

## Discussion Questions for Week Ten

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was a group of poets and painters who formed in the 1840s with the goal of subverting artistic norms. Their name refers to their painting style: they rejected contemporary artistic practice and returned to the kinds of colors and styles associated with painting before Raphael (look up some images online). In addition, their work tended to be more sensual and sexual in nature than was typical of the period. Dante Gabriel Rossetti was the leader of this group: he was a poet and a painter, and, like William Blake, he often paired his poems and paintings together.

- (1) How does Rossetti depict the earthly and the heavenly in “The Blessed Damozel”?
- (2) How does the painting help you read the poem, if at all?
- (3) How does Rossetti challenge Christian orthodoxy in his poem?
- (4) “Nuptial Sleep” was a poem at the center of “The Fleshly School Controversy.” Many reviewers found the poem “vulgar” and “offensive” in its focus on “pleasures of the flesh.” Does the poem seem controversial to you? Why or why not?
- (5) Christina Rossetti’s “Goblin Market” is clearly an allegory—but exactly how does it work? (Consider: what does the fruit represent? the goblin men? the sisters? death? and what is the moral of the poem?)
- (6) What does “Goblin Market” say about women and sexuality? (Consider: blushes, kissing, men)
- (7) Victorian schoolchildren would recite the final lines of “Goblin Market” as an affirmation of familial bonds and the domestic role of women. In 1973, a short article on the poem was published in *Playboy* (along with nude photography), which emphasized the radical erotic elements of the poem. How can a poem produce such opposing readings? Can the poem be at once a Christian/domestic moral tale and an expression of sexual freedom?