NAME: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Robert Browning**

**MY LAST DUCHESS**

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have 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, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Frà 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, 'twas all one! 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, -- 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 an 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. 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!

1. Imagine that you are the gentleman who has come to meet with the Duke about a possible marriage between him and your master’s daughter. Write what you are thinking and saying as you listen to the Duke. Write your comments/ thoughts next to the lines of the poem—thoughts in bubbles, comments in quotes.
2. IF Browning had written this poem as a dialogue, would it have been as surprising, as fun to read, and as poetic? Why or why not?

**Porphyria's Lover**

1. What mood is set by the first few lines? Underline words that create mood.

THE rain set early in to-night,

  The sullen wind was soon awake,

It tore the elm-tops down for spite,

  And did its worst to vex the lake:

  I listen'd with heart fit to break. *5*

When glided in Porphyria; straight

2. Line 5-14: what kind of a woman is Porphyria? What kinds of things does she do for her beloved?

  She shut the cold out and the storm,

And kneel'd and made the cheerless grate

  Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;

  Which done, she rose, and from her form *10*

Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,

  And laid her soil'd gloves by, untied

Her hat and let the damp hair fall,

  And, last, she sat down by my side

  And call'd me. When no voice replied, *15*

She put my arm about her waist,

3. How does the speaker in the poem react as Porphyria lights the fire, sits at his side?

  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, *20*

Murmuring how she loved me—she

4. What kind of “ties” is she afraid to break for the sake of her love for the speaker?

  Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,

To set its struggling passion free

  From pride, and vainer ties dissever,

  And give herself to me for ever. *25*

But passion sometimes would prevail,

5. What does the speaker want from Porphyria?

  Nor could to-night'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. *30*

Be sure I look'd up at her eyes

6. How does Porphyria, according to the speaker, feel about him? How does he feel about this sudden realization?

  Happy and proud; at last I knew

Porphyria worshipp'd me; surprise

  Made my heart swell, and still it grew

  While I debated what to do. *35*

That moment she was mine, mine, fair,

7. What is there to debate about?

  Perfectly pure and good: I found

A thing to do, and all her hair

  In one long yellow string I wound

  Three times her little throat around, *40*

8. What is his “solution”?

And strangled her. No pain felt she;

  I am quite sure she felt no pain.

As a shut bud that holds a bee,

  I warily oped her lids: again

  Laugh'd the blue eyes without a stain. *45*

And I untighten'd next the tress

9. Sketch what you see from the description in these lines:

  About her neck; her cheek once more

Blush'd bright beneath my burning kiss:

  I propp'd her head up as before,

  Only, this time my shoulder bore *50*

Her head, which droops upon it still:

  The smiling rosy little head,

So glad it has its utmost will,

  That all it scorn'd at once is fled,

  And I, its love, am gain'd instead! *55*

Porphyria's love: she guess'd not how

  Her darling one wish would be heard.

And thus we sit together now,

  And all night long we have not stirr'd,

  And yet God has not said a word! *60*

10. Who might be the audience, or listener, who has just heard this whole ‘lovely’ explanation the speaker has just given?

11. What do you think will happen next?

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12. Were you surprised?

Judge: Do you think poetry should be about weird strange behaviors? Why do you think a poet, who was actually pretty normal and happy, write such strange poems about nutty people, even psychopaths?

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