

English Assessment - Reflection

Name:	Sana	Date:	Dec 2012
Essay title:	Lack of Morality AO1, AO3, AO4		
Checklist: (the basics)	Introduction	✓	AO1
	Focus on the question	✓	AO2
	Spelling/grammar	✓	AO3
	Presentation	✓	AO4
Reflect and self-assess:	<p>Does my introduction hook the reader in?</p> <p>Is my essay well structured and organised, flowing logically?</p> <p>Is my use of language clear, mature and appropriate?</p> <p>Do I show a good understanding of the topic?</p> <p>Is my essay focused on detailed analysis, rather than narrative?</p> <p>Do I go beyond the obvious?</p> <p>Is my argument sustained and developed throughout the essay?</p> <p>Does my conclusion refer to the question?</p> <p>Does my conclusion bring a new and interesting point to strengthen the argument?</p>		
What Went Well:	<p>AO1: Confident expression, good use of critical vocabulary throughout</p> <p>AO3: A well balanced argument therefore allowing you to offer a variety of interpretations.</p> <p>AO4: Well used context 😊</p>		
Target:	<p>⊕ Could you provide more evidence (quotes) from the text?</p>		

18/21 Band 6

How far do you agree that the characters in Brownings poems display a disturbing lack of morality so they are impossible to sympathise with?

"My Last Duchess" and "Porphyria's Lover" are two pieces of poetry that can be argued as extremely morbid complete with a macabre series of murders ^{committed} done by individuals who lack morality.

However, it can also be argued that to a certain extent Robert Browning ~~does~~ depicts these characters in such a manner that it would make the reader feel a sense of sympathy towards them.

Undoubtedly, Browning portrays the Duke of Ferrara in 'My Last Duchess' as a dehumanised individual who cannot be reckoned with as he is the one in power. Throughout the poem, this power of his is constantly made aware to the reader through his formal but commanding tone, "Will't please you sit and look at her" Browning deliberately uses this in his dramatic monologue with the purpose of producing a sinister and domineering effect. On a second reading, it forces the reader to believe that there is an implied listener who the Duke is asserting authority over. The regular repetition of "my" and "mine" also reflects the Duke's possessive nature as he wants to contain the beauty of his late wife his ability to do this reflects his socially superior status. Browning's psychopathic Duke finds contentment only in manipulating and controlling others this is a visible sign of his wealth. Therefore, his character has been decided as the critic David Lodge has stated "character emerge gradually, diversified or actually conveyed by action and speech." This makes it difficult for the readers to sympathise with the Duke of Ferrara.

Readers may also find it extremely difficult to feel any kind of sympathy towards the Duke as he gives women no value of life and strips them of their identity as though they are nothing but disposable objects. The Duke perceives his late wife as an object throughout the poem, indicating that she is only to be seen and not heard as she is painted on the wall "if she were alive". This idea of presenting her as a painting shows how mentally unstable the Duke is, that he still wants to control her ageless beauty that only art can contain, even after death. He wants to give her a life time sentencing in this frame of imprisonment where he draws the "curtain" open in order for the people he has permitted to gaze upon her. Furthermore, the Duke's love for materialistic excellence becomes apparent to the reader as he praises the tremendously talented painter "Fra Pandolf" for making a portrait that captures his late wife's beauty making it as if "she were alive" indicating his social superiority as his admiration for material things are much higher than human life. All these motifs symbolise the Duke finally getting complete obedience from his wife, even though every aspect of this poetic structure shows the control of the Duke, reality is quite different as he only gains this submission once he has killed his Duchess and placed her in this frame. Browning intentionally does this to show that even the socially inferior are never content with what they have but are very far from the norm of life.

At the time when this poem was written, during the Renaissance in Italy, art assumed a new humanism and began to separate religion, "My Last Duchess" is a perfect example of this as he captivates her to fulfil his own self-belief that now he finally possesses all of her appearances and has no fear that she will go against him. The painting can be seen as the 'newer' and 'better' version of the Duchess. The last few lines of the poem illustrate and reinforce the love for materialistic excellence that the Duke has, as he points out the statue of "Neptune." Browning has purposely introduced this fine piece of art as it is a direct indication of the Duke and his wife symbolised by the Neptune "taming" sea horse. This is also a direct imagery of the Victorian society that men were

AD3
ex up
reprehensions

through the use
of 1st person perspective / Monologue

AD3
interpret

great use
of
criticism

AD3

AD3
developed
interpretation

AD4
and
research.

