

Goblin Market Study Guide

Goblin Market by Christina Rossetti

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

Goblin Market Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Overview.....	4
About the Author.....	5
Goblin Market.....	6
Dream Land.....	9
At Home.....	10
A Triad.....	11
Cousin Kate.....	12
Spring.....	13
A Birthday.....	14
Remember.....	15
After Death.....	16
An End.....	17
Song.....	18
A Summer Wish.....	19
An Apple Gathering.....	20
Song.....	21
Maude Clare.....	22
Echo.....	23
Winter: My Secret.....	24
Another Spring.....	25
No Thank You John.....	26
May.....	27
A Pause of Thought.....	28



[Song..... 29](#)

[Sister Maude..... 30](#)

[The First Spring Day..... 31](#)

[The Convent Threshold..... 32](#)

[Up-Hill..... 34](#)

[A Bruised Reed Shall He Not Break..... 35](#)

[A Better Resurrection..... 36](#)

[The Three Enemies..... 37](#)

[The One Certainty..... 38](#)

[Sweet Death..... 39](#)

[The World..... 40](#)

[Characters..... 41](#)

[Setting..... 43](#)

[Social Sensitivity..... 44](#)

[Literary Qualities..... 45](#)

[Themes..... 46](#)

[Themes/Characters..... 48](#)

[Quotes..... 50](#)

[Topics for Discussion..... 51](#)

[Ideas for Reports and Papers..... 53](#)

[Further Study..... 54](#)

[Copyright Information..... 55](#)

Overview

For more than a hundred years Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* has fascinated teachers and critics while enchanting readers of all ages. In remarkably simple, yet richly textured language, Rossetti creates a strange and haunting world inhabited by horrid goblin creatures who tempt the unwary to buy their magical fruit. The poem's human protagonists, two adolescent sisters, thoroughly engage the reader through their joys, suffering, and love for one another.

But *Goblin Market* is more than just an enjoyable, readable story. It offers intriguing insights into important human concerns. Rossetti illustrates through the goblin men and their magically appealing fruit the seductive nature of evil.

Through the effects of the fruit on Laura, Rossetti shows that evil, like drugs and other apparently pleasurable things, cannot long satisfy. She conveys the idea that those who embrace evil or selfish pleasure will suffer—and so will those who love them. On a deeper level, Rossetti's 567-line poem provides significant insights into the relationships between men and women and into the often-divided human personality. Perhaps more important, the poem develops the idea that a suffering individual enslaved by habits or evil can be rescued through the redeeming love and sacrifices of another.

About the Author

Born in London on December 5, 1830, Christina Georgina Rossetti was the younger sister of the famous Pre-Raphaelite painter and poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti, for whom she often served as a model. Her family encouraged Rossetti and her brothers to read, draw, and write poetry. Her grandfather published Rossetti's first volume of poetry when she was seventeen.

During her adolescence Rossetti, her mother, and her sister became deeply committed to the Anglican Church (Church of England), and her religious beliefs played an important part in her life and writing. Rossetti broke off an engagement in 1848 because of religious differences with her fiancé. In 1866 she refused to marry a man she had loved deeply for years because he lacked sufficient religious conviction. Rossetti's religious beliefs did not make her stuffy or unpleasant, however. She maintained a wry sense of humor and a kind, tolerant manner throughout her life, even during periods of intense personal suffering.

For most of her life Rossetti lived quietly, writing poetry and working for charitable causes. Although she could not imagine full equality for women, she was always conscious of gender issues and worked for a number of women's causes.

After publishing poetry in several periodicals, Rossetti published *Goblin Market*, and *Other Poems* in 1862. Other volumes of poetry, fiction, and essays followed, including *Sing-Song*, a book of nursery rhymes, in 1872. Rossetti's poetry often concerns personal conflicts and emotions. Frequently her poems express a need to renounce worldly pleasures, and even romantic love, in favor of spiritual unity with God. Her best and best-known poem, *Goblin Market*, illustrates her typical combination of lush, almost sensuous detail with a sense of spirituality and renunciation.

She died of cancer on December 29, 1894, in London.



Goblin Market

Goblin Market Summary

Goblin Market is a narrative poem that tells the story of two sisters. The poem begins with goblins tempting the young women to try their juicy and luscious fruits. The sisters hear the goblins every day and night, calling out to them and describing their fruit.

The sisters know that they must resist the cries of the goblins, for the goblins are magical creatures and their fruit is enchanted. If the sisters listen to the goblins and give into them they would be under the goblins' spell. The cries of the goblins cannot be ignored completely but the sisters react to the goblins in different ways. Lizzie bows her head and tries to block the cries out, whereas Laura is fascinated by them. She spies on them, intrigued by their cries and the fruit they have to offer. Laura describes the goblins to Lizzie but she refuses to listen and runs away. Laura remains to watch the goblins, mesmerized by their appearance and seductive fruits.

The goblins make their way to where Laura is hiding. They reach her hiding place and coax her to come out, tempting her with their fruit. Laura protests feebly that she has no money. The goblins weave a crown from twigs and leaves for her head and dismiss the fact that she has no money. They will let her taste their fruit in return for a lock of her hair. Laura gives them a lock of her hair and gives in to temptation. She samples their fruit. The goblins' fruit is unbelievably juicy and tasty. Laura has never tasted such incredible fruit before; she sucks an endless amount of fruit dry but still craves more. Reluctantly she eventually makes her way home with only a fruit kernel to remind her of her experience.

Lizzie meets Laura when she returns home. Lizzie has been worried about Laura and tells her sister the story of Jeanie, who succumbed to the goblins last year. Jeanie was a friend of Lizzie's. She sampled the goblins' fruit and died as a result. Lizzie is worried that the same will now happen to Laura. Laura reassures her that she is well and describes the delights of the goblins' fruits. Laura wants Lizzie to taste the fruit as well, vowing to return to the goblins to get some fruit for Lizzie.

The next day the girls carry out their daily tasks. They milk the cows, make cakes, feed the chickens and sew, just as they did previously. Laura's thoughts are preoccupied with the goblins and the desire to taste their fruit again and she is unable to concentrate fully on her tasks. Laura becomes more excited as the evening approaches in the hope that she will see the goblins again. The sisters return to the place they saw the goblins. Laura doesn't hear the goblins and is unwilling to return home. Lizzie tells her that she can hear the goblins but isn't going to give in to their calls. Laura is shocked and chilled by the realisation that she can't hear the goblins' cries.

The sisters return to their home without encountering the goblins. The thought of never tasting their fruit again makes her miserable yet fills her with an intense and passionate



yearning that begins to consume her. Laura becomes ill with longing and desire for the fruit. She remembers the kernel she kept after tasting the fruit and tries to grow her own fruit from it. Laura realises that she will never taste the fruit again, and her health begins to deteriorate. She goes to bed and remains there until her death seems imminent.

Lizzie watches her sister deteriorate before her eyes. She is worried about her sister and doesn't want her to die in the same way that Jeanie did. Lizzie resolves to save Laura and sets out to find the goblins.

The goblins are excited to see Lizzie. They try to tempt her with their fruit. They won't accept her money and are only interested in seducing her. Lizzie doesn't give in and the goblins become angry. The goblins taunt Lizzie and pull her hair, trying to beat her into submission. They force the fruit on her mouth in an attempt to make her eat the fruit, but she still refuses to give in. Eventually the goblins realise that they can't win and so they leave. Lizzie returns to Laura with the juice from the fruits covering her face.

