

Bergerac Syndrome

Pablo Gutiérrez

Original Title: El síndrome de Bergerac
Working Title: Bergerac Syndrome
Original Language: Spanish / Spain
Publisher: Grupo Edebé
Publishing date: 2021
Number of pages/words: 240 / approx 53,000
Recommended age: 12+



**Winner XXIX Edition
Edebé Award for
Children's Literature
2021**

**Potentially
translation funding
from Spain**

Based on true events

Laced with humour, this original plotline based on actual events takes a classic play and literary references and makes them palatable to modern young readers

About the author

In 2008, **Pablo Gutiérrez** published his first novel *Rosas, restos de alas* (2008), which won the Premio Tormenta en un vaso (Storm in a Teacup Prize) for the Best New Author in Spanish. In 2010, he was featured as one of Granta magazine's Best of Young Spanish-Language Novelists (Issue 113). Before that, he was a finalist for the 2001 Miguel Romero Esteo Prize for Playwriting. Having spent a year living in London, Pablo is available for written and / or pre-prepared interviews in English. As well as writing books, he is also a teacher of literature at a secondary school in Cadiz, where he lives close to the sea in peace and tranquillity.

About the translator

Claire Storey is a literary translator working from Spanish and German into English. She translates for adults and children, but has a particular interest in YA and MG. Claire is co-editor of **World Kid Lit**, highlighting the importance of books in translation for young readers. In 2021/22, Claire received funding from Arts Council England for a project focussing on YA Literature from Latin America. She has been a speaker at the YA Lit Con, the Bookseller Children's Conference and the YA Studies Association Conference. In 2021 she was named Outreach Champion by the Institute for Translation and Interpreting for her work in schools talking about careers with languages. She would be happy to consider "author" events in schools as well as any marketing opportunities to support publication.

Publishing Rights

World English language rights available.

Rights holder: Grupo Edebé
Contact person: Geòrgia Picanyol Bulló
Email: gpicanyol@edebe.net
Website: www.edebe.com

BERGERAC SYNDROME
PABLO GUTIÉRREZ // SPAIN

claire@cslanguages.co.uk | [@ClaireStorey16](https://twitter.com/ClaireStorey16) | www.clairestoreylanguages.co.uk

Financial Assistance to Aid Translation

There may be several options available for financial assistance to support the translation process.

The Ministerio de Cultura opens applications for translation grants every year.

Email: traduccion.lenguasestado@cultura.gob.es

Acción Cultural Española (AC/E) offers a programme of translation grants for full works, including children's books.

This programme is open from 1st March to 31st October 2023.

Regional bodies, such as the Government of Madrid also offer financial assistance to translate books from Spanish.

I would be happy to explore these options with you

Overview

“The year of the nose!” That is how the ex-students of the Juan Sebastián Elcano de Sanlúcar school in Spain remembered the “intense adventure” which inspired this award-winning young adult novel written by author and educator Pablo Gutiérrez. While at pains to highlight that this is a work of fiction, Gutiérrez stated in an article for the national Spanish newspaper El País that “in essence, everything we experienced that year is in here: the discovery of books and theatre, the awakening of love and friendship, the insecurities of adolescence, dreams and fears.”

Velia and her friends are embarking on their post-16 education. They decide to take a module on World Literature, run by a new teacher - Lupe. After initially struggling to inspire her students, Lupe agrees that one lesson per week will be an open discussion covering whatever the students desire. In amongst the random conversations about TV, film and books, Lupe intertwines snippets of classic world literature, drawing comparisons to the students' discussions.

When one student tells of a film she was watching with her parents - Cyrano de Bergerac - the idea emerges to perform the play to the school....

Throughout the story, there references to classic literature and also Harry Potter - Velia is a self-confessed Potterhead!

The story of Cyrano de Bergerac is a popular text and has been made into several films over the years, the most recent of these - a musical adaptation - was released in 2022.

BERGERAC SYNDROME

PABLO GUTIÉRREZ // SPAIN

claire@cslanguages.co.uk | @ClaireStorey16 | www.clairestoreylanguages.co.uk

Praise for Bergerac Syndrome

EXXIX Edition Edebé Award for Children's Literature 2021 - Winner

"Selected unanimously, the jury remarked that it is a masterclass of literature and drama that encourages children to put a play on stage. They praised the humour and references to well-known works such as Cyrano de Bergerac, Salinger, Shakespeare and the Harry Potter saga. It is a clear tribute to literature". [Watch the video](#) on YouTube (with English subtitles)

Raquel Vidales, El País (National Newspaper)

The teacher who converted Cyrano de Bergerac into an adolescent idol.

