Socrates and Rossetti

- An analysis of *Goblin Market* and its use in the classroom

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ABSTRACT
This essay concerns Christina Rossetti’s poem Goblin Market and its use in a Swedish upper secondary classroom. The purpose of this essay was to analyse the poem through a Marxist perspective and investigate how both the analysis of the poem and the poem itself could be used when teaching English to an upper secondary class.

This was done in two stages; firstly by analysing the Victorian society’s effect on Rossetti’s poem through a Marxist criticism perspective and secondly by using a specific pedagogic method called the Socratic Dialogue method when analysing the use of the analysis and the poem in the classroom.

When analysing the poem and how it has been affected by its contemporary society, it becomes clear that the poem provides a critique in several ways towards consumerism and social ideals of Victorian Britain. Concerning the use of the poem and the analysis in the upper secondary English classroom it is evident that the poem and the literary analysis combined provides an interesting view on Victorian Britain for the pupils to discuss while having Socratic seminars.

Key words: Socrates, Rossetti, Goblin, lesson planning, Socratic Dialogue method, Victorian.
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1.0 INTRODUCTION
The poem *Goblin Market* (from now on abbreviated GM) was published in the year of 1862, written by the then thirty-two-year-old Christina Rossetti during the Victorian age in Great Britain (The Victorian Web 2007.02.23) (The Victorian Web 2007.02.21). The story of the poem concerns the two girls Lizzie and Laura and how they try to resist the temptation of the goblin men in the forest. The poem ends with Laura falling for the temptation and buying fruit from the goblin men, paying with a lock of her hair and a precious teardrop. Because of this she soon gets addicted to the forbidden wares but Lizzie is in the end able to cure her friend from the need to eat their fruit and thereby allowing the two of them to live happily ever after.

This poem can be read simply as a beautiful piece of art representing the time and era which it was written and published in. However, when looking more closely at the lines of the poem and the feelings they mediate, the poem can be interpreted in many ways, for example giving different perspectives on the society which the author herself lived in. Through these different critical viewpoints it is possible to read the poem in order to discover different underlying messages. By analysing the poem’s underlying meanings we find both a specific perspective on the historical situation of Christina Rossetti but also new and interesting perspectives on modern society. One perspective we can use to interpret the poem’s meaning through is Marxist criticism.

When teaching English to pupils in today’s upper secondary school in Sweden the teacher must at some point use one or several texts in order to practice the pupils’ linguistic skills. To use a poem as one of these texts will most certainly develop not only the students’ language capacities, but also their knowledge of literature as a whole and their abilities to use their imagination and capability for empathy. GM was written more than a century ago but still has the capacity to inspire and captivate its readers, no matter what age they are. Since its themes concerning conception like “love”, “ethics” and “friendship” still are persistent today; the poem will be useful in any upper secondary school. By using the didactic method known as the Socratic Dialogue method these conceptions can be further discussed in the classroom, together with the poem. Through this both the pupils’ linguistic skills and their knowledge of litterateur and poetry will be developed. In addition, this method will also practice the students’ capability for empathy, respect, analysing and imagination.

2.0 THESIS STATEMENT
This essay argues that the poem GM offers the reader an interesting perspective on consumerism and female ideal in Victorian England in which it was once written. This argument will be
supported by a number of examples within the poem. Moreover, the essay claims that GM can be successfully used in upper secondary English classes, since the poem concerns themes like “love”, “ethics” and “friendship”. These subjects are current to the students and can together with a historical background teach the students about Victorian England as well as make them analyse the different themes of the poem. In particular, this essay argues that the poem suits the pedagogic method referred to as the Socratic Dialogue method. By using GM as a discussion text during English classes in upper secondary school this essay claims that it is possible that a large number of the students will develop their linguistic and analytic skills.

3.0 PURPOSE
The main purpose of this essay is to analyse the poem GM through a Marxist perspective. That will include analysing what the poem tells the reader about Victorian society concerning the colonization of other cultures, the consumption of the Victorian people and the female role in that society. By applying a Marxist perspective when reading the poem it is, according to this essay, possible to discover underlying criticism of both the consuming society created by the colonization of other countries and cultures and the female ideal of Victorian England. Another purpose of writing this essay is to investigate how GM can be used in a Swedish upper secondary classroom by using the Socratic Dialogue method as a way of introducing the poem to the pupils. These purposes for writing this essay raise a number of questions which are answered in the text. The questions are answered by analysing the poem and how it can be used in class through the Socratic Dialogue method.