Lizzie urges Laura to suck the juices from her face, hoping that this will be enough to save Laura. Laura sucks the juices; they taste bitter to her and are poisonous. Laura is consumed by fever and returns to her bed. Lizzie watches over her, worrying about her sister's health and hoping that she will recover.

Laura wakes up in the morning to find Lizzie's attempt to save her sister has worked. The fever has subsided and Laura is rejuvenated. Laura and Lizzie grow old together. As old women and mothers they tell their children cautionary tales about the goblins and warn them what will happen if they eat their tempting fruit.

Goblin Market Analysis

Goblin Market is written as a third person narrative with an unseen narrator. The context for the poem is Victorian England. Although the poem is fictional with the genre of the poem being fantasy, the characters represent issues central to the period the poem was written.

The two main characters in the poem are young women. Written at a time before female emancipation the restricted lifestyles of women are clearly portrayed. Laura and Lizzie's daily routines involve menial tasks such as cooking, cleaning and sewing. Their life is governed by domesticity with no freedom to be independent. This reflects the lifestyle of many women at the time. Christina Rossetti's poem can be seen as an exploration of the roles of women and the effects on women when they deviate from their familiar roles.

The goblins in Rossetti's poem symbolise temptation. Before they encounter the goblins, Laura and Lizzie are innocent women. Their subsequent actions symbolise the options women have when open to temptation. Lizzie is content in her domestic role as a woman and does not give in to the temptation. Laura is frustrated by the boundaries of being a woman and gives in, sampling the goblins' fruit. The temptation can be seen as sexual, as religious or as independence; women were limited in all of these areas at the



time. It is the effect on women in contradicting these social expectations that is important. The subsequent poem is an exploration of what happens when a woman deviates from normal expectations.

Lizzie, who has not given into temptation, lives a guilt free happy life. Laura who has given in to temptation is tortured and punished for breaking the rules. Further evidence of this is the character Jeanie who sampled the delights of marriage before she should have and dies as a result. The message is that women must live by the expected rules of society and that there is no other way to be happy. Rossetti would not have been able to express her opinions freely at the time. In portraying a woman in her poem whose punished for giving in to temptation she is subtly criticising the society at the time she lived in and the narrow range of options available to women.

A contradictory theme to temptation is innocence. Whilst the destructive effect of desire and temptation can be seen through the character of Laura, the power and purity of innocence can be seen through the character of Lizzie. Lizzie is described as virginal and Christ-like.

"Like a royal virgin town, topped with gilded dome and spire," she resists temptation and conquers the evil goblins. Her motivation in doing this is love for her sister. The power of sisterly love is stronger than temptation and has healing powers. Rossetti is commenting on the strength of female relationships and friendships, as well as the strength of the solace found in these relationships. Her message to other females is that of solidarity and encouragement. Through uniting they can be strong.



Dream Land

Dream Land Summary

The main character in *Dream Land* is a young woman, and the poem describes her unhappy life. Instead of rejoicing in the joys of life and nature like the "rosy morn," and the "fields of corn," she hears only the sad song of the nightingale and the shadowy twilight. The woman feels no joy at being alive and longs for death, where she will be at peace and finally happy.

Dream Land Analysis

Dream Land explores the theme of death, which is mentioned often in Rossetti's poetry. Her characters are unable to enjoy life and seek solace in the peace of death. We can interpret this as women at the time being unable to choose how to live their lives. Their only escape from this is in death.

At Home

At Home Summary

At Home is written from a ghost's point of view. In the first verse the ghost describes returning to visit friends. The friends are described as happy, laughing and enjoying life. The friends love each other and are celebrating their friendship and life in general.

In the second verse the ghost, unseen by the humans, continues to watch the friends. Their conversation focuses on life in the present and hopes for the future. No mention is made of the past and this upsets the ghost.

The ghost is hurt that the friends have forgotten her and shivers miserably. She doesn't want to be noticed by the friends and doesn't disturb them. The ghost is torn between wanting to remain with the friends and having to go away and leave them. The ghost chooses to leave, upset by the fact that her friends have forgotten her so quickly.

At Home Analysis

The focus in this poem is life after death. The poem is narrated from the point of view of a ghost. Death is seen in this poem as being finite and an unhappy experience. This character reflects on how quickly the dead are forgotten by the living. This is unlike characters in her other poems, who long for death as a release. Rossetti experiments with the idea here that death may not be a release and that we may be as unhappy in death as we were in life.

A Triad

A Triad Summary

The stories of three women in love are told in this sonnet. One woman is blooming and full of life. Another woman is pale and cold like snow. The final woman is dying from lack of love. The first woman is shamed in love, the second is neglected by her husband and dies, and the third woman also dies from lack of love.

A Triad Analysis

A Triad is written as a sonnet. The poem has a traditional sonnet structure of fourteen lines with the classic split of eight and six lines. The first eight lines set the scene and introduce the topic, in this case the three women. The final six lines either add information or summarise the topic, and in *A Triad*, they describe the fate of the women. The message is contained in the final line of the poem "All on the threshold, yet all short of life." Rossetti has adopted a negative view of love in this poem. All three women experienced love, and all have suffered as a result.



Cousin Kate

Cousin Kate Summary

Cousin Kate is a narrative poem about two cousins who both fall in love with the same man. Kate's cousin narrates the poem. The narrator describes herself as an innocent young woman, who didn't know she was beautiful until a lord told her so and took her to his palace. The lord courted the narrator and they had a relationship. The lord was very much in control of the relationship with the woman being described as his "plaything."

Eventually the lord becomes bored with the narrator of the poem and falls in love with her cousin. Cousin Kate is described as good and pure, fairer than the narrator. The narrator is cast aside and looked down on by society for having a shameful affair, while Cousin Kate marries the lord.

The narrator is hurt by the marriage and thinks the relationship is false. If the narrator had been in Kate's position she would not have married the lord. It is the narrator's opinion that Kate has let her cousin down.

In the final verse the narrator triumphs over Kate by having an illegitimate son by the lord. Kate and the lord have no children and seem unlikely to have any in the future. The narrator knows that the lord would do anything to have a son, and rejoices in the knowledge that she has something he desires yet cannot have.

Cousin Kate Analysis

Cousin Kate is a poem that criticises men and the power they have over women. The narrator was innocent until she met the lord. The lord corrupts her and then discards her, choosing to marry her cousin. Rossetti criticises the treatment of women in society in contrast to the treatment of men. The lord isn't criticised for having an extramarital relationship, yet the narrator is shunned and outcast by the same society. This reflects the social attitudes of Victorian Britain. Men are portrayed as fickle yet powerful, with women as powerless playthings. The tone of the poem is bitter with a negative impression of relationships being described.



Spring

Spring Summary

Spring describes the process of nature during the winter months. They are followed by the changes that occur in the spring season. Winter is described as restricting life; the ground is hard and bare, but underneath new life waits to emerge.

The arrival of spring brings new life; shoots sprout from bare branches, grass pushes through bare earth and birds begin to sing again. Spring is described as a wonderful and happy time where there is nothing wrong in the world, where God is beneficent and there are no problems. Nature is described as being at its peak during springtime.

The joys of spring are described as short lived. The summer months bring death and destruction and a reminder that all life must eventually die.

