitionism.)

7. How does Rostand introduce the theme of redemption? (If the play had ended with Act IV, Cyrano and Roxane would not have grown from the level of unrequited love and admiration to mature lovers who accept their late-in-life awareness of a doomed relationship. As Cyrano reads the last love letter, Roxane suffers a painful coming to knowledge that the man she mourned was wrongly identified. The real lover and composer of speeches and letters slumps beside her in a preface to death. Cyrano, fated to die from an ignoble ambush, stands in delirium and fights prejudice, compromise, stupidity, and death. He further ennobles himself by refusing to replace Christian in her heart and by carrying to heaven an unstained character that defies the humanity that lies hidden in Cyrano's heart.)
8. Why has Act V become so valued a scene in the history of theater?

(Act V allies all aspects of theater in one well-timed performance. To the hints of impending death that cling to Cyrano's late arrival, the direction must coordinate leaves of Titian red that fall on the October evening. In the distance, the sounds of the vesper bell blend with the singing of nuns entering the chapel for evening worship. The lowering of stage lights further enhances the drama by proving to Roxane and the audience that Cyrano is reciting rather than reading the love letter. Like a holy relic, he clutches the page and renders aloud the lines that he wrote fifteen years earlier.

The final glimpse of Cyrano raging at abstract enemies of his character creates a pathos for a brave man who dies, not in valiant combat or cavalier duel, but from a head wound inflicted by lackeys, who ambush him with a log of wood. The costuming must reflect an aging widow and her tattered old friend, who removes his hat to display a bandage. In the final gesture of high romanticism, Cyrano must pull himself erect and make the final salute to God, who is the ultimate judge of his actions.)

Questions 9 and 10-Critical Level.

9. What psychological flaws weaken Cyrano as a hero? (The great sword fighter and head of the Gascons, Cyrano wraps himself in layers of compensation. Beneath his show of sincerity to poetry, honor, country, and friends lies the concealed insecurity that only Le Bret perceives. To a lifetime of longing for love and family, Cyrano maintains the stance of a born hero who cares only for displays of courage.

A key scene in the play occurs in Act I, Scene v, when Cyrano halts his frenetic act of bravado at the Hôtel de Bourgogne to speak heart to heart. Le Bret comments that Cyrano has "some badly distorted ideas" if he emulates warlike fools. Cyrano admits to having 48 enemies, including Montfleury, de Guiche, Valvert, and others. Le Bret questions the way he lives and asks, "Where will it lead you? What are you trying to accomplish?" In a sincere act of self-interpretation, Cyrano admits that he avoids complicated courses of action and chooses "to be admirable in everything."

Le Bret, not to be thrown off a true revelation, probes deeper. Cyrano gives himself away as he

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describes Montfleury as a loathsome slug crawling across a flower, an image representing Roxane's loveliness and purity. To Le Bret's questions, Cyrano admits the irony—the least attractive man in love with the most desirable woman. Even though Le Bret encourages the love match, Cyrano falls short of complete self-revelation when he admits, "I let myself be carried away, I forget myself—and then I suddenly see the shadow of my profile on the garden wall.")

10. What do the contents of the last love letter reveal about Cyrano?

(A doubly meaningful dramatic irony that rewards and wounds both parties, the letter states the circumstance of Christian's death while prophesying a similar loss of Cyrano. She is astonished that he reads the words aloud, which predict that the day is Cyrano's last. He confesses the passion for her that he has never expressed and cries out with poignant regret that he will never again caress her with his eyes.

With gentlemanly restraint, Cyrano continues to pour out his emotion as though he speaks for Christian. Roxane remembers that the timbre and cadence are the same as the voice she heard under the balcony fifteen years before. Interrupting his litany, she demands a correction. In a show of support for Christian, Cyrano weakly defends his position with "No, no, my love, I didn't love you!" In the fatal confrontation that precedes Cyrano's swoon, Rostand unites the two pieces of evidence—Cyrano's tears and Christian's blood staining the letter.)

Questions 11-13 Critical Level.

11. Summarize the Gascon spirit in an essay that accounts for unity, brotherhood, patriotism, and courage.
12. Compose an oral essay on allusions to Cinderella and Beauty and the Beast, both French fairy tales.
13. Join with a small group to discuss the changes in Roxane from a pampered young girl who listens to gossip at the Place Royale to a weathered widow who treasures her old friend Cyrano.

