Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Per: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

“**My Last Duchess”**

**Vocabulary:**

**• Duchess (n.)** – the wife or widow of a duke (the male ruler of a duchy; the sovereign of a small state)

**• Frà (n.)** – a title given to an Italian monk or friar (a Catholic man who has withdrawn from the world for religious reasons)

**• countenance (n.)** – face

**• earnest (adj.)** – serious in intention, purpose, or effort; showing depth and sincerity of feeling

Read lines 1–2 (“That’s my last Duchess painted on the wall, / Looking as if she were alive”) and answer the following questions…

1. What specific words and phrases does the speaker use to describe the Duchess?
2. What do these words and phrases suggest about the Duchess?
3. Who is the speaker of the poem? What words and phrases indicate the speaker of the poem?

**Read lines 2–4** (“I call / That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf’s hands / Worked busily a day, and there she stands”) and answer the following questions…

1. **What does the Duke mean by “that piece” (line 3)?**
2. **How does the Duke describe the piece?**
3. **Who is Frà Pandolf (line 3)? What words and phrases in lines 3–4 indicate who he is?**
4. **Why might the Duke mention Frà Pandolf in line 3?**

**Reread line 5** (“Will ’t please you sit and look at her?”) and answer the following questions…

1. **To whom is the Duke speaking?**
2. **Who else speaks in the first five lines of the poem?**
3. **Describe the Duke’s tone toward the listener in line 5. What words demonstrate this tone?**

**Read lines 5–8** (from “I said / ‘Frà Pandolf’ by design, for never read” to “The depth and passion of its earnest glance”) and answer the following questions…

1. What is “that pictured countenance” in line 7?
2. Explain what the stranger “read[s]” in lines 6–7: “for never read / Strangers like you that pictured countenance.” What might read mean here?
3. To what does “its” refer in line 8?
4. What are some words that the Duke uses to describe the “glance”?
5. What does the reader learn about the Duchess from the description of her portrait in the first 8 lines of the poem?

**QUICK WRITE:**

Identify **two** specific word choices in the first 8 lines of the poem and explain how they impact the meaning and tone. Use vocabulary from this unit in your quick write.

**Vocabulary:**

durst (v.) – dared

• mantle (n.) – a loose, sleeveless cloak or cape

• laps (v.) – lays partly over something underneath

**Reread lines 5–12** (from “I said / ‘Frà Pandolf’ by design, for never read” to “if they durst / How such a glance came there”) and answer the following questions

1. To whom does the Duke refer in line 6?
2. What does by design mean in this context?
3. Why does the Duke claim in lines 6–12 that he mentions Frà Pandolf “by design”?
4. For what other reasons might the Duke mention Frà Pandolf twice in the first six lines of the poem?
5. In line 11, what do the words “if they durst” suggest about the Duke’s view of himself?

**Reread lines 13–21** (from “Sir, ’twas not / Her husband’s presence only” to “For calling up that spot of joy”) and answer the following questions…

1. What does the Duke imply when he uses the word only in line 14?
2. What does the phrase “that spot of joy” suggest about the Duchess? What does the Duke imply in lines 15–21 might have caused such an expression?
3. What does the Duke mean by the phrase “such stuff” in line 19? What does the Duke’s use of the phrase “such stuff” suggest about his attitude towards Frà Pandolf?
4. How did the Duchess respond to “such stuff” (line 19)?
5. What does the Duke imply when he remarks that “such stuff / Was courtesy she thought, and cause enough / For calling up that spot of joy” (lines 19–21)?

**Quick Write:**

What does the reader learn about the Duke through his description of the Duchess in lines 1–21 of the poem?

Reread lines 9–10 of “My Last Duchess” (“But to myself they turned (since none puts by / The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)”) and respond in writing to the following prompt: **What does the reader learn about the portrait? How does this information develop the Duke’s character?**

**Vocabulary:**

favour (n.) – a gift bestowed as a token of goodwill, kind regard, love, etc., as formerly bestowed upon a knight by his lady

bough (n.) – a branch of a tree, especially one of the larger or main branches • officious (adj.) – objectionably aggressive in offering one’s unrequested and unwanted services, help, or advice; meddlesome

**Reread lines 21–23:** “She had / A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad, / Too easily impressed.”

1. What is the effect of the repetition in these lines?
2. What is the effect of “how shall I say?”

**Read lines 25–31** (from “My favour at her breast, / The dropping of the daylight in the West” to “the approving speech, / Or blush, at least”) and answer the following questions…

1. What does the Duke mean by “the dropping of daylight in the West” (line 26)?
2. What does bough mean in the line “The bough of cherries some officious fool / Broke in the orchard for her” (lines 27–28)? What words are associated with bough that can help to define it?
3. What happens in lines 27–28?
4. What is the connotation of the word officious? (line 27)? What words or phrases suggest this connotation?
5. What does the Duke mean when he claims the Duchess’s “looks went everywhere” (line 24)?
6. What does the punctuation in “Sir, ’twas all one!” (line 25) suggest about the Duke’s tone and message? What inference can be made about how the Duke feels about what he is saying?
7. What inferences can be made about the Duchess based on lines 25–29?

**Read lines 31–34** (“She thanked men,—good! but thanked / Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked / My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name / With anybody’s gift”) and answer the following questions…

1. What does the Duke mean by the “gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name” (line 33)?
2. From the Duke’s perspective, how does the Duchess value the gift of the Duke’s family name?
3. How does this contrast with the Duke’s view of the gift of his name in lines 31–34?
4. Evaluate the Duke’s reliability as a narrator in these lines. Support your response with evidence from the text.

**Quick Write:**

What is the impact of Browning’s choice of speaker on the development of the Duchess?

**Homework:**

**Respond briefly in writing to the following prompt:**

What does the reader learn about the characters of the Duke and the Duchess in lines 29–34? What is left uncertain about the Duke and Duchess in these lines?

**Vocabulary:**

trifling (n.) – idle or frivolous conduct, talk, etc.

• forsooth (adv.) – in truth; in fact; indeed

**Read lines 31–35** (from “She thanked men,—good! but thanked / Somehow” to “Who’d stoop to blame / This sort of trifling?”) and answer the following questions….

1. Consider the definition of trifling. To what “trifling” (line 35) is the Duke referring?
2. How does the Duke describe his response to the Duchess’s “trifling” (line 35)?
3. What does it mean to stoop? What does the word mean in this context?
4. What does the word stoop suggest about how the Duke views the Duchess?

**Read lines 35–43** (from “Even had you skill / In speech—(which I have not)” to “E’en then would be some stooping; and I choose / Never to stoop”) and answer the following questions…

1. What does the Duke say about his own speaking ability?
2. What does the language of the poem suggest about the Duke’s speaking ability? What specific details and examples illustrate his speaking ability?
3. What inference can be made about the Duke based on what he says about his speaking ability?
4. To whom does the Duke refer as “such an one” in line 37?
5. What is the meaning of the word will on line 36?
6. What is the Duke’s will? How does this contribute to the Duke’s development as a character?
7. What is the meaning of lessoned as Browning uses it in line 40?
8. Paraphrase lines 35–43 (from “Even had you skill / In speech” to “and I choose / Never to stoop”).
9. How do specific words or phrases in the Duke’s statement, “I choose / Never to stoop” (lines 42–43) impact the meaning or tone of the text?

**Quick Write:**

How does Browning further develop the character of the Duke in lines 34–43?