**Read ‘The Basics’ about *My Last Duchesss,* then re-read the poem before answering the following questions:**

1. Using arrows, match the characters’ names to their roles in the poem.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| * Alfonso, Duke of Ferrara
 |  | * The *NEXT* duchess???
 |
| * The ‘Last Duchess’
 |  | * The guest downstairs whose daughter the duke wants to marry
 |
| * Fra Pandolf
 |  | * The listener in the poem
 |
| * Claus of Innsbruck
 |  | * The speaker in the poem
 |
| * The Count
 |  | * The painter of the portrait of the ‘last duchess’
 |
| * The Count’s daughter
 |  | * The lady in the portrait
 |
| * The Count’s Servant
 |  | * The artist who created the bronze statue
 |

1. In the first ten lines of the poem, find evidence that a) the Duke is pleased with the portrait; and b) that he guards the image jealously.
2. The Duke says that the duchess had a heart ‘too soon made glad’. What does he mean by this, and what does it reveal about his character?
3. Name three different ‘gifts’ that the Duke describes as being given to the duchess. What point does he make by describing these?
4. The Duke claims not to have ‘skill in speech’. What does he mean by this, and do you think Browning meant it to be true? Is there any evidence in the poem that goes for or against this?
5. ‘…all smiles stopped altogether’ when the Duke commands the duchess to stop smiling at everything. Think of three different alternative meanings to this line. Which do you think is the most likely and why?
6. Why might the Duke point out the statue of Neptune ‘taming a sea-horse’ as they go down the stairs to greet the Count?
7. Browning chooses to reveal key information about the listener and the setting to the poem right at the end. Why do you think he chooses to hold this back in the poem’s overall structure?
8. The poem is written in *blank verse.* Look this up if you’re unsure of what it means – why might Browning choose this form, and why does he use *enjambement* to run lines into each other?

**EXTENSION 1: Using the information in the ‘Basics’ section, as well as your own research, how do you think *My Last Duchess* reflects Browning’s views on power in relationships in sixteenth century Italy as well as his own period?**

**EXTENSION 2: How would you describe the Duke’s use of language throughout the poem? Give some examples to back up your points, and link this into what he says about not having ‘skill in speech’ (develop detail from what you’ve answered in Q5!)**

**EXTENSION 3: How does a picture of the ‘last duchess’ emerge in the poem? Do you think there may be differences between the way she is portrayed by the Duke , and how she actually was? Find evidence in the poem for your reasons, and account for why Browning may have created these differences.**



 *poem by poem* QUESTIONS

***My Last Duchess***byRobert Browning