

# My last duchess essay essay sample



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One would believe that the primary reason for becoming emotionally involved with a partner in the form of marriage would be love, and my perception of love between two human beings is an intense feeling of deep affection or fondness for their partner. However “ My Last Duchess” completely contradicts this belief.

The Duke appears to have had no ability to understand his wife as little more than a beauty, and regards her solely as a painting in his grand collection now she is dead. This is evident where it says:

“ That’s my last Duchess painted on the wall,

Looking as if she were alive.

I call that piece a wonder now”

From this it is possible to believe that he perceived her beauty to be only skin deep and that he failed to understand her character when she was alive as she is only “ a wonder” now she ceases to exist. Before he only showed interest in what was on the surface and was not content when she did not portray the normal wife image. She did not share his views and took pleasure from nature and the simplest things, when everything he wanted he could capture from art and literature. However now she is a wonder to him as he can admire her beauty alone.

There is also an autocratic sense to his character, which shows the power he holds over her. This is evident on many occasions two of which are:

“(since none puts by the curtain I have drawn for you, but I)”

and

“ I gave commands”

These both show that he is a sole power and had a hold over her every move. It almost suggests that he owned her in the first quote, which shows how she was deemed inferior to him.

This image of how egotistic he is comes up again between Lines Twenty two and Thirty four where he implies that the Duchess's wider view of the world and taking pleasure from the simplest things made her very common indeed.

He contrasts this greatly with himself when he says:

“ as if she ranked

My gift of a nine-hundred year old name

With anybody's gift”

Here he becomes very arrogant, as he believes he was far superior to his wife and makes her character, which was so opposing to his, seem wrong. He was born into a rich wealthy high class family and she was merely of the common folk.

This character is supported by the tone of the poem, which is very official and almost conceited. This, the way his manner is expressed, and the use of extremely formal language- which shows he is prim and stiff in manner-leads me to believe he is affectedly superior, aloof and almost snobbish.

There is also a great sense of irony in this poem. Robert Browning, the poet, snatched his love Elizabeth Barratt away from her father, a family tyrant. They eloped and married and loved one another to her death. They experienced mutual love.

However this is an extreme contrast to the affairs in the poem. The Duke seemed to have cared more for the appearance of his wife, leading me to believe that there's was not a mutual love and that they did certainly not love each other until she died.

The form of this poem is slightly odd, however the rhyme scheme seems very regular in rhyming couplets. It is a single stanza poem and therefore has no gaps. I think in this case the form mirrors the content, as judging from how conceited and arrogant the Duke appears, and how superior he believes himself, it would fit his character and cold formal manners for him to speak in a monologue continuously without letting anyone else having a word in.

There is also a great deal of enjambment where the Duke continues on speaking without a pause beyond the end of the line. This makes the poem seem more like a story, which he is telling to the Count and also shows again how superior he believes himself as he continues speaking continuously. No-one else could possibly get a word in.

Lastly it is clear that the Dukes main priority was his image and his art held importance over his love, as the whole poem ends with him referring to a bronze statue of Neptune which he has recently had cast in bronze.