A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO THE SIGNET CLASSICS EDITION OF
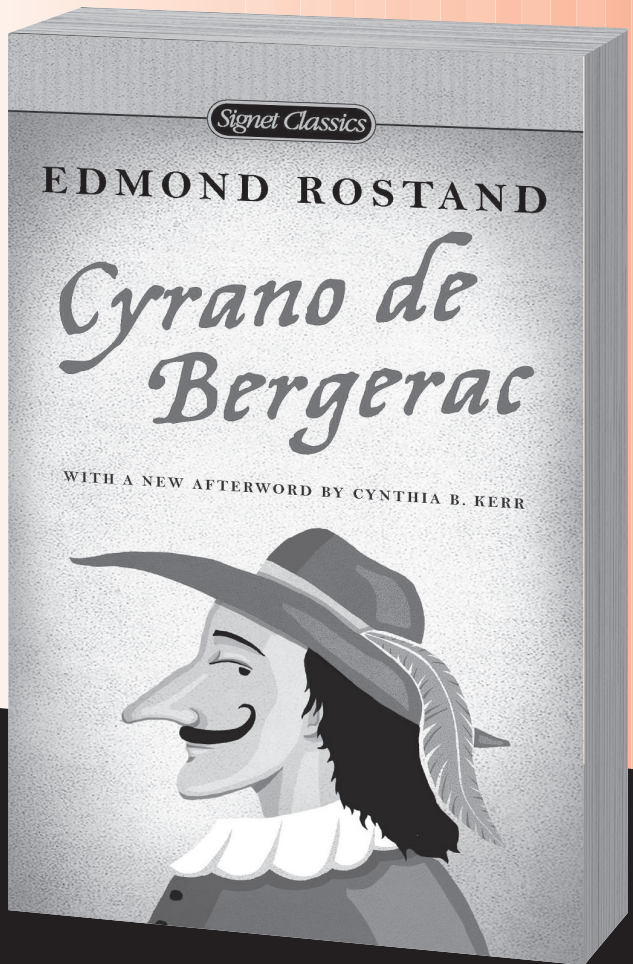
CYRANO DE BERGERAC
BY EDMOND ROSTAND

BY CHRIS GILBERT

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INTRODUCTION

In the "Introduction" to the Signet Classics Edition of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Eteel Lawson details Edmond Rostand's uncertainty on the opening night of his masterpiece: "…Rostand faced his lead actor, Constant Coquelin, and said, 'I beg your forgiveness, my friend. Pardon me for having involved you in a disastrous adventure'" (p. ix). While it is most certainly an adventure, Cyrano has been anything but disastrous. Since its 1897 Paris debut, the play has enjoyed numerous productions in multiple countries and formats. Coquelin first dazzled French audiences as Cyrano, but subsequently found himself performing in London, and soon afterward, North America. Gerard Depardieu assumed the lead role in Paul Rappeneau's 1990 film *Cyrano de Bergerac*, and Kevin Kline starred alongside Jennifer Garner in a 2007 Broadway production of the play. These are but a few notable examples as the play has continually drawn audiences across the globe.

Its longevity and widespread appeal can be mostly attributed to the swashbuckling hero after whom the play is named. First an off-stage voice, Cyrano soon becomes the main focus of the play, and he captivates until his final exit. His wit provokes laughter, and his courage produces amazement. His insecurity and intense self-awareness, though, humanize him and his complexities add layers to the play. This is an accessible play for many, but it works particularly well in the high-school classroom as teenagers can so easily identify with Cyrano. Students will empathize with Cyrano's insecurity and his attempts to navigate and express his feelings for his beloved; they will also admire his bravery and devotion to his friends. Here, students will find themes related to inner and outer beauty, the heroic archetype, and the appropriateness and meaning of devotion, deception, and honor.

This guide features a variety of instructional strategies for use throughout an exploration of *Cyrano de Bergerac*. These activities invite students to participate in a number of different ways with assignments specific to both individual and group arrangements addressing the Common Core State Standards. Technology is also featured throughout, and students are encouraged to closely analyze text while making connections to larger themes.

LIST OF MAIN CHARACTERS

Cyrano de Bergerac........................... Play's protagonist—intelligent, honorable, yet insecure

Christian de Neuvillette.....................................Cyrano's opposite—handsome but lacks wit

Count de Guiche.............................. Powerful nobleman—loves Roxane and dislikes Cyrano

Roxane ....Beautiful and intelligent—loved by Cyrano, De Guiche, and Christian

Ragueneau ....Poetry-loving pastry chef and friend of Cyrano

Le Bret..Cyrano's fellow soldier and friend

Lignière ....Christian's friend—a poet and drunkard with many enemies

Viscount de Valvert .... Nobleman aligned with De Guiche

SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY*

Act One

Act I begins in the auditorium of the Hotel de Bourgogne in 1640. Lignière and Christian de Neuvillette, a handsome, aspiring Gascon Guard, appear. As various guests arrive, Christian expresses his desire to know the name of the woman he loves. Meanwhile, Roxane appears alongside Count de Guiche, and Christian is awestruck by her beauty. He then learns that De Guiche, in an effort to pursue her, seeks to have Roxane married to Viscount de Valvert. Shortly thereafter, the play La Clorise begins. The actor Montfleury appears and is subsequently forced from the stage by Cyrano. Valvert then challenges Cyrano, and the two duel. Cyrano composes a ballad while he fights, and when he finishes, strikes Valvert. After the duel, Cyrano reveals to his friend Le Bret that he loves Roxane; remarkably, Roxane's Duenna arrives and explains that Roxane wishes to meet Cyrano at Ragueneau's shop the following day. Cyrano's elation is short-lived, however, as he learns that one hundred men seek Lignière's life. The act concludes as a confident Cyrano departs to confront these attackers.

