



Cyrano de Bergerac

Enrichment Guide

Created by Jessy Ardern and edited by Ksenia Broda-Milian for Royal MTC

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Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre is proud to call Manitoba home. Royal MTC is located in Winnipeg on Treaty 1, the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Inninewak, Anishinewak, Dakota Oyate, and Denesuline, and the National Homeland of the Red River Métis. We are thankful for the benefits sharing this land has afforded us, acknowledge the responsibilities of the Treaties, and embrace the opportunity to partner with Indigenous communities in spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.

The Role of the Audience

Theatre needs its audience! We are happy to have you here. Every staff person, actor, and crew member backstage plays an important part in your experience, and you also have a role in the experience of cast, crew and the people around you.

Arrive Early: Please make sure you give yourself enough time to find your seat before the performance starts. Latecomers may not be admitted to a performance. We ask groups to arrive at least 20-30 minutes before the show.

Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices: Please **turn off** your cell phone/mp3 player/gaming system/camera/smart watch. Texting, surfing, and gaming during performances is very distracting for the performers and other audience members. Using cameras and recording devices during a performance is **never** allowed.

Talking During the Performance: Even when you whisper, you can be heard by performers and people around you. Unless it is a relaxed performance, disruptive patrons will be removed from the theatre. Please wait until after the performance to share your words with others.

Food/Drinks: Food and outside drinks are not allowed in the theatre. When there is an intermission, snacks and drinks may be available for purchase. There is complimentary water in the lobby.

Dress: There is no dress code at the Royal MTC, but we respectfully ask you not to wear hats in the theatre or block the view of those behind you. Please do not wear strong scents like perfume or body spray. We thank all patrons for their cooperation.

Leaving During the Performance: If you leave the theatre, you will be readmitted at the discretion of Front of House staff. If readmitted, you may be placed in an empty seat at the back of the auditorium instead of your original seat.

Being Asked to Leave: The theatre staff has, and will exercise, the right to ask any member of the audience to leave if that person is being inappropriate or disruptive including (but not limited to): talking, using devices that produce light or sound, and deliberately interfering with an actor or the performance (tripping, throwing items on or near the stage, etc.).

Talkbacks: A short question and answer period with the actors takes place after student matinees, first Tuesday evening shows, and some public matinees. While watching the show, make a mental note of questions to ask the actors about the production or life in the theatre. Our artists deserve to be treated with respect! It's okay to have a negative opinion, but this is your chance to ask questions and understand the performance or process, not to criticize. If you have a concern, see the house manager after the show and they will make sure your feedback gets to the appropriate Royal MTC staff.

Enjoy the show: Laugh, cry, gasp – responding to the performance is part of the nature of theatre! As you get involved in the story, try to balance your reactions with respecting the people around you. The curtain call is part of the performance too – it gives you a chance to thank all the artists for their hard work with applause, and for them to thank you for your attention. We all appreciate when you stay at your seat and join in the applause!



**Thank you to Canada Life for generously
supporting student tickets!**

About the Creators

Playwright: Edmond Rostand was born in Marseille, France in April 1868. His father was both an economist and a poet, and Rostand studied philosophy, history, and literature when he attended college in Paris. Rostand became a playwright, poet, and occasional lyricist. In 1890, he married fellow poet and playwright Rosemonde-Étiennette Gérard. They had two sons shortly after.

Growing up, Rostand was intrigued with the story of the real-life writer and duelist Savinien de Cyrano de Bergerac, who lived during the 1600s. Rostand admired Cyrano's legendary wit and courage, and decided to write a play about his childhood hero. In 1897, Rostand premiered his new play, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, at Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin.

At this time, the French theatre had been taken over by naturalism; that is, writing plays with natural-sounding dialogue instead of verse. When *Cyrano de Bergerac* was performed, rhyming verse was considered extremely old-fashioned. However, Rostand felt that the old-school Romanticism and lyric writing was well suited to the story of a great poet, so he wrote Cyrano in rhyming couplets. The uncut version of Cyrano is written entirely in rhyming couplets – and it's more than 5 hours long!

On opening night, Rostand was seized with fear. He became convinced that the play would be a failure, and begged the lead actor to forgive him. However, the play was an instant smash. The audience insisted on 17 curtain calls before they would stop applauding, and the production ran for more than 300 nights straight.

Rostand suffered from pleurisy during his life, an inflammation of the chest that causes pain while breathing. During the 1900s, Rostand relocated to the French Basque Country, seeking a cure. The house where he lived there is now a museum.

