



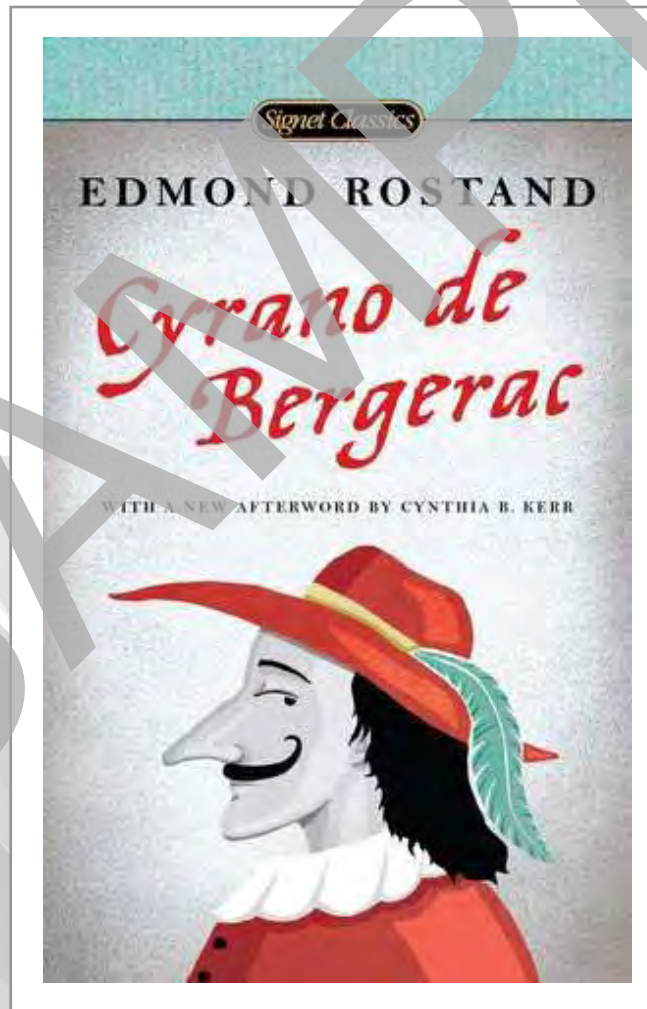
**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 9-12**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# Cyrano de Bergerac

Edmond Rostand



**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

# Cyrano de Bergerac

Edmond Rostand

## TEACHER GUIDE

**NOTE:**

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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## Skills and Strategies

### Thinking

Comparing, evaluating,  
analyzing details

### Writing

Lyrics, dramatic scene,  
dialogue

### Listening/Speaking

Participation in discussions,  
participation in dramatic  
activities, describing,  
defending opinions

### Comprehension

Predicting, sequencing,  
cause/effect, inference,  
problem solving

### Vocabulary

Compound words, words in  
context, word mapping

### Literary Elements

Character analysis, setting,  
plot, figurative language

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## Summary of *Cyrano de Bergerac*

The curtains open on a “play-within-a-play.” We are in the Hotel de Bourgogne, where a performance of *La Clorise* is about to begin with Montfleury, a very corpulent actor, in the lead role. In the audience are people from various walks of life—from pages and pickpockets to Cardinal Richelieu. Handsome Christian de Neuvillette arrives arm-in-arm with Lignière, who is the worse for drink. Christian spots the beautiful woman he has been admiring from afar and learns from Lignière that she is Magdeleine Robin, known as Roxane, and that Count de Guiche, though married, is among the many who have their eye on her, too. In fact, according to Lignière, De Guiche is trying to arrange a marriage between Roxane and Valvert, “a sad specimen of a man whom he can count on to be obliging” in facilitating an affair between De Guiche and Roxane.

Horrified by this news, Christian is about to find and confront Valvert when he catches a thief trying to pick his pocket. The thief reveals that 100 men are preparing to attack Lignière because he has offended someone with a song he wrote; Christian goes off to warn his friend. Meanwhile, just as Montfleury begins his performance, Cyrano de Bergerac appears and demands that he leave the stage, citing the actor’s lack of talent (and only later revealing to friends the real reason for his animosity—Montfleury has dared make eyes at Roxane, the beloved cousin with whom Cyrano is secretly in love). Cowering, Montfleury leaves. Prodded by De Guiche, Valvert confronts Cyrano by doing the unmentionable—referring to Cyrano’s incredibly large nose. Cyrano challenges Valvert to a duel, composing an impromptu ballad while he fences, drawing blood on the final refrain. Next, Cyrano produces a bag of gold to appease the disgruntled audience and theatre management. This is one of the grand gestures Cyrano so loves; he now has no money and accepts only a meager meal from the refreshment girl.