Act Two

Cyrano arrives at Ragueneau's pastry shop where he meets Roxane. She thanks Cyrano for "humbling" Valvert, and then reveals she has a confession to make regarding the one she loves. Cyrano grows excited but is soon crushed when Roxane reveals her affection for the Gascon Cadet, Christian. She then asks Cyrano to protect him from duels with other soldiers. Cyrano agrees, and Roxane leaves after requesting that Christian write to her. Carbon, captain of the Guards, arrives with the other Cadets to salute Cyrano's victory over the one hundred men. Although warned by the Gascons to never mention Cyrano's nose, Christian ridicules Cyrano to prove his courage while Cyrano, mindful of his promise, does not retaliate. When the two are alone, Cyrano reveals to Christian that Roxane demands a love letter from him. Christian confesses that he lacks wit, but Cyrano offers to write for him. With Cyrano's intelligence and Christian's handsome appearance, they form a "romantic hero."

Act Three

Outside Roxane's house, Cyrano and Roxane talk about Christian but are interrupted by De Guiche who announces that the Cadets will soon depart to besiege Arras. Realizing that she could lose Christian, Roxane convinces De Guiche to spare the Cadets. When Roxane and Christian meet, Roxane expects eloquence from Christian, but without Cyrano's help, he disappoints with simplistic speech. Later, Christian and Cyrano hide beneath Roxane's balcony where an unseen Cyrano feeds poetic lines to Christian, who haltingly delivers them to Roxane. Frustrated by Christian's slow pace, Cyrano supplants him and woos Roxane from the darkness. Roxane is moved, and accepts a kiss from Christian. A Capuchin monk arrives, bearing a letter from De Guiche which reveals that he intends to come to Roxane. Reading aloud, Roxane deceitfully claims that the letter states that she and Christian are to be married. De Guiche is en route, but Cyrano intercepts and delays him. De Guiche arrives after the wedding, realizes what has occurred, and exacts revenge by sending the Cadets off to war. Cyrano vows to have Christian write to Roxane.

Act Four

Outside Arras in the camp of the Gascon Cadets, the men are tired and hungry. While complaining about their condition, they hear gunshots as Cyrano returns to camp. He has been delivering love letters to Roxane. Cyrano attempts to boost the troops' morale, but is interrupted by De Guiche's arrival and announcement that the Spanish are preparing for a full attack. Christian longs for Roxane to receive a farewell letter, and Cyrano claims it is already written. Christian sees the letter and becomes suspicious after noticing a tear stain on the page. Unexpectedly, Roxane and Ragueneau arrive at the front. Alone with Christian, she confesses that she now loves him for his soul instead of his appearance. Christian urges Cyrano to confess his love to Roxane, but he refuses. Christian proposes that they allow Roxane to choose between them. Cyrano converses with Roxane, but they are interrupted as Christian is shot down. From his body, Roxane collects the final letter. Honoring his friend, Cyrano conceals the truth and fights on.

Act Five

Act V occurs in a convent where a grieving Roxane now lives. A few nuns discuss how poor Cyrano has become. When De Guiche arrives, Roxane reveals that Cyrano frequently visits her, and the Duke suggests that Cyrano should be careful. Ragueneau appears and shares dreadful news with Le Bret: Cyrano has been mortally wounded. Shortly thereafter, a pale and unsteady Cyrano arrives to visit Roxane, his hat lowered over his eyes. He discusses the week's news, but trails off and alarms Roxane. He then reminds her that she once promised he could read Christian's farewell letter. She produces it, and Cyrano reads it aloud. As darkness falls, Cyrano continues to read, and Roxane finally realizes the words are his. Cyrano vows to meet death with courage.

*For additional summary, refer to pages xi-xvi in the "Introduction" to the Signet Classics Edition of *Cyrano de Bergerac*

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

While the Common Core State Standards emphasize close analysis of the text itself, students will benefit from learning about the work's context as well. The following sections provide information regarding the author's life, the genre of the literary work, and the time during which the play was composed. Students can also reflect on this content during their reading, as doing so could provoke them to read from a different perspective, such as reading to deduce how cultural movements influenced the text and how Rostand's life experiences possibly influenced the construction of characters in the play.

BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE ON THE WRITER, GENRE, AND PERIOD

Edmond Rostand: The Dramatist

Edmond Rostand, dramatist and writer, was born in Marseille, France, in 1868 and died in Paris, France in 1918. Rostand was born into a cultured and privileged family, and he inherited some of his literary abilities from his father who was a poet. Rostand's mother was a strict Catholic, and while he never became an orthodox Christian, the impact of his early religious experience can be found in the forms of symbols and themes throughout his various works. As a young man, Rostand studied literature, philosophy, law, and history at the Collège Stanislas, in Paris; he was drawn, however, to writing above all else. In 1890, Rostand published his first

noteworthy work, a book of poetry titled *Les Musardises*. His first successful play, *Les Romanesques*, based on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, was produced in 1894. *Cyrano de Bergerac*, his most popular and critically-acclaimed work, was first performed in 1897. Although not his final play, it is what Rostand is primarily remembered for; the work, loosely based on the life of the real Cyrano de Bergerac, evoked an older romantic tradition, thus contradicting the emphasis on realism that dominated French theater at the time. After *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Rostand continued writing, but none of his subsequent works equaled the triumph of his masterpiece. Sadly, he died of pneumonia in 1918. Have your students read his obituary, featured here: **http://www.theatrehistory.com/french/rostand003.html**.

• Use the following questions to facilitate the close reading of this informational text:

• How would you describe the tone of this text? Provide textual evidence.

• How is the obituary organized? What is its structure?

• How do the examples and descriptions create a particular way of remembering or memorializing Rostand?

• Do you believe the writer adequately honors Rostand? Why? Why not?

Genre and Historical Context

Cyrano de Bergerac was a critical success for many reasons, but its genre significantly influenced its favorable reception. The play is frequently classified as a Romantic work because it resembles earlier French plays hailing from this tradition. These works commonly followed a romantic hero who embodied the code of chivalry, as this idealized figure was brave, honorable, and utterly devoted to his beloved. Chivalry demanded physical strength and prowess, but it also emphasized intelligence, integrity, and artistic and literary proficiency. Cyrano serves as an ideal example of the classic romantic hero, and the play's accelerated pace, vibrant settings, and emotional resonance successfully revive the older romantic genre.