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Math and Computers

1. Use a variety of shapes from a computer graphing program to contrast the French and Spanish armies that clashed at the siege of Arras. Stress the number of lives lost and property destroyed.
2. Collect lines from the play that disclose passage of time in the past and present, for example, the length of Cyrano's feud with Montfleury and the day in May 1639 when Roxane changed her hair style.
3. Make a time line of France's contribution to romantic literature. Stress the roles of Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, and Edmond Rostand.

Social Studies

1. Summarize the organization of the French fighting forces that includes aristocratic officers and cadets. Explain the prestige of titles such as cardinal, duke, viscomte, captain, colonel, and cadet.
2. Write an extended definition of zeitgeist. Compile lines that express the excitement and apprehension as the Gascon cadets prepare for war and the sweeping romance that impels Roxane to a hasty marriage.

Comment on De Guiche's ability to control underlings by ordering them into battle, but his inability to rebuke the Capuchin for conducting the wedding.

Psychology

1. Draw a character web representing the interconnectedness among members of Parisian society. Which characters seem well acquainted? Which say little about themselves or their opinion about Cyrano? Which seem most aware of current gossip? Why is the theater a popular gathering spot? Why would a widow withdraw from society to live in a convent?
2. Present a diagram of characters that reveals different types of pride, for example, magistrate, husband, military leader, lady of the house, duenna, soldier, officer, followers, pages, fifer, actors, musicians, writers, aristocrats, cardinal, mother superior, nun, and monk.
3. Discuss with a group the theme of chastity for women. Account for an emphasis on purity and social respectability in women but not in men. Explain why the orange girl can conduct business in the theater and the Capuchin can leave the monastery to preside at a wedding but Roxane must send notes to friends by her duenna, Sister Marthe cannot look directly at Cyrano, and Lise must stop flirting with the musketeer in the pastry shop. Add information about the reputation of actresses.

Economics

1. Explain the vast difference between aristocrats like Cardinal Richelieu and the French working class. Discuss why patronage is an appropriate measure for struggling authors, artists, and artisans.
2. Make a sign board reflecting the offerings of a seventeenth-century bake shop. Include appropriate prices.

Cinema

1. Draw a storyboard of violent scenes. Depict how the camera could capture a swordfight on stage and the attack of the Spanish at Arras.
2. Make a list of dramatic scenes from the novel that would require intense use of lighting, costume, makeup, music, props, and stunts, particularly the final scene, which requires careful alliance of sound, lighting, scenery, special effects, costume, makeup, and acting.
3. Study several film and ballet versions of *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Note how romance is a unifying element among scenes of violence, plotting, ambush, dueling, and war. Comment on the requirements of an actor to play a keen swordsman who is equally adept at composing verse.

Science and Health

1. Using a model skull, explain why a blow to the head can result in confusion, gradual loss of consciousness, fainting, and death.
2. Comment on the stages of mourning that affect Roxane. Account for her withdrawal to a convent and rejection of potential suitors such as de Guiche. Project how she will mourn for her old friend and unconfessed lover.

Geography

1. List and illustrate examples of transportation in 17th-century France, especially the coach that carries Roxane from Paris through Spanish lines to Arras.

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2. Create a bulletin board contrasting these settings: Paris, Scarpe, Porte de Nesle, Touraine, Rouen, Gascony, Dourlens, Bapaume, Genoa, Bergerac, Dordogne, and Arras. On a tourist map of Paris, locate the Rue Saint-Honoré, Saint-Roch church, Rue d'Orléans, Hôtel de Bourgogne, Rue de l'Arbe Sec, Quai des Orfèvres, Hôtel de Bourgogne, Place Royale, Marais section, and Seine River. Discuss with a group why the action begins in a Paris theater, moves from a bake shop to Roxane's home to a battlefield, then returns in Act V to a Paris convent.

Language.

Make a chalkboard list of essential terms from the play such as yew, tapestry, holy relic, chevron, and duenna. Supply short definitions and pronunciations.

Composition.

1. Compose a short newspaper article in which you recount Cyrano's biography. Note his mother's dislike of him. Comment on a childhood friendship with his cousin and a memory of her the previous May. Include information about loneliness and increased enmity in the fifteen years that fall between acts four and five.
2. Explain in a paragraph the purpose of tragedy. What elements in the play seem hopeful? How does war prevent Cyrano from confessing his love to Roxane? What does Roxane suffer by learning too late that Cyrano has loved her all along?
3. Compose a first person account of vespers at the convent, a battlefield picnic, writing poems at Ragueneau's pastry shop, attacking eight men at the Porte de Nesle, forbidding Montfleury from playing Phedon, flirting from the theater gallery, courting Roxane with wartime letters, and convincing a Capuchin that he is expected to perform a quick marriage ceremony. Mention aspects of French history, custom, music, cuisine, decor, costume, and entertainment that most appeal to you.