Spring Analysis

Rossetti explores the meaning of life in this poem. At first we are led to believe that new life is positive and rejuvenating. Life is described as being brilliant during the months of spring with animals and plants being revitalised. However, the only point of this new life is to eventually die. Rossetti's message to readers may be to make the most of life while you can since it's only a short period of time or it's a more negative message that life is pointless, its only purpose being death.



A Birthday

A Birthday Summary

A Birthday is a love poem. The first verse describes the narrator's heart by comparing it with many happy images such as a "singing bird" and a "halcyon sea." The reason the narrator is so happy is because she is in love and her love has come to her.

The second verse contains lots of images of a heavenly bed. The bed is ornate and rich with silk cloths and gold hangings. The narrator repeats the message of being in love and being happy.

A Birthday Analysis

This is a joyous and happy poem. Similes are used in the first verse to describe the narrator's happiness, but their overuse makes the love seem abundant and effusive. The use of hyperbole in the last line of the first verse emphasises the fact that the narrator is unable to contain her love.

The second verse has connotations of wealth and riches with a "silk dais," and "gold and silver grapes." This use of imagery makes the love seem precious and priceless. Being in love has given the narrator a new lease on life, with falling in love being described as "the birthday of my life." Contrary to Rosetti's other poems, here being in love is a positive experience.

Remember

Remember Summary

Remember is written as advice from one lover to another. The main character in the poem is speaking to her partner, telling him what to do when she is dead. She tells her lover to remember her and describes a number of situations when he should remember her, for example when thinking of future plans. The narrator only wants him to remember not to grieve or pray as she says this is futile.

The narrator tells her lover not to worry if he forgets her. His happiness is her priority and in her opinion it is better for him to forget and smile again rather than remember and be sad.

Remember Analysis

Remember is written as a sonnet. The sonnet is divided into three sections, two sections of six lines each and a final message contained in the last two lines of the poem. The first six lines are written as a series of commands to instruct a lover to remember his partner after her death. The tone and style is positive and confident. The next six lines reflect the insecurity of the narrator. She is not confident that her lover will remember her and doubts the strength of his love. The final two lines inform us that she would rather her lover was happy than sad in remembering her. The narrator is a martyr for love, happy to die to make her lover happy.



After Death

After Death Summary

After Death describes a scene with the main character on her deathbed. The room is dark with the curtains half drawn. The floor is swept and covered with rushes and blossom. A man enters the room and looks at the dead body. He weeps after looking at the body, but doesn't touch it or disturb it in any way. The man is described from the point of view of the dead woman. She tells us that the man didn't love her but she is pleased that he is still alive and well.

After Death Analysis

After Death is written as a sonnet and a tribute to the dead woman. Unlike other sonnets this one does not have an internal structure. Its main purpose is a tribute to the dead woman. We are under the impression that the woman died of a broken heart. The man in the poem didn't reciprocate her love when she was alive but is sad that she is dead. The message about love is negative. Love causes pain, anguish and ultimately death.

An End

An End Summary

The death of love is described in this poem. In the first verse love is buried with a gravestone at his feet. The second verse informs us that love was only young when he died. Love was born in the spring but died before the harvest in the autumn. The characters in the poem mourn the death of love and sing songs while sitting by his grave. In the final verse we learn that the death of love will never be forgotten, with its effect felt throughout the years.

An End Analysis

An End can be interpreted in two different ways. It could be the death of a relationship. Love is personified to symbolise the relationship. The brief nature of the love has a powerful everlasting effect on the narrator who is never able to love again.

Another way to interpret the poem is to see it as being about love for a child who was born in the spring but passed away by the start of the autumn, having a devastating long-term effect on the narrator. The focus of the poem is ambiguous, leaving the final interpretation to the discretion of the reader.



Song

Song Summary

Song is very brief and links people in different stages of life to flowers. Roses and young people are matched and laurels are paired with people in their prime. The narrator has grown old before her time and chooses to be represented by ivy leaves.

The second verse links flowers with the age of people when they die. Young graves are covered with violets, graves of people in their prime are adorned with bay leaves and the narrator's grave is strewn with ivy leaves to show that she died before her time.

Song Analysis

This poem demonstrates a preoccupation with the topic of death. The narrator is so unhappy that all she can think about is the topic of death. The choice of ivy leaves is interesting, as ivy is known for sucking life from other trees. Reading between the lines we can assume that the narrator has been consumed by a passionate love that has been unreciprocated, sucking her dry and making her old before her time.

A Summer Wish

A Summer Wish Summary

A wistful narrative voice explores the joys and beauties of nature. The first verse sings the praises of a rose. The rose is beautiful and laden with dew, its beauty designed to give pleasure to others. In the second verse a bird is described, flying carefree in the sunlit sky. Its song gives pleasure to all that hear it.

In the next verse the narrator wishes she were a rose. She would like to give pleasure to others and be happy with who she is. In the final verse the narrator wishes she were a bird whose role was to give pleasure through song.

A Summer Wish Analysis

The tone of *A Summer Wish* is wistful. The narrator appreciates beauty in nature. She recognises that beauty in nature gives pleasure and is accepted unconditionally. Natural beauty is simple and uncomplicated. In longing to be a part of nature she reveals a desire to be loved and accepted unconditionally. The narrator's life is complicated and she longs for the simplicity of nature.

An Apple Gathering

An Apple Gathering Summary

An allegorical tale about picking apples is told in *An Apple Gathering*. The main character gathers apple blossoms in the first verse to wear in her hair. When she goes to pick apples from the same tree later in the year she finds the tree has produced no fruit. The main character returns home, sad and with an empty basket.

Other characters are more successful in their search for fruit. Young children return home with their baskets piled high and Gertrude is helped to carry her heavy basket of fruit home by a strong lover.

The narrator misses Willy, the man she was in love with, and is upset that they will never laugh or walk together in the lane where the apples grow. She lets other characters pass by in pairs and small groups, waiting as the night draws in and the temperature drops.

An Apple Gathering Analysis

An allegorical tale with a moral message about love is conveyed in this poem. Apples are symbolic of love. The narrator sampled love too soon and picked the blossoms before the fruit was ripe. The narrator is punished for being tempted and doesn't enjoy the full delights of the fruit or love. Other characters were patient and waited for the fruit and love to develop are now enjoying its benefits whereas she is lonely and single. The point being made is that it is unacceptable or unwise to rush into love; if love is rushed then it won't last and will die.



Song

Song Summary

This is a short and simple poem about nature and love. The narrator describes different pairs found in nature; butterflies, lilies and doves, and comments on how perfect and beautiful they are. The second verse looks at couples in love, describing how natural they seem in the summer sun. The poem ends on a darker note by suggesting that these couples haven't considered the approach of night.

Song Analysis

On first reading *Song* we are led to believe that this is a positive and optimistic poem about love and pairs being found naturally in nature. However, a closer second reading shows that this poem does contain a negative twist in the last line. The narrator reminds us in the final line that all good things must come to an end and happiness cannot last forever.



Maude Clare

Maude Clare Summary

The poem begins with the end of a wedding ceremony as the guests are leaving the church. The bride and groom's exit is followed by Maude Clare, whose appearance is more impressive than the bride's.

The groom's mother gives her son advice and wishes him a long and happy marriage. She tells her son that she and his father were in the same situation thirty years ago when they got married but they survived and so will the son.

We find out in the next verse what problems the lord and his wife are facing. Before the lord married Nell he was involved in a passionate affair with Maude Clare. Maude Clare addresses the lord after his wedding and gives him her half of the gold chain they had shared. She also reminds him of the time they spent together wading for lilies in the lake and picking flowers together. Maude Clare then turns to address the wife. She tells her that she is welcome to her husband, that any love she felt for him has gone leaving only a bitter withered heart.