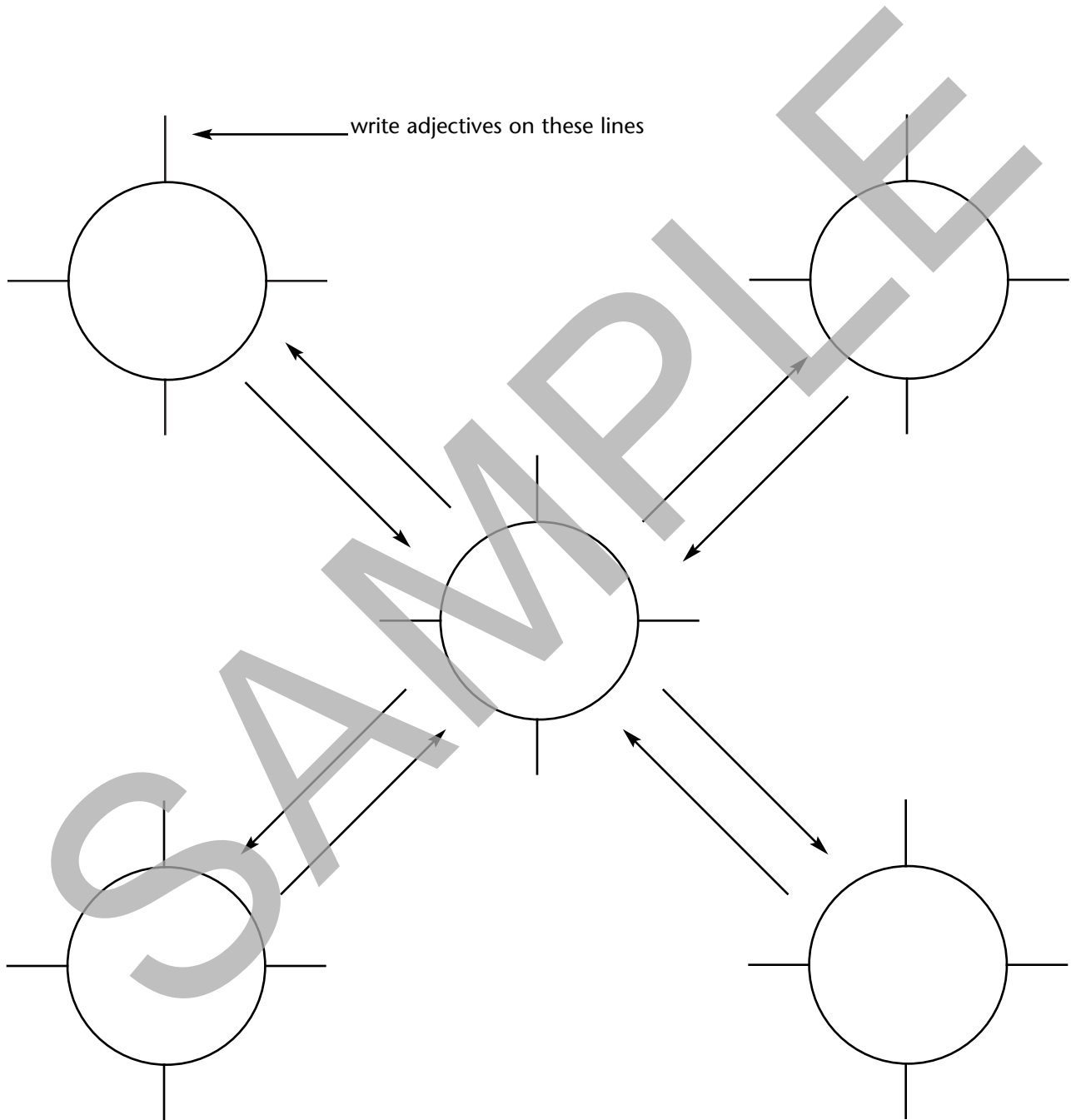
Roxane’s duenna appears and Cyrano’s spirits are revived by the news that Roxane wishes to meet Cyrano at the pastry shop of Ragueneau, a baker and poet. Cyrano dares to hope that despite his ugliness, his feelings for Roxane are reciprocated. Elated, he goes off to handle the 100 men who are about to ambush Lignière. He brings a love letter to the pastry shop and is about to give it to Roxane when she reveals her reason for wanting to see him. She is in love with a new member of Cyrano’s military company, Christian, and she wants Cyrano to protect Christian from intimidation by other soldiers. Inwardly crushed, Cyrano agrees to be Christian’s protector. Thus, when Christian publicly teases him about his nose, Cyrano swallows his fury and lets Christian know privately that his cousin Roxane is interested in Christian and expects a letter from him. Christian apologizes for his rudeness and explains that words don’t come easily to him. Cyrano gives him the letter he wrote to Roxane.

