

“My Last Duchess” by Robert Browning

Questions to consider:

1. What is a dramatic monologue?
2. Who is the speaker? How would you describe his character or personality? Who is the speaker addressing? What is the situation? Are there any allusions?
3. What was the Duchess like? Do we feel empathy for her? What does the speaker mean when he says, “she had/A heart...too soon made glad” (lines 21-22)?
4. In lines 45-46: “This grew; I gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together.” What seems to be the Duchess’ fate? Why does Browning suggest this fate so indirectly and ambiguously? What kind of language does the speaker use? (eg. Colloquial, elevated)
5. The speaker asks the envoy to notice another work of art, a bronze sculpture showing “Neptune.../Taming a sea horse...” (lines 54-55). What does this work of art suggest about the theme of the poem as a whole?
6. What point do you think Browning is trying to make?
7. What is your personal reaction to the poem?