Nell responds to Maude Clare by saying that she is happy to have what Maude Clare is casting off. She loves her husband for better or worse and is happy to stay by his side. The wife ends the poem by saying she'll always love her husband and one day he'll love her more than Maude Clare.

Maude Clare Analysis

An analysis of *Maude Clare* provides the reader with an insight to marriages in the Victorian era. It is clear when we read the poem that the woman the lord is in love with is Maude Clare, yet she is not the woman he is marrying. Maude Clare is more beautiful and intelligent than the lord's bride so we would assume she would be a better bride for him. Their union would be unacceptable by Victorian standards as she was a different class to him; he is a lord and is marrying a lady. This is the acceptable fashion. To marry below your social class was unacceptable and could have led to ostracism. Rossetti would have been unable to criticise society openly, yet manages to do it subtly through the content of her poem.

Echo

Echo Summary

A lament for lost love is described in *Echo*. In the first verse the narrator hopes and prays for her love to return to her in a dream. She hopes to be joined with her love in her dreams and describes their union as being like Paradise. We learn that these dreams are bitter as the object of her love and dreams is dead. The narrator wishes he were still alive so they could share their lives together.

Echo Analysis

The topic of love and death is discussed again. The narrator mourns a lost love whose death has ended their love. Whereas love should be happy and joyful this character is sad and lonely without her love. We see again that the experience of love is ultimately sad and leads to loss and loneliness.



Winter: My Secret

Winter: My Secret Summary

Winter: My Secret is written as a direct response to the reader. In the first verse the narrator considers telling us a secret but decides not to as the weather is bad and the reader is too curious.

In the second verse the narrator continues to describe the winter months. She describes the cold, biting weather that makes her wrap up warmly to protect herself. The narrator tells us that in weather like this she won't open her door to anybody, preferring to be ensconced inside in the warmth and away from prying eyes.

The narrator considers the spring months and decides that the weather at this time of year cannot be trusted or relied upon. She reinforces her distrust of the spring months by saying it is likely to snow even in May.

The only time the narrator would consider telling us her secret is in the summer. The weather conditions would have to be suitable; not too hot, cloudy or windy. Then and only then she may consider telling us her secret.

Winter: My Secret Analysis

The narrator speaks metaphorically about telling the reader a secret. The seasons of the year are metaphors for getting to know her reader. Winter symbolises the start of the relationship; the narrator wraps herself up to protect herself from the weather. This shows us that she doesn't trust the person she is speaking to at this time and won't share her secret. As the spring progresses, she becomes less guarded and considers sharing her secret. The summer months after the long winter and spring seasons are suitable to share her secret, having had plenty of time to get to know the reader. However, it is uncertain that she will ever share her secret, making her elusive and attractive to the reader.



Another Spring

Another Spring Summary

Another Spring expresses the desire to live long enough to see another springtime and what she would do if she could experience another spring. The first verse describes the flowers she would plant and enjoy watching, from snowdrops and crocuses to primroses.

The second verse describes the enjoyment she would get from watching tiny lambs and listening to birds singing. She would also take pleasure from the weather and find the rain musical.

The last verse explains how she would live her life if given the opportunity to experience another spring. The narrator says that she would enjoy every moment and live life to the full, laughing at the joys life brings.

Another Spring Analysis

This poem is written in the future conditional tense and uses the preposition "if," to describe what her life could be like if she had the chance. The use of the conditional tense informs us that she is unlikely to see another spring and reading between the lines we realise that the narrator is dying. The poem is full of regret and wishes bitterly that she had lived her life differently. The narrator realises her life has been wasted by waiting for life to happen and would live life to the fullest if given a second chance.

No Thank You John

No Thank You John Summary

A spirited and feisty narrator turns down a suitor in this one sided conversation written as a response to a suitor's demands. We are given an impression of John's demands through the responses of the narrator, although we never actually hear the words spoken by the character John.

The narrator tells John that she has never loved him and chastises him for constantly bothering her. She compares him to a ghost with a pale complexion who keeps haunting her. She tells John not to remain single for her sake, as plenty of other women would accept him but she never will.

John accuses her of being heartless, something she denies. She defends herself by saying she can't be forced into loving him and it would be unreasonable to expect that. She tells him that she will never love him and would rather turn down another fifty proposals than accept him.

The narrator asks John to put the past behind him and to enjoy the present. She offers John her friendship and no more, asking him to accept her friendship with no ulterior motives. His only option is to accept her friendship, as she will never love him.

No Thank You John Analysis

The narrative style in this poem is powerful and assertive. The narrator knows her own mind and desires and won't be influenced or coerced into being in a relationship with a man she does not love. The style shows strength of mind and independence something that wasn't often attributed to women in the Victorian era. *No Thank You John* helps to alleviate some of the myths about Victorian women and gives us an insight into their true characters.

May

May Summary

The month of May is described in the first verse as bright and summery; a time for new opportunities with eggs waiting to be hatched and poppies not yet flowering. The second verse describes what happens after the month of May has passed. The joys and happiness felt in May have disappeared, leaving the narrator old, grey and washed out.

May Analysis

The brevity of love is explored. Love is seen as a negative and consuming thing that can bring great pleasure, yet whose long-term effect is destructive. The destructive effect of love is felt more keenly as it is compared to feelings of life and happiness associated with the month of May. The lightness and the happiness of the first verse enhances the misery and woe felt in the second verse.

A Pause of Thought

A Pause of Thought Summary

A Pause of Thought explores the hope that an unrequited love might one day be returned. The first verse describes the sinking feeling experienced when realising that your love isn't reciprocated. The narrator describes the determined nature of youth and their unwillingness to give up on love.

The hope that the love will be returned remains the focus for the next three verses. At times the narrator feels like giving up and can't see the sense in yearning for a love she will never be able to have. However, youth and hope triumph over cynicism and the narrator remains optimistic that there is a chance her love may be returned.

In the last verse the narrator chastises herself for her hope, which she now realises is futile. Despite the futility of the love and the recognition of this she is still unable to stop hoping or loving.

A Pause of Thought Analysis

The experience of being in love is described as being miserable. The narrator of this poem knows that her love will never be returned but remains true to it in the hope that one day there may be a chance. We see again how life can be wasted and destroyed by pursuing futile love.



Song

Song Summary

In *Song* the narrator gives advice to her lover about how to behave after her death. The narrator doesn't want her lover to be sad when she dies, she doesn't want roses or cypress trees planted by her grave and doesn't want any sad songs to be sung in remembrance of her. All she asks is that her lover is like the green grass above the grave. She leaves it to the discretion of her lover whether he remembers or forgets her but leaves the choice up to him.

The narrator describes her life after death as living in a twilight world, where emotions can't be felt and life can't be experienced. She is unsure if she will remember her love after her death so she wants him to carry on with his life without her.

Song Analysis

Song explores the theme of life after death and the role of love in that life. The narrator is uncertain about life after death, and examines the idea that love may not survive after death. The uncertainty about life after death stems from the religious beliefs at the time; faith in the church was being questioned, with personal beliefs about religion being examined as a result.