During the late nineteenth century, France was in the throes of industrialization, and art imitated this grim, mechanical-driven time. Realism, a literary movement emphasizing the commonplace routines of everyday life, heavily influenced literary and dramatic works. France was still reeling from its defeat in the Franco-Prussian war, and the country was also grappling with the Dreyfus Affair. *Cyrano*, which follows the exploits of a passionate, adventurous hero, contrasted with the social atmosphere and literary tradition of the time. Rostand situated it in the seventeenth century during the rule of Louis XIII and Louis XIV, France's golden age. This was a time of musketeers, romanticism, and adventure. Its romantic focus made *Cyrano* a substantial creative risk for Rostand, but the work immediately cemented his reputation as a talented dramatist. The play's initial production resulted in widespread praise and an audience that reportedly applauded for a full hour after the curtain fell. Some critics have attributed its success to the escapism it offered, for the French were able to lose themselves in the play and forget the troublesome reality of the time.

1. Have students fold a sheet of paper into three sections with these labels: What I Notice, What I Predict, and Assessment of my Predictions. Then, have them access the following resource: **http://tinyurl.com/cdbergerac**

   Tell them to read the first three paragraphs which detail challenges that faced the French populace in the late nineteenth century and record, in the first column, information that strikes them as bleak or troubling.

   If you have not already introduced *Cyrano*, in the second column have students record their predictions about the play and its effect on the population. Students should consider what

sort of dramatic work the downtrodden French would have benefitted from most. Additionally, have them examine the colorful cover of the Signet Classics Edition of *Cyrano de Bergerac* (shown via document camera) to help them further predict the play's atmosphere and mood. Next, have them read the last few paragraphs of the website above. In the third column, they should summarize their findings, and compare them to their predictions.

Have students discuss their ideas in pairs, and then move to a whole-class discussion. This is a good opportunity to discuss the value of escapism to the French and the relevance of escapism to contemporary American culture. Discuss: how could the play serve as a distraction for the French people? Are distractions such as movies, TV, and video games helpful, or harmful, to us today? Do you benefit from escapism in your own life?

2. The following online resources pertain to *Cyrano*'s genre and historical context. Explore as a whole class, assign to individual students, or form student groups and give each a specific resource to investigate. After students explore their assigned website, have them project it and summarize its contents to the class. These presentations will provide students with a basic understanding of *Cyrano*'s historical background and genre, and teachers can prompt students to reflect on this information throughout their reading of the play.

    *   This website has information about nineteenth century French realism, and it contains a series of images to illustrate the concept. While this resource focuses on visual arts, it accurately depicts the realism movement: **http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/rlsm/ hd_rlsm.htm**

    *   This resource provides information regarding political strife in France during the late nineteenth century: **http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dreyfus_affair**

    *   *Cyrano* features elements of tragedy, comedy, and romance. This website provides a short explanation of the difficulty of defining the play's specific genre: **http://www. bard.org/education/studyguides/Cyrano/bergeracheroic.html#.UtM6HPsgc98**

    *   Information on the real Cyrano de Bergerac is available at: **http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/ bergerac.htm**

    *   This resource provides information regarding chivalry and how this concept has changed over time: **http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chivalry**

Anticipating the Play

After you have introduced students to *Cyrano*'s historical context and familiarized them with romanticism and chivalry, show them the trailer from the 1990 *Cyrano de Bergerac* film starring Gerard Depardieu: **http://tinyurl.com/cyranotrailer**

While students watch, have them jot down adjectives to describe what they see. After they conclude their viewing, have them elaborate on a few adjectives in writing or through discussion. Additionally, ask them the following questions:

*   What were some of the adjectives you wrote down? Why?

*   What evidence of chivalry did you observe in the trailer?

*   What evidence of romanticism was apparent?

*   What predictions can you make about the plot of the play?

BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE THROUGH INITIAL EXPLORATION OF THEMES

Cyrano as a Unique Hero

The play offers students an opportunity to examine the concept of the hero, by examining the preconceptions they have about what does, and does not, constitute heroism. Have students pursue this thematic angle by first investigating the concept of archetypes. Carl Jung developed an understanding of archetypes as ancient, universal character types, patterns, and symbols. Have students research this concept at **http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jungian_archetypes**. Students either read online and record thoughts on a separate document, or annotate their thoughts, questions, and insights on the website itself. To do this, have students create a free account on **https://www.mystickies.com/**. This resource allows them to leave virtual sticky notes on any website.

Beginning with this exploration of archetype allows an instructor to position *Cyrano* in two different ways. First, the play can be read in a "stand-alone" fashion, and students can reflect on how Cyrano's character challenges popular notions of heroism. Students may not initially believe that a hero could be insecure and vulnerable, for example. The second instructional approach, though, requires *Cyrano* to be positioned alongside other "heroic" texts in a larger study of the heroic archetype. One could precede *Cyrano* with a text featuring a more stereotypical hero, such as *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Then, students could read *Cyrano* and follow it with a text centering on a tragic hero such as *Oedipus Rex*. If taught in this fashion, the play becomes part of a larger unit in which students examine a variety of heroic characters. Regardless of how the play is positioned, have students compose a journal entry after they read and annotate the Wikipedia article. Have them answer the following questions in a short response:

• What are your general reactions to the article? Do you find the concept of archetypes to be believable? Why or why not?

• Reflect on the archetype of the hero. What does the term "hero" mean to you? Generate a list of characteristics that you believe a hero must have.

After writing, give students an opportunity to share their responses, either in pairs, or with the entire class. Have them keep their writing, as it contains a valuable list of heroic characteristics that students should cross-reference as they read the play. Most likely, *Cyrano* will affirm student beliefs regarding how heroes must display exceptional strength and skill. However, some students may find Cyrano's insecurity regarding his appearance and his inability to express his feelings to Roxane as evidence of weakness. Utilize these opportunities to challenge and extend students' thinking regarding what it means to be heroic.