- Does the poem give any criticism of the consumer habits of Victorian England?
- What does the picture of Victorian women presented in the poem say about Victorian England?
- How can the poem be used in the teaching of English in a Swedish upper secondary school class, fulfilling the goals in the syllabi for the courses English A and B?
- In what way can the criticism of the consumption of Victorian society be used in the upper secondary classroom through the Socratic Dialogue method?

4.0 METHOD/ THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE
The method used in this essay is a qualitative analysis of Christina Rossetti’s GM as well as an analysis of how the poem can be used as an educational text in upper secondary school with a specific pedagogical method. To be able to find the answers of the questions raised in the essay,
Marxist literary criticism has been studied and a close reading of the poem through a Marxist perspective has been done. Moreover, to answer the questions concerning how the poem can be used in the upper secondary classroom, the theories of the Socratic Dialogue method were studied together with the syllabi regarding the teaching of pupils at this level. Furthermore, these theories were then applied to the poem in order to see how this specific text can be used in the classroom.

4.1 Marxist Criticism

Marxism was founded in the nineteenth century by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels under the name Communism (Barry 156). This school of thought was created when Marx and Engels together published the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848, stating a new materialist philosophy. According to Barry the Marxist sees social progress as a product of the struggle between different classes in society. Further on, Barry states that the aim of Marxism is to bring about a classless society based on common ownership of the government.

Marxism is a political viewpoint that has changed during the years, as critics have interpreted it differently throughout the years. Although it can be interpreted in many different ways there are quite a few main points that the different Marxist approaches agree on. The Marxist critic focuses on how the individual plays his or her part in society. It claims that all social change or progress is created by the class struggle of the individual in the society (Wolfreys & Baker 129). The foundation of this struggle is the different economic forces that control and affect society and its inhabitants.

Moreover, according to Marxism, all societies have to pass through three different stages due to the class struggle of the people (Wolfreys & Baker 129). The first one is called the *antique* society and refers to the first stage of the organized society. The second stage is called the *feudal* society, meaning a society which is controlled by the nobility and where most people produce just enough to support their own living. The third stage is called the *bourgeois* society, referring to a civilization where the means of production is controlled by one class (the bourgeois) which depends on the labour of the lower classes in society. The *bourgeois* society can therefore also be applied to the relationship between a nation and its colony.

As a Marxist critic one looks for a number of things in a text. It can be how the protagonist or the other characters are depicted and function in society or which bonds that exist between the protagonist and his or her environment. Another part to analyse can also be to look into the society which the author lives in or how the reality of the author affects the text (Barry 167).
Marxist criticism used in literary analysis claims that literature is influenced and affected by both social and political circumstances (Barry 158). One of the purposes for using this perspective when analysing literature is to try and determine how much the object of the analysis is influenced by the society it was produced in. Also, another statement claimed by the Marxist literary perspective is that literature can only fully be understood when looked upon within the frame of its social reality (Robey & Jefferson 167). This means that it is impossible to completely understand the different levels of any literary work if we do not have any knowledge of the society which the work was written and published in. By analysing the poem GM through a Marxist perspective this essay claims that it is possible to discover interesting views on the Victorian age, during which the poem was written.

Jessica Maynard states that Marxism is a philosophical and financial theory that describes social change (Baker & Wolfreys 129). This change emerges from the production process of any given society, which leads to a conflict between the different classes in society. This conflict then develops the economic and industrial situation in the given society.

4.2 Victorian Britain

The time period which we today refer to as Victorian Britain took place during the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901) (Cunliffe 192). Throughout these decades Great Britain experienced many changes that transformed the nation into a world-wide expanded and industrialized society. During the nineteenth century Britain had expanded its borders to incorporate cultures and countries in North- and South America, Australia, Africa and Asia. By the end of the nineteenth century Great Britain consisted of a fifth of the world’s surface and approximately a quarter of the world’s population was ruled by Britain (Cunliffe 186). This meant that the island nation which was the core of this empire was influenced from many parts of the world and this affected both its inhabitants as well as the British culture.

