

---

## The Similarities And Differences Of “Porphyria’s Lover” And ‘My Last Duchess’

Robert Browning, the 2nd is an English poet and playwright from the 1800s. Browning was born on May 7, 1812, in a middle-class suburb in London. He started his early career making long poems. Browning was always inspired to write poems by his father. His father, Robert Browning, the 1st, had a library only available to him where there were historical anecdotes. At around 30 years of age, Browning wrote and published “My Last Duchess.” Browning’s second decision was to write “Porphyria’s Lover” which was first published in 1836. To draw a comparison between these two poems, it is vital to grasp the common thread between them. A Dramatic Monologue is a poem in the form of a speech or narrative by an imagined person, in which the speaker reveals aspects of their character while describing a situation. It has a more theatrical sense/quality to it than a normal monologue. It is a form of speech or narrative by an imagined person. Both poems have many similarities but are still very different in their many ways.

My Last Duchess starts off with “The Duke of Ferrara” who is the main character of this insightful poem. The literary composition starts off with The Duke debates with a servant for the hand of count’s female offspring in wedding. While the negotiations were going on, The Duke decided to keep a painting behind a curtain that only he is allowed to draw while the servant sits on the bench looking at it. While the Duke describes his painting, he mentions the artists name, Frà Pandolf. The duke also shows his control in the beginning parts of the poem. The Duke then ended up saying the portrait was of his former wife/lover. This pleased the Duchess and she ends up smiling the whole time. She was overly ecstatic when the Duke decided to take her hand in marriage. Although the poem doesn’t have an ending in which both characters are left joyful. It is mentioned in the poem “all smiles stopped together” which means he probably had killed her to shut her up.

Porphyria’s Lover starts off by describing the setting round the house of her lover. The speaker is the one living in the cottage and his lover is a young woman named Porphyria. She makes a dramatic entrance into the poem by coming out of a storm and tries to make a fire. They both eventually start talking and she mentions how she worships him. This poem also has a dark ending as well. The man decides to wrap her hair around her neck and strangles her.

Both dramatic monologues sound similar but different. They both tend to have a dark and deep ending to them, but there are many other things that factory in the similarities and differences. The Similarities are quite obvious, we have a dark ending at the end of each poem, and they are both a sort of love story. Both poems involve a man loving a woman and then killing her at the end of the poem. That’s not where the similarities stop though. Both men wish to have complete management in their relationships and in a very manner have possession of the woman. In “My Last Duchess,” The Duke shows he has all the control as he hires someone to murder his wife. This as compared to Porphyria’s lover shows that he has no control to kill herself by choking herself with her hair, However, it seems that in a way both the man and Porphyria killed her. They both ended up strangling her with her hair to kill her. It shows that she is only killed because it’s the only way her lover can stay with her spirit forever. This shows a similarity and a difference in both poems because in “My Last Duchess” the man hired someone to kill his spouse while in “Porphyria’s Lover” the man helps Porphyria kill herself. A

---

simple way to explain this is that in "Porphyria's Lover" Porphyria is killed through love, while in "My Last Duchess" The Duke moves on after murdering his wife and goes on searching for a new one.

Another Similarity is the fact that the poems are being told by the husbands. Both in "Porphyria's Lover" and "My Last Duchess" are the men telling the story, however in "Porphyria's Lover," the story is written in present tense while in "My Last Duchess" the story is being written in past tense. In "My Last Duchess" The Duke has found a new love and is already wanting to remarry. In "Porphyria's Lover" doesn't tell the story to a single person, it just tells it to the audience which is a similarity in 'My Last Duchess.'

The structure is another major source of similarities and differences in the poems. The structure of the two poems shows when in the poem the men have control over their women. This doesn't sound too bad since these poems were written back in the old times where woman didn't have rights. At the end of "Porphyria's Lover," towards the end of the poem where the man decides to take control and help kill Porphyria.