Sister Maude

Sister Maude Summary

This is a poem about jealousy and betrayal. Maude betrays her sister because she is jealous of her sister's lover. In the first verse she spies on her sister and betrays her to their parents. The lover is now dead and Maude's sister is angry with her. Maude's sister bitterly tells Maude that her betrayal was futile as her lover was never interested in Maude and would never have chosen Maude over her sister.

In betraying her sister and her sister's lover Maude has damned her own soul for eternity. We learn that the sisters' father is dead and his soul is in heaven. Their mother has died recently and is about to be accepted into heaven. The narrator believes that when she dies she will also be allowed into heaven but Maude's soul is doomed to wander the earth for eternity, as her act of betrayal has made her unsuitable for heaven.

Sister Maude Analysis

The tone of this poem is extremely bitter. Although the poem is short it explores the themes of love, betrayal and revenge. The bond of filial love is strong but in this poem it is portrayed in a negative fashion. In betraying her sister, Maude is damned for eternity. Love is also seen as negative, as the man both women were in love with is also dead. It is clear that Rossetti believes that sisters should be loyal and faithful to each other. Women should support each other and be united, not betray each other.

The First Spring Day

The First Spring Day Summary

The focus of this poem is the arrival of spring. The first verse concentrates on traditional springtime occurrences such as birds singing whilst looking for a mate, and spring flowers blossoming. The narrator wonders what will happen in the spring and whether she will be happy or disappointed. The narrator concludes the poem by saying that spring's arrival is inevitable but her happiness is doubtful. She hopes and prays that she will find happiness, either in this world or the next life.

The First Spring Day Analysis

The narrator associates spring with new life and happiness. Spring is metaphoric for new love and happiness. We know that the narrator has been let down in love before and that she is pessimistic about being happy again as she says, "I still am sore in doubt concerning Spring." Though the arrival of spring symbolises new hope and opportunities, it is doubtful that the narrator will find happiness in this life. She instead hopes for happiness in death, "in this world, or in the world to come."



The Convent Threshold

The Convent Threshold Summary

The Convent Threshold is a narrative poem that tells the tale of two lovers in a sinful relationship. They have committed sins together that have injured and perhaps killed people they love. Their sins mean that they cannot be together. The narrator urges her lover to repent so they can be together in the afterlife.

The narrator is racked with guilt because of the sins she and her lover have committed. She describes herself as being soiled with sin and guilt and sees repenting as the only way to be forgiven. The narrator chooses God and religion to save her soul, and urges her lover to do the same. Her reasoning is that if they both repent they may be united in heaven.

The lover seems more concerned with his present life rather than what may happen in death and is not concerned about repenting. The narrator tries to persuade him to repent by making heaven sound attractive and a wonderful place to be. If he repents, the angels in heaven will sing with joy and bells will ring out to celebrate his repentance. The narrator reasons with her lover that they enjoyed the pleasures of their sins and now they must pay for their sins. Her reasoning is to repent now before it's too late, otherwise they will be damned and doomed to be separate for eternity.

She then appeals to the love they shared. In repenting she will be granted a place in heaven. She does not want to be alone in heaven and deprived of joy so she wants her lover to repent too. She is subversive in her approach in appealing to the love he felt for her and softly blackmails her lover into complying with her wish for him to repent.

The narrator attempts one final time to persuade her lover to repent and describes her own death. She makes it sound grim and unappealing. Her death will separate them forever if he doesn't repent. She persuades him by telling him that he will never be able to see or touch her again. She believes that he won't be able to bear being without her and this will persuade him to repent.

The Convent Threshold Analysis

This poem is a thorough exploration of the relationship between sin and repentance. The narrator is clearly troubled by her sins and decides to repent. Through confessing to a Christian God and then living a reformed lifestyle in accordance with God and religion she will be saved. Atonement on earth results in salvation in heaven.

The nature of the sin is vague but is linked to her lover and pleasures they enjoyed together. Love is once again seen as something that is negative and something for which we should be punished. The lover's reluctance to repent means that he either does not share the same values as the narrator, or does not see anything wrong with



their actions. Therefore, he doesn't see the need to repent. His reluctance reflects the difference in values and ideals attributed to men and women at that time. Men were forgiven more readily than women for extra marital relationships and women were judged harshly for their actions; this explains her need to repent and his reluctance.

The need to repent also reflects the religious influences at the time. The church was a powerful influence during the Victorian era, with religious values dictating every day life. The fear of a vindictive God and the possibility of eternal damnation are reflected in this poem.



Up-Hill

Up-Hill Summary

Up-Hill is written in a conversational style with the narrator asking questions that are answered by an unknown character. The topic of conversation is a journey. We assume the person answering the questions has made this journey before, since they are able to knowledgeably answer all the questions the narrator asks.

The narrator is concerned about the length of the journey and whether it is all "up-hill." She is also concerned that there will be nowhere for her to stay when she has completed her journey. The other character informs her that it is a long journey that will take all day but there is an inn that she can stay in at the end. The narrator is reassured that she will find the inn without difficulty. She also discovers that other people who have already completed the journey will be there too. She is worried that she won't be welcome at the inn but the other character reassures her by telling her that every person who visits the inn is made to feel welcome.

Up-Hill Analysis

Up-Hill is an extended metaphor that describes the journey we must make in life to find peace in the after life. The journey in life will be difficult and an "up-hill" struggle. Our reward will be in heaven where everyone who has made the journey will be welcome. Other people who have led honest and moral lives will also be in heaven to keep us company. Everybody who seeks a place in heaven will be welcome as long as they make the effort to lead virtuous lives.



A Bruised Reed Shall He Not Break

A Bruised Reed Shall He Not Break Summary

This poem is written from Jesus' point of view. Jesus is talking to a human whose responses we do not hear. Jesus tries to convince his audience to follow him and lead a religious life. Jesus persuades the listener to convert by reminding them of the sacrifices he made for mankind and the torture he endured on the cross. Jesus is determined to continue until he is successful in converting the listener.

A Bruised Reed Shall He Not Break Analysis

The title of this poem expresses the unseen character's feelings towards Jesus and religion. Through reading between the lines we understand that the character Jesus addresses is ambivalent towards Jesus and is pessimistic about religion. The title suggests that the character has suffered a crisis of faith and is the symbolic bruised reed. The negative experiences of the character make them reluctant to accept and trust religion again, provoking Jesus' determination to convert and save the character.

A Better Resurrection

A Better Resurrection Summary

The main character of this poem describes her life as barren and empty. The narrator is overwhelmed with feelings of loneliness and compares her heart to a stone. The future holds no hope for the narrator; her life is drawing to an end and she has lost her belief in heaven. Her only hope is that Jesus will rescue her and provide salvation.

The narrator continues describing how barren and empty her life is. She describes her life as being frozen and withered where life no longer survives. She compares her soul to a bowl that can no longer contain water or life.

At the end of the poem the narrator hopes that her life can be remade as a new bowl. She describes the new bowl of life as a cup that God and Jesus can drink out of.

A Better Resurrection Analysis

A Better Resurrection explores the theme of religion and absolution. The narrator has lead a life without religious direction. As her life draws to an end, she realises that without religion her life has been pointless and meaningless. She concludes that her soul has no direction without the love of God and prays for forgiveness. In seeking absolution the character has a hope of being happy in the afterlife. Without absolution she is doomed to eternal unhappiness.

The Three Enemies

The Three Enemies Summary

This poem takes the form of a conversation about belief and faith in Jesus. In the first part of the poem one character tells the other character that they don't look well. The character is described as being pale, sad, weary and footsore. The second character responds by comparing her problems to those faced by Jesus. In each instance Jesus' suffering was more intense than the characters' suffering.

