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WITH PORTRAITS AND FACSIMILES

My Last Duchess Details

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From Reader Review My Last Duchess for online ebook

Abhishek Singh says

Characters- The Speaker and His dead wife.

Theme- Power, Money, Arrogance, Jealousy, and Secrecy.

Because_I'm_Batman says

Hidden meanings and ambiguous statements, each word is chosen to reveal some aspect of the speakers' character. A dramatic monologue is a poem where an individual speaker talks to his audience describing some event or moment in his or her life which reveals features of their character, they may not have meant to share. This style of poem is a fun and interesting read, each line layered with meaning and intrigue, engaging the mind of the reader, forcing them to consider every line spoken and what possible meaning can be extrapolated. Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess" is one such monologue full of lines that reveal the true nature of the speaker.

The Duke is the speaker of this poem, and the character that is revealed is one of rigidity, control, and cold cruelty. Reviewing the Duke's words the reader quickly realizes that his last wife reached her end at her husband's hands. Whether he killed her himself or ordered someone to do it is unclear, though from what we can garner from his characters, he seems one not to stoop to such lengths, preferring not to get his hands dirty, that is what the help is for. He mutters in reference to his wife supposedly loose character, "E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose/ Never to stoop" (ll. 42-43). This line speaks of cold rigidity and a firm belief to never have to do anything he feels is debasing or would in some manner put him out. One can see him wave with a flap of his hands and a careless mutter for his wife to be removed from the picture, and he would feel secure in the knowledge that when he goes to bed that night it would be done.

Browning starts the poem with the Duke, who speaking to his matchmaker, saying, "That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,/ Looking as if she were alive," and one, when rereading through, is filled with the sick feeling that this painting has become his trophy, his reminder of the women he has killed, and the control he has exerted over her (ll. 1-2). He gets a sadistic sense of pleasure from the painting, from the last remnants of his wife, that last thing that seems almost "alive" with her life. He comments "none puts by/The curtain I have drawn for you, but I" (ll. 9-10). In life she lived as his wife, under his rule, under his thumb, he controlled her death, bringing about her demise, and now even in death he controls her and her story.

Everything that remains of her remains in his cold calculating hands, under his reign and authority, even her memory has been tainted by him. She will never be remembered for more than what he allows, and he reveals in this abuse of power and authority of her in all aspects of her existence. It is not hard to extrapolate the Duke needs absolute control in all aspects of his life and has no problem abusing his power to reach this state of authority over situations. Even his decorations hint of his need for dominance, "Notice Neptune, though,/ Taming a sea horse, though a rarity,/Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!" (ll. 54-56). Browning does a exceptional job of layering meaning into every word the Duke speaks and building up a hatred in his audience in the cruel Duke even as we are drawn further into the despicable drama of what is being told. "My Last Duchess" is a fabulous example of a dramatic monologue and it is clear to see how Browning earned so much respect and fame for his phenomenal work.

Rao Javed says

This was a poem with a deep story and with a deeper meaning. It was amazingly touching.

Cas Gabriel says

The narrator is so cunning and sly, like, seriously. We're supposed to hate and fear him, I know that, but I also can't help liking him. You know that guy. The guy we all love to hate. And like. Yes, a very good read.

Mario says

If I would ever have to choose a favorite poem, it would definitely be this one.

Talina says

Read for my English 1C introduction to literature

Lizzie says

2.5

Ramona says

So fascinating to pick apart (my working theory is that the last duchess was a cheater and the duke killed her for it, which is ironic because at the end of the poem he's going after another girl).

Also I'm convinced that in these lines:

*"She thanked men,—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..."*

he's talking about his p-e-n-i-you finish the word.

Emily says

This poem seems rather dull to me.

Keith says

I am not sure if I would want the Duke as part of the family?

Poem also at: poetrysoup.com

Leah Craig says

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.

Chelsea says

Browning is creepy and violent but he's also genius...plus I heard he was a total sweetie irl

The Brazen Bell says

Every time I read this, I'm completely stunned at how intricately detailed it is. Seriously, like the poem has couplet after couplet after couplet, but you never say the poem that way to get the actual rhyme. Beyond that, I think Browning tackles some interesting and horrible subjects without moralizing them. I still don't know about the final image in the poem, but I just dknafsdlkfjalsdf love this poem.

Sadia Mansoor says

An extract from the poem:

*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.*

Woohhoo.. That Duke got her killed!! Thats frightening! :/

What a selfish fellow!! -_-

Really like this poem (Y)

Poppy says

Quite a boring poem with no real tone

Larry Wang says

Pretty solid poem. I don't really like verse, but this was enjoyable.

Kevin J.J. Carpenter says

What a horrifying poem! It's a dark and very realistic study of life (and marriage). And when you realise how the last duchess actually found her demise, you'll feel a horrible, unrivalled swelling in your gut. It's fantastic.

Sarah says

"...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."

"My Last Duchess", which I read in conjunction with "Poryprynia's Lover", is pretty much a prime example of how a dramatic monologue should be written. More than anything, the subtlety of the narrator in his choice of words (made clearer by the strict poetic structure- heroic couplets) and intonation is what gives the reader a true idea of what happened. As it turns out, the "last duchess" has committed no crime and has done nothing wrong- it's really all just in the Duke's head. His perception of reality is skewed so that everything she does is somehow worthy of envy, and eventually possible death (this point was actually argued in my class, which is why I phrase that this way).

Really, really brilliant. I'm more interested in Browning now!

Tuba Sayed says

Oh god, our main protagonist is so sly, I can't even. . .