Inner and Outer Beauty

Cyrano de Bergerac challenges students to assess the importance of both inner and outer forms of beauty. Cyrano represents inner beauty, routinely demonstrating his wit, courage, and other virtues. Christian, however, exemplifies external beauty, having a pleasing physical appearance but lacking the intelligence of Cyrano. Before beginning the play, ask students to pair up and fold a sheet of notebook paper in half to form two columns; have them label one "Inner Beauty" and the other "Outer Beauty." Ask them to brainstorm characteristics for each column. For example, students could write down qualities such as "loyalty" or "kindness" as examples of internal beauty. For external beauty, tell students that responses must be school-appropriate. After giving them time to work together, have each pair come to the board and record a few of their responses (create two columns on the board as well). After this, facilitate a whole-class

discussion, asking students to comment on the listed characteristics and to examine cultural norms regarding ideal behavior and attractiveness. To expand, have students construct a journal entry responding to the following questions:

• Which type of beauty, inner or outer, is more valued in our culture?

• Which type of beauty is more important to you?

After students have discussed their responses in small groups, distribute post-it notes, asking students to briefly summarize their thoughts on them. Allow students to post their sticky notes on the board and use this as a basis for whole class discussion. As students read the play, remind them of their initial responses. At the conclusion of the play, ask students the second question again and see how and why their opinions may have changed.

Devotion, Deception, and Honor

Cyrano de Bergerac causes readers to examine the limits of devotion, the appropriateness of deception, and the meaning of honor. Throughout the play, students will observe Cyrano as he expresses his devotion to Roxane through subterfuge, and they will note his honor as he conceals his own feelings for Roxane even after Christian's death. Have students examine these concepts through a brief anticipation guide and subsequent discussion. An anticipation guide is a list of brief statements that students comment on. Have students read each statement, record whether they agree or disagree, and justify their choice in one sentence or less. Possible statements can include the following:

1. It is acceptable to deceive if someone else benefits from it.

2. Lying is never a heroic act.

3. True devotion requires doing anything for the object of one's devotion.

4. Most people are honorable.

5. Heroic characters are always honorable.

After giving students time to think and respond, have them briefly compare answers with a partner. Then, go through each statement as a class, and allow students to share their agreements and disagreements. To extend exploration of these themes:

• Have students bring in an object that represents something they are devoted to. It could be a photograph, an illustration, or an item. Allow students to share it, and what it symbolizes, with the class.

• To explore honor, have students illustrate, either digitally or on paper, something or someone they would "stand up" for. Students will share their work with the class.

DURING READING ACTIVITIES

ANALYZING THROUGH INDIVIDUAL RESPONSE

These activities, designed to support students in their analysis of the text, can be used during or outside of class. Primarily, these strategies provoke close analysis of text, examination of character and theme, and the formation of text-to-self connections and personal responses to the text.

Coding the Play

Annotating involves recording thoughts, questions, and connections in the margins of a literary work. Coding provides a more specific focus for this activity. To begin, provide symbols for students to use as they read and critically examine a portion of *Cyrano*. Have them use these symbols during reading as a way to categorize their thinking and make it visible. Some examples of these symbols, or codes, include:

> **!** Use to indicate dialogue/actions that surprise you.
>
> **?** Use to record questions you have about the play.
>
> **∗** Use to note text that pertains to a specific theme.

Instruct students to code the text, using the symbols provided, as they read. Students can code on post-it notes or on photocopied sections of the text itself. They should accompany each symbol with a few sentences that express the thoughts/questions behind the code. After reading, there are a number of ways to build upon this activity:

• Have students choose a coded response (or several) to elaborate on in a journal response.

• Have students trade their coded text with a classmate and annotate each other's responses. When students trade back, ask them to reflect on their partner's annotations.

• Have students trade their questions and generate answers to each other's inquiries.

This activity can be used at any point during the play, but it may be of particular use in Act I, as students can be taught early on to read actively and look for themes and connections in hopes of establishing critical reading habits for the entire play. For more information on this strategy, consult: **http://tinyurl.com/codetext**.

Student Generated Questions (QAR)

When students are able to generate their own questions, they are typically more invested in the analytical process. Allow them to take ownership of inquiry through this activity. QAR refers to Question-Answer Relationships and works well in terms of encouraging both close analysis and personal connections. The types of questions include:

• **Right there questions:** answers to these questions are found explicitly in the text.

• **Think and search questions:** answers lie in the text, but may only be found by examining several different sections and piecing them together.

• **Author and you:** answers require personal interpretation based on textual evidence.

• **On my own:** answers connect personal experience with themes of the text.

Have students work independently to generate one question per category for a specific section of the play (Roxane and Cyrano's initial conversation in Act Two, the balcony scene in Act Three, and the last few scenes in Act Five work well for this). Tell students to record their questions, during reading, on a separate sheet of paper. Doing so will require students to review and critically analyze both the play and their own experiences. After these questions are generated, instructors have several options:

• Have students trade and answer each other's questions in writing.

• Have students submit questions on notecards, and randomly select several for a formative assessment.

• Have students select one question to expand upon in an extended written response ("Right there" questions do not work well for this).

For more information, consult this resource: **http://www.readingquest.org/strat/qar.html**

Concept Maps and Character Study

Concept Maps allow students to display their analysis in an organized visual manner. This graphic organizer works particularly well with *Cyrano* as the play features numerous, multifaceted character relationships. Students can use Concept Maps in several different ways. First, students can select one character to occupy the center of the map, and the linked circles can list character traits with textual support. Second, students can feature two characters, one on each side of the diagram, and they can list shared and separate characteristics on different sides. Lastly, students can feature multiple characters within the same map, and linked circles can specify how each character views and outwardly behaves toward the other. Linking Cyrano to Roxane would highlight the discrepancy between his true feelings for her and his contrived, outward behavior. For examples of these maps, consult this resource: **http://tinyurl.com/concmaps**

Character Diaries

Have students explore character motivations through the use of character diaries. Rostand creates fascinating characters in *Cyrano*, and students may have questions or assumptions about characters that deserve deeper examination. Tell students to select a round, or dynamic, character from the play as it will be easier to write about developed characters such as Christian or Roxane. During reading, students should construct diary entries that expand upon the information featured in the text, and there should be multiple entries based on various moments in the play. As they follow their character, students will have opportunities to make and explore inferences about the play; in this way, students fill in what is not explicitly stated in the text through creative writing. Give students the following directions:

• Write in first person and assume the identity of a character.

• Express the character's motivations, fears, and internal conflicts.

