

Investigating *Cousin Kate*

- ❖ Think about the significance of the title
 - What does it lead you to believe the poem is about?
- ❖ Do you think that the poem is more about the speaker than about Cousin Kate?
- ❖ Why do you think that the speaker does not name herself?
 - Count how many times she names Kate
 - How significant do you think that this is?
- ❖ Which title do you think is the most appropriate - *Cousin Kate* or *Up and Down*?
 - Why?
- ❖ What associations do you have with the word 'contented'?
 - In what ways do you think that the speaker's early life corresponded to these ideas of contentment?
- ❖ What comments do you think the speaker is making about the society in which she lives?
 - Whom do you think she blames?

Investigating language and tone

- Where do you think that the speaker's anger really lies?

- Do you think the accusations she throws at her cousin are justified?
- Do they create a sense of sympathy for the speaker?
- ❖ Why do you think that the poem is not addressed to the lord himself?

Investigating structure and versification

- ❖ Note down the rhyme scheme for the entire poem
 - Do you notice anything interesting about it?
 - How, if at all, does it change as the poem develops?
- ❖ Look more closely at the rhyme scheme in the second verse
 - What is the effect of rhyming the words 'love', 'glove' and 'dove'?
 - How does linking these words together contribute to the message the speaker is giving?

Investigate! The poetry of Christina

Rossetti: *Cousin Kate*

- ❖ Read the fourth verse aloud and look closely at the rhythm it creates
 - Which words are more pronounced than others?
 - Do you notice anything unusual?
- ❖ Read the fourth line again
 - How, if at all, does the rhythm of this line reflect the mood of the speaker?

Investigating imagery and symbolism

- ❖ What do you associate with the idea of doves?
 - Why do you think that the speaker tells her cousin, 'You had the stronger wing'?
 - Do you think that she is right?
- ❖ How does the imagery contribute towards your feelings for the speaker?
 - Does her description of herself as a 'plaything' increase your sense of sympathy for her plight?

Investigating themes

- ❖ Think about the poem's presentation of marriage in relation to Victorian ideology
 - Do you find anything surprising about this presentation?