The Victorian time period is known for its self-discipline and enforcements of what it considered to be social correctness (Tucker 128). This affected the gender ideals: how men and, especially, women were expected to behave. Moreover, since Britain at this time was governed by a woman and the mother of eight children, Queen Victoria served herself as a role model of female behaviour and propriety. Women were expected to nurture the home and children but also to be a role model concerning moral values and disciplining personal desires, both to their children and their husbands. The failure of self-control and to show any kind of sexual or passionate emotions could mean loss of respectability (Tucker 129-132).
During the Victorian age the differences between the two genders were partly shown by how bodies and physical differences were treated. Women were regarded as the “weaker” sex but there was also a difference between women of different classes in society. While working-class women were seen as healthy and crude, middle-class women were looked upon as delicate and pure. Some people even considered a basic medical examination as violating the weak constitution of the middle-class woman (Tucker 409-411). Moreover, the way the female body was looked upon - as well as the need for restraint of feeling within both men and women - affected society’s view on sexuality. The dominant part of men and women’s sexual role was the need for virginity before marriage. The idea was that both the man and the woman would become different persons after marrying and starting a sexual relation together. This cultural and social opinion was founded on the thought that transformation from the individual’s need of sexual restrain to the couple’s need for procreation was necessary. While sexual conduct was needed to create a family it was still considered be a purely physical act in order for the woman to remain pure and restrained (Tucker 420-421).

4.3 The syllabi for upper secondary English level A and B

When using the Socratic Dialogue method in upper secondary school during English lessons the different English courses, level A and level B, must be taken in consideration. Since the students in the different courses are on different language proficiency levels the chosen goals to strive at must be adapted so that they are appropriate for each and every pupil. The goals must be adapted to the Socratic Dialogue method and attainable for the students and be relevant when using the Socratic seminars. The two syllabi for English level A and level B state that the student after finishing the courses should have reached a number of goals. Accordingly the student should:

- “desire, have the confidence and be able without preparation to take part in discussions on familiar subjects and exchange information, personal views and experiences” (Skolverket 2007.06.08).
- “be able to read and understand texts with varying factual contents, especially texts linked to their study orientation or their own areas of interest” (Skolverket 2007.06.08).
- “be able to read and understand simple literature and through literature acquire a knowledge of cultural traditions in English-speaking countries” (Skolverket 2007.06.08).
- “be able to formulate themselves in writing in order to inform, instruct, argue and express feelings and values, as well as have the ability to work through and improve their own written production” (Skolverket 2007.06.08).
• “be able to discuss in appropriate language, different subjects and keep a discussion going” (Skolverket 2007.06.07).
• “be able to actively take part in discussions, and be able to present and deal with the merits of opposing arguments” (Skolverket 2007.06.07).
• “be able to orally and in writing summarise and comment on different types of texts, especially those related to the area of interest or study orientation” (Skolverket 2007.06.07).

4.4 The Socratic Dialogue Method
Socrates was a philosopher who lived and worked in Athens, ancient Greek. Though it is difficult to be sure of the exact time, it is estimated that he was born sometime around BC 470 – BC 469 (Dorion 11). Socrates strived stubbornly to define the meaning of concepts and expressions which we use in our every-day life. The reason for this was that he felt that we use expressions like “love”, “justice” and “wisdom” without knowing what they really mean. We think we know what these phrases stand for but when we really try to explain and define them, we often find that it is very difficult to state what these complex idioms mean (Lindström 6). Even though Socrates practiced his philosophy more than two millennia ago, his ideas and methods are still considered by many to be current. Socrates believed in asking questions to people with the purpose of them finding the correct answers within themselves, instead of him giving the correct answer to them. Through this principle Socrates developed a method for teaching which we today call “The Socratic Dialogue Method”. This method is used in some schools as a method of teaching, but can still be considered somewhat ground-breaking since it differs from “traditional” teaching.

In many different societies and schools today, the teacher’s main task is generally to give the pupils information or answers, since he or she is supposed to have the most amount of knowledge and therefore needs to pass it on to the students. In many cases the teaching is structured so that the teacher is merely having lectures during which the students are taking notes. The teacher sometimes asks a few questions which often can be answered with a few words or a repetition of what the teacher have already said. These questions are not meant to stimulate the analysing abilities of the pupils; instead it is just a way of checking that they understand what the teacher has been talking about during the lesson (Lindström 13). The Socratic Dialogue Method, however, is based on the principle that every student has the ability to find the solution to a question or a problem by answering specific questions asked by the teacher.
Every person also has the ability to develop the right moral values and ethics. Through this method these values become more apparent and it is possible to see them more clearly (Pihlgren 28). This method of teaching therefore fosters individuals to use an investigating viewpoint, reason in a logical way and to use an open mind, instead of just repeating pre-fabricated information.