In the second part of the poem the first character tries to cheer the second character by telling her that she has good and positive attributes. These attributes are being young, fair, rich and sweet. The second character is merely humbled by these attributes and replies that Jesus was a much better person than she is.

The third part of the poem features the devil, who tries to tempt the character away from believing in Jesus. The devil offers her glory, knowledge and might. The character tries to ignore the devil and prays to Jesus to save her soul.

The Three Enemies Analysis

The Three Enemies is an exploration of faith in Jesus. This poem describes true faith and belief in Jesus, unlike other poems that demonstrate a lack of faith or a crisis in faith. Jesus is better and more powerful than any human. His suffering and the sacrifices he made for humans are beyond compare with any that a human may endure. In this poem faith and belief in Jesus is the acceptable way to live and the right choice to make.

The One Certainty

The One Certainty Summary

The voice of a preacher narrates his point of view about life in this poem. It is the preacher's belief that we have no control of our life. We cannot influence what we see or hear and our lives are cheerless and empty. He believes that life will continue in the same way every day until the end of time. Nothing will happen to change our lives until we die. Death is the ultimate power.

The One Certainty Analysis

The preacher's voice is negative and cynical. He sees no hope and joy in life and the only certainty is that we will die. In this poem religion is a dreary monotonous experience; it is not about the love of god or the regeneration of life. In this poem we are all suffering and paying for our sins.



Sweet Death

Sweet Death Summary

Sweet Death is a description of how death is sweeter than life. The first verse describes how all the sweetest flowers have to die eventually. The narrator notices flowers wilting and dying in a graveyard and comments on how the blossom returns to the earth from which it came.

The second verse continues the observations by commenting that even young flowers die. The bright, colourful flowers die and return to the earth, nourishing it and making the grass richer. The grass is more worthy than the flowers as it lasts longer.

The final verse compares the life cycle of the flowers to humans. The narrator observes that beautiful, young humans die too. Like flowers the human bodies return to the earth but their souls go to heaven. It is the narrator's belief that we should accept our fate.

Sweet Death Analysis

Sweet Death is an allegorical poem with a religious message. The oxymoronic title surprises us with its unusual view about death. The narrator explains that all life must end. The sweetness of death for humans is going to heaven and being accepted by God. The tone of the poem is acceptance. It is written from a Christian perspective and demonstrates that there is nothing to fear in death, for death is sweet and inevitable. Rossetti appears to have resolved her crisis of faith and accepted religion and God.



The World

The World Summary

This poem is narrated by a masculine voice confused by the temptation presented by women. Women are seen in two different and contradictory ways. On one hand, women are sweet soft and loving. However, on the other hand they are evil temptresses whose darker side is revealed only at nighttime. The soft loving woman is deceptive, with the true face of women representing evil and sinful temptation.

The World Analysis

The World is Rossetti's interpretation of the fall of mankind and temptation. Erotic desire and romantic love are compared. Romantic love is symbolised by flowers. Erotic love is represented by images of monsters and evils. Her message is that both types of love are equally sinful and to give into temptation is to sin.



Characters

Lizzie in Goblin Market

Lizzie is the pure and innocent sister in *Goblin Market*. Lizzie resists the temptation of the goblins' fruit and lives a happy life. She braves the goblins to rescue her sister, remaining true to herself and her values at all times.

Laura in Goblin Market

Laura is the sister of Lizzie. She gives in to temptation and samples the goblins' fruit. Laura's desire to taste the fruit again makes her ill and her health deteriorates rapidly. Laura is saved by the love of her sister Lizzie.

Goblins in Goblin Market

The goblins are weird and magical masculine creatures. They tempt innocent young women with their enchanted fruit. The fruit sucks the life out of the women in the same way that the women suck the juices from the fruit, with the goblins delighting in seducing the women.

Jeanie in Goblin Market

Jeanie is a friend of the sisters. She sampled the goblins' fruit and died before she could be married.

Cousin Kate in Cousin Kate

Kate is a woman who betrays her cousin by marrying the man her cousin fell in love with. Kate is seen to be virtuous and pure in contrast to her cousin whose scandalous behaviour makes society shun her.

Lilian and Lillas in An Apple Gathering

Lilian and Lillas are children who gather apples to take home to their mother.

Plump Gertrude in An Apple Gathering

Plump Gertrude is a lady who gathers apples. Her basket is carried by her strong lover.



Willie in An Apple Gathering

Willie is the man the narrator was in love with.

Maude Clare in Maude Clare

The character Maude Clare attends her lover's wedding to denounce her love for him. Maude Clare is more beautiful and intelligent than her lover's bride, yet is prevented from marrying him due to her social class.

Thomas in Maude Clare

Thomas is the lord who had the affair with Maude Clare. He chooses to marry a different woman and rejects Maude Clare.

Nell in Maude Clare

Nell is the lady that Thomas chooses to marry in *Maude Clare*. She loves Thomas and does not mind that he has had an affair with Maude Clare.

Sister Maude in Sister Maude

Maude betrays her sister and is doomed to a life of eternal damnation.

John in No, Thank You, John

A character who will not accept the fact that his love is unrequited.

Meg and Moll in No, Thank You, John

Meg and Moll are single women who would be happy to marry John.

Setting

Sisters Laura and Lizzie live in the country, but the specific time and place are not important to the story. The mythical action could occur anywhere.

Each morning and evening a group of goblin men passes through the glen calling, "Come buy, come buy." They are trying to sell incredibly enticing fruit that is apparently from a warm, pleasant, magical place far away.

Social Sensitivity

Readers or parents may have concerns about Goblin Markets susceptibility to religious and sexual interpretations.

Such concern is probably unnecessary.

The poem can be very rewarding without reference to either, although many readers find it useful to see the poem from more than one perspective. The religious approach, while older and more common, is less explicit. The poem works most obviously as a general treatment of entirely earthly redemption through love. In fact, only a few inconspicuous biblical allusions make any direct reference to Jesus, and it is easy to see these as a kind of poetic comparison adding stature to Lizzie's actions by association.

The sexual/feminist passages seem obvious to the person looking for them, but for more than a century almost nobody noticed them. If anything, Goblin Market recommends sexual abstinence before marriage; it also offers hope of redemption for those who need it.



Literary Qualities

Goblin Market appeals to a wide variety of readers. Many enjoy the strange setting, the haunting tone, the appealing characters, or the hideous goblin men.

Goblin Market has long been printed separately for children, sometimes in lavishly illustrated editions. Those interested in religious studies find in the poem a rewarding portrayal of Christian principles of sin, suffering, sacrifice, and redemption. Feminists and those interested in gender studies appreciate the poem's female perspective on aspects of male/female and female/female relationships. And nearly everyone can identify with a character who makes a bad choice, but who is saved by a loving, unselfish friend.

Goblin Market also presents an interesting study of language and poetic techniques. Rossetti's language seems simple, but she has crafted it meticulously. She employs various kinds of rhyme and meter with high success. Her similes and metaphors nearly always delight the careful reader.

For example, to see the goblin men: "Laura stretched her gleaming neck/ Like a rush-imbedded swan,/ Like a lily from the beck,/ Like a moonlit poplar branch,/ Like a vessel at the launch/ When its last restraint is gone." Rossetti uses symbols effectively throughout the poem to suggest larger meanings and relationships.