Literature and Theater

1. In an illustrated term paper, indicate how Italy's *commedia dell'arte* and Molière's comedies influenced European theater. Explain why Rostand defied late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century style by continuing to write romantic drama when others were performing realism and naturalism.
2. Role-play the part of the duenna, theater rowdies, Capuchin monk, Lise, D'Artagnan, Carbon, Montfleury, orange girl, thief, fops, cadets, poets, actors, children in the bake shop, spy, or Sister Marthe. Indicate how each person interacts with a major character. Discuss how *Cyrano de Bergerac* would change if only the main characters formed the cast.
3. Analyze lines from Cyrano's ballade and his introduction of the Gascon cadets that demonstrate rhyme, repetition, metaphor, simile, allusion, pun, humor, wit, dramatic irony, and alliteration.
4. Apply a cause-and-effect diagram to explain the following scenes: Cyrano chooses to address Roxane from under her balcony, Christian seeks a kiss, Roxane and Ragueneau carry food to the cadets at Arras, Cyrano returns De Guiche's scarf, Christian presses Cyrano to confess his love to Roxane, Cyrano hoists a handker-

chief, and Roxane welcomes Cyrano each week at the convent.

Art and Music

1. Using desktop publishing or other media, create numerous commercial and functional items: a hanging sign for Ragueneau's bake shop or the Ladies of the Cross convent, posters welcoming new cadets, a family coat of arms for de Guiche or Cardinal Richelieu, a convent bulletin board announcement of Roxane's arrival, headstones for Christian and Cyrano, scepter and crown for the Queen of France or the Cardinal Prince of Spain, multiple views of a convent or monastery, a program for *La Clorise* or *Scapin*, a signboard pointing the way to Arras or the Rue Saint-Honoré, a manual for sentries or pages, detailed sketches of a seventeenth-century cannon or rapier, a view of the Hôtel de Bourgogne's stage and galleries, and a memorial for the victims of the siege of Arras.
2. Join with a group to design a mural depicting contrasting costumes, such as villagers and actors in a pastoral, cadets and the captain, cooks and lackeys, and swordsmen and nuns.
3. Describe aloud the frivolous society that decrees foppish fashion, writing style, and public behavior, such as duennas as chaperones, masks for lovers, dueling, salons for discussion groups, ornate love letters, and patronage for poets. Explain how superficial values harm Cyrano's self-image. Include comment on Cyrano's mother's response to her son and on Roxane's infatuation with a handsome soldier.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Compose a theme in which you compare Cyrano with similar faithful lovers and fighters. Select models from Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, Alfred Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, Zora Neale Hurston's *Mule Bone*, William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or *The Tempest*, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, Robert Browning's "Andrea del Sarto," Mary Stewart's *The Crystal Cave* and *The Hollow Hills*, Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*, Mariano Azuela's *The Underdogs*, Sylvia Lopez-Medina's *La Cantora*, William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, Sir Walter Scott's *Lorna Doone*, and Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal Dreams*.
2. Use scenes from *Cyrano de Bergerac* to decorate a mural depicting the siege of Arras. Display evidence of hunger and *esprit de corps* alongside desperate combat, spying, and victory. Show various locations where Cyrano rallies young inexperienced cadets.
3. Pantomime the everyday life of villagers and the excesses of aristocrats like Cardinal Richelieu, Viscomte de Valvert, Olympe John of Austria, Mancini, and Comte de Guiche. Note the differences in their diet, dress, transportation, work, behavior, and prestige.
4. Write a newspaper account of Cyrano's life and death. Note his loyalty, flamboyance, and honor. Comment on the hardships that he imposed on himself, such as repaying the audience for Montfleury's interrupted performance and living alone in hunger and self-denial.
5. Compose letters from Christian to his family. Explain the

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reason for his hasty marriage and departure and his intent to establish a lasting marriage with the woman he loves.

