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| What Would I Give? |  |  |
| Technique identified | Relevant quote/s | Evaluation of technique, how it has been used, meaning and context/influence. |
| Symbolism/imagery | ‘scalding’ ‘wash the black mark clean’ ‘stain ingrain’ ‘make me clean again’ | In the third stanza the narrator wants tears, these have connotations of cleansing but also of grief. The adjective ‘scalding’ describing the second mention of tears also implies that there is a burning passion behind the water droplets. Throughout this stanza the sense of cleaning and cleansing is ever-present: ‘wash the black mark clean’, ‘stain ingrain’, ‘make me clean again’. It seems as though the narrator is trying to scrub something out of herself in order to gain the purity she used to hold. (Context – Rossetti’s mental health) |
| Structure | - | This poem clearly emphasises the number three and its varying connotations. With three stanzas, and three lines in each stanza, we are not only reminded of the holy trinity but also the idea of three wishes which are common in fairy tales, for example Aladdin. (Context link – Rossetti’s faith) |
| Rhyme | (Last stanza) ‘small’ ‘all’ ‘way’ ‘say’ ‘ingrain’ ‘again’ | The AAB rhyme scheme of this poem emphasises the language previously mentioned. The AA rhyming couplet represent togetherness and unity, whilst the line following - the B - doesn’t quite fit, illustrating someone being left out of this unity and therefore separated within the same space. Having said this there is internal BB rhyme within the last line of each stanza which perhaps hints at the possibility for unity within herself. (Context link – her engagements) |
| Narrative | ‘heart’ | In the first stanza the narrator talks of wanting a warm ‘heart’. We do not know who she thinks will provide this love; it could be love from God, love from herself (independence) or love from a lover. In the second stanza the narrator admits she wants to be able to interact with people. There is a sense of isolation here and the lack of words she feels she has emphasises this. Having a lack of words is ironic for a poet - we realise she is not actually speechless - the narrator is illustrating that she feels as though there are conversations which she cannot participate in. Perhaps, because of the group of people she is with (Context link – Pre Raphaelite Brotherhood and social groups) |

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| The World | 1854 |  |
| Technique identified | Relevant quote/s | Evaluation of technique, how it has been used, meaning and context/influence. |
| Time | ‘day ‘night’ | Throughout this poem there is constant reference to time with the repeated mentions of ‘day’ and ‘night’. This illustrates a transition, from day to night, which happens globally and is inevitable - perhaps the interpretations are global and inevitable too. If we particularly look at the man’s perspective interpretation perhaps he is expressing the nature of Victorian woman’s power, in the day, in society, they are domestic and un-powerful, but at night roles are reversed because then women have power over men in the form of a sexual power - a sense of transition in roles/power as the day transitions to night. This semantic field of night and day is interesting, especially when we compare the two and realise that more emphasis is given to the night; maybe Rossetti is using the day and night as metaphors - temptation is bigger than goodness. (Context link - the Victorian stereotypes of woman) |
| Symbolism and imagery | ‘moon’ ‘serpents’ ‘horns’ ‘clove’ | The ‘moon’ represents females and fertility; the moon controls the tide reflecting the enormity of female power. The ‘moon’ also has connotations of transformation, like that of a werewolf. The reference to ‘serpents’ has not only religious connotations of temptation and sin but also reminds readers of Medusa’s story. (Medusa had powers but was hated for it so they transformed her power. When she looks at people they turn into stone. Therefore people had to look at her through a mirror) Perhaps it illustrates illusions and misperceptions, also mirrors related to mental illness, mirrors are subjective, they rely on our opinions to create the image we perceive. The imagery of an untameable animal within a poem focussing on the powers of temptation, shows the nature of what temptation can make us do - we behave like animals when we give into our instincts and become more instinctive and less intellectual. Religious imagery is ever present in Rossetti’s poems and this poem is the same. The reference to ‘horns’ and ‘cloven’ reflects the devil and emphasises the nature of temptation. There is a dilemma running through Rossetti’s poems, does being a poet contradict her religion? Is she sinning by thinking her thoughts and spending time writing them down rather than praying? Some argue that this poem is a modern reworking of Adam and Eve. (Context link – Rossetti’s faith) |
| Structure | ‘:’ | The use of the ‘:’ creates a caesura which marks the shift in the poem. This highlights the transitional point and the liminal position because temptation and indecision. The Volta in this poem reflects the poems shift from talking about truth in the day and lies at night, to lies in the day and truth at night - for prostitutes what happens at night tarnishes the day. (Context link – Highgate) This poem is in sonnet form, but it is not a (conventional) love poem instead some argue that it is a reframing of biblical stories within this form. |
| Narrative (who is speaking?) |  | Could be written from a man’s perspective (showing Rossetti’s intelligence/abilities) talking about a woman whom he has sexual feelings for. However he repents her possibly because she has a - sexual - power over him. (Context link – writing as female in Victorian century and male influences in her life) Could be about a woman contemplating whether they should enter into a life of prostitution. Could be about a woman talking about wanting a relationship with another woman (modern reading). |