"With Bergerac Syndrome ... [Gutiérrez] demonstrates his leap into the young adult genre, something that is not always common with authors who have achieved recognition among the adult public. For Gutiérrez, however, given his double experience as a writer and educator, it comes naturally." -

Spain's News in English

Pablo Gutiérrez teams up with Cyrano de Bergerac to win over young people. Cyrano de Bergerac is a "bully with a broken heart' created by Edmond Rostand, a character who 'represents adolescent thinking' and who also gives his name to Bergerac syndrome, suffered by people who, due to their lack of confidence or the distorted perception of their image, make them want to be on a third plane or, if possible, go unnoticed."

BERGERAC SYNDROME

PABLO GUTIÉRREZ // SPAIN

Synopsis

When Velia and her group of friends embark on their post 16 education, they have to choose which subjects they want to go on to study. Narrated in the first person by Velia, as an avid reader, it seems only natural that she should opt for a course on World Literature. Their teacher Guadalupe (Lupe) Ossorio is new to the school and Velia, along with the nine other pupils who also sign up for the course, finds her teacher's behaviour a little odd and can't quite work her out.

After struggling to inspire her pupils, a frank discussion takes place in class which culminates in an unusual agreement: Monday to Thursday, their classes will continue as usual, but on Friday, the class has the freedom to discuss whatever they want. While their Friday classes appear to descend into chaotic discussions about books, films and TV, Lupe cleverly intertwines snippets of world literature and there are many literary references throughout the book, introducing readers to great writers of note. Velia is also a huge "Potterhead", and fans of the series will appreciate the many references to the saga.

When Claudia comes to school one Friday and shares her experience of watching the film *Cyrano de Bergerac*, the germ of an idea begins to grow: they could stage an adaptation of the play. Passages taken from the original play *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1897) written by Edmond Rostand (1868-1918) are included, which Velia and Claudia subsequently adapt for their performance.

While some of the pupils are initially reluctant, the enthusiasm spreads, reflected in the scenes of fast-moving dialogue, and with Lupe's help, they determine to do it. Laced with humour, this original plotline takes a classic play and literary references and makes them palatable to modern young readers.

The pupils enlist the help of their parents to refit the stage, sort out the lighting and sew the costumes as well as helping each other to embody their roles. As the day of the performance arrives, tensions grow and the pupils work together to face their fears. When Claudia pulls out just days before the show, Velia must step up and take on the central role that Claudia has abandoned. The performance is a huge success.

In amongst these preparations are also reflections on the complex adolescent themes of friendship, first kisses, toxic relationships, betrayal and self-confidence. Along the way, the pupils discover great literature, classic works, the magic of theatre, and above all, the ability of words to create realities. As Lupe says in the story, "Theatre is a sequence of obstacles that implacably leads us to disaster but that always ends well."

BERGERAC SYNDROME

PABLO GUTIÉRREZ // SPAIN

claire@cslanguages.co.uk | [@ClaireStorey16](https://www.instagram.com/ClaireStorey16) | www.clairestoreylanguages.co.uk

Sample Translation

English translation by Claire Storey
(pp. 83 - 90)

A film. It's fair to say it was Claudia who brought Cyrano de Bergerac back from the grave, but had we not been so moved by the final scene of Romeo and Juliet, none of it would ever have taken place. I mean, Shakespeare and our friend's acting talents had already heightened our sensibilities, so Claudia's words fell on fertile soil.

This is how it happened:

Friday, open discussion on reading and neurosis. The classes had degenerated somewhat; we spent the hour talking about films, TV, music, fanfic, manga characters or anything else that occurred to us. The teacher, Lupe, let us speak freely, as if simply letting go of the kite strings, going along with the agreement we had made, although I imagine she sometimes thought of us as kids without any real substance.

Connor had left his suspicions about our teacher behind him and tried to take a lead role in the conversations, but Vélez and Claudia kept him out of the limelight. Every so often, Lupe would subtly steer the session towards one of her interests. She took advantage of our discussion about Kafka's novella to introduce us to *The Metamorphosis*; or that song by Cat Stevens to talk to us about John Lennon, whose assassin claimed to have committed the crime in line with instructions from a famous novel called *The Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger. That Salinger was a strange guy, he shied away from photos, lived in a hut in the forest and had no interest in fame or success. Of course, after nibbling a tiny corner of that particular cookie, I had to go to the library to borrow a copy of *The Catcher*, which I read that very night. It became one of my favourite books. Years have gone by and it still is.