Rostand died in the flu pandemic of 1918. *Cyrano de Bergerac* remains his most popular work, and has been translated into more than a dozen languages.

Adaptor: Jessy Ardern grew up in Winnipeg. Like many playwrights, she started writing in order to supply herself with acting work; Jessy wrote her first plays while still in high school, when she started producing new work at the Winnipeg Fringe alongside artistic friends and collaborators. She moved to Edmonton in 2013 to attend the University of Alberta's BFA acting program.

Jessy now works as an actor, playwright, and occasional screenwriter. Her writing has been seen onstage in Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Stratford, Toronto, and Edmonton, where she has won two Sterling Awards for her work as a playwright. Selected writing credits include *Prophecy*; *The Fall of the House of Atreus: A Cowboy Love Song*; *Harold & Vivian Entertain Guests*; and

Queen Lear is Dead. Jessy is the youngest ever winner of the Harry Rintoul Award for Best New Manitoba Play, and the recipient of the 2024 Sharon Pollock Award.

Jessy continues to produce new work with friends and collaborators. She is an artistic co-producer with immersive theatre company The Fox Den Collective. This fall, TFDC produced her interactive linked shows, collectively titled *R&J: Closing Night*, in partnership with Theatre Projects Manitoba.

See the entire creative team and cast for Royal MTC's production, including their biographies, [on our website](#), where you can also download the Ovation program.

Characters

The following are character descriptions drawn directly from Jessy Ardern's adaptation of *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

Christian [Crist-ee-YAN, sometimes elides to Crist-YAN]: Early 20s to mid 30s. Just the loveliest guy: handsome, good-hearted, brave, and deeply well-intentioned. If Christian was a poem, he might be "[Wild Geese](#)" by Mary Oliver.

Madeleine Robin [ro-BAHn], aka Roxane: Early 20s to mid 30s. Fiercely intelligent – deeply frustrated – beautiful – prickly – trapped. If Roxane was a poem, she might be "[For Women Who Are 'Difficult' to Love](#)" by Warsan Shire.

Cyrano de Bergerac: Early 20s to mid 30s. Brilliant – funny – physically ugly – flamboyantly theatrical – deeply angry. Although he would despise the suggestion (and indeed, this whole exercise) for being heavy-handed and disgustingly un-funny, if Cyrano was a poem he might be "[There Was A Bad Tree](#)" by John Giorno.

de Guiche [duh GEESH]: 40 – 60. Rich, privileged, and SUCH a tit. But a tit with potential. If de Guiche was a poem, he might be some ungodly combination of "[The Charge of The Light Brigade](#)" (Alfred, Lord Tennyson) and "[Flowers](#)" (Cyrus/Hein/Pollack).

Marie: 60-80. Roxane's maid/companion/chaperone. In her secret past is enough material for seven plays. Even her last name is a secret. If she told you, she'd have to kill you. If Marie were a poem, she might be "[Proverbs of Hell](#)" by William Blake.

Ragueneau [rag-NO]: 40-50. The widowed owner of a small cafe. Obsessed with poetry. Generous to a fault. If Ragueneau were a poem, she might be "[A Single Woman's Bedroom](#)" by Yi Lei.

Le Bret [le BRETT]: 30-50. A captain of the cadets, and a close friend of Cyrano. Serious, fair-minded, and even-keeled. If Le Bret were a poem he might be "[Invictus](#)" by William Ernest Henley.

Carbon [Car-BONNE]: 30-50. A lieutenant of the cadets, and a soldier to the core. Rather irritable. If Carbon were a poem he might be "[Again, These Days I Have Been Thinking of You](#)" by Ha Jin.

More Characters:

Kate – is Mme. Ragueneau's assistant. Young. Excitable.

An Orange Seller – who works for the theatre

A Theatre Manager – who is just so damn tired.

Valvert [val-VAIR] – is just the worst.

A Priest – who bumbles.

Lignière [lin-YAIR] – is a poet, with a taste for alcohol that verges on a problem.

Montfleury [mon-flur-EE] – is an actor, and a bit of a letch.

The Gascony Cadets – are a variety of 17th century Frat Bros, but you love 'em

Content Overview

This section may contain spoilers.

Some coarse/strong language. Non-explicit sexuality and sensual content; violence and death. For further details, please [visit our recommendations page](#).

Synopsis

This section contains spoilers.

