

Investigate! The poetry of Christina

Rossetti: *Song (When I am dead, my dearest)*

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Song (When I am dead, my dearest)

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- ❖ What are your associations with the idea of 'life after death'?
 - Are any of these associations shared by the speaker in the poem?
- ❖ Rossetti refers to the act of singing and musical expression
 - How does this affect the mood that the poem creates?
 - Write down references to the act of singing?
- ❖ What is the creation of music shown to be an expression of?
- ❖ What comes to mind when you think about nature?
 - Do you see these associations shared by the speaker of the poem?
- ❖ List the phrases which indicate that the speaker depends on another for happiness
- ❖ To what extent do you think people are defined by the relationships they are in (somebody's child, somebody's sibling, somebody's pupil/employee etc)?
 - Do you think an individual can understand him or herself in isolation from such relationships?
 - What evidence can you find in the poem?

Investigating language and tone

- ❖ Think about the voice that emerges
 - Does this voice bring out any particular emotions?
- ❖ To what extent are you able to identify with the poetic speaker?
- ❖ Is there any evidence to suggest that the speaker is actually a woman?
 - Would a difference in gender mean that you read the poem any differently?
 - Do you consider that the speaker displays traits traditionally ascribed to a male or female voice?

Investigating structure and versification

- ❖ Read the first verse again closely, thinking about its rhythm
 - Which other words does the poem emphasise through the rhythm of that the metre creates?
 - Which words are linked to one another through the metre?
- ❖ Like *A Birthday*, the poem is written in a 16 line form, divided up into 2 stanzas
 - Can you identify any further similarities in form?

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- ❖ Can you identify any differences?
- ❖ How does the metre in each differ?
- ❖ What does the structure contribute to the poems?
 - Does it affect the tone in which the poems are read?

Investigating imagery and symbolism

- ❖ Throughout *Song*, the speaker expresses her emotion through the denial of certain images and symbols
 - List all the occurrences of the words 'no' and 'not'
 - Why do you think that there are so many?

Investigating themes

- ❖ List all the allusions to the natural world
 - How do these allusions correspond to the speaker's emotional state in the poem?
 - What do they reveal about the purpose of the poem?
 - What do they reveal about the identity of the speaker?