

# *Cyrano de Bergerac*

## Study Guide Student Copy

### Act I, Scene I

#### A Performance at the Hotel de Buorgogne

##### Vocabulary

burghers – middle-class citizens (bourgeois); merchants

falsetto – a high-pitched male voice

foils – fencing swords

lackeys – low-level servants

marquises – noblemen who rank one below the ranking of a duke

oblong – rectangular

pages – messenger servants

proscenium – an area of a theater between the orchestra and the curtain

troopers – soldiers on horseback; cavalrymen

1. List two ways that Rostand lets the audience know that the play is set in 1640.
  
2. What do the two Musketeers, the First Lackey, and the Guardsman all have in common? What do you think Rostand is saying about life in France at this point in history?

## Act I, Scene II

### Vocabulary

**candelabra** – a candle holder that holds several candles at once; a chandelier with candles

**coquettish** – flirtatious

**duenna** – a governess; chaperone

**ode** – a type of lyric poem usually addressed directly to a particular idea or object

**triolet** – a type of poem containing eight lines in each stanza, with the first line repeated as the fourth and seventh lines and the second line repeated as the eighth line

1. What does the following passage from the play tell the audience about Christian? What does it reveal about the importance of personal appearances to important men such as the First Marquis?

FIRST MARQUIS: [*to the SECOND*] He's good-looking, but his fashion is a little out of date.

LIGNIERE: [*to CUIGY*] Monsieur de Neuville comes from Touraine.

2. Why does Christian insist that Ligniere remain at the theater? What is Ligniere's profession, and why does he decide to stay instead of going to a nearby tavern?
3. Briefly identify Ragueneau. Why does he attend the play?
4. List five characteristics that Le Bret, Cuigy, and Ragueneau use to describe Cyrano. How does Cyrano react to anyone who "smiles" at the sight of his large nose?
5. Briefly describe Roxane.
6. Find an adjective in Scene II to describe De Guiche's character. Why does De Guiche want Roxane to marry Monsieur de Valvert?

## Act I, Scene III

### Vocabulary

incredulously – skeptically; in disbelief

obsequious – submissive, fawning

pastoral – pertaining to the pleasant country life; rural

persecute – to oppress or harass

viscount – a nobleman whose rank is one below that of an earl

1. Why does the pickpocket warn Christian that Ligniere's life is in danger?

2. What evidence is there that Christian is or is not an honorable man?

3. How does the Cardinal's presence alter the mood of the audience?

## Act I, Scene IV

### Vocabulary

affable – pleasant, friendly

appendage – an attachment (usually referring to a part of the body)

conch – a type of large shell

envoi – a short passage at the end of a poem

farce – a comedic play containing much slapstick and a far-fetched plot

parry – to deflect; to sidestep

pedantic – excessively wordy in a pretentious way

scabbard – a case for a sword

tragedian – an actor who plays tragic characters

1. What are some conflicts that arise after Cyrano appears?
2. Identify the following literary terms, which Cyrano exclaims while on stage:
  - a. “[...] I’ll cut off his ears and slit him up like a roasted pig!”
  - b. “I shall mount the stage now and carve up this fine, fat Italian sausage!”
  - c. “If you keep on, you’re liable to rouse my sword right out of its scabbard!”
3. Explain why the crowd is amused when Cyrano says, “I will clap my hands three times, you full moon! On the third clap, I want to see you eclipse yourself!”

4. Why does Cyrano hate Montfleury?
  
5. Cyrano's removal of Montfleury and cancellation of the play is outrageous, even dangerous. Cyrano gives Jodelet a purse of money in order to refund the audience. State a theme for this play based on this grand gesture.
  
6. The audience first learns about Cyrano from his friends. Then they hear his voice. Finally, Cyrano appears on stage. Why do you suppose Rostand structures the play so that the audience is fully prepared for Cyrano's entrance?
  
7. Why does Cyrano list for Valvert the various ways that a man might insult his huge nose? What is Valvert's reaction to this speech?
  
8. What adornments or decorations does Cyrano consider to be of more importance than gloves, ribbons, or lace?
  
9. Why do you suppose Cyrano decides to compose a ballad while he is dueling with Valvert? What does Cyrano plan to do just as he finishes reciting the refrain?
  
10. What evidence is there that the audience's opinion of Cyrano changes after he duels with Valvert?

## Act I, Scene V

### Vocabulary

**protuberance** – something that projects outward; a lump or bulge

**sublime** – inspiring; of the highest moral worth

1. How does Cyrano explain to Le Bret his reasons for making so many enemies?
2. What is Cyrano's secret reason for banishing Montfleury from the stage? What simile does Cyrano use?
3. How does Le Bret argue that woman may find Cyrano attractive despite his large nose?
4. What is the one thing in life that Cyrano fears?