Themes

Death

Death is a theme central to many of Rossetti's poems. The topic of Death is approached with differing points of view. On one hand death is seen as a sweet and comforting end to life. On the other hand death is scary and unknown; a finite end to life.

Many of Rossetti's poems focus on linking death in nature with death in mankind. Death is symbolised by flowers withering and crops dying. Spring represents hope for new life, but very often this hope is not fulfilled and there is no regeneration. Death in nature, through the changing seasons, is linked to death in humans. Winter is linked to old age with no possibility of spring or new life.

The issue of what happens after death is raised. One interpretation is that death is a finite process. Our bodies return to earth and we have no new opportunities to live. An alternative view is that death is just a beginning. Our journey through life is merely a preparation for our deaths. When we die we begin a new life. Rossetti's strong religious beliefs dictate that the choice of path we take in death is dependent on our behaviour in life. If a moral and religious life without sin has been achieved in life then we will be rewarded in death and go to heaven. If we have lead a sinful life and given into temptation then we will pay for our sins in the after life and be tortured for eternity in hell.

Ultimately death is described as being a powerful and inevitable force that controls our lives. In many poems the fear of death prevents enjoyment and fulfillment in life.

Unrequited Love

Unrequited Love is a recurring theme, central to Rossetti's poems. The cause and effects of unrequited love and the resulting pain and anguish are explored from different perspectives. The most common perspective explored is unrequited love felt for a man by a woman. The pain felt by a woman when her love is unrequited is unbearable. The only comfort for the woman is death, and it is only when the woman is dead that the man then realises his loss and actual love for her. This can be plainly seen in Rossetti's poem *After Death*. As such love is seen in a negative and cynical life. Happiness in love can only be achieved through death.

The effect of unrequited love on men is also explored. Unlike women, men do not give up on their love. Whereas the only solution for women is death, men are free to press their love to comply, applying pressure to persuade the women to love and marry them. In her poem *No, Thank You, John*, Rossetti refuses to give in to John's marriage proposal and tells him that she will never love him. This is an unusual display of strength for a woman at that time, and mirrors Rossetti's experience in refusing to marry her fiancé when she discovered he held different religious beliefs to hers.



Another interesting approach to unrequited love is the lack of human faith or love for Jesus. Several of Rossetti's poems focus on being spurned by God and Jesus and needing reassurance that they will love and look after mankind in death. The process is also approached from the angle of Jesus feeling pain when man refuses to love and believe in him. In the poem *A Bruised Reed Shall He Not Break*, Jesus' determination to convert a non-believer is demonstrated.

Temptation

Temptation is a theme that is integral to the other themes linking love and death. Temptation is often presented symbolically, and often fruit is used to symbolise the temptations of the flesh. In *Goblin Market* the goblins' fruit tempts Laura. When she gives in and samples their fruit she is punished and her body deteriorates rapidly. This image is repeated in other poems as fruit is used to symbolise temptation. When temptation is succumbed to, the fruit withers and loses its appeal; the message being that it is wrong to give in.

When humans succumb to temptation in Rossetti's poetry they have two options: to repent and live a virtuous life on earth and in heaven, or to continue being sinful and pay for their behaviour by being doomed to an eternity in hell. *The Convent Threshold* narrates the story of a woman who has sinned and is now repenting. She wants her lover to repent too but he can only think of immediate pleasures and temptations, not the consequences of his behaviour in the future.

Rossetti's message is clear and links strongly to her religious beliefs. It is not possible to give in to temptation without paying the consequences. It is better to lead a life free from sin and temptation and be rewarded in the after life with eternal joy and peace.



Themes/Characters

Goblin Market includes only a few characters: the goblin men and Laura and Lizzie, late-adolescent sisters. The poem also mentions Jeanie, who died after eating goblin fruit, and Laura's and Lizzie's husbands and children in later life.

Laura and Lizzie see the goblin men "hobbling down the glen" each morning and evening crying, "Come buy, come buy." The goblins themselves are thoroughly repulsive, but their words are "sugar-baited." The goblins tempt young maidens to try their evil fruit "in tones as smooth as honey." Further, the goblin men describe their wares in sensuous detail: "Plump unpecked cherries,/ . . . Bloom-down-cheeked peaches,/ . . . Wild free-born cranberries ... " All are "sweet to tongue and sound to eye."

Maids heard the goblins cry: "Come buy our orchard fruits, Come buy, come buy...

The girls know these fruits are evil.

When they first hear the goblins, Laura cautions Lizzie, "We must not look at goblin men,/ We must not buy their fruits." And Lizzie later warns, "Their offers should not charm us,/ Their evil gifts would harm us." They also remember the sad case of their friend Jeanie, who "met them in the moonlight,/ Took their gifts both choice and many,/ Ate their fruits and wore their flowers." But once she had eaten the fruit, Jeanie could never again find the goblin men.

She "dwindled and grew grey" wishing for more goblin fruit. She now lies in a grave on which no flowers or grass will grow.

Laura, despite these warnings, finds the goblins' cries "kind and full of loves."

Seduced by the fruit and goblin voices, Laura buys the fruit with a "golden curl" from her head. Although she finds the goblin fruit "sweeter than honey . . . / Stronger than man-rejoicing wine," Laura discovers the following night that though Lizzie still hears and fears the goblin sellers, she herself can no longer see them or perceive their cries. Horrified at her inability to purchase the fruit to which she has become, in effect, addicted, Laura "sat up in a passionate yearning,/ And gnashed her teeth for balked desire, and wept." Like Jeanie before her, she quickly falls ill.

Lizzie, unlike Laura, resists the goblin men's tempting fruit. Seeing Laura's decline, Lizzie "longed to buy fruit to comfort her,/ But feared to pay too dear." But when Laura seems about to die, "Lizzie weighed no more/ Better and worse," and goes to buy fruit from the goblin men—not for herself, but for her sister. When the goblins discover that Lizzie will not eat the fruit herself, they try unsuccessfully to force it into her mouth, smearing the fruit onto her face in the process. Eventually they give up, return the penny she has paid them for the fruit, and leave Lizzie to return to Laura, who kisses the fruit from her sister's face. Given in this way, the goblin fruit no longer enslaves Laura, but frees her from her need for more.



Rossetti once told her brother William that she intended *Goblin Market* to be a simple tale with no deep or hidden meanings. But any serious reader will easily discover in the poem a number of themes and implications. Certainly Lizzie's sacrifice for Laura illustrates one of Rossetti's favorite themes: the redemption of a guilty person by an innocent one. Only through the efforts of a loving, self-sacrificing sister (with all that word's meanings) can Laura regain her lost innocence and overcome her desire for illicit sensual pleasures symbolized by the goblins' fruit. Many critics emphasize the similarity between Lizzie's actions and Jesus' sacrifice to redeem humanity from the results of its indulgence in sinful pleasures (or perhaps from original sin). However, through Rossetti herself was a practicing Christian, the redemption theme operates outside any explicitly Christian context. Rossetti intends to show that a person can recover from serious errors, although often only with the help of a giving, loving friend.

Many critics see in *Goblin Market* Rossetti's woman-oriented analysis of gender roles. In this reading the goblin men represent male attempts to sexually seduce "maidens" by offering kind words and the promise of immediate pleasure.