Act 1

At the Theatre Français, a handsome young man named Christian is looking for a mysterious woman that he saw on the street earlier that day. Christian is new to Paris, and is joining up with the cadets (an elite part of the French army). He is introduced to Mme Ragueneau, a cafe owner, and to Le Bret, the leader of his squad. Christian is warned to keep an eye out for Cyrano de Bergerac, who is also a member of the cadets. Cyrano is known for his ferocious temper and his sensitivity about his large nose. However, Cyrano is also a famous poet.

Christian makes eye contact with Roxane, the lady that he fell in love with on the street. He's warned that Roxane is out of his league, and that the powerful Comte de Guiche is trying to marry her off to his friend so that he, de Guiche, can have access to her bed. Christian then learns that de Guiche has sent 100 swordsmen to kill Ligniere, a poet who wrote a satirical song about the nobleman. Christian runs off to warn Ligniere.

The play begins. A terrible actor named Montfleury begins to perform, but a voice shouts that he needs to get off the stage or be punished for his bad acting. Cyrano enters, frightening Montfleury off the stage. De Guiche pushes his friend Valvert into dueling Cyrano, but Valvert is beaten easily and Cyrano gives him a mortal wound.

Le Bret demands to know why Cyrano acted so recklessly. Cyrano responds that Montfleury is not only a bad actor: he was leering at a certain woman in the theatre. Le Bret deduces that Cyrano is in love with Roxane. Le Bret encourages Cyrano to try wooing Roxane, but Cyrano is afraid that his nose makes him too unattractive to even consider it.

However, Roxane's maid arrives and gives Cyrano an invitation to meet her mistress at the cafe the next morning. For the first time, Cyrano has hope that Roxane might return his affections. Ligniere enters, terrified of the 100 assassins sent to kill him. Cyrano declares that, in defiance of de Guiche, he will take on all 100 by himself.

Act 2

Having killed or frightened off the squad of assassins, Cyrano waits for Roxane at the cafe. When she enters, she confesses that she is in love with a cadet. At first, Cyrano is hopeful that she is referring to himself – but it is soon revealed that she is talking about Christian.

Roxane and Christian haven't spoken yet, but she felt an instant connection and feels certain that she and Christian are meant for each other. Cyrano questions whether she could really love a man that she has never spoken to, especially given Roxane's love for books and intelligent conversation. She agreed that she is probably being silly, but says,

In a life of ten thousand strings,

Is it too much to hope for just one perfect thing?

Roxane begs Cyrano to look after Christian once he joins the cadets. Cyrano reluctantly agrees, as he feels that her happiness is more important than his jealousy.

Roxane leaves as the cadets enter, rowdy and eager to hear about Cyrano's great battle. As Cyrano gives himself a moment to get over his disappointment, Christian also enters and is teased by the other cadets. They warn him not to mention Cyrano's nose; thinking that this is part of the hazing, Christian takes this as a challenge.

When Cyrano tells the story of the 100-man fight, Christian interrupts with references to Cyrano's nose. Eventually Cyrano loses his temper and shouts at everyone else to leave. However, instead of fighting Christian (as everyone expects), he honours his promise to Roxane and encourages Christian to woo her.

Whereas Cyrano is incredibly intelligent but unattractive, Christian is very attractive – but feels self-conscious about his intelligence. Hating to let down Roxane and her hope of "one perfect thing", Cyrano promises to help Christian woo her.

Act 3

After receiving gorgeous letters for weeks, Roxane is rapturously in love with Christian – not knowing that the letters were actually written by Cyrano.

De Guiche appears outside Roxane's door and tells her that he is going off to war. He has been made a colonel in charge of Cyrano and Christian's regiment. Roxane tricks de Guiche into promising to keep the cadets at home. She also tricks him into leaving without having to reject him – which would be a dangerous thing for a woman in her position to do.

Roxane tells Cyrano that she and Christian have a date that night, but she won't tell him what she wants to talk about... so Cyrano is unable to prep Christian. Christian tries to woo Roxane without Cyrano's help and fails miserably. Cyrano wants this exercise to be over, but when Christian pleads for help he reluctantly agrees. The two men stand under Roxane's balcony, and Cyrano feeds Christian lines that the handsome young man sometimes gets wrong. Eventually Cyrano takes over and, unable to help himself, uses the opportunity to express all of his true feelings to Roxane.

A priest arrives with a letter from de Guiche: the nobleman wants to sleep with Roxane before he leaves for war, and he won't take no for an answer. Roxane tricks the priest into marrying her and Christian, while Cyrano stalls for time. Enraged that Roxane is now married, de Guiche goes back on his word and orders the cadets to report for duty at the front. Roxane begs Cyrano to protect Christian, and to make sure that he sends her "lots and lots of letters". Cyrano promises.