• Incorporate illustrations (hand drawn or digital) to symbolize or emphasize the content of their character's diary.

Students can write on notebook paper, compose on a word processor, or they can create blog posts or status updates. A reputable site that can be used for this activity is **http://kidblog.org/home/**.

READER RESPONSE AND JOURNAL PROMPTS

As students read the play they can collect and comment on their reactions to significant quotes in a reader response journal or as a Focus Activity for a discussion of different sections of the play. The teacher can also provide quotes and ask for students' verbal or written responses. Some key quotes for reflection include:

1. "I may not cut a stylish figure, but I hold my soul erect. I wear my deeds as ribbons, my wit is sharper than the finest mustache, and when I walk among men I make truths ring like spurs" (p. 40).

2. "I'm afraid to speak a single one of all the words I have in here. (*Strikes his chest.*) But writing is a different matter…. (*Takes his pen again.*) I'll now put down on paper the love letter that I've already written within myself a hundred times. I have only to look into my soul and copy the words inscribed in it" (p. 66).

3. "I prefer to lead a different kind of life. I sing, dream, laugh, and go where I please, alone and free. My eyes see clearly and my voice is strong. I'm quarrelsome or benign as it suits my pleasure, always ready to fight a duel or write a poem at the drop of a hat" (p. 92).

4. "What a strange pang in my heart! I'm like Lazarus at the feast—a feast of love! I must content myself with very little, but I still have a few small crumbs. Yes, I feel something of that kiss in my heart, because Roxane is kissing not only Christian's lips, but also the words I spoke to her!" (p. 134).

5. "I was in danger of being captured or shot when I had the good sense to take off the scarf that showed my rank and drop it on the ground. I was thus able to slip away from the Spaniards without attracting attention, then come back to them, followed by all my men, and beat them!...Well, what do you think of that?" (pp. 161-162).

6. "I'm yours, Christian, but I know you would lift me up if I tried to kneel before you, so I'm placing my soul at your feet, and it will always remain there! I've come to ask you to forgive me—and now is the time to ask forgiveness, since we may be about to die!—for having insulted you, in my frivolity, by first loving you only because you were handsome" (p. 185).

7. "I want to be loved for myself or not at all! We'll see what she decides. I'm going to walk to the end of the camp, then come back. Talk to her while I'm gone, and tell her she must choose one of us" (p. 190).

8. "Yes, sometimes I envy him. When a man has been too successful in life, even though he hasn't done anything really wrong, he still has all sorts of reasons for feeling a little disgusted with himself. Their combined weight isn't enough to form a burden of remorse, but he can never escape a kind of vague uneasiness" (pp. 205-206).

9. "'To be struck down by the only noble weapon, the sword, wielded by an adversary worthy of me…' Yes, I once said that. Fate is a great jester! I've been struck down, but from behind, in an ambush, by a lackey wielding a log! I've been consistent to the end. I've failed at everything, even in my death" (p. 219).

ANALYZING THROUGH GROUP RESPONSE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Discussion questions require students to deepen their analysis of the play through interaction with classmates. These questions can be directed at the whole class or introduced through specific conversational frameworks such as Paideia Seminars or Literacy Groups. Additionally, these questions can be given to students in small-groups, pairs, or in online forums and chat sessions.

Act I

1. Scene I introduces multiple characters, and the dialogue of each is brief and quickly replaced by another. How would you describe both the mood and pacing of this scene? Why is it paced in this fashion?

2. Christian states a few reasons why he is hesitant to converse with Roxane. What are his fears? What do these fears reveal about him? (p. 15)

3. Several characters make remarks about Cyrano. What do they say? How do these comments characterize Cyrano and build anticipation for his debut? (pp. 18-19)

4. In the short exchange between De Guiche and the First Marquis, what does the audience learn about the historical setting of the play? (p. 22)

5. What does Christian learn about Lignière? How does he react to the news? What does this say about him? (p. 23)

6. Cyrano makes his first appearance, "*Standing up on a chair with his arms folded, his hat cocked, his mustache bristling, and his nose pointing aggressively.*" How does this description characterize Cyrano? How does his appearance alter the mood of the scene?

7. In this first scene, what evidence do you see of Cyrano's courage?

8. In the lengthy and tense exchange between Cyrano and The Meddler, why do you think Cyrano draws so much attention to his nose? (pp. 36-37)

9. Cyrano delivers one of the play's most famous speeches on pp. 38-39. What was Rostand trying to illustrate about Cyrano here? What examples of imagery do you see in the speech?

10. Cyrano exclaims, "I may not cut a stylish figure, but I wear my soul erect" (p. 40). What does he mean?

11. Cyrano composes a ballad while he duels with Valvert. Is this evidence of his confidence or arrogance? Why? (p. 43)

12. Cyrano confesses why he cannot express his love to Roxane. Is this reason an understandable one? How does this confession challenge our perception of Cyrano?

13. At the end of Act I, Cyrano agrees to protect his friend Lignière against one hundred men. Why are these men after him? How do you predict the conflict will play out?

14. Thus far, would you characterize Cyrano as a hero? How would you characterize Roxane? Explain your reasoning.

Act II

1. In Scene I, Ragueneau instructs the cook to make the soup "a little more lyrical" (p. 60). Locate other lines that indicate the fusion of writing and cooking.

2. Cyrano remarks, "I'm afraid to speak a single one of all the words I have in here. (Strikes his chest.) But writing is a different matter…." What does he mean? Why would one form of expression be easier for him than another? (p. 66)

3. The dialogue in Scene VI between Roxane and Cyrano details the history of their relationship. Why do you think the playwright chose to include these lines?

4. How does Cyrano's pledge to protect Christian enhance the dramatic irony of this scene? (p. 79)

5. What is Cyrano's rationale for standing up to men like Count de Guiche even though in so doing he may impede his own position in the world? (pp. 91-92)

6. Why does Christian insult Cyrano's nose? (pp. 96-98) Why does Cyrano restrain himself from harming him?

7. Cyrano decides to team up with Christian in hopes of wooing Roxane. This plan, on several levels, requires deception. Is this dishonesty justified? Why? Why not?

