“My Last Duchess”

By: Robert Browning

That’s my last duchess painted on the wall,  
Looking as if she were alive. I call  
That piece a wonder, now; [Fra Pandolf's](http://mason.gmu.edu/~lsmithg/275pandolf.htm) hands  
Worked busily a day, and there she [stands.](http://mason.gmu.edu/~lsmithg/275period.htm)  
Will't please you sit and look at her? [I said](http://mason.gmu.edu/~lsmithg/275said.htm)   
"Fra Pandolf" by design, for never read  
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,  
That depth and passion of its earnest glance,  
But to myself they turned ([since](http://mason.gmu.edu/~lsmithg/275since.htm) none puts by  
The curtain drawn for you, but I) [10]   
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,  
How such a glance came there; so not the first  
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 't was not  
Her husband's presence only, called that spot  
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps  
Fra Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps  
Over my lady's wrist too much" or "Paint  
Must never hope to reproduce the faint  
Half-flush that dies along her throat:" such stuff  
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough [20]  
For calling up that spot of joy. She had  
A heart - how shall I say? - too soon made glad,  
Too easily impressed: she liked whate'er  
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.  
[Sir, 't was all one!](http://mason.gmu.edu/~lsmithg/275argue.htm) My favour at her breast,  
The dropping of the daylight in the West,  
The bough of cherries some officious fool  
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule  
She rode with round the terrace -all and each  
Would draw from her alike the approving speech, [30]  
Or blush,at least. [She thanked men](http://mason.gmu.edu/~lsmithg/275hyphen.htm) - good! but thanked  
Somehow - I know not how - as if she ranked  
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name  
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame  
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill  
In speech - (which I have not) - to make your will  
Quite clear to such a one, and say, "Just this  
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss  
Or there exceed the mark"- and if she let  
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set [40]  
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse  
- E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose  
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,  
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without  
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;  
[Then all smiles stopped together.](http://mason.gmu.edu/~lsmithg/275neptune.htm) There she stands  
As if alive. Will 't please you rise? We'll meet  
The company below, then. I repeat,  
The Count your master's known munificence  
Is ample warrant that no just pretence [50]  
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;  
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed  
At starting is my object. Nay, we'll go  
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,  
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,  
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze [for me](http://mason.gmu.edu/~lsmithg/275closure.htm).

Ms. Proch ELA B30

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

My Notes:

The Duke is the speaker of the poem. He is entertaining an emissary (representative) who has come to negotiate the duke’s marriage to the daughter of another powerful family. (He is a widow) he shows the visitor through the palace and stops at a painting of this last duchess. He starts to reminisce about her and the making of this portrait. He claims she flirted with everyone and did not appreciate his “gift of a nine-hundred-years- old name.” As he continues, the reader realizes that the Duke in fact caused the Duchess’s early demise: when her behavior escalated, “[he] gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together.” Having made this disclosure, the Duke returns to the business at hand: arranging for another marriage, with another young girl. As the Duke and the emissary walk leave the painting behind, the Duke points out other notable artworks in his collection.

Munificence- generosity

[Fra Pandolf's](http://mason.gmu.edu/~lsmithg/275pandolf.htm) – the made up artist who paints the duchess

**Information about Robert Browning**  Ms. Proch ELA B30

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Robert Browning was born on May 7, 1812, in Camberwell (a suburb of London). He was one of the greatest poets of Victorian England. The 1800’s, featured the reign of Queen Victoria; therefore, this period of English literature is considered the Elizabethan Era. Browning’s worked reflect his robust optimism and his faith in the value of human life.

In the 1830's he began to discover that his real talents lay in taking a single character and allowing him to discover himself to us by revealing more of himself in his speeches than he suspects-the characteristics of the **dramatic monologue**.

In 1845 he saw Elizabeth Barrett's Poems and contrived to meet her. She was another famous poet of Victorian England, but unfortunately she was in poor health and spent a lot of her time in a darkened bedroom writing poetry. Although she was very much under the control of a domineering father, the two married in September 1846 and a few days later eloped to Italy, where they lived until her death in 1861. Their relationship was one of the world’s most famous romances. The years in Florence were among the happiest for both of them. Although he lived and wrote actively for another twenty years, the late '60s were the peak of his career. His influence continued to grow, however, and finally lead to the founding of the Browning Society in 1881. He died in 1889. He is buried in Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey.

Browning’s best known style of poetry is the dramatic monologue. In his monologues he spoke in the voice of some imaginary or historical character. Most of these monologues portray people at dramatic moments in their lives. Some characters are good, and others are evil. With both, he indirectly expressed belief in the value of action and the dislike of passive behaviour.