6. Write a paragraph to explain how Roxane's courage impresses a coward. Discuss the cadets' rally at the sight of a beautiful woman bearing food and hope.
7. Establish a website introducing Cyrano de Bergerac as both an historical and literary figure. Note his most famous exploits. Summarize ballet, animated, and film adaptations of Rostand's play.
8. Write several conversations in which local people discuss the bravery of the Gascon cadets at Arras. Name as examples the heroic acts performed by de Guiche, Christian, Carbon, and Cyrano. Comment on the possibility that Christian commits suicide in battle by placing himself in front of the oncoming Spanish attack.
9. Compose a short speech in which you contrast several examples of Cyrano's oratory. Include the man-from-the-moon speech, anti-patronage speech, fight with Death, challenge to Montfleury, nose speech, and wooing scene under the balcony.
10. Using examples from the play, lead a discussion of standard motifs, such as soldiers who are proud of their homeland, women who go out in public to be admired, chaperones who serve as go-betweens, people who compensate for loss by being testy or argumentative, shy men who doubt they have a chance with beautiful women, officials who enjoy tormenting their subordinates, starving poets, and hosts who enjoy jolly company.

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. Compose a list of every fight described in the play. Give justification or explanation for each, including the duel, ambushes, and attack at Arras.
2. Make a list of scenes from the play that express contrasting attitudes toward loyalty, regret, compassion, vengeance, prestige, love, courage, and heroism. Next to each, indicate what you think is the author's personal philosophy.
3. Compose an extended character sketch of Cyrano. Account for bad memories of his mother, his hesitance to court Roxane, and his hatred of her suitors, particularly Montfleury.
4. Compose a chapter in which the Gascons mourn Cyrano and honor his many exploits.

RELATED READING

Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*
Alexandre Dumas, *The Three Musketeers*
Anthony Hope, *The Prisoner of Zenda*
Henrik Ibsen, *Enemy of the People*
Molière, *Scapin*
Ayn Rand, *The Fountainhead*
Rafael Sabatini, *Scaramouche*
William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*
Mary Stewart, *The Crystal Cave and The Hollow Hills*
Alfred Tennyson, *Idylls of the King*

ROSTAND'S OTHER WORKS

Les Musardises (1890)
Le Gant rouge (1890)
Les Deux Pierrots (1890)

Les Romanesques (1894)
La Princesse lointaine (1895)
La Samaritaine (1897)
L'Aiglon (1900)
Chantecler (1910)
Le Bois sacré (1909)
Le Vol de la Marseillaise (1919)
Le Cantique de l'Aile (1919)
Deux Romanciers de Provence (1921)
La dernière nuit de Don Juan (1921)
Complete Works (1926)

CROSS-CURRICULAR SOURCES

For more information about the Cardinal Richelieu, the Thirty Years War, Gascony, and seventeenth-century Paris, consult these sources:

The Ancient Regime: A History of France, 1610-1774, Emmanuel le Roy Ladure
Cardinal Richelieu, Pat Glosop
Gascony and the Pyrenees, John East
Richelieu, Robert J. Knecht
Richelieu and His Age, Joseph Bergin
Also, consult these websites for particulars on Gascony, Cardinal Richelieu, and Cyrano de Bergerac:
"Cardinal Richelieu," <http://www2.lucidcafe.com/lucidcafe/library/95sep/richelieu.html>.
"Cardinal Richelieu," <http://www.knight.org/advent/cathen/13047a.htm>.
"Cyrano de Bergerac," <http://cyrano.kensai.com>.
"Gascony," <http://123voyage.com/realsw/fr/areas.gers.htm>.

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Rostand, Jean, "Edmond Rostand," *Nouvelles Littéraires*, April 11, 1968, 1, 13.

"The Soliloquy from Act II of *Cyrano de Bergerac*," members.tn.net/~justinia/Cyrano.htm.

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism. Vol. 6. Detroit: Gale, 1982.

"Who Is This Cyrano Guy, Anyway?," 133.30.8.a:10080/=@@=www.nando.net.

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COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Match each description with the name of the speaker. You may use some answers more than once.

- | | | | | |
|--------------|------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------|
| A. soubrette | D. thief | G. Jodelet | J. Sister Marthe | M. Lise |
| B. Capuchin | E. Carbon | H. Madeleine Robin | K. duenna | N. de Guiche |
| C. Ragueneau | F. Le Bret | I. Cyrano | L. Montfleury | O. Christian |

- _____ 1. knows that Cyrano is starving in his lonely room.
- _____ 2. appears in a pastoral.
- _____ 3. claims to have a lover at Arras.
- _____ 4. names modes of interplanetary travel.
- _____ 5. loses a scarf.
- _____ 6. is tricked into performing a marriage.
- _____ 7. flirts with a rival in front of her husband.
- _____ 8. promises Cyrano a bowl of soup.
- _____ 9. stains Roxane's letter with blood.
- _____ 10. hates to see pages of verse turned into bread wrappers.