Act III

1. Cyrano displays his musical knowledge soon after the start of Act III (p. 107). How does this reflect the code of chivalry? What other skills, observed thus far, exemplify Cyrano's embrace of chivalry?

2. Why is it ironic that Roxane accuses Cyrano of being jealous of Christian's poetry? (p. 109)

3. De Guiche vows to Roxane that he will take revenge on Cyrano. What do you think is driving De Guiche's dislike of Cyrano? (p. 112)

4. During her conversation with De Guiche, Roxane saves Cyrano and Christian from the war while convincing De Guiche to fight (pp. 113-114). How does she do this? What do her actions in this scene reveal about her? Is Roxane an admirable character? Why or why not?

5. What do Roxane and Christian each want from the other? How do these different desires create tension? (pp. 120-121)

6. Cyrano tells Christian to "Stand here, in front of the balcony, you wretched fool! I'll be under it, telling you what to say." Why does Cyrano help Christian? Does Cyrano make the right decision when he supplants Christian under Roxane's balcony? (p. 125) Why? Why not?

7. How does Cyrano's statement, "because in the protecting darkness I dare at last to be myself" have a double-meaning? (p. 127)

8. Why does Cyrano not stop the wedding of Roxane and Christian? Does his decision reflect honor, cowardice, or something else?

9. In what way does Cyrano attempt to delay De Guiche's arrival? (p. 138) Why do you think Rostand has Cyrano utilize wit instead of force?

Act IV

1. This Act opens in the field at the siege of Arras. What is the overall condition of the French troops? (p. 154) Provide textual support for your answer.

2. Le Bret asks Cyrano, "Don't you think it's going a little too far to risk your life every day to send a letter?" (p. 152). Is Cyrano going "too far"? Why does Cyrano do it?

3. What did De Guiche do with his white scarf? Why? What are Cyrano's thoughts on De Guiche's actions? What does the scarf symbolize?

4. Why is the tear on Cyrano's letter significant? (p. 166) Why does Christian snatch the letter from Cyrano?

5. When Roxane arrives in the camp, how do the Gascons' actions reflect the tenets of chivalry?

6. In scene VII, what honorable decision does De Guiche make? Does this action redeem him?

7. What does Christian seem to realize when he tells Cyrano, "And you were carried away by the letters you wrote! So much so that you defied death…"? (p. 183)

8. Roxane expresses that she loves Christian primarily for his inner self. She tells him, "Your true self has prevailed over your outer appearance. I now love you for your soul alone" (p. 185). Why does this statement sadden Christian?

9. As Christian dies, Cyrano lies and tells him that Roxane chose him. While this brings Christian comfort, is this deceptive act justified? Why? Why not?

Act V

1. Act V opens in a convent. What is the impact of this dramatic shift in setting?

2. What do we learn about Cyrano from the descriptions of the nuns?

3. How does Cyrano's current appearance and behavior contrast with his character from previous Acts? (p. 210)

4. What causes Roxane to finally realize the truth? (pp. 216-217) Why does Cyrano deny it?

5. Do you agree or disagree with Cyrano's statement that he has "been consistent to the end. I've failed in everything, even in my death"? (p. 219) Why/why not?

6. Why does Cyrano say that his time under Roxane's balcony was "the essence of my life"? (p. 220)

7. What personified "enemies" does Cyrano fight? (p. 222) Does this reflect his delirium or perhaps something else?

8. Cyrano's last words are, "My white plume" (p. 223). What does this refer to? Why does Rostand conclude the play in this manner?

DEEPENING ANALYSIS

Open Mind

In this activity students select a character and make inferences about what resides within his or her mind while reading the play. Have small groups of students select a character and while reading construct a list of the character's personality traits, fears, goals, motivations, and other notable characteristics. Then ask students to represent these things visually through symbols (for example, one symbol for De Guiche might be a crown, to symbolize his inflated ego and sense of authority).

Once they have several symbols, have students cut out (or create on a digital canvas) a profile of their character's head and arrange the symbols inside. Students can use traditional art supplies (construction paper, markers, magazines) or digital resources such as **http://www.queeky. com**. On the back, or underneath the profile, have students explain the reasoning for their symbols, and require them to cite specific lines from the play as justification. Have them present their visual project to the class.

Online Discussions

Students can extend class discussions on-line during reading. Online spaces tend to be more inclusive, as every student (even the more introverted) has an equal chance to express his or her thoughts. Students have several options for this activity. Through Moodle or other e-learning platforms, it is simple to construct a discussion forum (consult help files for specific instructions). Other options include sharing a Google document with students and enabling comments, or using a free website such as **http://www.quicktopic.com/** to create a space for conversation. To facilitate an effective online discussion, provide students with an open ended question designed to provoke varied responses. This question could also be linked to some sort of online media such as a thematically related nonfiction text, video clip, or relevant website.

Examples include:

•   There are numerous articles on the web pertaining to body image and self-esteem (**http:// tinyurl.com/imageesteem**), and this topic would connect specifically to Cyrano's insecurity regarding his appearance.

•   This article from *The New York Times* examines cultural expectations of "heroes" in sports (**http://tinyurl.com/nytimeshero**). Have students compare these popular notions of "heroism" with the ideal displayed in Cyrano.

•   **http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/lying/lying_1.shtml** defines lying and explores when deception may be ethical. Have students examine this resource and connect its content to the deception featured throughout Cyrano.

Gallery Walk

This activity involves quiet reflection and non-verbal interaction. To begin, select several interesting quotes from the play or images that depict, or relate to, character, setting, theme, or historical context. Create several stations around the classroom consisting of a surface for students to record thoughts on (a whiteboard or large sheet of paper) and different quotes or images. Give each student a marker and instructions for the activity; these instructions can be very specific or generalized. For example, students can be told to record a text-to-self connection or a question based on the quote/image, or they can be directed to write how the quote/image connects to a particular theme. Tell students to remain silent, and have them circulate around the room and record their thoughts/questions at each station. Then, tell students to re-visit each station and select one classmate comment or question to quietly respond to. They should disagree and say why, agree and add a thought, or ask a question. After the activity is completed, whole-class discussion can occur, or students can choose one comment/question to expand on through writing.