“My Last Duchess” By Robert Browning Ms. Proch ELA B30

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Who is the speaker of this poem?

2. Why is the Duke showing the emissary, or representative, around his place?

3. What is the name of the artist who painted the Last Duchess?

4. How does the Duke describe the last duchess’ heart?

Please quote this information from the poem (2)

5. The duke gives numerous examples regarding what other people have done for her.

Name two of these things. (2)

6. What gift did the Duke give to her that she ranked the same with “anybody’s gift (34)?

7. Did the Duchess ever smile for the Duke? Circle: YES NO

8. Did other people make the Duchess smile too? Circle: YES NO

9. What was the Duke’s solution to his problems concerning the Duchess?

10. Why did he do this?

11. What type of person is the speaker of this poem? (2)

12. Is this poem considered an example of a dramatic monologue? YES NO

**/15**

“Porphyria’s Lover” By Robert Browning Ms. Proch ELA B30

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Who is this speaker of this poem?

2. Has Porphyria visited this cottage before?

3. Browning uses a literary device called pathetic fallacy. What does pathetic fallacy mean? How does he use it in this poem? (2)

4. Describe Porphyria. Give a minimum of two traits. (2)

5. Is this poem written in iambic pentameter? Circle: YES NO

6. Is this poem an example of a dramatic monologue? Circle: YES NO

7. Give two examples that show the speaker was interested in Porphyria’s love.

Please use lines from the text. (2)

8. Did the speaker think about his task before he accomplished it? Or was his action spontaneous and unplanned?

9. Once Porphyria is dead, the speaker does not leave the cottage. Instead, what does the speaker decide to do with the body? Name a minimum of two actions he proceeds with. (2)

10. Name at least two similarities between this poem and “My Last Duchess?” (2)

**/15**

“Porphyria’s Lover”

By: Robert Browning

The rain set early in tonight,  
The sullen wind was soon awake,   
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,  
And did its worst to vex the lake:   
I listened with heart fit to break.  
When glided in Porphyria; straight   
She shut the cold out and the storm,  
And kneeled and made the cheerless grate   
Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;   
Which done, she rose, and from her form  
Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,   
And laid her soiled gloves by, untied  
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,   
And, last, she sat down by my side   
And called me. When no voice replied,  
She put my arm about her waist,  
And made her smooth white shoulder bare,   
And all her yellow hair displaced,  
And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,   
And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,  
Murmuring how she loved me — she   
Too weak, for all her heart's endeavor,  
To set its struggling passion free   
From pride, and vainer ties dissever,   
And give herself to me forever.  
But passion sometimes would prevail,   
Nor could tonight's gay feast restrain  
A sudden thought of one so pale   
For love of her, and all in vain:  
So, she was come through wind and rain.   
Be sure I looked up at her eyes  
Happy and proud; at last l knew   
Porphyria worshiped me: surprise  
Made my heart swell, and still it grew   
While l debated what to do.  
That moment she was mine, mine, fair,  
Perfectly pure and good: I found  
A thing to do, and all her hair  
In one long yellow string l wound   
Three times her little throat around,  
And strangled her. No pain felt she;  
l am quite sure she felt no pain.   
As a shut bud that holds a bee,  
l warily oped her lids: again   
Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.  
And l untightened next the tress   
About her neck; her cheek once more  
Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:   
l propped her head up as before,   
Only, this time my shoulder bore  
Her head, which droops upon it still:   
The smiling rosy little head,  
So glad it has its utmost will,   
That all it scorned at once is fled,   
And l, its love, am gained instead!  
Porphyria's love: she guessed not how   
Her darling one wish would be heard.  
And thus we sit together now,   
And all night long we have not stirred,  
And yet God has not said aword!

**My Notes: Porphyria’s lover**

-Written and produced in 1836, and was considered grotesque and shocking bc the description of the girl’s death

-is it murder by a selfish man? Or depraved sexuality?

- it seems that she is familiar with the place

- talk about pathetic fallacy

- perhaps he does not speak because he is thinking about what he is going to do?

- the word found indicates that we was thinking of doing something prior to

- He "warily" opened her eyes, they were beautiful blue eyes, beautiful because he still saw the woman he loved and they were "laughing" because they were content with the events that had just transpired

- “laughing eyes?” Why? Was she smiling as she was being strangled? Does she want to face death? She uses her last bit of strength to produce these laughing eyes.-

- Why not a look of shock? After all, she worships him and the person you worship is strangling you?

- did she want to die? A form of euthanasia? Can we be sure?

- last line suggests that what he did was a good thing to do

- does not want to give into society’s pressures? And he thinks he will so he strangles her?