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Lindsay Shubin says

“Porphyria’s Lover” is a poem by Robert Browning written in 1842. Browning wrote this poem in the first person, which allows us to experience the story through the writer’s eyes. This poem reminds me of a quote by Rumi: “Life is a balance of holding on and letting go”. A stifling desire to hold on to things that are precious can spoil any remaining tender sentiment. Change is difficult to accept, and in times of transition it is difficult to focus on what may lie beyond the horizon. Because this poem prompted self-reflection, I enjoyed it and would recommend it to readers who enjoy stories with multiple layers.

The poem begins with the writer watching a violent storm from the inside of a cottage. His lover enters, starts a fire and makes the cottage warm. She goes on to tell the writer how much she loves him, but also how she was “too weak, for all her heart’s endeavor”. In that moment Porphyria worships him, and perhaps believing the affair may not last he decides to keep her forever in that moment by strangling her with her own hair. The writer is pleased because through his actions this love can continue: “That all it scorned at once is fled, and I, its love, am gained instead.” Believing this time together is what Porphyria ultimately wanted, he says: “Her darling one wish would be heard”. He then spends the night with her lifeless body.

The writer uses symbolism to express feelings, starting with the weather. The storm outside is symbolic of the writer’s mood. The weather is not just bad, but almost bitter and hurtful. It seems the writer might be expecting similar treatment when he states: “I listened with my heart to break”. A contrast is felt immediately when Porphyria enters the scene. The writer seems to view her as almost ethereal due to the way he describes her gliding in and how she “made the cheerless grate blaze up and all the cottage warm”. After her death, the writer is aware that he has acted selfishly but does not openly expressing regret, but perhaps alludes to it by mentioning: “And yet God has not said a word”.

Browning draws us into his poem with vivid descriptions of a tender scene, but catches the reader off guard with an unexpected ending. These factors have prompted various interpretations that attempt to decipher the true message of this poem. The message I interpreted was: Sometimes when we can feel something special slipping away we want to hold tighter and not lose our grip. However, we may selfishly strangle the life out of what we were holding so dear. Difficult though it may be, sometimes letting go is the best path. We need to find contentment with only being able to access those happy times by memory.

Elvia Martinez says

After reading Porphyria's Lover a few time and hearing it read helped me understand it a little better. I don't fancy poetry all that much. The way I understood this poem was that they were having a clandestine affair and this might be their last rendezvous. When the lover is strangling her, she is not putting as sort of struggle.

Lindsay Hetzel says

Literally read this in ENGLISH but I don't care because I am obsessed with this poem.

The Brazen Bell says

I am low key obsessed with this poem. It's genius. The moment Porphyria arrives the rhythm changes, the sudden horrible twist, the absolute madness and characterization of a manchild. Magical. I could go on all day about this poem. Browning is probably my favorite poet.

Yolanda Sfetsos says

So this is a poem my daughter studied this year when her class was looking at gothic poetry, and she recommended I read it.

Wow. It's very well written and sets a warm scene to begin with, before it's shattered by the narrator strangling the poor girl with her own hair! Because he wants to keep her forever.

So creepy. So vivid. Such strong conviction.

Danielle's Books says

Quite a twisted poem

Sarah says

"Be sure I looked up at her eyes
Happy and proud; at last I knew
Porphyria worshipped me; surprise
Made my heart swell, and still it grew
While I debated what to do."

"Porphyria's Lover" is genius in how the true drama of the situation unfolds and how the narrator is slowly revealed to be absolutely insane. Beginning with a depiction of dark feelings, Porphyria's entrance into the scene creates the illusion of warmth and safety, leading to a wonderfully gothic twist and gruesome aftermath. This was a fun one to read in my literature class.

Kristina says

"Porphyria's Lover" by Robert Browning shows the reader about the duality of nature in humans. This poem was written in a time when "lovers" could not be together if they had different social standings, and thus had to make sacrifices to be together. I enjoyed this poem because unlike many other poems that may be dull and lead you directly down the path it started with, "Porphyria's Lover" gives the reader a great twist at the end of

the poem.

"Porphyria's Lover" starts with a very stormy night where the wind is so strong it threatens to break the elm-tops. A man in his cabin that is cold and dreary sits there with his heart breaking as if he is waiting for someone. Then glides in Porphyria and she shuts the door to close out the cold and the rain, she then stirs the fire to warm the cabin. Once she had finished stirring the fire she starts to remove her rain soaked cloak, gloves and hat. Porphyria then lets down her long, damp and beautiful hair and sit next to the man in the cabin. She then starts to call to him but he never answers her so she takes his arm and puts it around her waist. She starts to tell him how much she loves him even though he is silent. He can see how beautiful she is and how much she loves him even to the point of worshiping him. To him this moment is perfect and he then starts to wrap her beautiful yellow hair around her next three times and strangles her. When she has finally died he thinks to himself that she is still beautiful and that she did not suffer. He then props her head on his shoulder and they sit there together in silence.

