

## Poems of Robert Browning

### Dramatic Monologue:

Dramatic monologue is a literary form where the writer takes on the voice of a character and speaks through them. Although dramatic monologues also occur in theater and prose, the term most frequently refers to a poetic form where the poet creates a character who speaks without interruption. Within the poem's framework, the speaker reveals surprising information about their character or situation to an implied or explicit audience, often not intended to be the reader.

A dramatic monologue is also called a persona poem, and the character speaking in the poem is referred to as a "persona." The narrator of a persona poem or dramatic monologue is most frequently a person, but dramatic monologues can also be told by animals, objects, places, or abstract concepts (such as love or destiny). It is written in second person, and the presence of an auditor is assumed.

Poets who write dramatic monologues or persona poems are occasionally referred to as monologists.

### The Last Ride Together

I SAID—Then, dearest, since 'tis so,  
Since now at length my fate I know,  
Since nothing all my love avails  
Since all, my life seem'd meant for, fails,  
Since this was written and needs must be—  
My whole heart rises up to bless  
Your name in pride and thankfulness!  
Take back the hope you gave,—I claim  
Only a memory of the same,  
—And this beside, if you will not blame;  
Your leave for one more last ride with me.  
My mistress bent that brow of hers,  
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs  
When pity would be softening through,  
Fix'd me a breathing-while or two  
With life or death in the balance: right!  
The blood replenish'd me again;  
My last thought was at least not vain:  
I and my mistress, side by side  
Shall be together, breathe and ride,  
So, one day more am I deified.  
Who knows but the world may end to-night?  
Hush! if you saw some western cloud  
All billowy-bosom'd, over-bow'd  
By many benedictions—sun's  
And moon's and evening-star's at once—  
And so, you, looking and loving best,

Conscious grew, your passion drew  
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,  
Down on you, near and yet more near,  
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here!—  
Thus leant she and linger'd—joy and fear!  
Thus lay she a moment on my breast  
Then we began to ride. My soul  
Smooth'd itself out, a long-crap'd scroll  
Freshening and fluttering in the wind  
Past hopes already lay behind.  
What need to strive with a life awry?  
Had I said that, had I done this,  
So might I gain, so might I miss.  
Might she have loved me? just as well  
She might have hated, who can tell!  
Where had I been now if the worst befell?  
And here we are riding, she and I.  
Fail I alone, in words and deeds?  
Why, all men strive and who succeeds?  
We rode; it seem'd my spirit flew,  
Saw other regions, cities new,  
As the world rush'd by on either side.  
I thought,—All labour, yet no less  
Bear up beneath their unsuccess.  
Look at the end of work, contrast  
The petty done, the undone vast,  
This present of theirs with the hopeful past!  
I hoped she would love me; here we ride.  
What hand and brain went ever pair'd?  
What heart alike conceived and dared?  
What act proved all its thought had been?  
What will but felt the fleshly screen?  
We ride and I see her bosom heave.  
There's many a crown for who can reach.  
Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!  
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,  
A soldier's doing! what atones?  
They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.  
My riding is better, by their leave.  
What does it all mean, poet? Well,  
Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell  
What we felt only; you express'd  
You hold things beautiful the best,  
And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.  
'Tis something, nay 'tis much: but then,  
Have you yourself what's best for men?  
Are you—poor, sick, old ere your time—  
Nearer one whit your own sublime  
Than we who never have turn'd a rhyme?  
Sing, riding's a joy! For me, I ride.

And you, great sculptor—so, you gave  
A score of years to Art, her slave,  
And that's your Venus, whence we turn  
To yonder girl that fords the burn!  
You acquiesce, and shall I repine?  
What, man of music, you grown gray  
With notes and nothing else to say,  
Is this your sole praise from a friend,  
'Greatly his opera's strains intend,  
Put in music we know how fashions end!'  
I gave my youth: but we ride, in fine.  
Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate  
Proposed bliss here should sublimate  
My being—had I sign'd the bond—  
Still one must lead some life beyond,  
Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.  
This foot once planted on the goal,  
This glory-garland round my soul,  
Could I descry such? Try and test!  
I sink back shuddering from the quest  
Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?

Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.  
And yet—she has not spoke so long!  
What if heaven be that, fair and strong  
At life's best, with our eyes upturn'd  
Whither life's flower is first discern'd,  
We, fix'd so, ever should so abide?  
What if we still ride on, we two  
With life for ever old yet new,  
Changed not in kind but in degree,  
The instant made eternity,—  
And heaven just prove that I and she  
Ride, ride together, for ever ride?

## **My Last Duchess**

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,  
Looking as if she were alive. I call  
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands  
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.  
Will 't please you sit and look at her? I said  
'Frà Pandolf' by design, for never read  
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,  
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,  
But to myself they turned (since none puts by  
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)  
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,  
How such a glance came there; so, not the first

Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 't was not  
Her husband's presence only, called that spot  
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps  
Frà Pandolf chanced to say, 'Her mantle laps  
Over my lady's wrist too much,' or 'Paint  
Must never hope to reproduce the faint  
Half-flush that dies along her throat:' such stuff  
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough  
For calling up that spot of joy. She had  
A heart -- how shall I say? -- too soon made glad,  
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er  
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.  
Sir, 't was all one! My favour at her breast,  
The dropping of the daylight in the West,  
The bough of cherries some officious fool  
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule  
She rode with round the terrace -- all and each  
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,  
Or blush, at least. 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. Who'd stoop to blame  
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill  
In speech -- (which I have not) -- to make your will  
Quite clear to such an one, and say, 'Just this  
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,  
Or there exceed the mark' -- and if she let  
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set  
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,  
-- E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose  
Never to stoop. Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,  
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without  
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;  
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands  
As if alive. Will 't please you rise? We'll meet  
The company below then. I repeat,

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The Count your master's known munificence  
Is ample warrant that no just pretence  
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;  
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed  
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go  
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,  
Taming a sea  
-horse, thought a rarity,  
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

## **Fra Lippo Lippi**

Fra Lippo Lippi is an 1855 dramatic monologue written by the Victorian poet Robert Browning which first appeared in his collection *Men and Women*. Throughout this poem, Browning depicts a 15th-century real-life painter, Filippo Lippi. The poem asks the question whether art should be true to life or an idealized image of life. The poem is written in blank verse, non-rhyming iambic pentameter.