Thus, Lizzie thinks of "Jeanie in her grave,/ Who should have been a bride;/ But who for joys brides hope to have/ Fell sick and died." Once Laura has succumbed to the goblin men's advances, they abandon her, leaving her with an unfulfillable desire for more fruit and an inability to enjoy other kinds of pleasure. In this interpretation, when the goblin men try to force Lizzie to eat their fruit, symbolically they are attempting to rape her. Indeed, Rossetti's wording in these passages suggests she is thinking in these terms. For example, she describes Lizzie as "Like a royal virgin town/ Topped with gilded dome and spire/ Close beleaguered by a fleet/ Mad to tug her standard down." The redemption theme may also operate here, since Laura can only be rescued by another woman's love and unselfishness. Some critics see Laura and Lizzie as two sides of feminine nature—a divided self that eventually finds unity through Lizzie's actions.

In all of these interpretations, Lizzie's help effectively rehabilitates Laura, and the poem ends with Laura describing to her own children how "there is no friend like a sister/ . . . To fetch one if one goes astray,/ To lift one if one totters down."



Quotes

"Their offers should not charm us, their evil gifts would harm us," Goblin Market pg.2

"Laura turned cold as stone to find her sister heard that cry alone," Goblin Market pg.7

"Her tree of life drooped from the root," Goblin Market pg.8

"One may lead a horse to water, twenty cannot make him drink." Goblin Market pg.12

"For there is no friend like a sister in calm or stormy weather; to cheer one on the tedious way," Goblin Market pg.16

"His plaything and his love. He wore me like a silken knot, he changed me like a glove," Cousin Kate pg.19

"Now newly born, and now hastening to die," Spring pg..21

"You sinned with me a pleasant sin: Repent with me, for I repent." The Convent Threshold pg..36

"How should I rest in Paradise, or sit in the steps of heaven alone?" The Convent Threshold pg..37

"A royal cup for Him my King: O Jesus, drink of me." A Better Resurrection pg..41

"The old thorns shall grow out of the old stem, and morning shall be cold and twilight grey," The One Certainty pg..43



Topics for Discussion

What evidence is there in Rossetti's poems that she experiences a crisis in faith?

To what extent, according to Rossetti, do our actions determine our destiny?

Is the God of Rossetti's poems forgiving or punitive? Discuss with reference to her poetry.

Which love is the more powerful and true, love between a man and a woman or religious love?

How is temptation symbolised in Rossetti's poetry?

What is Rossetti's view of death? Discuss her different interpretations of death with examples.

According to Rossetti is it better to sin and repent or never give in to temptation?

What insights do we gain to the Victorian era through reading Rossetti's poetry?

In what ways does Rossetti raise the issue of female emasculation?

Christina Rossetti was associated with the Pre-Raphaelite movement. In what ways is the Pre-Raphaelite movement reflected in her work?

In your opinion what made Rossetti's poetry so successful in a time when women's work wasn't as prominent or as prolific as men's' poetry?

1. The goblin men's fruit is extremely enticing, but eating it causes serious problems. What might the goblin men's fruit represent to Rossetti? Can you think of any additional modern "fruits" Rossetti might have included had she written the poem today?
2. How does Rossetti make the goblin fruit seem desirable to Laura? What part do the goblins play in persuading her to try their fruit? Why does she buy it if she knows she shouldn't?
3. When Laura eats the fruit Lizzie brings her, it affects her very differently than the same kind of fruit she received directly from the goblin men. Why? How does Lizzie rescue Laura? Why do Lizzie's actions cure her suffering sister?
4. Laura and Lizzie twice discuss their dead friend, Jeanie. What function does Jeanie have in the poem? Why does Rossetti mention her?
5. Rossetti sets Goblin Market in a place where daily visits by goblins seem normal. What effects do the poem's unrealistic elements have on you? Do they add to or detract from the poem?



6. Do any of the characters or events seem familiar to you? Can you recognize in yourself or in others any aspects of Lizzie? Of Laura? Of Jeanie? Of the goblins? Are Rossetti's characters believable to a modern reader? If you were to reset this play in your own school or neighborhood, what changes would you make?

7. What lessons has Laura learned by the end of the poem? What will she tell her children?

8. Do you think Goblin Market works best for any particular audience? For example, does it speak articulately to men as well as women? To both children and adults?

9. Why does Rossetti apparently conceal her thoughts in character, symbol, and story? Would her ideas be more effective in another form? What would be gained? What lost?



Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Is *Goblin Market* just a simple story, as Christina Rossetti once suggested, or does it have deeper levels of meaning?

Can all the poem's elements be taken as strictly literal? If not, what other ideas could they suggest? Do critics go too far when they see deeper meanings and ideas in the poem?

2. The goblin fruit has unusual effects on Laura and on Jeanie. What are these effects? What symbolic significance might each effect have?

3. *Goblin Market* has often been seen as a kind of fairy tale. What fairy tale elements do you see in the poem? What do they contribute to the poem's message and effect?

4. *Goblin Market* has long been popular as a children's poem. To what extent is it appropriate for younger children? Are there aspects of the poem that could only be understood by older, more experienced readers?

5. A number of critics believe that *Goblin Market* portrays Rossetti's feelings about relationships between men and women. What elements in the poem suggest this? In this interpretation, what might the goblin men represent?

Their fruit?

6. Christina Rossetti was a believing and practicing Christian. Some critics find in Lizzie's innocent, self-sacrificing actions a parallel to Jesus' redeeming sacrifice for sinners who have indulged in forbidden pleasures. What evidence do you see in the poem for or against such an interpretation?



Further Study

Charles, Edna Kotin. *Christina Rossetti: Critical Perspectives, 1862-1982*.

Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 1985. This study examines different critical views of Rossetti's works.

Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar.

The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979. This sophisticated work includes perhaps the standard feminist treatment of *Goblin Market*.

Lang, Cecil B., ed. *The Pre-Raphaelites and Their Circle*. 2d ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975.

This book briefly explains the PreRaphaelite movement of painters and poets, led by Rossetti's brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti. It includes poetry from all the poets in this group, including Christina Rossetti.

Weathers, Winston. "Christina Rossetti: The Sisterhood of Self." *Victorian Poetry* 3 (1965): 81-89. This article offers a good reading of the divided self idea in *Goblin Market*.



Copyright Information

Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction

Editor

Kirk H. Beetz, Ph.D.

Cover Design

Amanda Mott

Cover Art is "Pierrot," 1947, by William Baziotès Oil on Canvas, 42 1/8 x 36 Donated by the Alisa Mellon Bruce Fund, ©, 1996 Reproduced with Permission from the Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction

Includes bibliographical references and index

Summary: A multi-volume compilation of analytical essays on and study activities for the works of authors of popular fiction. Includes biography data, publishing history, and resources for the author of each analyzed work.

ISBN 0-933833-41-5 (Volumes 1-3, Biography Series)

ISBN 0-933833-42-3 (Volumes 1-8, Analyses Series)

ISBN 0-933833-38-5 (Entire set, 11 volumes)

1. Popular literature—Bio-bibliography. 2. Fiction—19th century—Bio-bibliography. 3. Fiction—20th century—Bio-bibliography. I. Beetz, Kirk H., 1952-

Z6514.P7B43 1996[PN56.P55]809.3—dc20 96-20771 CIP

Copyright ©, 1996, by Walton Beacham. All rights to this book are reserved. No part of this work may be used or reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or in any information or storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the copyright owner, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For information, write the publisher, Beacham Publishing Corp., P.O. Box 830, Osprey, FL 34229-0830

Printed in the United States of America First Printing, November 1996