

Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps

15 Fra 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

20 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.
25 Sir, 'twas 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
30 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

35 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

40 Herself be lessened so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and make 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

45 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,
The Count your master's known munificence

50 Is ample warrant that no just pretense
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,

55 Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

Writing from Reading

Summarize

1 Who is the speaker of the poem? To whom does he give the tour? What brings the visitor to the viewing?

Analyze Craft

2 The speaker is not the poet—the poet creates a character here, and a story. Can you describe the two characters in the poem and the woman in the painting whom the speaker describes?

Analyze Voice

3 What are your first impressions of the speaker, and what are your final ones? How and where do they begin to change?

Synthesize Summary and Analysis

4 What do you learn about his "last Duchess," and how do you imagine she felt about her husband?

Interpret the Poem

5 When "all smiles stopped together," what do you think happened? Did he have her killed? Was she perhaps a suicide? Or did she simply—as old stories have it—"die of grief"?