## Act I, Scene VI

### Vocabulary

(No Vocabulary)

1. What does Cyrano's reaction to the Duenna reveal about his thoughts?

## Act I, Scene VII

### Vocabulary

nebulous – hazy, vague, unclear

1. What new aspect of Cyrano's personality is revealed after Cyrano learns that Roxane wants to see him?
2. Cyrano states that he is willing to fight a hundred men to save Ligniere because Ligniere once drank holy water as a romantic gesture for a young lady. What other reason might Cyrano have for fighting one hundred men?
3. "Willing Suspension of Disbelief" is a term for the willingness of the audience to accept the behavior and motivations of the characters for the duration of the play. At the end of Act I, Cyrano bravely goes off to fight one hundred men. Do you believe that Cyrano's actions are believable or unbelievable? Cite incidents from the story to support your answer.

## Act II, Scene I

### The Poet's Eating-House

#### Vocabulary

andiron – a metal support used in a fireplace

couplet – two lines of poetry usually rhyming and having the same rhythm

desecrated – defiled, violated

diminutive – small

gallery – a narrow passageway

lute – a small guitar-like musical instrument

lyre – a stringed instrument belonging to the harp family

scullions – kitchen workers

1. Explain the conflict between Ragueneau and his wife, Lise. How is Ragueneau similar to Cyrano?

## Act II, Scene II

#### Vocabulary

(No Vocabulary)

1. What is the purpose of the exchange between Ragueneau and the children?

## Act II, Scene III

#### Vocabulary

(No Vocabulary)

1. Why does Cyrano write a letter to Roxane? For what reason does he decide not to sign the letter?



## Act II, Scene IV

### Vocabulary

cudgels – small, heavy clubs

pikes – long spears

1. Find a passage from this scene that demonstrates Cyrano's lack of interest in his fight with the one hundred men.
2. What evidence is there that the poets who enjoy Ragueneau's hospitality only pretend to like Ragueneau's poetry?

## Act II, Scene V

### Vocabulary

(No Vocabulary)

1. How does Cyrano guarantee a private meeting with Roxane?

## Act II, Scene VI

### Vocabulary

(No Vocabulary)

1. Find an example of litotes in this scene.
2. List some ways Roxane raises Cyrano's hopes that she is in love with him. What word does she use that shatters his hopes?
3. What is Roxane's true reason for meeting Cyrano at the pastry shop?
4. Find an example of irony on page 50.

## Act II, Scene VII

### Vocabulary

coronets – crowns worn by members of the noble class

heraldry – the study of genealogy, coats of arms, and ranks of the noble class

intrepid – brave

pentacrostic – a set of five lines of poetry in which the same word or name is formed within all five lines

1. Cyrano recites a poem to introduce the Gascons to De Guiche. Briefly identify the qualities that Cyrano believes all the Gascons possess.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Why does Cyrano decline De Guiche's offer to be Cyrano's patron?

## Act II, Scene VIII

### Vocabulary

**madrigals** – vocal arrangements meant to be sung by three voices in harmony with one another

1. Cite some of Cyrano's reasons for why he rejects patronage.

2. Cyrano discusses his reasons for remaining free of patronage:

“To be content with every flower, fruit or even leaf—but pluck them from my own garden and no one else's! And then, if glory ever does by chance come my way, I'll pay no tribute to Caesar, because the merit will be my own.”

State a theme for *Cyrano de Bergerac* based on the above quotation.

3. What evidence is there that Le Bret knows Cyrano is deeply hurt after his visit with Roxane?

## Act II, Scene IX

### Vocabulary

(No Vocabulary)

1. Why does Christian risk a battle with Cyrano by making comments about Cyrano's nose?

## Act II, Scene X

### Vocabulary

**eloquence** – the ability to express oneself gracefully and fluently

**haphazard** – random

1. What reason does Cyrano give Christian for wanting to help him win Roxane? Speculate on what unspoken reasons Cyrano may have.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. List two objections that Christian has to Cyrano's plan to win Roxane. How does Cyrano overcome these objections?

## Act II, Scene XI

### Vocabulary

(No Vocabulary)

1. What is the purpose of this scene?

## Act III, Scene I

### Roxane's Kiss

#### Vocabulary

**livery** – a uniform worn by male household servants  
**steward** – one who manages a household or property  
**trite** – unoriginal, commonplace

1. How has Ragueneau's life changed since Act II, when he was entertaining the poets in his bakery?
2. How does Cyrano utilize the pages for his amusement?
3. How does Cyrano feel when he realizes that Roxane has memorized the poems that Cyrano wrote for Christian? Cite incidents to support your answer.