And so begins the continuing deception whereby Cyrano provides Christian with the beautiful love words that mean so much to Roxane. Eventually Christian decides that the farce should end, and he tries to tell Roxane in his own words how much he loves her. Unimpressed, she leaves him and returns to her room. Cyrano saves the day by feeding lines to Christian from beneath Roxane’s balcony; for a moment in this famous balcony scene, he forgets himself and speaks his love directly to her, unseen by her in the dark.

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## Sociogram

**Directions:** On the “spokes” surrounding each character’s name, write several adjectives that describe that character. On the arrows joining one character to another, write a description of the relationship between the two characters. How does one character influence the other?



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## Act Two Scenes I-VII

### Vocabulary

andirons (58)	scullions (59)	brioche (59)	petits fours (59)
nougat (59)	caesura (60)	lyre (60)	stentorian (64)
siege (69)	invincible (76)	gazette (81)	routed (85)
peremptory (86)			

### Vocabulary Activity

Break the whole group into small groups of three. Assign several words to each small group. Each group is responsible for coming up with three clue cards for each word. Sample: LYRE

one-syllable noun  
rhyming with a synonym  
for "employ"

sounds like a word that  
means "prevaricator"

ancient stringed  
instrument made from  
a turtle shell

Sets of clue cards are given to another small group of three. Each person takes one clue card for a given word, reads it aloud, and works with the other two teammates to figure out what the target word is.

### Discussion Questions

1. How can you tell that Lise is more practical than her husband? Why do they argue? (*Lise criticizes her husband's poet friends for freeloading; she makes pastry bags out of their poetry.*) With which one do you sympathize more?
2. What is your impression of Ragueneau? What words and phrases would you use to describe him? (*He is generous with his friends, has a fondness for poetry and beautiful things, has his head in the clouds.*) How is he like Cyrano? (*Both are romantics, idealistic poets with little interest in practical matters.*)
3. How does this act present a different side of Cyrano from the one you saw in Act One? (*In the last act we saw Cyrano the swaggerer; in this act we see a more vulnerable Cyrano stung by his unrequited love for Roxane.*)
4. Do you think Cyrano believes that Roxane has arranged to meet him because she loves him? (*His writing a love letter to give to her indicates that he has gotten his hopes up.*) What other reasons might she have? Does he consider these?
5. Why has Roxane come to Cyrano? (*She knows Christian will be in his military company and wants Cyrano to protect Christian.*) When does he realize that she isn't telling him that she

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loves him? (*She describes the man in whom she is interested as “fearless, handsome...”*) What do you think he would have said and done if he had given her the letter before he realized the truth about her feelings?

6. How does Cyrano react when the poets talk about his exploits of the night before? (*They don't realize that he is the hero; he is more interested in writing the love letter than talking about the swordplay.*) What is his reaction when the cadets want to hear about his fight against the 100 men? (*Depressed by the realization that Roxane is in love with someone else, Cyrano would rather avoid talking with the cadets.*)
7. Why do you think Cyrano agrees to protect Christian? (*He loves Roxane and wants to help her even if it means defending a competitor.*) Could there be more than one reason? Do you think Cyrano feels any anger toward Roxane—who can't seem to see past his nose to his soul (his true feelings)?
8. Why do you think Cyrano rejects De Guiche's offer to get his uncle, Cardinal Richelieu, to help him with his play? (*Cyrano is proud and doesn't want to be indebted to anyone.*) Would you accept help to become a published author? Do artists and writers today have to make such decisions? Why do you suppose De Guiche makes the offer? Would Cyrano accept the offer from someone else? How do you think the rejection will affect De Guiche?
9. Why does De Guiche ask Cyrano if he has read *Don Quixote*? (*De Guiche is implying that like Don Quixote, Cyrano is idealistic, “tilting at windmills;” he is warning Cyrano that he has the power to hurt him.*) Can you think of a modern-day film or story that De Guiche might have mentioned to illustrate the same point if he were alive today?
10. Of the characters you have met so far, which do you most like to hear speak? Why?

**Prediction:** Cyrano has angered De Guiche by refusing his patronage. Will De Guiche have anything more to do with Cyrano?

### Writing Activity

Describe a time—real or imagined—when you rejected an offer of help because you were too proud to accept it. Who offered the help? In what tone of voice? Why did you reject the help? Did you later regret it?

### Literary Analysis: Romance

*Cyrano de Bergerac* is often referred to as a romantic play. During the middle ages, the medieval chivalric tale known as the romance was developed. Knights and ladies were often featured in these tales; often men loved their ladies from afar and wrote tender poems about them. As students read *Cyrano*, have them look for evidence that Cyrano is this sort of sentimental, idealistic hero.