This poem starts off with such a stormy night but with so much love and ends with murder. As a reader this poem gave such a twist and was very vibrant that it made an impact on me. He speaks about the love that Porphyria has for him and how she worships him, that I never expected him to murder her. This poem was written in the early 1800s in a time where lovers could not be together if they had different socioeconomic standings. For me this poem was about a woman whom loved her lover so much that she would risk everything for him. When she would see him she would risk her reputation, family, social standings, and even her livelihood. But her love for this man was worth risking everything. The duality of human nature come into play when the man murders his lover even though they love each other so much. I believe they felt that the only way they could be together was in death.

As humans we are capable of horrible things like murder but also capable of beautiful things like love. "Phorphyia's Lover" shows us exactly that, that a man is capable of great love but also murder when he murders his lover. After reading this poem it validates even more that people do have dual natures and are capable of anything. For myself this poem is somewhat scary because just at the thought that everyone has the capacity to murder is something freighting.

Emily says

I do not like Robert's work as well as Elizabeth's. This poem is definitely more on the disturbing side.

D says

it is hard to believe the writer was such a loving husband despite writing a lot about characters who hate/murder their wives.

p.s: mentally thinks of every movie in which Tim burton makes jhonny depp murder Helena carter

Morgan 👩?🎓📚 Paukner says

This was interesting. I read it for school and I can't say that I regret reading it, at all.

Tracy Morton says

My all time favourite poem. I fell in the love with the imagery and the characterizations.

Ayman sulaiman says

I was reading so passionately I just got in that moment when he killed her I shucked it was unbelievable act .

Paula Rivera says

In “Porphyria’s Lover” a poem by Robert Browning, we can revel upon the duality of human nature once again. I enjoyed reading this poem, especially because Browning writes it from the point of view of the speaker himself, which allows us into his inner thoughts. The speaker takes us from one extreme –love to another- murder all with his thoughts. Again, portraying the duality of our thoughts and nature as humans. This Poem begins on a stormy, windy, night. As the speaker sits in his lonely cottage he describes how Porphyria enters, starts a fire and makes “all the cottage warm”. She then proceeds to speak to him, although we cannot hear what she says only to have him not respond to her. Not giving up, Porphyria moves his arm around her waist and bares her shoulder in what seems a sexually suggestive way. She says she loves him, and then he realizes how much she worships him, and must love him, to have come all this way in the rain. The speaker then decides to preserve that moment forever by strangling her with her own long blonde hair and sitting next to her corpse for the rest of the night.

Although this poem is about a love stricken man, it is written from the point of view of a madman as well. A madman who has perhaps, killed in the past to indulge his own fetish of possession and ownership over another human being. I found it that as a reader, I characterized him as a madman, yet did not necessarily feel sympathy for the victim Porphyria. Perhaps this is what Browning was trying to do by not describing much of Porphyria as a character, except, of her sexually suggestive ways although obviously not yet married to the speaker. This I thought made it easier for the reader to identify with the speaker. In turn forcing us to judge ourselves and consider the possibility that we might all possess the capability of evil or murder, as we possess the capability for love.

We might want something to work or be preserved so badly, that we are willing to go to extreme measures to preserve it, rather than face change. This may have been written in a Victorian time when perhaps changes in society were not the same as today’s, but a valuable lesson, of not fearing change can be applied to today’s living as well.

Amanda says

The poem, “Porphyria’s Lover” written by Robert Browning in 1842 helps me view on what is going on like if I was present in the time. The poem resembles a symbol defining that everyone has to let go sometime in their lives, even if you don’t wish too. Holding and gripping to something that you think is yours, might be gone in an instant. The author states this poem as a single image for readers to agree with, and familiarize

with their personal lives. This poem might be short, but it has many meanings to the author's expressions. In the beginning of this poem the writer is explaining how he is watching a powerful storm with a lot of wind that is taking place outside of his home. His lover walked in the home and made the place warm, and sat next to him and told him she loved him, but yet she felt "too weak, for all her heart's endeavor." On that instant when she said that, Porphyria began to ponder that their relationship was not going to last. So he decided to keep her forever and states "from pride, and vainer ties dissever, and give herself to me forever." He arose to strangle her with her own yellow hair. The writer took the separation of love difficult and still wanted it to remain. He began to realize that Porphyria adored him and sleeps with her dead body next to him.

There were many symbols that voiced the feelings of this writer and how he was heartless when doing the harmful act to his lover. In the begging of the poem, the writer states how the storm was so powerful with "sullen wind." The writers closely viewed her as if she was an angel walking in with a positivist outlook. When she entered their home there was a sudden change of emotion and sense in the poem. In the poem I view him as an evil, heartless man, almost as if he was not human. Towards the end of the poem the writer makes it seem if he has no regrets and is just careless when he says "Yet God has not said a word." In other words he does not regret on killing her and will be peaceful now that she is dead.

The author in this poem grabs my full attention, but leaves me shocked and surprised on how it comes to an end. My understanding of this poem is that: we are all humans and we all sometimes feel different about something and don't want to let go, but we try anything to keep it forever and just loose it in the end because we never let it go.