Quotes from the Reader Response section of this guide can be used to stimulate discussion. Ask students to comment on the significance of the following images in the play.

> The balcony scene   **http://tinyurl.com/mm4r2jc**
>
> The siege of Arras   **http://www.vincentperez.com/cyrano6x.jpg**
>
> The convent   **http://tinyurl.com/m73xjz7**

Visual Notes

Students can deepen their analysis of the play if their thinking is consistently made visible. The free website **http://padlet.com** offers students an online canvas of sorts; here, they can create virtual post-it notes that feature text, links to websites, images, and video. The site is also updated in real-time, so students can watch the conversation unfold. To use it, first navigate to the web address above and click "Build a wall." This will generate a page for students to use during their reading of the play. There are several different ways to approach this activity:

- Tell students to post questions they have during the reading of a scene or entire act. Then, have students select a classmate's question to answer in a separate posting.

- Have students respond to a specific theme. For example, during Cyrano's debut in Act One, have students post textual evidence of heroism and chivalry.

- Have students pause at the end of a scene or act and give them time to locate and post images or video that connect to character, plot, setting, or theme. If available, students can also use webcams to create unique media to upload. For example, following the conclusion of Act Two, scene VI, have students locate or create an image that symbolizes Cyrano's emotional state after learning of Roxane's love for Christian.

AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

Now that students have read the entire play, they can return to the text to develop a deeper understanding of its significant themes through discussion and creative activities.

I. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND WRITTEN RESPONSE

1. "My nose is *enormous*, you snub-nosed, flat-faced wretch! I carry it with pride, because a big nose is a sign of affability, kindness, courtesy, wit, generosity, and courage" (p. 37). Do you think Cyrano lives up to this statement? Also, if his nose truly symbolizes these positive characteristics, why do you think he is unable to fully appreciate its appearance? Is this evidence of a heroic flaw?

2. "I will walk along, under the plume that glory herself has placed on my hat, with twice the pride of Scipio, and a nose three times as long!" (p. 57) The plume appears throughout the play, and it is actually the last thing Cyrano refers to before his death. How does this symbol connect to the ideal of honor?

3. De Guiche admits to hiring men to kill Lignière (p. 89), and he also sends the Gascons off to a likely death (p. 147). Do these actions, and other behaviors, make De Guiche the villain of the play? Why? Why not? How does he contrast with the honorable behavior of Cyrano and other characters?

4. Christian says, "Words come easily to anyone when he wants to pick a quarrel. I may have a certain quick, soldierly wit, but with women I'm always at a loss for anything to say" (p. 101). If Cyrano embodies the code of chivalry, how does Christian's behavior indicate his adherence, or lack of, to the code? Is Christian at all chivalrous?

5. Roxane apologizes to Christian in Act Four, saying "I've come to ask you to forgive me—and now is the time to ask forgiveness, since we may be about to die!—for having insulted you, in my frivolity, by first loving you only because you were handsome" (p. 185). Does she owe him such an apology, or should Christian be apologizing to her? Which character, Roxane or Christian, adheres more closely to the code of chivalry?

6. In the "Afterword" to the Signet Classics Edition of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Cynthia B. Kerr writes, "Cyrano has become a magical mirror, able to reflect and project our pride, insecurities, egotism, and selflessness" (p. 231). Do you agree with this statement? Why? Why not? In what ways do Cyrano and Roxane function as a "mirror" for you to understand human nature or your own concept of self?

7. Is Roxane an admirable or weak character? Is she developed or superficial? Why is she attractive to Cyrano? Is it just her physical beauty that appeals to him? Is she different from Christian and how? Is she just a stock character—the lady of courtly love? Trace her development throughout the play. What are her virtues and what are her failings?

8. Compare and contrast the inner and outer beauty of Cyrano, Christian, and Roxane. Which character is more admirable to you and why? Who is the true hero of the play? Defend your answers with textual evidence.

9. Describe how Cyrano adheres to the code of chivalry. Which of his behaviors are admirable and which are superficial? Explain your point of view.

10. How is Roxane both a victim and beneficiary of Christian and Cyrano's deceptive actions? What larger conclusions can you draw about the appropriateness of deception? Is it ever justified? Why? Why not?

11. How does Rostand create dramatic irony? How does this dramatic irony affect the reader's engagement with the text? Be specific.

II. ACTIVITIES TO EXTEND ANALYSIS OF THE PLAY

Re-envisioning Scenes

This dramatic activity involves analysis, performance, and text-to-world connections. Instruct students to form small groups and select a scene from *Cyrano* that interests them. Students should first read the scene carefully while recording thoughts and questions; tell them to assist each other until all group members sufficiently understand the content. Next, have students select a new time period, a specific setting, and a different dialect for this scene. You could also randomly assign these variables to encourage students' creativity.

Ask students to generate a script specifying parts, dialogue and stage directions; they must alter the text so it is effectively transplanted into a new context. Next, give students time to create costumes and props. The final step involves students polishing their script and performing their transplanted scene in front of the class. With Cyrano, there are endless creative possibilities. For example, students could reimagine the battle scene in Act Four as a contest between teams at a high school football game. Students could imagine the conversation involving Cyrano, Christian, and Roxane in Act Three as a conversation at a high school dance. The duel between Cyrano and Valvert in Act One could become a poetry slam or hip-hop battle.

Analyzing Themes

Weebly is a free resource that allows students to create websites. To use it, first navigate to **http://education.weebly.com/** and create accounts for yourself and your students (you can create one account per student group and have all group members use the same username and password). Tell students to sign in to their page at: **http://students.weebly.com/**

Assign a specific theme from the play to each group: inner/outer beauty, deception/devotion, heroism or another idea which the class has discussed. Have students discuss their theme, locate textual evidence, and then represent and explore it by creating a website that includes links to videos, other websites, and relevant audio. Tell students to include text from the play that highlights their theme. When finished, students can present their webpages to the class.