Act 4

Months into a siege at Arras, the soldiers are starving, terrified, and dehydrated. Christian and Cyrano have become close comrades-at-arms, and have saved each other many times.

De Guiche shows up and tells the cadets that there is hope for the French army: a supply line has opened up. However, opening up the line has meant that this group of cadets is going to have to hold off the entire Spanish army by themselves, which they know is a suicide mission – especially without any supplies, including food and bullets. Christian tells Cyrano that he needs to write Roxane a farewell letter. Cyrano reveals that he has already written one, and Christian is confused to realize that the letter is long and tear-stained.

A sickly young man enters the camp dragging an ancient cart. The soldiers back off, fearing that he may be carrying the plague. Instead, the boy is revealed to be Roxane in disguise, bringing supplies to the camp. Her maid, Marie, is hidden in the cart to act as protection. Although the cadets are grateful for the food, they are terrified to realize that Roxane and her maid are going to be caught in the upcoming battle.

Roxane refuses to leave Christian's side. De Guiche reluctantly decides to stay and help protect her. Christian has realized that Cyrano is in love with Roxane. He speaks to her, and asks if she would still love him "even if he were ugly". She assures him that she would.

Christian is enraged that Cyrano didn't tell him the truth. The two argue in the tent before making up and admitting that they have come to love each other like brothers. Christian forces Cyrano to tell Roxane the truth, and leaves them alone to talk as gunfire starts up in the distance.

Cyrano gathers his courage, but before he can confess to Roxane, Christian is carried into the camp. He's been shot. Roxane tells Christian:

Christian, we had so little time but it was perfect.

You gave me this one perfect thing.

Christian dies, and Roxane is forcibly removed from the camp as the war explodes into action.

Act 5

Fifteen years later, Roxane is reading a book at the cafe. The Comte de Guiche arrives and tentatively asks how she is doing, and whether or not she has reconsidered marrying him. When she firmly rebuffs him, he takes it well; it is apparent that the war has changed him.

De Guiche and Mme Ragueneau talk about Cyrano, who has become increasingly reckless. His satire skewers all of the important people of Paris, and De Guiche is worried that Cyrano's life is at stake. Sure enough, Ligniere runs in and informs Ragueneau and de Guiche that Cyrano was cornered on the street by three fighters and walked away bleeding heavily. Worried, the three of them leave the cafe to try to find and help Cyrano. They leave Roxane reading, and don't tell her what has happened.

Cyrano enters and chats with Roxane. He asks her if she still has "Christian's" letters; she assures him that she does. He asks if he can read one, and she gives him Christian's final letter, which she carries with her at all times.

Cyrano reads aloud from the letter. Eventually he stops looking at the page, and Roxane realizes that he was the original author. She is furious and heartbroken at his deception. Cyrano tells her that he didn't want to sully the memory of Christian, whom they both loved, and that he didn't want to destroy her "one perfect thing".

Roxane tells Cyrano:

When I said I wanted "perfect"...

What I meant was "real".

He asks if there was ever a world where she could have loved him. She tells him yes. However, as they start to approach each other, Cyrano collapses.

It is revealed that Cyrano was shot in the street fight. He refuses medical help, knowing that it's too late for him. In a delirium, he makes jokes, gives his own eulogy, and fights to stay upright. Eventually, he loses his words and dies.

Context and Related Resources

Who was Cyrano de Bergerac?

Savinien de Cyrano de Bergerac is the inspiration behind this play, though much of what we know of him has come from stories and myth – so it's hard to know what's true.

We do know that he was born in France in 1619. Although most historians agree that Cyrano was born to minor aristocracy and educated by a country priest, one biographer argues that he

was in fact born the son of a fishmonger, and the noble appellation “de Bergerac” was one that he gave himself.

Although the romance in this play was invented, the timeline is accurate: Cyrano was already a prolific and reckless duelist by the age of 21, when he was wounded at the battle of Arras. Fifteen years later, sources suggest he was killed by a falling piece of wood on the streets of Paris. Although this was not as rare as it sounds (building codes being notably lax in the 1600s), there is evidence to suggest that this was an assassination. Rostand built on this rumour for his play.

Cyrano’s early abuse at the hands of his father and the clergy seems to have led to a lifetime of mistrust in authority figures: yes, he really did become a celebrated and scathing satirist. He really did have a large (though hardly freakish) nose. And – as absurd as it sounds – contemporary sources indicate that at one point Cyrano really did take on 100 men in defense of a friend. Most of them ran away after the first seven deaths.

