

# Comparison of hemingway and browning's novels



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The theme of gender is extremely prevalent in both *Hills Like White Elephants* by Ernest Hemingway, and *My Last Duchess* by Robert Browning. In both of these instances, the main characters in both stories revolve around powerful men in one way or another. For the Duke, his world revolves around power; and at this time, power of such royal status could only be obtained by a man.

In *Hills Like White Elephants*, a couple is debating the possibility of the woman receiving an abortion for an accidental pregnancy. However, throughout the short story, it is very apparent how the man's tone changes and affects his girlfriend.

In *My Last Duchess*, the Duke is extremely sensitive and jealous of the way his late wife paid attention to other people. As a powerful man in charge, he believed that he was the only person, especially the only man, that the Duchess should be able to pay attention to. Thus, when she looked on, and her looks went everywhere, the Duke was extremely offended, for he was supposed to be the favor at her breast. He found it quite offensive that she interacted and spoke with other men when she was married to a man of such great power and status; that she would never have to speak to someone else. He felt that his gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name should have been taken with pride and gratitude. It disgusted him that she could ever give attention to someone that was not him. He believed that women, especially wives, deserved to be domestically dominated, the same way servants must follow orders; any sign of kindness or joy was a threat to his power as a man. Therefore, after she died, possibly at his doing, he found her very dispensable. Because of his gender, he felt

that women were disposable and easily replaced, therefore he would be able to easily find his next duchess.

Similarly, in Hills Like White Elephants, the American Man is sure to make his opinions known about his girlfriend's possible abortion. It is quite shocking how he acts and speaks to his girlfriend about such an important and frightening topic, that would change their lives forever. Clearly, the reader is able to tell that the girlfriend is very upset and worried about the possibility of becoming a mother, and rightfully so. However, her boyfriend is very insensitive to her feelings when speaking of the abortion: [The operation's] really not anything. It's just to let the air in. The way that he speaks of a life-altering operation is definitely an interesting choice in diction when referring to the abortion his pregnant girlfriend may have to have. I think the way that this man talks to his girlfriend is a clear sign of a man that definitely views himself as the dominant hand in the relationship. He is not nearly as high-strung as the Duke in the previously mentioned story, but I think that their genders definitely play a role. In a situation where the man has no idea what it is like to be pregnant and have to be the one having the abortion, the man has a very strong, ignorant, and somewhat arrogant opinion of what his girlfriend should do.

In both stories, the male characters feel that their opinions and needs are more important than the women's; a classic tale of gender inequalities that have been seen through many years of history and literature.