Zainab Aina

**Persuasive Essay**

Throughout the play, Cyrano de Bergerac portrayed a character who many people could not help but admire. Although he treated many people in unkind, sometimes malevolent ways, his intentions were always honorable. A tragic hero is an honorable protagonist with a tragic flaw that usually leads to his demise. Cyrano was a perfect representation of this. His low confidence combined with his extreme wit led him to devise a crafty plan that eventually led to a lackluster love life. With eloquence that could lead to immense success and an uncouth facial appearance, Cyrano embodied quintessential components of a tragic hero.

Although he was not born into nobility, Cyrano was very well educated. When he spoke, he exuded eloquence, wit, and the confidence of a king. However, he was endowed with a few tragic flaws. The most obvious was his large, very noticeable nose. However, Cyrano had flaws that only his closest friend knew of. He had low self-esteem where his appearance was concerned. Also, Cyrano had a vice that eventually led to his death. “I’m always glad to add another enemy to my list…Let’s call it my vice” (92). Cyrano loved to displease others and welcomed being hated. “Each new enemy is a pleat that constrains me still more, yet adds to my splendor, because hatred is both a yoke and a halo of glory” (93). It was clear that Cyrano knew being hated by so many people would make his life more difficult and abate his chances of becoming successful. However, he was willing to sacrifice these desires in order to maintain his moral integrity. He knew exactly what type of life he could lead in order to have great fortune, but he didn’t. “…he lives without compromise, free in both his thoughts and his acts” (205). He chose the type of life he wanted and was therefore responsible for his own fate. Cyrano’s strong will and refusal to conform to the expectations of the people around him initiated his fall from potential greatness.

As brilliant and as talented a Cyrano was, he could have been extremely successful. In the beginning of the play, after his duel with Valvert, even though he gained many new admirers, he’d gained even more enemies as well. However, his major downfall took place when Christian got himself killed in war. Until that point, although it was very vague, Cyrano still had a glimmer of hope of being with Roxanne. “It’s all over. Now I can never tell her” (192). When Christian was killed, Cyrano entered a lose-lose situation. If he told Roxane the truth, she might not believe him. Even if she did, it would have been immoral and would ruin Roxane’s memory of Christian. That was when Cyrano realized that the whole plot was a mistake. If he had given her the letter himself, although we can never be sure, it’s safe to assume that his love would have been requited. However, Cyrano was afraid that Roxane could never love him. “Don’t be timid: speak to her, tell her, so that...So that she’ll laugh in my face? No! That’s the one thing in the world that I fear!” (51). Ironically, in the end, Cyrano learns that Roxane wouldn’t have laughed in his face. She was in love with his words and eloquence, not Christian’s face. “I’ve loved only one man and I’ve lost him twice” (221). Roxane would have accepted Cyrano as he was.

Like everything else he did, Cyrano faced and accepted death with honor. Even though he wasn’t killed the way he wanted to die (in battle), he didn’t face death with an attitude of self-pity. He lived his final minutes speaking eloquently and battling death. “I know I can’t defeat you all, I know that in the end you’ll overwhelm me, but I’ll still fight you as long as there’s a breath in my body” (221). Although Cyrano knew he couldn’t cheat death, he still fought. He died battling his emotional and internal enemies. Though the way he was killed was tragic and silly in a way, Cyrano’s death was honorable. As he battled stupidity, lies, compromise, prejudice, and cowardice, he declared that he’d never give up as long as he was capable of fighting back. Not many people are able to realize their weaknesses. As Aristotle once said, “A man doesn’t become a hero until he can see the root of his own downfall.” Throughout his life, Cyrano was very aware of his flaws, but he never expressed their true cause. As he died, however, he declared the root of his downfall as he battled them. At that moment, combined with all his other characteristics, Cyrano became a superlative depiction of a tragic hero.

Cyrano always had to deal with a face that contradicted his personality. An eloquent soul destined for greatness, battling a tragic face. These opposing characteristics led Cyrano to develop emotional tragic flaws that would haunt him until the final moments of his life. However, Cyrano, in a very atypical way overcame these flaws on his own. It’s hard to pity Cyrano because of this. It’s sad that his life was shortened by a block of wood dropped on his head, but the way he lived the spent his last moments was so beautiful and admirable that you feel a sense of fear. It makes the audience wonder; if someone so gifted and brilliant could die the way Cyrano did, then what type of death could someone far below Cyrano’s standard expect to face?