

# Investigate! The poetry of Christina

## Rossetti: L.E.L

### Investigating L.E.L.

- ❖ Think about the fascination with celebrities that exists today
  - What are the possible negative effects of this upon the individual?
    - What do you think would be most difficult to cope with?
  - How do you think that the media can distort an identity?
- ❖ Why do you think that Rossetti chose to write a poem in memory of L.E.L.?
  - Do you think that she wanted to:
    - Give her a voice?
    - Associate herself with the earlier poet?
    - Emphasise the destruction that focusing on superficial appearances can cause?
- ❖ Although *L.E.L.* highlights the unhappy situation of the poet, it does not make any explicit reference to her death
  - Why do you think that this is?
- ❖ What do you consider to be the main features of the poem?

### Investigating language and tone

- ❖ Why do you think that Rossetti later chooses to have L.E.L. as the speaker of the poem?

- Considering that the poem was composed over twenty years after L.E.L.'s death, what effect does this have?
- ❖ Write down the places in the poem where the voice changes
  - Why do you think that a change in voice is important at these points?

### Investigating structure and versification

- ❖ Find instances of repetition in the poem
  - How do these instances affect your reading of *L.E.L.*?
- ❖ Look at the punctuation throughout the poem
  - Write down any points you find interesting
- ❖ Note that many of the lines are divided by a colons and commas. For instance, 'All love, are loved, save only I; their hearts / Beat warm with love and joy' (l. 15-16)
  - What is the effect of this punctuation?
  - How does it emphasise meaning and highlight tensions?

#### Investigating imagery and symbolism

- ❖ The poem begins by contrasting the society 'Downstairs' with the loneliness of the 'solitary room above' (l. 1-2)
  - How important is place in this poem and why?
- ❖ Why do you think that L.E.L. had to disguise the reality of her life?
  - What enables Rossetti to identify L.E.L.'s 'show' as a disguise?
- ❖ L.E.L. declares that she 'feel[s] no spring' (l. 8)
  - What is the difference between feeling spring and witnessing it visually?
  - What do you think prevents her from feeling the effects of spring?

#### Investigating themes

- ❖ Why do you think that Rossetti's L.E.L. chooses to conceal a particular 'truth' (l. 29)?
- ❖ What does Rossetti suggest the difficulties are of existing happily both in the public and the private realms?
- ❖ What indications can you find that Rossetti is sympathetic to L.E.L.'s plight?

- ❖ Why do you think that Rossetti choose to associate herself with L.E.L.?