
How Edmond Rostand Uses Static Characters (Based on Cyrano De Bergerac)

Static Characters in Cyrano de Bergerac

Character development is an author's way of showing how a character changes their beliefs and ideals in response to new conflicts or ideas. Static characters, unlike dynamic characters, are those who do not show a large amount of development, if any at all, and are used by authors to show humanity's flaws. Examples of static characters are sometimes portrayed as an enemy who the protagonist has to defeat, such as a supervillain who never learns why it is wrong to kill innocent civilians and ends up being stopped by some hero, usually one with powers that go past the realms of man. In the play *Cyrano de Bergerac*, by Edmond Rostand, Rostand uses static characters to develop the story. The play is focused on the protagonist, Cyrano de Bergerac, as he fights both his physical enemies and inner demons. Cyrano's fighting, or rather lack of fighting, with his flaws shows how an absence of growth can affect an individual's ability to reach their human potential. Cyrano's lack of development in certain traits show how he fails to grow as a person, and reveals Rostand's mixed views on people who cannot take in new beliefs and ideas.

Cyrano's incapability of accepting his own appearance throughout the play, and his entire life, leads him to never taking risks and not becoming the best possible version of himself he could have been. For example, in Act I after Cyrano has defeated Valvert in their duel and is now talking to Le Bret about his love for Roxane, Le Bret urges Cyrano to tell Roxane of that very love. Cyrano meekly responds by saying "I long for Cleopatra -- do I look like Caesar?" (26). Cyrano's own insecurities about his physical beauty prevents him from confessing to Roxane, a risk which had the potential to earn him happiness. Another quote that exemplifies Cyrano's failure to take risks due to appearance occurs in Act IV, when Christian has just found out that Roxane loves him for only his soul. Christian commands Cyrano to go tell her the whole truth about their betrayal to her, how they lied and tricked her. After Christian tells him that Roxane told him she would still love him if he were ugly since his soul shone so bright, Cyrano replies with,

Well, I am glad she told you that [she loves you only for your inner beauty].

But do not be deceived. It is a sweet

And pleasant thought -- but it is just a thought.

Never accept it as a truth, and never grow

Ugly or plain. (104)

Cyrano's insecurity about his appearance is once again preventing him from taking a risk that could potentially earn him the women of his dreams. Similarly, a last quote further exemplifies Cyrano's insecurity during the ends of his life, while talking to Roxane after she has found out it has been him who had been loving her all these years:

No. In the fairy tales the lady says

“I love you” and the beast becomes a prince,

As beauty banishes all ugliness.

But, though you speak the magic words, this is

No fairy tale -- and I remain the same. (123)

Cyrano is, again, and for the last time, putting his insecurities in front of his happiness and resorting to not allowing himself to be happy, too afraid of falling, letting people in, and getting hurt. Cyrano's failure to be able to let people in and holding onto feelings of insecurities hold him back from taking new opportunities that would in the long run make him a happier person, able to accept love from others.

Cyrano's inability to put aside his self pride and high standards he holds society and himself to lead to him not being the happiest he could have been. During the first act of the play right after Cyrano has forced Montfleury off the stage and banished him, a young man asks him why he hates Montfleury so much. Cyrano's response,

Young man,

There are two reasons, each one great enough

To earn my condemnation and contempt.

First: He's a stupid actor, mouths his words,

Chews up scenery, and beats the air

With flailing arms. He leans his weight on lines

That, otherwise, would soar in singing joy.

Second: That is my secret. (15)

exemplifies Cyrano's heightened sense of ideals, and the standards he holds Montfleury as well as everyone else to. Cyrano's imagery, such as his metaphors of Montfleury's actions and characteristics, further humiliate Montfleury and show the audience the extent to which Cyrano looks down on those he feels superior to. In the same way, another quote said by Mother Margaret, even fifteen years later, further reveals Cyrano's self pride and own standards, and how it has not changed in the slightest. While the two sisters and Mother Margaret are talking in the park about Cyrano and his boastfulness, Mother Margaret mentions that Cyrano is very poor and does not have enough money to feed himself consistently. When Sister Martha asks why Cyrano does not ask for help, Mother Margaret responds with “He is too proud; / Any assistance would be an offense” (112). Cyrano is literally killing himself just to avoid the humiliation of asking for help. His high standards of not wanting to be seen as weak or letting people help him, he is depleting himself into a starving, debilitated shell of a man. Finally, a last

quote said by Le Bret confirms how Cyrano's high standards for society ruins him. After the nuns exit, Le Bret, Roxane, and De Guiche enter and converse about Cyrano and his well being. Le Bret claims he is not well, and informs the others of the following:

