

## Works

Rossetti's literary career started with translations from Dante and other Italian poets, which reveal his formal ability in rendering metre and rhyme. His first published poem was *The Blessed Damozel* (1850) in *The Germ*, the Pre-Raphaelite magazine. His poetry appeared mainly in two collections: *Poems* (1870) and *Ballads and Sonnets* (1881), including the sonnet sequence *The House of Life*, which is by some critics considered his finest work.

## Features of his poetry

Rossetti belongs to the continuation of the Romantic movement for his **sensuous response to beauty and interest in the Middle Ages**. Being a painter, his imagination was stimulated by the **interaction of word and visual images**. His poems often show a pictorial rendering of a scene, and, like his paintings, take on a symbolic value. For example, in *The Honeysuckle* in the first stanza the plant in blossom is described as a prize to be won which pushes the poet to action, that is, to pluck it; in the second stanza the plant is perceived as something sacred and stops the poet's action, and he refrains from touching it, that is he 'plucked not'. The two different attitudes may symbolise either different attitudes to beauty or different periods of the poet's life such as the impetuosity of youth versus the thoughtfulness of maturity. The choice of words such as 'mellow intercourse', 'virgin' and 'pluck' may also hint at a contrast between sensual love and spiritual love.

## Literary reputation

Rossetti's use of poetry as a refuge in a dream world became a **model for the aesthetic movement** of the end of the 19th century; but his literary reputation has sharply declined in our time.

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## BEATA BEATRIX

by DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

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## REVISION

1. What characterises Rossetti's early artistic career?
2. What were the aims of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood?
3. What negative events affected his life?
4. What are his main literary works?
5. What are the predominant features of his poetry?
6. What influence did he have on later literary movements?

Below are some split images from the text. Reconstruct them by matching the items in column A with the appropriate items of column B.

A	B
1 quick	a) sweet and fair
2 climbing	b) of scent and dew
3 I found it	c) with thorn
4 nursed	d) in mellow intercourse
5 All virgin lamps	e) for the prize

## Test Yourself