Cyrano De Bergerac: Hero Of A Comedic Love Story Or A Tragic Hero

Rostand's Cyrano de Bergerac is a well-known comedic love story behind the walls of humor and satire. It revolves around Cyrano de Bergerac's failed pursuit of love of a maiden named Roxanne because of his many personal flaws. Ironically, these are the exact flaws that prompt many to regard Cyrano as a tragic hero. Although he did not strictly follow the characteristics of the mainstream Greek example of heroes, Cyrano in Rostand's Cyrano de Bergerac is defined as a tragic hero. His opportunity to find true happiness with his forever love was constantly compromised by his own flaws which eventually led to his tragic demise.

Cyrano was an acclaimed man, armored with his quick wit and eloquence as a member of the Cadets of Gascony. He was able to gain the emotional pity of the audience by missing his chance of finding true happiness with his true love. Much like any hero, he was equipped with a fatal flaw that eventually led to his own destruction. Cyrano possessed an enlightened mind but an unattractive appearance with a large nose that caused him to become vigilant. In that, he feared that his eloquence would simply be overshadowed by his rather unattractive appearance.

People in the past, including his own mother, mocked him and showed almost no affection towards him because of his large nose. This resulted in his vigilance towards his own ideals and sentiments. In the excerpt: Valvert: Your nose is . . . very big. Cyrano: Yes, very. (30)Cyrano's first entrance involved a slight confrontation between him and Valvert, one of de Guiche's men, who teased Cyrano for his nose. Cyrano's past experiences have prompted him to become protective of himself by teaching himself how to fight any man who attempts to mock or criticize him. His vigilance is evident in the text as Cyrano humiliated Valvert by belittling his lack of creativity for simply mentioning the obvious size of his nose. His fatal flaw of vigilance contributes to his heroism as he was willing to fight one hundred men by himself to protect his friend, Ragueneau. At the same time, this trait leads to his prolonged downfall, as he is unable to tell Roxanne his true feelings even when Christian was already dead. He was too afraid to let his guard down and show his vulnerability to a woman because of his fear that Roxanne will simply humiliate him for his looks, just like other people. This eventually stops him from having the chance to find happiness with his true love, gaining pity from the audience as his happily ever after was instead a tragic downfall.

Cyrano's vigilance allows him to earn the emotional pity of his audience which contributes to his embodiment as a tragic hero, as it also pushes him to go to extensive lengths for those around him at all costs despite his own welfare and desires. However, it also feeds into his downfall as a hero as his fear of vulnerability prevents him from telling Roxanne the truth after Christian's death. Other than his vigilance, Cyrano is also endowed with other admirable traits that connects his heroism despite his flaws. He took most pride as he strived to maintain his moral integrity throughout the play. It was evident that Cyrano was a man who did not mind having enemies and, to some extent, even enjoyed infuriating others. In the book, Cyrano stated that "Each new enemy is a pleat that constrains me still more, yet adds to my splendor" (93). By this, it was evident that he was completely aware that more enemies meant a more difficult life. However, he also states that "hatred is both a yoke and a halo of glory" (93).

Although he knew that success could have been extremely simple for him because of his incredible skills, he chose to protect his moral integrity, sacrificing his great desires in love. Instead of taking the easy route to his own greatness, he opted to choose the kind of life that he wanted to be known for.

Cyrano's heroic moral integrity, however, is also a dual flaw, as his personal code prohibits him from pursuing his love for Roxanne. Cyrano was a man of his word and he simply could not go against his moral code and somewhat betray Christian by exposing the truth about the letters and his own feelings. Yet again, this fuels Cyrano's self-destruction as even though he could have chosen to tell Roxanne the truth and possibly have the opportunity to be with his true live, he instead opted to keep the truth from Roxanne until he was dying in her arms. Cyrano's moral integrity was one of the defining features of his heroic character, but it also prevented him from having the courage to provide Roxanne with the truth after Christian died in the war. Many well-known heroes experience a fatal downfall during one specific instance or at the end of their story. However, Cyrano is a one of a kind hero who does not strictly follow the mainstream Greek archetype of characters.

Cyrano's greatest downfall, begins when Christian dies until the time of his own death with his failure of telling Roxanne his genuine feeling as is inner conflict. Ever since the moment that Christian died, Cyrano had all the chances and opportunities in the world to tell Roxanne the entire truth, to some extent, false love with Christian and how he was really the man behind the love letters that she loved the most. However, it was Cyrano's selflessness, another one of his commendable traits, that prevented him from doing so. It is not explicitly evident in the book, but it could be speculated that Cyrano might have treasured the bond that he has formed with Roxanne and the freedom of seeing her more frequently so much that he did not want to risk losing her. There was a possibility of Roxanne rejecting him again despite her knowing the truth, and it is inferred that Cyrano did not want to experience her rejection for the second time as well. During his last moments, Cyrano says that: "When Beauty said "I love you" to the best that was a fairy prince, his ugliness Changed and dissolved, like magic… But you see[He is] still the same" (192). As a man who took pride in his great work, a shift in Cyrano's characterization is also evident during Cyrano's last moments as he reflects on his personal failures and undesirable appearance that is permanent but no one really had the guts to ever mention or criticize him for. He stressed to Roxanne that no matter what happens, even if he dies, he will still be the man with a large nose that was never loved by anyone. This shift in Cyrano's morale and character supports Cyrano's heroic aspect as many heroes in other works of literature experiences a major shift or change internally or externally prior to their downfall. For Cyrano, this change is more internal as, throughout the whole book, he is constantly dealing with the inner conflict of telling Roxanne how he feels and eventually the truth about Christian's letters.

Cyrano's inability to tell Roxanne about his genuine feelings and emotions for her is Cyrano's tragic fall as a hero because his characterization shifts in the end as he evolves from a person who is so eloquent and honoured into a dying man who was pitied by everyone including his love, Roxanne. Although it was heroic and admirable for him to curb his own emotions for Roxanne to be happy with her own love, it also influenced his fatal fall as he did not have the courage to tell Roxanne the truth about his love until he was on his deathbed.

Cyrano de Bergerac by Edmond Rostand is a romantic comedy that revolves a hopelessly romantic man and his failure of pursuing his love for Roxanne. Rostand eloquently develops Cyrano's character to possess the main aspects of a hero yet connect these exact traits to his

flaws that leads to his own self-destruction. Cyrano’s greatest downfall of not telling Roxanne the truth even after Christian’s death and waiting for his own death was caused solely by his own doings. His combination of fatal flaws eventually led to his tragic fall of shifting from a highly decorated member of the Cadets of Gascony who was also an eloquent poet that was admired by most to a dying man in Roxanne’s arms who was pitied by everyone. Much like other heroes in other well-known works of literature, Cyrano was heroic as he possessed many admirable traits that often jeopardized his true happiness. However, he was also the one person that generated most if not all of the reasons for his own tragic destruction, which prevented him from having the true happiness of being with the love of his life: Roxanne.