

## Lesson Plan: "My Last Duchess"

**Student Teacher:** Ms. Bilello  
**Grade Level:** 12

**Cooperating Teacher:** Dr. Nallo  
**Subject:** English

**Date:** 3/31/10  
**Supervisor:** Dr. Yocum

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### Preliminary Planning

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#### PA Standards:

1.3.11.C Analyze the relationships, use, and effectiveness of literary elements (characterization, setting, plot, theme, point of view, tone, mood, foreshadowing, irony, and style) used by one or more authors in similar genres.

1.3.11.D Analyze the effectiveness, in terms of literary quality, of the author's use of literary devices, (e.g., personification, simile, alliteration, symbolism, metaphor, hyperbole, imagery, allusion, satire, foreshadowing, flashback, irony) in various genres.

#### Objectives:

Students will analyze a dramatic monologue, "My Last Duchess" by Robert Browning.

#### Materials:

Notebooks

Pencil/pen

Literature, The British Tradition, Volume II. Prentice Hall, 2002.

"Exploring Ideas" Worksheet

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### Learning Sequence

Description

Time: 10 minutes

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**INTO** (Introduction/Motivation/Focus Attention)

Today, we will be reading "My Last Duchess" by Robert Browning.

"My Last Duchess" is an example of a dramatic monologue. I will point out to the students that other authors including Chaucer and Shakespeare wrote dramatic monologues, but Robert Browning perfected the form and made it his own.

A dramatic monologue is the speech of a single speaker. Monologues contain the following elements (I will write these on the board): a speaker who indirectly reveals his or her situation and character, a silent listener, addressed by the speaker and implied in what the speaker says.

I will also tell students that a dramatic monologue contains no stage directions or omniscient narration. Poets can set a scene in a monologue through implication.

Two examples of a dramatic monologue will be read to the class. These examples are prose, so it shows students that dramatic monologues do not necessarily have to be poetry. After each example is read, students will have to discuss and determine what is taking place in these dramatic monologues. Students should keep in mind the elements of a dramatic monologue.

I will tell the students to pay close attention for these elements as they read “My Last Duchess.”

Description

Time: 20 minutes

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**THROUGH** Learning Activities (Input, Checking for Understanding, Guided Practice, Independent Practice)

Students will be given time to read this poem independently. After students have read the poem, I will go over the poem as well as ask some questions in order to check for understanding.

1. Who can summarize the poem? *Browning describes a portrait of his former wife. The Duke describes at length his dead wife’s supposed faults. As the Duke talks, he reveals to the reader—and to his unheard listener in the poem—his chilling personality.*
2. What are the Duke and his listener viewing? *The Duke and his listener are looking at a portrait of his deceased wife.*
3. In lines 1-4, what object is in front of the speaker? *He is standing in front of the portrait of his former wife.*
4. What technique does Browning use to convey this information within the form of a dramatic monologue? *The opening “that’s” immediately suggests that the speaker is indicating something. The rest of the line explains what it is he is indicating and implies that he is speaking to a visitor unfamiliar with the painting.*
5. Explain whether Browning’s setting of the scene seems forced or whether the speech seems natural to the speaker. *It would be natural for the Duke to utter such a speech while walking with a visitor past a painting in his home: the effect is natural not forced.*
6. I will ask for a volunteer to read lines 15-31, and then I will ask the class the following question: How does the Duke indirectly suggest his own deeply jealous nature? *The Duke shows that he could not tolerate the ordinary pleasures his wife took in simple things, since he felt that this pleasure equaled the pleasure she took in his gifts.*
7. I will ask for a volunteer to read lines 43-47, and then I will ask the class the following question: How rational is the speaker being? How irrational are his underlying feelings? *The Duke’s seeming rationality in thinking is belied by his completely irrational emotional reactions—insanely jealous of his wife’s attention to anything besides himself and his rank.*

Students will be given a worksheet, “Exploring Ideas.” This worksheet focuses on the Duke’s descriptions of the Duchess, and what they tell us not only about the Duchess but also the relationship between the Duke and the Duchess.

Students will have time in class to complete the worksheet in class with a partner.

Description

Time: the last 6-8 minutes of class

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**BEYOND** Closure (Review, Check for Understanding, Summarize, Future Forecast, Transition)

I will have the groups share their answers with the rest of the class. Going over the worksheet, will be the review of today’s lesson. I will ask the class if they know anyone like the Duke. How about the Duchess?

I will also ask the class to define a dramatic monologue.

“My Last Duchess” by Robert Browning  
CP English 12  
Dr. Nallo

### Exploring Ideas

**Directions:** Working with a partner, discuss the quotations below, taken from the poem “My Last Duchess.” Focus on what it would be like to be married to the Duke, and what the poem suggests about the Duke’s relationship with his wife and his own character.

The Duke’s Description of the Duchess	What does this tell us?
“She had a heart – how shall I say? – too soon made glad”	
“She liked whate’er she looked on, and her looks went everywhere”	
“as if she ranked my gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name with anybody’s gift”	
“She smiled, no doubt whene’er I passed her; but who passed without Much the same smile?”	

“My Last Duchess” by Robert Browning (Answer Key)  
 CP English 12  
 Dr. Nallo

### Exploring Ideas

**Directions:** Working with a partner, discuss the quotations below, taken from the poem “My Last Duchess.” Focus on what it would be like to be married to the Duke, and what the poem suggests about the Duke’s relationship with his wife and his own character.

The Duke’s Description of the Duchess	What does this tell us?
<p>“She had a heart – how shall I say? – too soon made glad”</p>	<p><i>The Duke was not the only to impress the Duchess. It was easy for people to woo her.</i></p> <p><i>The Duke was not pleased with this behavior.</i></p>
<p>“She liked whate’er she looked on, and her looks went everywhere”</p>	<p><i>The Duchess was not only interested in her husband.</i></p> <p><i>The Duke seems to be jealous and hurt by his wife’s behavior.</i></p>
<p>“as if she ranked my gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name with anybody’s gift”</p>	<p><i>She was not grateful for her husband’s name as she was flirtatious with other men.</i></p> <p><i>The Duke seems annoyed and upset because he wife did not value his name.</i></p>
<p>“She smiled, no doubt whene’er I passed her; but who passed without Much the same smile?”</p>	<p><i>The Duchess cared about her husband, but did not treat him differently than others.</i></p> <p><i>The Duke seems to be jealous.</i></p>