## Act III, Scene II

#### Vocabulary

**syndic** – an officer of a particular organization who carries out certain duties

1. How does Roxane trick De Guiche into leaving Cyrano and the Cadets behind while the regiment goes to war?
2. What does De Guiche have in mind for Roxane?

### Act III, Scene III

#### Vocabulary

discourse – to talk; to discuss

1. What does Cyrano ask Roxane, and why? What is her response?

### Act III, Scene IV

#### Vocabulary

(No Vocabulary)

1. Why does Christian refuse to memorize Cyrano's love poems and decide to speak for himself?

### Act III, Scene V

#### Vocabulary

(No Vocabulary)

1. Explain Roxane's comment, "I hoped for cream, but you're giving me water!"

### Act III, Scene VI

embellishments – trimmings; added extras

premeditated – planned, intentional

1. In what way do the musicians provide comic relief?
2. List at least four ways that Roxane might discern that it is Cyrano speaking to her and not Christian.
3. How do you think Cyrano feels about Christian's desire to kiss Roxane?

### Act III, Scene VII

Vocabulary

rosary – a string of beads used for counting prayers

1. Why does Cyrano give the Friar wrong directions?

### Act III, Scene VIII

Vocabulary

(No Vocabulary)

1. Why does Cyrano decide to help Christian win a kiss?



## Act III, Scene IX

### Vocabulary

(No Vocabulary)

1. What arguments does Cyrano give Roxane to win her kiss?
2. Why does Christian hesitate to climb to Roxane for a kiss?

## Act III, Scene X

### Vocabulary

discreet – tactful, restrained

martyr – a sacrificial victim; one who suffers

1. Roxane cleverly tricks the Father into believing that he is supposed to perform a marriage ceremony for Christian and her. How does Roxane indirectly ask Christian if he agrees with her improvised version of the letter?
2. Why does the Friar mistakenly think that Roxane is to marry Cyrano, and is surprised that she is to marry Christian? How does Roxane distract the Friar from asking any further questions?

## Act III, Scene XI

### Vocabulary

asterisks – star-shaped symbols used in writing

metaphorically – figuratively, symbolically

posterior – the rear

rarefied – made thin or less dense

trident – a three-pointed spear

1. How does Cyrano behave when he encounters De Guiche?
2. Briefly summarize the seven ways that Cyrano invents to travel to the moon. What does this performance reveal about Cyrano?

## Act III, Scene XII

(No Vocabulary)

1. How does De Guiche react to Roxane's marriage?
2. What promise does Cyrano make to Roxane after she learns that Christian is going to war?
3. Christian marries Roxane knowing that he is unable to please her intellectually or spiritually without Cyrano's help. Cyrano helps Roxane and Christian to marry, knowing that he will lose her forever. At the beginning of this scene, before Cyrano intervenes, Roxane is not impressed with Christian. Yet, it is Roxane who orchestrates her marriage to Christian by tricking the priest. Speculate on the motivations of these characters. Why do you think Christian, Roxane, and Cyrano all seem to support this marriage?

## Act IV, Scene I

### The Cadets of Gascony

#### Vocabulary

**besiegers** – those who surround and blockade an area hoping to capture it from an enemy

**embankment** – a protective wall

**entrenchments** – ditches cut into the ground

**sentinels** – guards, watchmen

1. Why does Cyrano return to camp without any food or supplies for the troops? What is the reason that he risks his life each day?

## Act IV, Scene II

#### Vocabulary

**mutiny** – an open rebellion against those in charge

**reveille** – a signal played on the bugle or the drum in order to awaken soldiers in the morning

**wadding** – stuffing or padding

1. Why does Carbon ask Cyrano for assistance with the men?

## Act IV, Scene III

### Vocabulary

adversary – an enemy, opponent

courtier – an aristocrat; a member of the nobility

gluttonous – greedy, voracious

hearthstones – literally, the stones that make up the area in front of a fireplace; symbolically, hearths or hearthstones represent “home”

minuet – a type of dance that originated in France during the 17<sup>th</sup> century

pastoral – idyllic, rustic

patois – a regional dialect

ravenous – extremely hungry

1. How does Cyrano inspire, or distract, the men from their hunger?

2. What criticisms are made of De Guiche as he approaches the camp?

## Act IV, Scene IV

### Vocabulary

abdicating – giving up; relinquishing

1. What is Cyrano implying when he asks De Guiche about his white scarf?
2. How does Cyrano humiliate De Guiche in front of the men?
3. How does De Guiche use the white scarf to take revenge on Cyrano?
4. In what ways does Cyrano inadvertently reveal to Christian that he loves Roxane and is not writing the letters just to help Christian?

