

A Woman's Last Word

Stanza 7

Robert wants Elizabeth to teach him - she is six years older than him. Also, when Robert was starting to get into poetry, she had been writing for years. Robert wrote to her, as he was a fan of her work, stating "I love your verses with all my heart, dear Miss Barrett." They later met up and thus started their courtship. Robert wants her to help him become a better poet, a better lover and a better man.

He is teaching her how to love. – Age difference. – She wants to learn from him. – She has a lot to learn.

Tradition states that she must think as he thinks and speak as he does. – She cannot break tradition. – 'as I ought' – as she is supposed to.

She can 'think' she loves him but she cannot say it. – Unrequited love.

Stanza 8

'Meet' implies you have to arrange to be together - Robert and Elizabeth had to sneak around Elizabeth's father.

'laying... spirit' could reference to the fact that Elizabeth's condition got better when she met Robert - critics state she became a more sociable person when she met him. Robert is giving his spirit to Elizabeth to help her: he is laying his spirit in her hands to do as she will with it. He is giving himself to her to help her get better.

If he wants it he can have 'both' her body and her soul. – They can lay together – she is willing to give her entire self to him.

It's the man and woman's final night together – they may never have another one and so they want to make the most of it.

Stanza 9

'bury sorrow' – the couple must not think about Elizabeth's father. Mr Barrett saw Robert as a lower-class 'gold digger'. Robert did love Elizabeth and wants her to know this, regardless of his class or her wealth.

He must be strong – 'bury sorrow' – for the dying one.

'To-morrow' they can end it, but 'today' he can have her for one last time.

Stanza 10

After they eloped Elizabeth's brother and father refused to associate with her. Particularly her brother's attitude hurt Elizabeth. Robert could be saying here that she is allowed to cry as she will be safe in his arms, she can fall asleep loved by Robert.

She feels 'foolish' – she offered but he refused. – She reflects on her foolishness. – She is young and naïve.

Foolish her for believing she can speak out. – She's not allowed to. – She feels 'foolish' for wishing that she could change tradition so she gives up trying.

The couple can cry a little because one of them won't wake up again but even if it is her last night, they will fall asleep together.

She wanted him but he is either refusing her or ending their affair – she is telling him that even if he won't have her, she will always love him, and he will fall asleep loved by her.