All I foretold

Has now come true: neglect and poverty

And wretched solitude. But he goes on

Fighting the hypocrites of every sort;

Exposing the sham nobles, the sham priests,

Sham heroes, shameless prudes and plagiarists,

In short, the world we know! And each attack

Wins him the malice of new enemies. (113)

Le Bret is not only informing of Cyrano's recent events, but showing also that Cyrano has not grown in the slightest regarding his pride and standards. His exposure of the fraud plagiarists and prudes speaks about his own personal feelings, and how Cyrano is once again judging people severely, and thinks himself immensely superior to them. Cyrano's pride and high ideals which are never lowered leads him to live a shorter life filled with loneliness, despair, and weakness.

While Cyrano shows a lack of development in negative traits such as his insecurities and pridefulness, he also does not grow or develop concerning one of his positive traits -- his loyalty towards friends and loved ones. One of his earliest examples of loyalty towards friends occurs in Act II after Cyrano notices Lise has been acting familiar and tenderly towards the musketeer to whom she is obviously having an affair with. Cyrano confronts Lise and accuses her of the affair. Lise does not have the chance to defend herself, as Cyrano cuts her off and finishes the conversation abruptly with "Ragueneau is my friend, Dame Lise. / I'll see that he's not made a laughing stock" (38). Cyrano is taking into consideration Ragueneau's feelings, telling Lise to knock it off, but also not going and telling Ragueneau directly, knowing it would hurt him more than he could handle. Another quote that shows Cyrano's loyalty occurs in Act III after Roxane asks Cyrano to hold off De Guiche while she marries Christian. Cyrano simply responds with an "I understand" (75). Cyrano, even though being deeply hurt by the thought that the love of his life is marrying somebody else, is helping them to tie the knot, only to make Roxane happy. His loyalty is so deep he will go to such lengths as to crush his soul, only to remain loyal to the one he loves most. The last example of Cyrano's never changing loyalty is displayed during the final act, Act V, when Roxane refers to Cyrano as one of the only joys in her life.

Yes; [Cyrano comes to see me]

Often and punctually. He is my clock,

My comfort, and my newspaper. A chair

Is put beneath this tree when the day's fair,

And there I wait with my embroidery.

The clock strikes. And in time with the last stroke,

I hear -- I do not have to turn to see --

His cane upon the steps. (113)

Roxane is, essentially, admitting that Cyrano's loyalty to her has kept her in good company for the past fourteen years, bringing her comfort, happiness, and a sense of self worth. Cyrano's constant loyalty towards Roxane, which never leaves him throughout the entire course of his life, shows how a trait does not have to go through development to become something good. Cyrano stayed loyal until the day of his death, and while his growth was not present, it wasn't necessarily a bad thing.

Cyrano's traits, which never developed or changed, led him to live out a regretful life. In *Cyrano de Bergerac*, by Edmond Rostand, Rostand manipulates Cyrano, as well as others, to give the subliminal message that individuals who stubbornly hold on to their set ways will live an unfulfilling life. Rostand uses his characters actions and consequences of said actions as a warning to readers not to be like Cyrano, not to be closed minded and unwilling to change. However, he also emphasizes through positive traits, such as Cyrano's loyalty, that sometimes when something is already good you should not have to alter it in any shape or form. Nevertheless, whether voiced or not, all individuals who live out their life not developing or growing at all, not taking risks or new opportunities, or not learning how to move on, will live out their last days wondering what could have been, and be filled to the brim with regret and dissatisfaction.