

BYU Young Company Fall 2016

Cyrano



Teachers Resource Packet

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Introduction:

Play Synopsis:

Cyrano De Bergerac is a French aristocrat, soldier, and writer. Unfortunately, he also has a very large nose. While he rarely lets his nose bother him, he does let it get in the way of wooing the woman he is in love with, Roxanne. This allows a handsome soldier under Cyrano's command, Christian de Neuvillette, to catch Roxanne's eye. However, Christian has no talent for speaking, so he asks Cyrano for help. Cyrano agrees and Roxanne and Christian are eventually married with the help of Cyrano's words. However, Christian and Cyrano are sent to fight in a war by the jealous Count De Guiche, who was also infatuated with Roxanne. During the war, Cyrano sends many letters to Roxanne, pretending to be Christian. Christian eventually realizes that Cyrano is in love with Roxanne, and she is in love with Cyrano's words. Shortly before he is killed in battle, he encourages Cyrano to tell Roxanne the truth. Cyrano chooses to not tell Roxanne, so as to not sully her memory of Christian. Several years pass, and Cyrano suffers a severe head injury. Before he dies, he reads Roxanne the last letter he wrote on Christian's behalf, and Roxanne realizes that Cyrano was the man with whom she was truly in love.

Our Adaptation:

Our production of *Cyrano* is a shortened version of the original five act play by Edmond Rostand. While still having a classic feel, the costuming is set in the modern day, with a surrealistic twist. To emphasize Cyrano's talent as a writer, our main scenery is a large sheet with a letter written on it.

Using This Resource Packet:

This packet includes supplemental information, and lesson activities to help improve students' viewing experience. The suggested lesson activities have been designed with the aim of being easily executed without necessitating extensive preparation, time, or materials. Each lesson activity is adaptable to 4th, 5th and 6th grades. The activities are designed to correlate with core curricular standards.

Theatre Etiquette:

Just like the performers, the audience also has an important role to play. Because some of the students may not have attended a play before, below are expectations to help them prepare for *Cyrano*.

- Remember to use the restroom before the show.
- No photography, please, and be sure turn off your cellphones.
- Before the play starts, quietly follow the actors' instructions when they are seating you.
- Remember to sit flat on the floor with your legs crossed. This allows everyone to see the actors better and prevents limbs from falling asleep during the show.
- During the show, follow the actors' instructions when you are asked to participate.
- Don't speak with your neighbors during the show. We want everyone to be able to hear the actors.
- Please enjoy the show and laugh when you think it's funny.

You can clap at the end of the play. This is how you show the actors you enjoyed their performance.



Character List:

Cyrano De Bergerac: An outspoken writer, poet, and soldier, with a large nose.

Christian De Neuville: A handsome soldier in Cyrano's regiment

Count De Guiche: A wealthy military commander, who resents Cyrano

Roxanne: Cyrano's Cousin, who Cyrano, Christian, and De Guiche are all in love with

Henry Le Bret: Cyrano's childhood friend (portrayed as a girl in our production)

Ragueneau: A butcher and friend of Cyrano's

Duenna: Roxanne's attendant

Several minor roles, including a monk, and a soldier

About Edmond Rostand:

Edmond Eugene Alexis Rostand was born April 1, 1868 in Marseille, France. The son of a skilled and wealthy journalist, Edmond received a law degree in Paris. However, his true passion was playwriting.

When he was 22, Edmond wrote his first famous work, a book of poems called *Les Musardises*. Four years later, he wrote his first successful play, *The Romancers*. A year later he would write *The Faraway Princess*. Finally, in 1897, he wrote *Cyrano De Bergerac: A Comedy in Five Acts*.

His plays were known for being cheerful and inspiring, despite most of them ending in tragedy. In 1902 he was the youngest man to be welcomed into the French Academy, a famous institution that advised the writing and vocabulary of the French language. While he did enjoy a very successful career in Paris, his poor health eventually forced him to move to the French countryside, where he lived until his death in 1918.



Activity #1: Mad Lib love letter.

Core Curriculum:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3, 5.3, & 6.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

Play Contextualization:

When Christian tries to woo Roxanne by simply saying “I love you” over and over, she is unimpressed. She wishes for a man who can describe why and how he loves her. Cyrano is very talented at finding beautiful and descriptive words to describe her. This is what eventually leads Roxanne to fall in love with Cyrano’s words, more than Christian’s handsome appearance.