Cyrano de Bergerac is now most famous for the play by Rostand, though he has had other lasting impacts on popular culture. His novels, including *L'Autre Monde: ou les États et Empires de la Lune* (“Comical History of the States and Empires of the Moon”) are considered one of the earliest examples of science fiction, he seems to have pioneered the idea of a race of moon-men. Cyrano was also the first writer to imagine space travel via rocket.

A Period Drama... But Which Period?

Cyrano de Bergerac takes place in the 1640s, but was written more than 250 years later. However, the play was a throwback to an older tradition: Edmond Rostand wrote a play that took place in the 1600s, using the language and style of Romantic French theatre (late 1700s), and included references and jokes that were contemporary to his (late 1890s) audience.

As recent adaptations such as Christopher Nolan’s *Odyssey* have proven, people can get very worked up about the perceived “historical accuracy” of adaptations. But what, with *Cyrano*, would be a “historically accurate” adaptation? Rostand himself wrote modern jokes, lingo, and references into the play, including digs at local politicians – so keeping strictly to the language and attitudes of 1640 wouldn’t actually be accurate to the original. At the same time, the play was written in rhyming couplets, which is not historically accurate to any time period at all.

In a play that lives in three different time periods, what does “historical accuracy” look like?

Language

Translators of Rostand’s work – and translators of all poetry – always have an important question to ask themselves: do they care more about the precise, literal translation of the words? Or the “vibe” of the piece? Is it better to sacrifice the poetic feeling for the exact

translation? Or to supply words that might not be an exact translation, but which capture the feeling of the original?

For this production, adaptor Jessy Arden says:

“Rostand’s vision of the play was one where language was central to everything. Cyrano is a poet, and the world is soaked in poetry. I think that Rostand’s original vision, where the world is one of rhymes and rhythm, is too often sacrificed in the name of direct translation. Sure, you can take the precise words and translate them as accurately as possible, but if you’ve lost the poetry and the dexterity of the language then you’ve sacrificed the most important thing.

“At the same time, rhyming couplets are sort of a problem – at least for me. When the rhythm and rhyme of a piece become too predictable, that can lull the audience asleep. When your brain is always one word ahead of the characters, because of the predictability of the rhyme scheme, that’s no fun at all – and definitely not representative of Cyrano, who is extremely unpredictable!

“When preparing to adapt Cyrano, I listened to a lot of hip-hop. Rap artists are masters of rhyme, but they are also masters of keeping you on your toes. That was a big influence on this adaptation. Most of the characters speak in a fairly predictable rhythm, but Cyrano is constantly surprising you with triple rhymes, quadruple rhymes, slant rhymes, sudden changes of rhythm – even prose, at times. This allows him to live in a world of poetry and rhyme while still sounding more intelligent and dextrous than the people around him.”

“A Woman’s Place”

While it is true that time period is hard to nail down in this piece, one thing remains true: for women, this was a difficult time. Roxane in particular is a young woman of relative wealth and social standing, but the same status that affords her certain privileges (like not having to work) is the same status that prevents her from achieving any real independence (she couldn’t work even if she wanted to).

Roxane would have had two choices: to marry, and give up all of her rights to her husband; or to live in a convent and become a “wife of God.” Marriage was a potentially dangerous prospect for women. Not only did they give up all rights to their money, property, children, and body, but husbands could petition the king to imprison his wife based on any indiscretion he saw fit. A wife who angered or bored her husband might find themselves disposed of for reasons of alleged “madness” or “promiscuity” and would have no access to a lawyer or a trial. They might end up in a convent or asylum. A convent might allow for certain protections, but for many women it would have been a stifling existence.

Mme Ragueneau is a widow of the common classes, which means that she has a life of hard work and relative poverty. However, she is also in a social class that allows her to take over her late husband's business. Compared to Roxane, Mme Ragueneau actually lives a life with a certain amount of freedom.

The War

The Siege of Arras (1640) was a particularly nasty event in the Franco-Spanish War (1635 to 1659). The French army besieged the town of Arras, held by the Spanish Army, for 48 days. They hoped to starve out the Spanish by blocking their supply of food.

However, the Spanish responded by in turn blocking the food and water supplies of the French. By the end of the conflict, the French army was reduced to eating rats. Eventually the French army was resupplied, and they took Arras. It has remained a part of France since the 1659 Treaty of the Pyrenees.

The real-life Cyrano de Bergerac fought at Arras when he was only 21 years old. He was slashed in the neck by a sword, but survived to return to Paris, where he lived for another 15 years.



Photo of a battle scene from the Citadel Theatre production of Cyrano de Bergerac by Nanc Price.