Lupe's strategy was perfect. She wanted there to be disorder and confusion, and at that moment she would introduce the themes, topics, structures and literary mechanisms that she wanted us to learn about. She'd dangle temptations in front of us, trying to provoke a reaction. In many ways, Lupe was playing with us, and we barely even noticed.

"Right, your turn, Claudia," she said. "Tell us something."

"Yesterday my parents were watching a film," started Claudia, "and I sat down for a few minutes to watch a bit of it with them ... It was an old film, about musketeers, really weird because it was all in verse, like a play at the theatre, but it wasn't annoying like you'd expect, you forgot about the rhyming pretty much straightaway and it flowed really naturally, like songs in a musical. D'you know what I mean? Like the poems slipped out on their own accord, I can't explain it... And it was really funny too and made me laugh lots! But it was really sad at the same time..."

BERGERAC SYNDROME

PABLO GUTIÉRREZ // SPAIN

"It was about a guy who had a huge nose, I mean, like enormous, and he happened to be the best poet in France, as well as the bravest and the most ruthless. He had no respect for anything or anyone and caused massive scandals. At the start, he's having a duel with some posh gentleman, and while they're fighting, this poet guy's there making up a poem to take the mickey out of his opponent. Then you discover he's in love with the most beautiful woman in Paris, but you can just imagine how it is. With that nose! Poor thing. His name was Cyrano. Cyrano de Bergerac.

Lupe said it was one of her favourite films. She told us the plot was based on the play by neo-romantic author Edmond Rostand, and that this Cyrano de Bergerac really did exist, so we're coming back to that whole thing with the Laughing Cow cheese triangles: a film, based on a play, in turn based on the life of a guy who wrote poems that appear in the film, and so on. Mise-en-abîme, the dream of a dream of a dream...

"Why don't we read it?" said Maria, with her blessed innocence. "I know it's off topic, but we could read it out loud, if it's so funny. Like we did with Romeo and Juliet."

"Great idea! We could even act it out," said Claudia. "Here, in class, just for ourselves."

"Or on a proper stage," dared Vélez challengingly. "We could learn all the lines and perform it."

"Yeah, bruh, like it's that easy," said Roberto. "Learning all that, off by heart!"

"And anyway, there's loads of stuff we've not got: costumes, lights, swords, the set..."

"Swords? Would we really have swords?"

"Back in my old school, we put on two plays a year," said Vélez. "A Christmas Carol just before the Christmas holidays, and a few scenes from Don Juan Tenorio or something by Lope de Vega at the end of the summer term. All dead classical because the teachers were a bit old and fusty, but I enjoyed it. I'm up for it. Come on, who else is? You have to say yes, Candi, you're amazing, you were born for it. And you too, María."

"There's no way you're getting me on a stage! Don't be ridiculous. Sooo cringe!" replied Maria. "It's one thing to do it here with just a few of us, it's another to do it in front of like everyone. Ha!"

"What's there to be embarrassed about? Even if it's just for the other kids in our year?"

"The other kids in our year? That's even worse. Don't even joke!"

"And where would we get all the stuff from?" asked Juanito.

BERGERAC SYNDROME

PABLO GUTIÉRREZ // SPAIN

claire@cslanguages.co.uk | @ClaireStorey16 | www.clairestoreylanguages.co.uk

"We could make the set ourselves," said Claudia. "With paper, like illusions."

"Like a magician?"

"No, not really. Just like pictures that look like actual doors and windows, D'you get it?"

"Not really."

"Google it."

"And costumes?"

"My mum can help," answered Artur, whose voice we'd barely even heard before. "She's a seamstress. A good one. She makes costumes for carnivals, amazing outfits. She's got a lot of spare time, she'd love to do it."

"We'd need to sort out the text, too," said Maria. "It's probably far too long, or too difficult. I dunno.."

"Velia and I can sort that out," said Claudia, looking at me. "I'll come round to yours this weekend, I'll bring the original book, we can read it and write an adaption. OK?"

"What d'you mean, we'll write an adaption?" I asked, shocked.

"Oh come on! You can't say no, not with all those books you read and the stories you write... Do that and you don't have to go on stage if you don't want to."

"Oh no! It's either all of us making fools of ourselves or none of us," warned María.

"See, you're getting into it now..." said Vélez.