Another set of differences is in the characters. Sure, we know that the characters are different, but it's much more than that. The Duke decides to be cruel and murder his wife while Porphyria's Lover is very lonely and kills his lover so he can keep her with him. He even seemed sure that it was a good thing to kill her. The Duke is excessively attentive to class whereas Porphyria's Lover, rather than attempting to be powerful decides to be impartial in life. Like the Duke he is silent. Porphyria mentions in lines 21-30 that she is murmuring what proportion she loves her man which she was higher than him in status. We also see that both women are similar in their joyousness and their love for their men while the men are comparable in their control. It seems that The Duke was more powerful and had more control than the man in "Porphyria's lover."

Their treatment in love is very different in both works. In both works they show death as the best way to preserve love. The Duke is the one that kills in a more harmful way compared to Porphyria's lover. Browning shows the different ways of love in these two poems as two different possibilities. For "Porphyria's Lover," It shows the story as a happy ending even though the woman was killed. However, it's still better than "My Last Duchess" where The Duke tends to murder her and move on to another woman which doesn't show the preservation of love too well.

The nature of the two lovers are completely different as well. What separates the lover in "Porphyria's Lover" and additionally the one in "My Last Duchess" is that the character of their monologue, in "Porphyria's lover" her decision was to murder herself which was not expected while in "My Last Duchess" the Duke plans to murder her. This shows that the nature of the two poems are different even though they still have a similar theme. However, Porphyria's lover involves a man who does not realize the actions of killing her due to his everyday abnormal thoughts, he also performs the killing without much rethinking of what he had done. The Duke, however murders his wife in a very dark way by murdering her. This shows that even though these poems are very similar that they could even be opposites based on their endings. One is a Love story with a death but in a good way while the other has a death in a sort of dark way. "Porphyria's Lover" has a good ending to it while "My Last Duchess" has the sort of bad ending.

---

The theme of the two poems are also similar. The central theme of the two poems is love, but that's not all. The main theme is the preserved loved for one's self. Both lovers want to keep their woman for themselves. Porphyria has kept her lover consisted with himself while in the Duchess, her flirtatious personality forces her husband to control her.

Browning's treatment of love is also a comparison of both poems is unique. In both works, he shows death to preserve love. He doesn't make it easy to take in this theme. Browning, however, does hint all of this for us. He will provide us relative thought to lovemaking and therefore the completely different repercussions it has.

"Porphyria's Lover" and "My Last Duchess" are amazing works of art, Browning wrote in the 1800s that put a major effect on his career. These are both amazing and interesting reads of light and love. They both have similar characteristics but that doesn't mean they don't have differences. Both poems compare and contrast when looking from the reader's point of view and perspective. A major similarity that clearly resonates with the reader is the personification of love preservation. For "Porphyria's Lover," the story is more of a love story compared to "My Last Duchess." It is motivating to notice how each of the lovers are speaking out of their mind. whereas Porphyria's lover offers out obvious details regarding his feelings, thoughts, and therefore the act he completes. The duchess offers himself to her own will whereas the Duke decides to simply accept her fate. "My Last Duchess" takes on a darker approach on the love story. The Duke ends up killing his wife by hiring someone to do so. Compared to "Porphyria's Lover" Porphyria was willing her life to prolong their love for each other. These two pieces of Browning's work take a turn when the first poem showed the wife's free will to die, while the second poem took the wife's choice to die to prolong her marriage out of her hands, and her spouse hired a hitman to kill her. This comparison of these two poems can be taken in in many ways since Browning doesn't make it easy for us to take in the theme. He also never says that the only way to preserve love, because there are many different ways to do so. Killing your loved ones isn't really a good way to preserve love. Cherishing your life with your loved ones is much better than killing to preserve your loved ones. The Duke, for example, doesn't find this as a good solution to preserving love and tends to murder his wife. We also have to understand the fact that these poems were written in the 1800s which people at that time had many different beliefs than we do today.