

The first half of the poem

Task one

Consider the following sequence of events:

- A man thinks that because his lover is of a higher class, she would never commit to him. Her family would frown upon him, and their relationship, because of his background.
- On a stormy night, the woman visits the man.
- The man's cottage is cold, so she makes a fire to warm it and goes over to sit by her lover.
- She tells him she loves him and moves closer to him.



Questions:

- *Who do you think has the power in this relationship?*
- *How do you know they have power?*
- *What does it mean to have power in **any** relationship?*
- *Is having power in **any** relationship a good or a bad thing?*

Task two

Now, match the four events with quotes from the poem which support them:

<p>— she Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour, To set its struggling passion free From pride, and vainer ties dissever, And give herself to me for ever.</p>	<p>She tells him she loves him and moves closer to him.</p>
<p>The rain set early in to-night, The sullen wind was soon awake, It tore the elm-tops down for spite, And did its worst to vex the lake: I listened with heart fit to break.</p>	<p>On a stormy night, the woman visits the man.</p>
<p>She shut the cold out and the storm, And kneeled and made the cheerless grate Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;</p>	<p>A man thinks that because his lover is of a higher class, she would never commit to him. Her family would frown upon him, and their relationship, because of his background.</p>
<p>She put my arm about her waist, And made her smooth white shoulder bare, And all her yellow hair displaced, And, stooping, made my cheek lie there, And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair, Murmuring how she loved me —</p>	<p>The man's cottage is cold, so she makes a fire to warm it and goes over to sit by her lover.</p>

Task three

Look at the words in italics and think about how they might link to the idea of power:

<p style="text-align: center;">—<i>she</i></p> <p><i>Too weak</i>, for all her heart's endeavour, <i>To set its struggling passion free</i> <i>From pride</i>, and <i>vainer ties dis sever</i>, <i>And give herself to me forever.</i></p>	
<p>The rain set early in tonight, The sullen wind was soon awake, It tore the elm-tops down for spite, and did its worst to vex the lake: <i>I listened with heart fit to break. . .</i> ... tonight's gay feast...</p>	
<p>She shut the cold out and the storm, And <i>kneeled</i> and made the cheerless grate Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;</p>	
<p><i>She put my arm about her waist</i>, <i>And made her smooth white shoulder bare</i>, And all her yellow hair displaced, And, <i>stooping</i>, made my cheek lie there, And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair, <i>Murmuring how she loved me</i></p>	

The second half of the poem**Task four**

Consider the following sequence of events:

- The man looks adoringly at the woman; she seems to worship him.
- The man is surprised at this. Now that he thinks she belongs to him completely, against his expectations, he decides to keep her forever.
- The man uses her long hair to strangle her. He doesn't think it hurt her.
- He moves her dead body back into its propped position against his shoulder and takes pride and pleasure that both her apparent desire and his have been fulfilled.

'Porphyria's Lover' by Robert Browning

Questions to consider:

- *Who do you think has the power in this relationship now?*
- *How do you know they have power?*
- *What does it mean to have power in **this** relationship?*
- *Is having power in **this** relationship a good or a bad thing?*



Task five

Now, match the four events with quotes from the poem which support them:

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.
That moment she was mine, mine, fair

I found
A thing to do, and all her hair
In one long yellow string I wound
Three times her little throat around,
And strangled her. No pain felt she;
I am quite sure she felt no pain.

I propped her head up as before,
Only, this time my shoulder bore
Her head, which droops upon it still:
The smiling rosy little head,
So glad it has its utmost will,
That all it scorned at once is fled,
And I, its love, am gained instead!

Therefore, the man uses her long hair
to strangle her. He doesn't think it
hurt her.

He moves her dead body back into its
propped position against his shoulder
and takes pride and pleasure that
both her apparent desire and his
have been fulfilled.

The man is surprised at this; now
that he thinks she belongs to him
completely, against his expectations,
he decides to keep her forever.

The man looks adoringly at the
woman; she seems to worship him.

Task six:

Look at the words in italics and think about how they might link to the idea of **power**:

<p>Be sure I looked up at <i>her eyes</i> <i>Happy and proud</i>; at last <i>I knew</i> <i>Porphyria worshipped me</i></p>	
<p>surprise Made my heart swell, and still it grew <i>While I debated what to do.</i> <i>That moment she was mine, mine</i></p>	
<p>I found A thing to do, and <i>all her hair</i> <i>In one long yellow string I wound</i> <i>Three times her little throat around,</i> <i>And strangled her.</i> No pain felt she; I am quite sure she felt no pain.</p>	
<p>I propped her head up as before <i>Only, this time my shoulder bore</i> <i>Her head</i>, which droops upon it still: The smiling rosy little head, <i>So glad it has its utmost will,</i> That all it scorned at once is fled, <i>And I, its love, am gained instead!</i></p>	

The whole poem**Task seven**

Read the whole poem.

Think about the balance of power between both parts of the poem. What message about power do you think Browning might have been communicating in this poem?