

***Prospice* by Robert Browning**

Overview:

- This is a very personal poem to Browning, as we see him “*look forwards*” (the definition of “*Prospice*”) to his own death. This may be inspired by the death of Browning’s wife - Elizabeth - in 1861 because this poem was published in 1864. It portrays Browning as a “*fighter*” who will challenge death and face it with no fears. In contrast to his other poems, *Prospice* portrays a positive view of natural death.



Structure/form:

- Browning uses a regular ABAB rhyme scheme in this poem, which suggests his unfaltering stride towards death. It creates a march-like rhythm and suggests that Browning is very determined (see: “*The Lost Leader*”).
- This poem is of a medium-length, perhaps suggesting that life is not as long as it may seem - Elizabeth’s life was cruelly cut short.
- Use of exclamatives shows the intensity and passion of Browning and Elizabeth’s relationship.
- Use of declaratives like “No!” suggests that Browning is firm in his ideas - nothing can change his mind.
- There is the repeated use of plosive sounds. At the beginning of the poem, these are harsh “p” sounds in “*power...press...post*”, suggesting Browning’s own struggles. This harshness continues with “*Bear the brunt*” which highlights how confrontational Browning is about death. However, these are contrasted by “*peace out of pain*” which is much softer and implies that not only will Browning eventually be released, but that he also finds comfort and tranquility in death.

Language analysis:

- “*For the journey is done and the summit attained*” - the extended metaphor of a journey through life is used here to suggest that life is a challenge that we should conquer. The idea of a “*summit*” also implies that there is a reward (Heaven) waiting for us all, once we have completed the journey of life. This optimistic view of death links strongly to Christian ideas about mortality, which were particularly strong in the Victorian era. The Bible suggests that if you live your life as a good Christian, then you do not have to fear death. Here, Browning also suggests that death can be a good thing (particularly if it relieves pain and suffering).
- “*Bandaged my eyes*” - this line suggests that Browning does not want to reality of death to be hidden from him - he accepts it and does not want any