Glossary and Mentions

With contributions from Mara Teare

Attrition - A tactic used to wear down and weaken others, particularly your enemy, by attacking them repeatedly, and/or causing them repeated problems.

Ballestra - This is a fencing maneuver, when the swordsman takes a small hop forward, then immediately lunges at their opponent. It is meant to catch them off guard and be an explosive movement to close distance.

Bombast - Referring to pretentious and overinflated speech. Words that are numerous but don't mean anything, and are used in an effort to impress others.

Braggart - A loud, arrogant, boastful person.

Brigand - A bandit and a pillager. Typically part of a group of criminals who attack travellers.

Canker - A spreading sickness that erodes as it spreads, creating sores.

Cardinal Richelieu - A high ranking and highly influential member of the French clergy in the 1600's. He had massive influence over civil laws and was a close confidant of the royal family. Essentially, he was a hugely powerful religious, social, political, and military figure.

"Cherchez la femme" - The literal translation from French is "look for the woman". It originates in detective fiction, and is a cliché that the source of any problem will often be a woman.

Cin cin - This is used as a toast, it derives from the Mandarin saying "qǐng qǐng" which roughly translates to "please, please". It was adopted by European traders during the 1700s, and is now used in Italy as a way of toasting.

Compte de Guiche - Translates to "Count of Guiche".

Cupidity - A strong and intense desire; lust. When one is desperate to possess something, such as wealth, power, material goods.

Dross - Unwanted refuse and left over waste; the parts of something that have the least value.

Epistles - Another word for a letter, or formal address.

Florid - Having an elaborate, flowery style.

Fop - A vain man, overly concerned with his appearance.

Frenetic - Containing frantic, uncontrolled, fast energy.

Gascony - A provincial region in the southern part of France. The people of Gascony were known to have a reputation of being boastful, big talking, loud.

Importunities - To harass with someone with demands.

Kinetic - Produced by movement; relating to motion.

Marshal - A high-ranking military officer, usually in charge of cavalry. They would be responsible for battle strategy, tactics, and military logistics.

Muscadet - A sweet white wine, made from muscat grapes.

Musket - A long gun used by infantry in the 1500's. It was loaded from the muzzle, and was a shoulder firearm. This predated the rifle.

Musketeer - In the context of France in the 17th and 18th centuries, this began as a junior unit in the Royal Guard. They were comprised of lower nobility and the youngest sons of noble families.

"My nyas" - This is a reference to the balcony scene in Romeo and Juliet. After doing a false exit into her chamber, Juliet reemerges onto the balcony to speak again to Romeo. She draws a comparison between a falconer and his falcon, wishing she had the power to call Romeo back to her as a falconer calls his falcon back. Romeo then responds within the metaphor, referring to Juliet as his "nyas", or young hawk. Cyrano is echoing the balcony scene as he speaks to Roxane up on her balcony.

Panache - Originally referring to the plume of feathers worn on a soldier's helmet. The term came to signify valour, pride, dignity, courage, and rank. The play, Cyrano de Bergerac, is often credited with introducing the word into English, though no direct equivalent fully captures its original meaning. While it is now commonly defined as a flamboyant or confident style, the closest translation to "panache" as originally

intended by the author is probably "fighting spirit" or even "soul".

Pommel - The round knob on the bottom of a sword hilt.

Rancour - A deep-rooted resentment.

Melancholic - another of the humours, a personality cold and intellectual

Remit - An area that is the responsibility and authority of one person or a group of people.

"Render unto Caesar" - a quotation from the Gospel of Matthew in the Bible. In this passage, Jesus is being tested by the Pharisees, as they try to catch him out as either a traitor to Rome or a traitor to his own people. They ask him whether or not it is lawful to give tribute to Caesar. Jesus instructs them to bring him a coin, and asks them to tell him whose image is on the coin. When they respond "Caesar", he then tells them that they should give unto Caesar what is his, as his face is inscribed on the coin, and give unto God what is God's. He is teaching a lesson on civic responsibility versus divine responsibility. In the context of the play, Cyrano is using it as a way to demonstrate that he is shirking any sort of civic authority or societal conformity.

Rout - A defeat within military combat, usually followed by a hasty and disorganized retreat.

Sante - This is a French word that translates to "health". It is said as a toast, to say "to your good health", before a drink is taken.

Sixpence - An old British coin worth the value of six pennies. The value came to be associated with cheapness and poor quality.