Part II: True/False (30 points)

In the space provided write **T** if the statement is completely true or **F** if any part of the statement is false.

- _____ 1. De Guiche is embarrassed to see how bravely Roxane travels through enemy territory.
- _____ 2. Christian threatens Cyrano's wooing by climbing up for a kiss.
- _____ 3. Cyrano pays his monthly salary for baskets of brioche for new cadets.
- _____ 4. Roxane realizes too late that Cyrano is reciting rather than reading the letter.
- _____ 5. Cyrano denies that there are assassins waiting at the Porte de Nesle.
- _____ 6. The enmity between Cyrano and Montfleury arises over the issue of patronage.
- _____ 7. According to Cyrano's gazette, de Guiche has a new name—the Duke de Grammont.
- _____ 8. The siege at Arras pits the Gascons against the Spanish.
- _____ 9. Cyrano composes a ballade to add to a love letter.
- _____ 10. Roxane carries the last letter in a bag at her breast.
- _____ 11. The nose speech demonstrates that Cyrano pretends to be proud of his striking profile.
- _____ 12. When Roxane accompanies the duenna to a gathering across the street, Cyrano posts pages as lookouts.
- _____ 13. De Guiche intends to hide in a monastery rather than to accompany the men to Arras.
- _____ 14. Cyrano harbors resentment for Christian's heroism at Arras.
- _____ 15. Ragueneau drives to Gascony a coach loaded with supplies and food.

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

VOCABULARY TEST

A. Match each synonym in the passage below with the original term from the list that follows.

- | | | | | |
|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-----------|
| arcs | ducal | macaroon | raven | tapestry |
| bacchante | farce | noblest | relic | threshold |
| ballade | fonts | parry | salute | truculent |
| beadle | harmony | pastoral | sedan chair | vain |
| colonnade | immaculate | plagiarist | skeins | vespers |
| compromise | intact | portcullis | soubrette | yew |
| doff | laurels | prejudice | tableau | |

The **finest** (1) _____ battles are always fought in **uselessness** (2) _____! . . . You there, all of you, who are you? Your numbers seem endless. . . . An, I recognize you now: my old enemies! Lies! My greetings to you! (*Thrusts his sword into the empty air.*) And here's **con-cession** (3) _____! And **bias** (4) _____! And Cowardice! (*Thrusts again.*) What's that? Come to terms with you? Never! Never! . . . Ah, there you are, Stupidity! . . . I know I can't defeat you all, I know that in the end you'll overwhelm me, but I'll still fight you as long as there's a breath in my body! (*Swings his sword in great **semicircles** (5) _____, then stops, panting.*) Yes, you've robbed me of everything: the **awards** (6) _____ of glory, the roses of love! But there's one thing you can't take away from me. When I go to meet God this evening, and **lift** (7) _____ my hat before the holy gates, my **greeting** (8) _____ will sweep the blue **sill** (9) _____ of heaven, because I'll still have one thing **entire** (10) _____, without a stain, something that I'll take with me in spite of you. (*Springs forward with his sword raised*). You ask what it is? I'll tell you! It's . . . my white plume.

B. Synonyms

Select synonyms from the remaining words in Part A to match the terms below.

1. grill _____
2. walkway _____
3. worship _____
4. imitator _____
5. celebrant _____
6. mural _____
7. rapport _____
8. evergreen _____
9. church warden _____
10. memento _____

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

Part III: Motivation (20 points)

Complete each line below with a reason or justification.

1. Roxane knows Cyrano well because _____

2. Christian comes close to provoking a duel because _____

3. Attendance at mass is a cover for a secret meeting because _____

4. Cardinal Richelieu takes interest in Cyrano because _____

5. The cadets admire Cyrano because _____

6. Roxane matures by Act V because _____

7. Cyrano addresses death as an enemy because _____

8. The ambush at the Porte de Nesle fails because _____

9. Cyrano hesitates to court Roxane because _____

10. Cyrano keeps his promise to Roxane because _____

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Describe methods of courting fashionable women in 17th-century France.
2. Explain why Christian and Roxane part after the wedding.
3. Summarize de Guiche's behavior at Arras.
4. Account for the cadets' welcome to Roxane and Ragueneau.

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Match actions with settings from the play. You will have answers left over when you finish.

- | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|------------------------|
| A. Quai des Orlevres | F. St. Roch | K. Marais |
| B. Rue l'Arbre Sec | G. Place Royal | L. Ladies of the Cross |
| C. Hôtel de Bourgogne | H. Touraine | M. Scarpe River |
| D. Dourlens | I. Rue d'Orleans | N. Gascony |
| E. Bapaume | J. Arras | O. Dordogne River |

- _____ 1. Cyrano collapses.
- _____ 2. Christian hides beneath the balcony.
- _____ 3. A thief reaches for a purse.
- _____ 4. The Marshal goes for supplies.
- _____ 5. Roxane goes to mass.
- _____ 6. Ragueneau bakes brioche and petits fours.
- _____ 7. Evidence of an ambush collects.
- _____ 8. De Guiche claims to have performed well.
- _____ 9. Roxane first hears gossip about Christian.
- _____ 10. In memories of home, Gascons recall pleasant times by the river.

Part II: Fill in the Blank (20 points)

Complete each blank with a word or phrase.

1. Cyrano has ordered _____ never to appear again on the _____.
2. As the feeding of lines to _____ grows cumbrous, Cyrano takes his place and speaks directly to _____.
3. When Cyrano appears before _____, he intends to carry untouched his white _____.
4. The ramblings of a man from the _____ hinders _____ from interrupting the wedding.
5. _____ promises Cyrano a bowl of soup, but injuries caused by a _____ dropping a log of wood end his life.

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

Part III: Short Answer (20 points)

Place your answer to each of the following questions in the blank provided at left.

1. What play does Cyrano halt? Why? _____
2. Who is late for a discussion group? For what reason? _____
3. What does Cyrano hoist at Arras? For what purpose? _____
4. In what year does Cyrano die? _____
5. Where does Roxane attend mass? _____
6. Who wrote *Agrippine*? _____
7. Why does Roxane shut the door in Christian's face? Is this setback final?

8. Who plays a sad tune in the thorbo? _____
9. Where does de Guiche hide before the company leaves for Arras? Is his deception successful?
Why or why not? _____
10. How many bandits took part in the ambush? With how many did Cyrano deal?

Part IV: Identification (10 points)

Explain why each of the following is important to the story.

1. Capuchin
2. half a macaroon
3. Ladies of the Cross
4. Molière
5. Phedon

Part V: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Discuss the abstract enemies that Cyrano fights at the convent.
2. Compare the behavior of the Gascons at the pastry shop and at Arras.
3. Describe dishonest or pretentious actions displayed in Paris in Act I.
4. Contrast the importance of minor figures, particularly Carbon, Lise, the duenna, Valvert, Mother Marguerite de Jésus, Jodelet, and Sister Marthe.

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

ANSWER KEY

VOCABULARY TEST

- A.**
- | | |
|---------------|--------------|
| 1. noblest | 6. laurels |
| 2. vain | 7. doff |
| 3. compromise | 8. salute |
| 4. prejudice | 9. threshold |
| 5. arcs | 10. intact |
- B.**
- | | |
|---------------|-------------|
| 1. portcullis | 6. tapestry |
| 2. colonnade | 7. harmony |
| 3. vespers | 8. yew |
| 4. plagiarist | 9. beadle |
| 5. bacchante | 10. relic |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. B |
| 2. L | 7. M |
| 3. H | 8. J |
| 4. I | 9. O |
| 5. N | 10. C |

Part II: True/False (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. F | 11. T |
| 2. T | 7. F | 12. F |
| 3. F | 8. T | 13. T |
| 4. T | 9. F | 14. F |
| 5. F | 10. T | 15. F |

Part III: Motivation (20 points)

Answers will vary.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. L | 6. B |
| 2. K | 7. A |
| 3. C | 8. E |
| 4. D | 9. G |
| 5. F | 10. J |

Part II: Fill in the Blank (20 points)

1. Montfleury, stage
2. Christian, Roxane
3. God, plume
4. moon, de Guiche
5. Sister Marthe, lackey

Part III: Short Answer (20 points)

1. La Clorise, he hated bad acting
2. Roxane
3. Roxane's handkerchief, to encourage the fighters
4. 1655
5. Saint Roch
6. Cyrano
7. He speaks clumsily of love, no
8. pages
9. monastery, no, Cyrano uncovers the evidence
10. eight

Part IV: Identification (10 points)

1. the monk who performs the marriage.
2. food that Cyrano accepts from the orange girl.
3. the convent to which Roxane retires after Christian's death.
4. author of *Scapin*, which features a scene stolen from Cyrano's work.
5. the part Montfleury plays at the Hôtel de Bourgogne

Part V: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

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