Engaging in Seminar Discussions

A Paideia Seminar is a student-centered, Socratic discussion. In it, the teacher maintains the role of facilitator by providing students with open-ended questions, prompting students to respond, and by linking student comments. According to **http://www.paideia.org/for-teachers/teacher-resources/**, the seminar has three main question categories: opening questions, core questions, and closing questions. Opening questions identify main ideas from the text (If you renamed Cyrano to reflect a key theme, what would a good title be and why? Or how do you define honor?). Core questions require students to analyze textual details (In what specific ways are Cyrano and Roxane alike? How do the various settings impact the mood of the play? How does the white plume function as a symbol?). Finally, closing questions personalize textual concepts (How does the version of heroism in the play compare to its present definition? What sort of lessons can be learned from the play? Why do people continue to read and perform this work?)

After constructing multiple questions like these, have students gather in a large circle. Set group goals for the discussion and have students create individual goals as well. Some group goals could include practicing active listening strategies, disagreeing assertively yet politely, and having each participant express at least one thought. Individual goals could include referring to text, building on another's comment, and making consistent eye contact with others. Facilitate the conversation and concentrate on eliciting student responses. When the discus-

sion concludes, have students self-assess and provide feedback on the seminar. Note that many of the discussion questions in this guide suit this activity.

Visually Representing the Play

An infographic is a visual representation of information that features short sections of text and multiple charts, graphs, and other visuals. The digital medium offers students a unique way to package and represent knowledge while sharpening their digital literacy skills. Infographics are useful because students frequently encounter them online and through other forms of media. Additionally, the one page format forces students to be selective regarding content. They must scrutinize and incorporate the most important textual information. To view examples of info-graphics, go to: **http://tinyurl.com/ingraphic**. Infographics can be created independent of other assignments, or students can combine them with other activities (for example, students could create an infographic as a visual aid for a presentation, or they could include one in the Weebly activity described earlier). There are two free websites that students can utilize for this activity: **http://www.easel.ly/** and **http://piktochart.com/**. Allow students to explore both websites and decide which interface works best for them. Some suggested assignments include:

- Create an infographic that expands on a theme in Cyrano.

- Chart the trajectory of a character from the play.

- Diagram the plot of the entire play.

- Illustrate the historical context of the play by presenting information on the differences between romanticism and naturalism or the play's 1897 debut and its lead actors.

Set high expectations for the assignment by first showing students exemplary examples of infographics. Also, require students to include a specific range of visuals and text (i.e. four-five of each). When finished, have students project and present their work.

Text and Film Comparisons

Jean-Paul Rappeneau's 1990 *Cyrano de Bergerac* movie is well-done and accessible to students: (*Cyrano de Bergerac*. Dir. Jean-Paul Rappeneau. Orion Classics, 1990. Film.) The film *Roxanne,* an adaptation of *Cyrano* featuring Steve Martin, is also useful for this assignment (*Roxanne* Dir. Fred Schepisi. Columbia Pictures, 1987. Film.).

Have students view the film after completing the play. Give them a graphic organizer, such as a T-chart, and have them list similarities and differences (one category per side) between the film and print versions of the play while they watch. Tell them to pay close attention to dia-logue, plot, and how various shots are constructed. Discuss: How does the director position different characters in each shot? Is the setting highlighted or deemphasized? How does music influence the mood of various scenes? After viewing, have students write an essay in which they compare and contrast the two mediums and make an argument for which version more effec-tively conveys the central themes of the play.

Instructors could also show a few scenes from both films and ask students to compare/contrast how each director approached each scene. For example, how does the dialogue differ? Are close-ups or wide-shots utilized? Do different characters appear in each?

III. EXTENDED (OR PAIRED) READINGS

Heroism

The Epic of Gilgamesh. Trans. Andrew George. New York: Penguin Classics, 2003. Print.

Sophocles. *Oedipus the King.* Trans. Paul Roche. *Sophocles: The Complete Plays.* New York: Signet Classics, 2010. Print.

Beowulf. Trans. Burton Raffel. New York: Signet Classics, 2008. Print.

Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. NY: Scholastic, 2010. Print.

Chivalry

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Trans. Burton Raffel. New York: Signet Classics, 2009. Print.

Cervantes, Miguel de. *Don Quixote.* Trans. Walter Starkie. New York: Signet Classics, 2013. Print.

First Knight. Dir. Jerry Zucker. Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 1995. Film.

Devotion and Honor

Coelho, Paulo. *The Alchemist*. New York: HarperCollins, 1998. Print.

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice.* New York: Signet Classics, 2008. Print.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS GUIDE

CHRIS GILBERT has taught high school English for the past eight years in Asheville, North Carolina. He is also an avid writer. His work has appeared in the *Language Experience Forum Journal,* The *Washington Post*'s education blog, "The Answer Sheet," and NCTE's (National Council of Teachers of English) *English Journal*. He is a 2013 recipient of NCTE's Paul and Kate Farmer Writing Award.

## ABOUT THE EDITORS OF THIS GUIDE

JEANNE M. McGLINN, Professor in the Department of Education at the University of North Carolina at Asheville, teaches Adolescent Literature and directs the field experiences of 9-12 English licensure candidates. She serves on various editorial and professional boards and is the president of the Language Experience Special Interest Group of the International Reading Association and editor of its on-line journal. She has written extensively in the area of adolescent literature, including numerous teachers' guides and a critical book on the historical fiction of adolescent writer Ann Rinaldi for Scarecrow Press Young Adult Writers series.

JAMES E. McGLINN, Professor Emeritus of Education at the University of North Carolina at Asheville, has taught high school English and developmental reading at all levels, elementary through adult. His research interests focus on motivating and increasing the reading achievement of students in high school and college. He is the author and editor of numerous Penguin Teachers' Guides.

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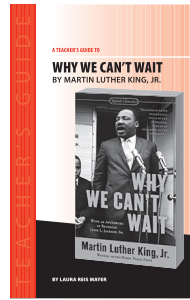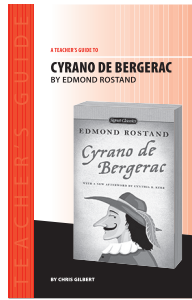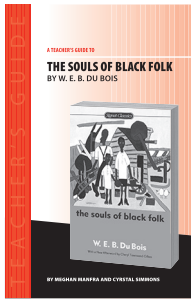
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