

# Gender Inequalities in Victorian England: Robert Browning's Porphyria's Lover Essay

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It was a tale of two lovers uniting in the night to express their affection and devotion. So how exactly did this tale of love, end in cruel, cold-blooded murder? Good evening and welcome to Poetry Break Down, I'm your host Mary Doe. Tonight, we will delve into the fascinating world of classic Victorian literature. Under the microscope is canonized poet, the late [Robert Browning](#). Browning's poetry was a reflection of his life and times living in Victorian England. Later on this evening we will analyze just how his times came to play a major role in some of his greatest works, in particular his revered poem *Porphyria's Lover*. Released in 1836 (Catherine Maxwell, 1993, p.27), this esteemed text follows the murder of beloved Porphyria, the lover of the enigmatic speaker who, after inviting her to his cottage for a romantic rendezvous, strangles her. Stay tuned, for tonight we explore just how this poem come to be a perfect representation of a society that was obsessed with the dominate preoccupation of male dominance.

Robert Browning's *Porphyria's Lover* skillfully epitomizes the male desire to dominate women in all spheres of life during the Victorian Era. This power construct is foregrounded as the dominant reading through a range of literary devices in the poem, pertaining to

gender roles. Originally, the dramatic monologue highlights Porphyria and her strong presence in contrast to her passive male lover.

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

(Browning, Porphyria's Lover, Lines 16-19)

Porphyria dominates her partner's actions, forcing his cheek against her bare shoulder; a symbol of control. Narrating the sto...

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... been Jemima Hazell from Poetry Break Down, goodnight Australia.

#### Works Cited

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