



# Approaches to different interpretations

## Unpacking quotations from critics

### Summarise the quotation

- The Duchess is theoretically powerful and free
- Her position reflects changes in Jacobean society such as the social and political (women's status, court corruption)
- Her situation is both inspiring and disappointing
- The Duchess' circumstances reflect the difficulties faced by seventeenth century women
- She can be seen as both a role model and a warning.

### Supporting Evidence

- Attitude towards Antonio – proposal
- Controlled by her brothers – marriage, women in C17th England – patriarchal society
- Duchess is objectified by Ferdinand – 'and those eyes'
- Her courage presents her as a role model – I am Duchess of Malfi still.

### Evidence Against

- The Duchess is never truly free
- Cannot reflect C17th women – extreme example and in an exceptional position of power and status which is not reflective.

*The Duchess of Malfi* is a study of an emancipated widow that reflects the great social and political transitions found in Jacobean England. The Duchess's fight for autonomy and self-determination is, on the one hand, inspiring, yet given her ultimate failure, disheartening on the other. That the Duchess's life mirrors the plight of real seventeenth century women cannot be ignored, thus she serves not only as a role model, but also as a tragic reminder of the world in which she had to function. - Nanci Lamb Roider

### Five quotes from the text named in the quotation

"...Raise yourself, of if you please my hand to help you"  
"I am to bespeak a husband for you"  
"You are in this line too strict, and were you not my princely brother I would say too wilful. My reputation is safe."  
"and those eyes"  
"she's loose i' th' hilts, grown a notorious strumpet"

### Three quotes from the other text

Stella stands up to Stanley – give me some money  
Stanley rapes Blanche  
Meat throwing  
Stage Blanche at the end

### Contextual links

Women's welfare in men's control – Bosola, Ferdinand, Cardinal, Stanley, Mitch  
Corruption in Jacobean court – social injustice  
Male appetites – Cardinal's behaviour, Stanley's behaviour  
Family – dynasty/personal ideas of family/duty