## Act IV, Scene V

### Vocabulary

ceremoniously – grandly; in a royal or noble way

1. How likely is it that Roxane journeys to the camp and is able to safely cross enemy lines in a well-provisioned coach? Cite incidents from the play to support your answer.

## Act IV, Scene VI

### Vocabulary

galantine – a type of sauce for fish or chicken; a dish made with such a sauce

gallantry – chivalry, courtesy; bravery

lance – a type of spear

pantry – a food cupboard

topaz – any of several gemstones that are yellow in color

truffles – small mushrooms considered a delicacy

1. In what ways does Roxane's appearance at the camp help the Gascons prepare themselves for the upcoming battle?
2. What surprise does Roxane have for the men, and how did she manage to bring it?

## Act IV, Scene VII

### Vocabulary

pikemen – infantrymen who carry pikes (long spears)

recoil – the jerking-back movement that a gun or cannon makes upon firing

1. Why do the Gascons share their food and wine with De Guiche?
2. What does Cyrano confess to Christian about the letters?

## Act IV, Scene VIII

### Vocabulary

frivolous – thoughtless, careless

1. How has Roxane changed since she last saw Christian on their wedding day? Why is Christian disturbed by this change?

## Act IV, Scene IX

### Vocabulary

(No Vocabulary)

1. Why does Christian insist that Cyrano tell Roxane the truth?

## Act IV, Scene X

### Vocabulary

formidable – alarming; frighteningly impressive

imperialist – of or relating to an empire

ramrods – rods used for stuffing the charge into a firearm

1. Why does Cyrano fail to confess his love to Roxane?
2. What is ironic about Christian's death?
3. Explain why Cyrano whispers in Christian's ear before he dies, "I told her everything. She still loves you."
4. In what ways has De Guiche changed by the end of this act?



Act V, Scene I  
Cyrano's Gazette

Vocabulary

coif – a small, tight-fitting cap

colonnade – a passageway consisting of uniformly spaced columns

habits – distinctive modes of dress (robes etc.) for members of religious orders

skeins – loose coils of yarn

1. What does the nun's conversation reveal to the audience about the quality of Cyrano's life in the last fourteen years?

## Act V, Scene II

### Vocabulary

beadle – one who delivers public announcements; a town crier

haughtily – proudly, arrogantly

prudent – sensible, wise

relic – an object of religious reverence and significance

serge – a type of cloth made from wool

1. Where does Roxane keep the last letter written by Cyrano?
2. Explain the irony in Roxane's statement, "At times, it feels like he's not really dead. Our hearts still speak, as if his love is still alive, and wraps itself around me!"
3. Why is Le Bret worried about his friend, Cyrano? How does De Guiche feel about the way that Cyrano lives his life?
4. What does De Guiche warn Le Bret about, and what literary device does his comment depict?

### Act V, Scene III

#### Vocabulary

garret – an attic room

1. What news does Ragueneau bring?

### Act V, Scene IV

#### Vocabulary

(No Vocabulary)

1. What indicators are given that Cyrano is mortally injured?

### Act V, Scene V

#### Vocabulary

imperceptibly – unnoticeably, undetectably

refectory – a dining hall

1. Who is “the last creditor who has a debt to claim” from Cyrano?
  
2. How does Roxane discover the truth about Cyrano’s love for her?

## Act V, Scene VI

### Vocabulary

**allegory** – a story that is written symbolically to represent didactic ideals or abstract notions

**delirium** – in a state of frenzy, confusion, disorientation

**exiled** – banished; sent away

**insolent** – rude, disrespectful

**projectile** – an object that is propelled in some way, like a rocket or a bullet

**salutation** – a greeting

1. How does Cyrano equate the night under the balcony as an allegory of his life?
2. What is ironic about the way that Cyrano is killed?
3. Cite incidents from the play to support or refute the following statement: At his death, Cyrano is content with his relationship with Roxane and does not regret that they were never more than cousins.

4. What enemies does Cyrano fight just before he dies?
  
  
  
  
  
5. What is the white plume that Cyrano takes with him into death?
  
  
  
  
  
6. Of the characters Cyrano, Christian, Ragueneau, and De Guiche, which do you believe are idealists? For each character, cite one incident from the play to support whether or not he is an idealist.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. A classic is a work which withstands the test of time. For what reasons do you believe this play is still enjoyed today?