

# The Pre – Raphaelites

## What was the Pre –Raphaelite Brotherhood?

The Pre – Raphaelites or Pre – Raphaelite Brotherhood was a secret society of English painters, poets and critics, founded in London in 1848. It became very influential by 1860.

**Who were the founders?** William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais and Dante Gabriel Rossetti

They were eventually joined by four others. Many other artists shared their principles.



## What were these principles?

To reject Mannerist styles adopted after Raphael and form links to Romantic poetry and literature. They opposed the Royal Academy's ideal as in the work of Raphael. They disregarded the usual conventions of symmetry and proportion.

They focused on nature and realism based on *physiognomy and character*.

It has been said that they were poised between the nostalgia of the past and the excitement about the future.

They were the young revolutionaries of their day. Many considered that they were attempting to weaken the power of the RA and in so doing weaken the power of conservatism and were politically and socially dangerous.

## What were their themes?

- Literature
- Poetry
- Love and death
- Religion
- Social problems
- Symbolism
- Medieval

## Why were their paintings thought shocking?

Objections were raised about their morality and realism, Dickens description was that they were 'degenerate'. Other descriptions were 'sacrilegious' and 'BLASPHEMOUS' e.g.

*'CHRIST IN THE HOUSE OF HIS PARENTS' BY MILLAIS*

The artists meant to be shocking to draw attention to their works and principles.

**Social problems** which were illustrated by them e.g. poverty, emigration, prostitution and sexual morality. E.g. 'The Awakening Conscience' by Holman Hunt



Picture from Clip Art

**'Proserpina' by Dante Rossetti**

**'The Germ'**: this showed their passion for writing and included pictures, essays and poems

**Which women were linked to the PRB?: e.g** Jane Morris, Fanny Cornforth

**1850-1857**: The PRB had dissolved but re-emerged in 1857 with William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones, Dante Rossetti and Arthur Hughes amongst them. However, they still received criticism. This did not deter them from continuing with what they believed to be art.

**Where to see Pre Raphaelite paintings:**

**Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle :**

**'Isabella or the Pot of Basil'** – one of the most well known. I have discovered more and more about it over 30 years.

**'Laus Veneris' by Edward Burne-Jones**

Many other paintings are on display.