Can you extend/explain this further/more sophisticated way? above women. However, it also shows how Duke has accomplished in "taming" his wife. This is why the reader withdraws any sympathy towards the Duke. ✓

On the contrary, it is possible for the reader to feel a certain amount of sympathy towards the Duke, as he is a lover with a heart full of pain due to the Duchess's actions. As the reader could indeed perceive the Duchess as flirtatious and unfaithful wife who admires other men even when knowing that her husband takes a disliking to it. Moreover, this shows the Duchess's complete disregard of her husband as she was "too soon made glad" indicating that she had lower standards and lacked knowledge on how women should behave around other men, instead of covering up her "wrist" she made her sexually feature's apparent. This is why some may argue that this is the Duchess's fate for being disobedient towards her husband, she refused him and so she deserves to have her life taken away from her. A woman of such stature acting in this manner was frowned upon in Victorian society and dealt with harshly so it was correct for her to be punished for the sins she has committed. Even more, this dramatic monologue could represent his confession of love for his Duchess who left him heartbroken and because he loves ever her so much, he decided to put her painting up so he could remind himself of the sorrow and the pain. This may invoke the readers to feel sympathetic towards the Duke of Ferrara. ✓

In Coming to Porphyria's Lover, to a certain degree it is impossible to sympathise with the speaker. The beginning of the poem is highly deceptive as the entrance of Porphyria was extremely elegant immediately indicating that she is higher up in status. Browning intentionally does this in order for the reader to recognise that there both on different playing fields, Porphyria being socially superior and the lover being socially inferior as he is not named. The name proves to be worthless as it is not mentioned, but his nature comes across as very spiteful and sullen, his speech is awfully hyperbole. Browning conveys the speaker as a man very much in love, who puts Porphyria on a pedestal as though she can do no wrong. However, the social struggle between them two becomes more apparent as if it's going to bring the worse out of the speaker, his speech changes "kneeling" "dripping" "soiled" all symbolise a 'Fallen Woman.' This completely throws the reader back, as Browning uses these literary motifs to reflect the speakers mind as believing she has lost her virginity and lost her innocence of being a woman. The Fallen Women, in the 19th century Britain, was used to describe a woman who has fallen from the grace of God due to her loss of innocence, the belief that socially and morally it is only acceptable for a women's sexuality and experience should be restricted to marriage. Porphyria's lover has accused her of such vile acts of infidelity, however, it has not be taken into account that if a man were to have an extra marital affair, it would be classified as more or less okay but indeed they only accept pure virgins. The speaker's actions are simply very contradicting to the era in which men had many mistresses. This is why the reader may not feel any sympathy towards to the speaker. ✓

On the other hand, this can be seen as an act of love as the speaker may believe that he is doing the right thing by killing her so she can avoid a bad name and save her from the social stigma and label that she will be placed with, setting her free from social class as it will mean that no one will know about her sin. Nevertheless, this is an uncertain interpretation as the speaker could simply be jealous of her status which it has all stemmed from causing him to be bitter towards Porphyria, leading him to believe that death is a levelling device so it takes away the social name that she carries as death does not see if you are superior or inferior, it is delighted to take anyone. The speaker believes that he has that authority. ✓

AB3 balanced argument 😊

ONE DOES NOT CONTRADICT TO THE SOCIAL CONVENTIONS OF THE TIME.

evidence?

A bit informal

AD4

what?

AO3 ✓
Alternatively, Porphyria's Lover has freed his love from a grisly death which is the highest act of love. Porphyria is known as a incurable blood disease, the symptoms of this illness is illustrated throughout the poem "gone so pale" and "too weak." Browning portrays Porphyria as if there is something wrong with her, the reader is aware that the speaker must make a decision fast as her health is deteriorating. The decision he made to kill his love (euthanasia) was morally correct as he did not want her to suffer anymore than she already had. This is why some may argue that you can feel a certain amount of sympathy towards Porphyria's Lover.

In conclusion, it is fair to say that to a certain extent Browning depicts his characters in his poems as characters you are able to sympathise with and who lack in morality, however, partially you can sympathise with them on certain issues.