Tabernak - A Quebecois curse word, literally meaning “tabernacle”. It is used to express anger, frustration, and passion. It is an equivalent of “holy sh*t” or “holy f**k” from English.

“Tilt at windmills” - An expression that originates from the novel Don Quixote. It references a part in the book when the protagonist mistakes windmills as giants, and attempts to fight them off. The expression means to fight imaginary enemies, or to engage in futile conflicts.

Verdant - Being green in tint or colour.

Explore More: Recommended Library Reading List

Explore More Cyrano – The Man

Cyrano: Adventures in Space and Time with Legendary French Hero

A biography that explores the true life of Savinien de Cyrano de Bergerac, separating the historical man from the romanticized fictional character.

Written by Ishbel Addyman

ADULT BIOGRAPHY ADDYMAN

The Greats Abridged: A Voyage to the Moon

A 17th-century satirical masterpiece narrated by Richard Stibbard, this early science fiction tale follows the bold and eccentric Cyrano as he devises bizarre methods to travel to the Moon.

Blending fantastical adventure with social commentary, this audiobook is both entertaining and thought-provoking-an imaginative predecessor to modern speculative fiction

Written by Cyrano de Bergerac

HOOPLA AUDIO BOOK

Explore More Cyrano de Bergerac Performed

Cyrano

A man ahead of his time, Cyrano de Bergerac dazzles whether with ferocious wordplay at a verbal joust or with brilliant swordplay in a duet. But, convinced that his appearance renders him unworthy of the love of a devoted friend, the luminous Roxanne, Cyrano has yet to declare his feelings for her, and Roxanne has fallen in love, at first sight, with Christian.

Directed by Joe Wright

DVD FILM/TV CYRANO

Cyrano

Working from Edmond Rostand's beloved play, Geraldine McCaughrean has transformed the tale into muscular prose that shimmers with turns of phrase Cyrano himself would have admired, offering us a thrilling new way to experience the power and passion, the humor and

heartbreak, of one of the most beloved stories of all time. This is a full-cast audiobook with multiple voice actors.

Adapted by Geraldine McCaughrean & Cynthia Bishop
HOOPLA AUDIO BOOK

Explore More Historical Fiction set in France

Becoming Josephine

Follow Rose Tascher as she sails from her Martinique plantation to Paris, eager to enjoy an elegant life at the royal court. Once there, however, Rose's aristocratic soldier-husband dashes her dreams by abandoning her amid the tumult of the French Revolution. After narrowly escaping death, Rose reinvents herself as Josephine, a beautiful socialite wooed by an awkward suitor--Napoleon Bonaparte.

Written by Heather Webb
FICTION WEBB

Thérèse Raquin

This novel caused a scandal when it appeared in 1867 and brought its twenty-seven-year-old author a notoriety that followed him throughout his life. It is not only an uninhibited portrayal of adultery, madness and ghostly revenge, but also a devastating exploration of the darkest aspects of human existence.

Written by Émile Zola
FICTION ZOLA



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Discussion Questions

- Cyrano is revered for his bravery, both in battle and when challenging powerful figures. Yet at the end of the play, Christian declares to Cyrano, "I'm braver than you."
 - Do you think that Christian's statement is true?
 - Do you think that Christian believes this statement, or do you think he's trying to provoke Cyrano into action?
- Cyrano is both criticized and admired for his refusal to be polite to those in power.
 - When did you find this trait admirable?
 - When did you find it stupid?
- Do you think that Roxane is worthy of Cyrano's love? Why or why not?

- There have recently been modern versions of the play where Cyrano is played by a non-binary person or a woman. Would you be interested in seeing these versions? Why or why not?
- What part of the play did you find the most frustrating, and why?
- What part of the play did you find the most moving, and why?
- Who do you find to be the most heroic figure in the play?
- At the end of the story, both Roxane and Cyrano know that he has acted in a way that is disrespectful and highly manipulative. Do you have empathy for Cyrano's actions? Why or why not?
- What do you feel is the strongest act of love in the play?
- How do you feel about de Guiche at the end of the play?
- What did you notice about the sound in the play? How did it enhance, echo, or contrast the story? (Note: Arden has said that the fast-paced verse can become close to rap, so the score by Maddie Bautista has hip-hop influences.)

