

Cyrano de Bergerac: role model and a tragic hero

Literature



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There are many personality traits that an author can choose for their characters to embody. One author may want their character to be a tragic hero because they want a more somber storyline and want to evoke sad emotions and pity from the audience rather than having a typical happy ending. Another trait that an author can choose could be to make the character a role model. The author might choose this because he or she wants the audience to be presented with a good example of how a person should behave. Taking these two examples into consideration, both a tragic hero and a role model are two accurate ways that the protagonist of the drama *Cyrano de Bergerac* can be described. Even though these two representations are heavily contrasted with each other, author Edmond Rostand does a great job of managing the both of them and keeping them balanced throughout the story without letting one over power the other. Rostand uses direct characterization and actions to make protagonist Cyrano both a tragic hero and a role model at the same time in order to evoke pity from the audience in certain scenes to make Cyrano seen as a relatable role model rather than only a tragic hero.

For starters, Cyrano exhibits each of the main characteristics that a tragic hero must possess in order to truly be considered a tragic hero. For example, Cyrano possesses an immoderate amount of confidence throughout most of the drama. This is clearly shown when he describes his poetry by saying, "When I write something that I like, I reward the author by reciting it to myself." (Rostand 88; 2. 7). Here you can clearly see the amount of pride he takes in the things he does. Cyrano also possesses a tragic flaw, being his insecurities about his looks, making him not want to confess his strong

feelings towards a girl named Roxane. Roxane and Cyrano meet in a shop and Roxane starts to talk about a man she loves. She goes on to describe him by saying, " His face shines with wit and intelligence. He's proud, noble, young, fearless, handsome..." (Rostand 77; 2. 6). Up until she said " handsome" both Cyrano and us as the audience believed that she was describing Cyrano. This is one of the first times in the drama that we feel pity towards Cyrano after seeing that he has weak self confidence and the woman he loves does not love him back. Due to his insecurities, Cyrano starts to demonstrate a lack of judgement. After Cyrano finally learns the man she loves' name is Christian and meets him in person, he learns that Christian is very bad at expressing himself in words making Cyrano offer to write Roxane letters in place of Christian so that Cyrano himself can actually express his own feelings towards Roxane without her knowing it is him. This and his immoderate amount of pride later leads to his downfall. Cyrano's symbolic downfall in this story happens because he holds in his feelings for Roxane. In the sense, he chose his own fate of being alone because he was too insecure about his looks to fully open up to Roxane about his feelings for her. Once again, us as the audience are expected to feel a sense of pity towards Cyrano because he is in an unfortunate situation that we do not wish him to be in. However, Cyrano's literal downfall in the story is when he is attacked by one of his many enemies and slowly bleeds to death. This very specific order of events and characteristics is what truly makes Cyrano a Tragic Hero.

Along with being a Tragic Hero, Cyrano is also considered to be a role model because of his actions and words throughout the story. The most effective

way to know if someone is a role model or not is to understand how others feel about that person. As we are shown in the beginning of the book when the other characters are talking about what type of person Cyrano is by saying things like, " He's an extraordinary man, isn't he?" and "[He's] the most delightful under the sun!" we can infer that Cyrano is a very well respected man and is viewed highly among the people (Rostand 18; 1. 2). Another way Rostand portrays Cyrano as a role model is when he lets us as the audience see how loyal he is to his friends. An example of this is when Cyrano learns that one of his close friends named Ligniere has been threatened and warned not to go home because 100 men were planning on fighting him. Once Cyrano hears of this he replies, " A hundred men, you say? You'll sleep at home tonight!" (Rostand 55; 1. 7). After Cyrano says this, we later learn that he did in fact fight the 100 men alone and protect his friend. This is a prime example of how loyal Cyrano is to his friends and why Rostand would write a character like him. With these traits that were clearly shown in Cyrano throughout the drama, we as the audience can clearly see why Cyrano is also considered to be a role model.

Rostand manages to keep this balance of tragic hero and role model by making Cyrano's tragic flaw something that the audience can sympathize over rather than something that would repulse the audience and not like Cyrano as much. Cyrano's tragic flaw in this story is his insecurity that stops him from expressing his strong feelings towards Roxane and his lack of judgement when it comes to her. In the story, Cyrano learns that Roxane is in love with another man named Christian. This alone can be very relatable to the audience, making us feel more invested into Cyrano's character.

However, we also start to respect Cyrano even more because of the respect he shows towards Christian when he learns that he is the man that Roxane loves by helping him win her love rather than be selfish and try to split them up. Rostand is also able to keep this balance by making Cyrano possess more admirable traits than flagrant ones, making Cyrano's version of a tragic hero kind of unique. For example, in the story, Cyrano possesses a very helpful and loyal personality. We can see this in the story when Cyrano helps protect Ligniere and fights 100 men and also when he helps Christian win Roxane's love by writing the letters for him. By these means, we can see how making something relatable lets the audience feel " a part" of the story and lets us better understand what some characters are feeling more in depth making us sympathize about what the tragic hero is going through. Knowing how Rostand manages to keep Cyrano's balance of a tragic hero and a role model lets us better understand how truly complex Cyrano is as a character.

To conclude, Rostand's intent in making Cyrano a role model and a tragic hero was to show the audience that people are very complicated beings. We all portray good behavior and bad behavior from time to time. Rostand wanted to show how Cyrano is not so different from all of us because we all have our internal struggles. He wanted to explain that tragedy isn't so much the physical things, it's not dealing with them just like what Cyrano did when it came to Roxane. He was so insecure with one small part of his being that he could not reveal his truth. With this, he ends up dying without his truth being truly revealed or lived out. Rostand wanted to illustrate that there are

times when we as people are tragic heroes and there are times when we are role models.