

Read Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess" from lines 21–34 (from "I said / 'Frà Pandolf' by design, for never read" to "For calling up that spot of joy")

1. Reread lines 21–23: "She had / A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad, / Too easily impressed." What is the effect of the repetition in these lines?
2. What is the effect of "how shall I say?" (line 22) on lines 21–23?
3. What does the Duke mean by "the dropping of daylight in the West" (line 26)?
4. What does *bough* mean in the line "The bough of cherries some officious fool / Broke in the orchard for her" (lines 27–28)? What words are associated with *bough* that can help to define it?
5. What happens in lines 27–28?
6. What is the connotation of the word *officious*? (line 27)? What words or phrases suggest this connotation?
7. What does the Duke mean when he claims the Duchess's "looks went everywhere" (line 24)?

8. What does the punctuation in "Sir, 'twas all one!" (line 25) suggest about the Duke's tone and message? What inference can be made about how the Duke feels about what he is saying?

9. What inferences can be made about the Duchess based on lines 25–29?

10. What does the Duke mean by the "gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name" (line 33)?

11. From the Duke's perspective, how does the Duchess value the gift of the Duke's family name?

12. How does this contrast with the Duke's view of the gift of his name in lines 31–34?

13. Evaluate the Duke's reliability as a narrator in these lines. Support your response with evidence from the text.