"Well, I've been thinking, and I'll die of embarrassment, really I will, but it would be amazing for us to put on a play..."

"I'll be the baddy," said Connor. "And if I die on stage, it'll be a dramatic death..."

"Hmmm, I'm not sure there was a baddy in the film," said Claudia. "Oh yes, there was! The Count, who's in love with Roxanne and annoys Cyrano whenever he has the chance... De Guiche, I think his name was. We could change it a bit, make it a bit easier and more evil..."

"De Guiche. I like that name. In fact, from now on, you can all call me De Guiche, just so I can really get into it. And I'll put on a French accent..."

BERGERAC SYNDROME

PABLO GUTIÉRREZ // SPAIN

claire@cslanguages.co.uk | @ClaireStorey16 | www.clairestoreylanguages.co.uk

“No need, your accent’s already weird...”

“And the swords? We’ve got to have swords...”

“We’ll buy them. Plastic ones. We’ll all chip in.”

“We’re not having plastic ones, they’ve got to make clanking sounds in the final duel... there is a final duel, isn’t there?”

“Not exactly, but I’m sure we can fix that.”

“But we’re still missing something: the theatre,” said Roberto. “Where would we do it? On the playground? There’s no stage or anything. It’s just a scho...”

“Actually, there is,” interrupted Lupe, who’d remained silent throughout the conversation, in line with her strategy of letting go of the string and allowing us to tangle ourselves up. “They told me there’s an old wooden stage in the gym. It’s not been used for years and it’ll all be in bits and covered in cobwebs, but apparently it had drop scenes and even a rig for the lighting. It’ll need sanding and painting... And we’d have to put out all the chairs... And sound, we’d need a decent sound system... It’s not exactly the best place to put on play, of course, but...”

“Really?” said Maria, “Are you serious? Are we really going to do this? We’re actually going to do it! It’s so exciting!”

“You’d all have to read the text first,” reflected Lupe, bringing the group back down to earth.

“Understand it, analyse it, get to know the characters...”

“OK. Well, let’s read it,” said María. “And we’ll talk about all that.”

“How long is it, miss?” asked Juanito.

“Like Romeo and Juliet, more or less.”

“I’ll be a musketeer,” said Roberto, his enthusiasm growing again. “A musketeer looking for a fight, a drunk, a down-and-out sorta guy, a scoundrel, a ratbag...”

“Yes! There’s one of those! He comes out right at the start! He’s Cyrano’s friend!” shouted Claudia.

“Perfect. That’s me sorted, then!”

BERGERAC SYNDROME
PABLO GUTIÉRREZ // SPAIN

claire@cslanguages.co.uk | [@ClaireStorey16](https://www.instagram.com/ClaireStorey16) | www.clairestoreylanguages.co.uk

"And who'll play Roxanne? Definitely not me!" asked Maria.

"Candi!!" we all yelled, and poor Candi looked so awkward, but chuffed with the idea at the same time.

"The all-important question... who's going to be Cyrano? A man who's so cocky, so arrogant, so witty, so sad and yet so in love? Which of you dares to don a nose like his?" asked Lupe, and automatically we all turned to look at Vélez.

"Hey, no pressure then," he said. "It's a big responsibility, I need to think about it... My parents are going to say no, they keep telling me I've got to focus on my studies and I get too easily distracted and waste my time and... Excellent. I've thought about it. I accept!"

"What about the nose?" asked Roberto. "Where do we get one of them?"

"They sell latex noses in fancy dress shops," said Artur. "They come with a sort of clay to stick it on, like the make-up they use in the cinema."

"So then, are we actually doing this? Putting on the play? With costumes, set, and all that? Is everyone agreed?"

"Everyone!!!"

"One for all, and..."

"That's not Cyrano, that's D'Artagnan."

"I... erm.. I don't want to pee on your bonfire or anything, but I need to think about it," I said, interrupting the euphoria.

"I'll think for you," broke in Claudia, shaking my hand. "Velia's in too."

"Bravo!"

"It'll be fantastic!"

"A huge success!"

"I'll die right at the most crucial moment in the play, I need to work out how..."

"What do you think, Lupe?" I ventured to ask, hoping she would say the whole thing was completely ridiculous.

"What do I think? I think it's a magnificent idea."

BERGERAC SYNDROME

PABLO GUTIÉRREZ // SPAIN

claire@cslanguages.co.uk | @ClaireStorey16 | www.clairestoreylanguages.co.uk