Instructions:

Define “Mad Lib” to the class: a story that is missing a lot of words. The person with the story asks the people not looking at the story to suggest words to fill in the blanks. Then the story is read aloud.

Print out the Mad Lib sheet on the next page, and pick one to complete. Divide the class into groups of 3 or 4 with one student writing the words down and 2 or 3 more giving the words as suggestions. When the group is done, have them read their separate letters aloud as a class.

For younger classes, you may do this with the class as a whole, telling the class the kind of word you’re looking for, then choosing one of their suggestions, and writing it in the appropriate blank space. Then read the story out loud for the class.

Discussion Questions:

How did your word choices affect the letter?

What word(s) caused the letter to sound ridiculous?

Did any of the choices seem to make sense to the letter? Which ones?

What does this teach us about writing letters?

Love Letter #1

You are my [Adjective]_____ love. You have me completely in your [Noun]_____. I know and feel that if I am to [Verb]_____ anything fine and noble in the future I shall do so only by [Verb Ending in "ing"] _____ at the [Noun (Plural)]_____ of your heart. I would like to go through life [Body Part]_____ by [Body Part]_____ with you, [Verb Ending in "ing"]_____ you more and more until we [Verb ending in "ed"]_____ to be [Number]_____ being(s) together until the hour should come for us to [Verb]_____.

Love Letter #2

It has come to my [Noun]_____ that you are the [Superlative (ending in est)]_____ girl/boy in the [Noun]_____. My [Body Part]_____ starts [Verb ending in ing]_____ a [Noun]_____ every time you speak. I would like to [Verb]_____ if you want to go to the [Event]_____ with me next [Day of Week]_____. If you [Verb]_____ please [Verb]_____ me at the [Place]_____ in [Time Span]_____. I [Verb]_____ you and everything about you.

Activity #2: Romantic Telephone

Core Curriculum:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.2: Paraphrase portions of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.6: Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, using formal English when appropriate to task and situation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.2: Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

Play contextualization:

In the play, Cyrano whispers words and phrases for Christian to say to Roxanne. This proves difficult for Christian, who has to understand the words, and make it seem like the words are his own.

In addition, Cyrano De Bergerac was a real life person, who lived over a hundred years before Edmond Rostand wrote his play. That play has gone through alterations, including the one being performed at your school. This could have led to certain events and characters being changed over time.

Instructions:

Summarize the play contextualization above to the students.

Sit in a circle with the students. Whisper one of the phrases listed below in the ear of a student to your right or left. Then have that student whisper the phrase to the student sitting next to them. This continues until the phrase gets to the last student in the circle. Have that student tell the entire class what they heard. Continue this with other phrases, or phrases the students themselves think of.

List of phrases:

"My heart is all aflame for you I love you to distraction" - De Guiche

"I don't know the language of love." - Christian

"This paper is my voice. This ink is my blood. This letter... is me." - Cyrano

"He turns sweet nothings into verbal jewels." - Roxanne

Discussion Questions:

What was this activity like? Was it difficult or easy? How?

In what ways did the phrase change? In what ways did it stay the same?

Did any of you change what was said on purpose? Why?

What does this game teach us about story adaptation?

Activity 3: Create a Character

Core Curriculum:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.A, 5.3.A, 6.3.A: Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.7, 5.7, and 6.7: Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.

Play Contextualization:

Every character in *Cyrano* is based on a real historical figure. Edmond Rostand used historical accounts, as well as his own life experiences to create the characters in his play. In some ways these characters are the same as the historical people, but in some ways they are very different.

Instructions:

Explain the context given above.

Assign or have the students pick a person from history, and fill out the character sheets below with them in mind.

Tell them to use their imagination for facts they don't know.

For younger students, this can be a group activity

For older students, allow them to take the character sheets home and do research online.

Discussion Questions:

What new things did you learn about these historical figures from this activity?

What parts of your sheet are facts? What parts are imagined?

How similar is your character to the historical figure? How similar are they to you?

What does this teach us about using real people and events to write stories?

Create a Character Handout

1. Is my character a man or woman?
2. How old is my character?
3. What does my character look like? Draw them.
4. What's my character's name?
5. What does my character like to do for fun?
6. What talents does my character have?
7. What does my character do for work?
8. How does my character show their love for others?

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