Classroom Activities

1. Cyrano is a character who is often full of contradictions. Describe three different ways that Cyrano is a contradictory character, and the impact that this has on his journey through the play.
2. As Roxane, write a letter to Cyrano after his death. Tell him how you feel about him and his actions.
3. In one sentence, describe Cyrano de Bergerac from the point of view of:
 - Christian
 - De Guiche
 - Valvert
 - Mme. Ragueneau
 - Le Bret
 - Roxane
4. Write a 500-word review of the production. Did you enjoy it? Why or why not? Name at least one thing that you enjoyed, and one thing that you would change.
5. Imagine that Cyrano had not been shot at the end of the play, and that he arrived at the cafe to enjoy his usual chat with Roxane. Write the dialogue that you imagine they may have had together.
6. In her character descriptions, Jessy Arden says that:

“If Christian was a poem, he might be [“Wild Geese”](#) by Mary Oliver”

“If Roxane was a poem, she might be [“For Women Who Are ‘Difficult’ to Love”](#) by Warsan Shire”

If Cyrano was a poem he might be [“There Was A Bad Tree”](#) by John Giorno.”

Find three more pieces of art that you think accurately represent these characters: a poem, visual art, a song... Explain why you have chosen these three pieces of art to express who these characters are.

Curriculum Connections

English Language Arts – The following suggested connections are from the 2026-released Manitoba Framework of Learning. These are from the Grade 10 Curriculum, but similar outcomes from other senior years grades are comparable and similarly applicable. This list is not exhaustive.

FROM STRAND A: Building Literacy

- **General Learning Outcome: Oral Language Communication.** Learners engage in oral language communication as a recursive process of listening, speaking, and interacting to construct meaning, exchange ideas and perspectives, and expand their understanding of themselves, others, and the world.
 - **Listen and Comprehend ELA.10.A1.2** Examine how speakers use language choices, voice, organization, rhetorical strategies, and verbal/non-verbal communication to influence audience understanding and response.
 - **Speak and Interact ELA.10.A1.4** Exchange and develop ideas through dialogue (partners, group); make relevant connections among the contributions and viewpoints of others to build shared thinking; respond thoughtfully and respectfully to deepen understanding and extend collaborative thinking.
- **General Learning Outcome: Language as the Foundation for Reading and Writing** Learners build and apply foundational knowledge and skills, including letter knowledge, sound awareness, word structures, vocabulary knowledge, and language conventions, to engage as active readers, writers, and communicators.
 - **Vocabulary Knowledge ELA.10.A2.6** Apply an expanding vocabulary and knowledge of word relationships, meanings, and nuances to understand texts; select and refine vocabulary to communicate ideas clearly, precisely, and effectively in different contexts.
 - **Language Conventions ELA.10.A2.7** Analyze how language conventions (e.g., syntax, sentence structure, grammar, usage, mechanics) contribute to meaning, clarity, and coherence in texts; apply language conventions purposefully to communicate ideas clearly and effectively.

FROM STRAND B: Comprehend and respond

- **General Learning Outcome: Think Critically about Texts** Learners analyze ideas, information, viewpoints, and perspectives within and across texts to build

understanding. Learners use evidence from texts to develop, support, and evaluate interpretations.

- Analyze Ideas and Information **ELA.10.B3.1** Examine ideas, themes, facts, opinions, and perspectives within and across texts; explain how evidence supports interpretations and deepens understanding of people, experiences, and issues.
- General Learning Outcome: Consolidate Understanding Learners reflect on, extend, and integrate new learning to develop deeper understandings. They respond to texts by sharing interpretations, perspectives, and insights that expand, challenge, and/or refine their thinking.
 - Reflect on New Learning **ELA.10.B4.1** Explain and connect new ideas and understandings gained from texts; reflect on how new learning extends or expands existing knowledge, experiences, and perspectives.
 - Response to Text: Self and Others **ELA.10.B4.2** Examine and share responses to texts by integrating personal, cultural, and textual connections; explain how ideas, aesthetic features, and perspectives contribute to insight, appreciation, and emotional response. **ELA.10.B4.3** Compare and explain personal response with those of others and of broader community contexts; examine how assumptions, experiences, and perspectives can shape interpretations and influence understanding.

Certain activities such as writing a review fall under Strand C: Compose and Create.

Drama

Connecting - The learner develops understandings about the significance of the dramatic arts by making connections to various times, places, social groups and cultures.

DR-C2 - The learner develops understandings about the influence and impact of the dramatic arts.

Responding -The learner uses critical reflection to inform learning and to develop agency and identity

DR-R1 - The learner generates initial reactions to drama/theatre experiences.

DR-R2 - The learner critically observes and describes drama/theatre experiences

DR-R3 - the learner analyzes and interprets drama/theatre experiences.

Social Studies – This era is not covered in any High School Curriculum in Manitoba, however, it may be covered in Grade 8 Social Studies so students should have some familiarity.