

Q Question

What key themes or ideas does the poet explore? Use the highlighted text in the poem to help you.

- How does the poet's use of voice/language contribute to the poem's effect?
- How does the poet's use of form/structure contribute to the poem's effect?
- How does the poet's use of particular techniques contribute to the poem's effect?

A Answers

Key themes or ideas:

- Jealousy and obsession
- Sexual desire

How these are explored:

- This is a **narrative** poem, with a structure moving from separation to togetherness; Browning uses the **dramatic monologue** form to reveal the speaker's emotions.
- **Regular rhyme** creates a sense that the speaker is unable to free himself from feelings of **jealousy**. The five-line structure feels irregular – like the speaker's moral beliefs.
- **Enjambment** allows the words to flow naturally over the rhyme, but Browning also uses it to highlight emotion.
- **Pathetic fallacy** emphasises the **speaker's isolation** from society and 'normal' human behaviour.
- Physical and **sexual imagery** reveals the speaker's sexual **obsession**, as well as his desire to keep Porphyria 'pure'.

REVISING THE POEM



Match

Can you match the gaps in the analysis to the words below?

The speaker seems aware he has done By comparing the dead girl's to 'a shut bud that holds a bee', Browning suggests that the speaker fears her reproachful, or that he will incur a punishment for his, though he soon convinces himself all will be fine.

actions

wrong

gaze

eyelids



Learn

1. Pain of love: '**I listened with heart fit to break**', l.5: longing brings an almost physical pain.
2. Barriers to love: '**... set its struggling passion free from pride**', ll.23–4: Porphyria's love may be held back by social convention.
3. Obsessive love: '**... at last I knew / Porphyria worshipped me**', ll.32–3: the speaker wants to be the sole focus of love; to feel godlike.



Think

How could you use one of the quotations above to complete this paragraph?

The speaker seems to suggest that Porphyria would love him, if she could only

How do the poets explore breakdown and betrayal?

- Mew uses **animal imagery** in 'The Farmer's Wife' to emphasise the **incompatibility** of the farmer and his fearful wife.
- In 'Winter Swans', Sheers uses the **weather** to hint at the couple's **unsettled relationship**.
- Byron's **insistent rhythm** in 'When We Two Parted' makes the death of the relationship seem **inevitable**.
- In 'Porphyria's Lover', Browning's speaker uses **repetition** to show both **anger** at Porphyria and **satisfaction** once her 'betrayal' has been resolved.
- Hardy's use of **death imagery** in 'Neutral Tones', from the sun to the tree, echoes the **death of feeling** in the relationship.
- By ending stanzas with **questions** in 'Love's Philosophy', Shelley implies **disbelief** that his loved one is 'betraying' natural laws of love by not giving in to him.

Q Three key questions

1. Name three poems that explore the breakdown of a past or current relationship.
2. Name two poems that convey feelings of betrayal.
3. What feelings about his marriage breakdown does the speaker of 'The Farmer's Wife' reveal?

Answers

1. 'When We Two Parted' and 'Neutral Tones' explore the breakdown of a past relationship. 'The Farmer's Wife' and 'Wild Swans' present relationships in current difficulties.
2. Some poems convey ideas about the falseness of love itself through feelings of betrayal, like 'Porphyria's Lover' or 'Neutral Tones'.
3. In the 'The Farmer's Wife', Mew's speaker struggles with feelings of resentment and yearning, imbuing the poem with sadness.

Learn

Now learn these key quotations to enhance your skills.

1. Regret: '**When us was wed she turned afraid / Of love and me and all things human**' ('The Farmer's Bride')
2. Recrimination: '**... words played between us to and fro / On which lost the more by our love**' ('Neutral Tones')
3. Bitterness: '**In silence I grieve, / That thy heart could forget**' ('When We Two Parted')

Think

How could you use one of the quotations above to complete this paragraph?

Byron's *speaker* accuses his lover of fickle behaviour, suggesting he feels