

Rossetti: (e) *The Convent Threshold*

🔗 refers to links on www.crossref-it.info

❖ **Lesson focus:** To explore the poem.

❖ **Opening exercise:** Ask the students what they understand by the word 'convent'

- Look together at websites of convents (eg: <http://www.poorclare.co.uk/index.htm>).
- Do such institutions have a place in the world today?
- What would the students miss if they were living in such a place?
- What would they welcome?
 - 🔗 Rossetti > *The Convent Threshold* > Commentary > New Anglican convents in Victorian England

❖ **Textual examination:** Read through the poem aloud (it is a dramatic monologue)

- After each stanza, pause while students write down a possible title for the stanza. At the end, review their ideas
- What sense of the development of Rossetti's ideas is given?
 - 🔗 Rossetti > *The Convent Threshold* > Synopsis and Commentary > Synopsis

❖ Having established the general meaning of the poem, allocate the stanzas around the class.

- Examining their allocated stanzas, students look for references to key themes and images:
 - Thresholds / barriers / boundaries
 - 🔗 Rossetti > *The Convent Threshold* > Synopsis and Commentary > The threshold
 - Time / urgency / delay
 - 🔗 Rossetti > *The Convent Threshold* > Synopsis and Commentary > The dangers of delay
 - 🔗 Rossetti > *The Convent Threshold* > Language, tone and structure > Language and tone > Urgency
 - 🔗 Rossetti > *The Convent Threshold* > Imagery, symbolism and themes > Themes > Time
 - Repentance / turning away
 - 🔗 Rossetti > *The Convent Threshold* > Synopsis and

Commentary > Repentance & the need to turn aside

🔗 Rossetti > *The Convent Threshold* > Imagery, symbolism and themes > Themes > Lent & renunciation

- Blood

🔗 Rossetti > *The Convent Threshold* > Imagery, symbolism and themes > Imagery and symbolism > Blood

- Going up or down

🔗 Rossetti > *The Convent Threshold* > Imagery, symbolism and themes > Imagery and symbolism > Stairs

- Paradise / heaven

🔗 Rossetti > *The Convent Threshold* > Imagery, symbolism and themes > Imagery and symbolism > Paradise

- The first stanza could be examined together as a whole class in order to make the task clear.

❖ **Discussion ideas:** Discuss the findings of the students

- They should try to comment on their findings, not just list examples.

❖ **Recreative task:** Either before or after discussion, students could display their findings as mind-maps, with a sheet of paper for each theme or image, headed with the agreed titles for their given stanza(s).

❖ **Critical task:** How does Rossetti's use of language support and emphasise the meaning of her poem?

- Focus your answer on two or three specific stanzas.

🔗 Rossetti > *The Convent Threshold* > Language, tone and structure > Structure and versification

❖ **Extension task:** Research the notion of the 'fallen woman' in Victorian times

- What view of such women is given in *The Convent Threshold* and any other of Rossetti's poems that you know?

🔗 Rossetti > Changes in Britain in the Victorian era > The status of women