4.4.1 The conditions of the conversation

The Socratic conversation that takes place between the teacher and the pupil (or pupils) aims at developing the pupil’s inner “ethical compass” to give him or her the ability to sort and investigate different experiences, feelings and thoughts. This type of dialogue or conversation also teaches the pupils how to reason in a logical way without using his or her feelings or personal experiences as an argument for or against something. The distinguishing feature of the Socratic seminar or conversation is the common and unprejudiced search for truth (Lindström 8).

This method consists of free, analysing and investigating conversations under controlled forms, which take place between a seminar leader (for example a teacher) and a number of discussion participants (for example pupils). The leader chooses a text from which the discussion starts and the participants have an analytical conversation about it. The text can for example be an article, a poem, a photograph, a painting or even a movie. The text is then prepared and read thoroughly by every participant beforehand and then discussed during the seminar by the participants (Pihlgren 29). The participants can be of any age, from five-year-old children to adults and the size of the seminar group should be between four up to sixteen participants. The size of the conversation group affects the conversation and the result of the discussion in different ways. If the group is too small there is a risk of the group getting “stuck” during the seminar since there are not enough different opinions and viewpoints to discuss. If the group is too large there is a risk of the discussion getting too shallow (Lindström 35). The Socratic Dialogue Method consists of a number of parts:

4.4.2 The four main requirements

These are demands which – if followed – bring out the objective and non-judgemental parts of the participants’ personalities. By following these conversational rules you create an investigating, curious and welcoming environment for the text to be discussed in.

- Speak from your own conviction, without leaning on authorities or your own conceptions.
• Avoid contradiction on main points.
• Investigate the meaning of key-terms.
• Use examples from your every-day life instead of idealizing.

(Pihlgren 28)

4.4.3 The role of the seminar leader
The Socratic conversation consists of a group of people who are going to discuss and analyse a text, and the seminar leader who has the main responsibility over the discussion and makes sure that the conversation rules are followed. His or her main task is not to “teach” in the ordinary meaning of the word; instead he or she leads and guides the conversation (Lindström 10). The seminar leader should also make sure that the questions asked are understood correctly and be attentive of the questions and problems that the answers might raise. He or she ensures that the answers are formulated in a clear way and that they are founded on a relatively objective ground.

The seminar leader also brings up the different consequences the answers have on the discussed issue, for example when a student expresses an opinion about law and suggests his or her own law without considering the effects on society of that particular law (Pihlgren 29). The seminar leader is also responsible for illuminating different viewpoints and allowing oppositions to become the object for further discussions. In order to keep the dialogue going he or she should also be prepared to ask questions, both directed to a certain participant and to the group as a whole. One of the most important tasks, though, is to ensure that the four main requirements (as mentioned earlier) and that the seminar rules are followed (Lindström 36).

4.4.4 Seminar rules
These rules must be followed in order to have a rewarding and developing dialogue between the participants. If one or several of these rules are violated during the discussion the seminar leader must interrupt the discussion and solve the problem before continuing. Since these rules are founded on the need for a respectful and welcoming atmosphere when discussing important issues and problems it is crucial that these rules are followed by all of the participants:

• A joint investigation through a thoughtful dialogue.
• No “rights” or “wrongs” exist.
• Listen.
• Be prepared to review and perhaps change your opinion.

(Pihlgren 29)
4.4.5 The communicative virtues

There are ten communicative virtues which the participants should try to develop during the Socratic conversation (Pihlgren 28-29). They are equally as important and should be strived to be reached by the participants at all times.

_Honesty_ is crucial when having the Socratic seminars. The discussion’s purpose is not only to express different viewpoints and analysing topics, but also to practice the participants’ sincerity whilst discussing. Being open when sharing opinions is important in order to maintain an open mind. Therefore it is not allowed when discussing to hide behind and refer to authorities.

Another virtue is _courage_ and being prepared to make “wild guesses” or bold ways of interpreting the text. This can help the group in shedding some light over the text or discussion. Courage is, however, not the same as making guesses in order to seem interested in discussing the topic. Even though the guesses can be far-fetched the participants always need to explain their guesses with logical reasoning.

Two of the communicative virtues which are closely combined are _concentration_ and _respect_. The ability to concentrate on the discussion helps the participants to keep to the main theme and discussing issues that are important. Concentration also means that the participants should focus on what the other group members are saying. Respect is necessary when having these seminars since it requires that the participants treat the other group members as persons with interesting and important ideas. This is done by listening to and asking questions to the other participants.

Another important virtue is that the members of the seminar _support_ their ideas and arguments by referring to the text or their own experiences. This is needed in order to avoid referring to outside sources and authorities when discussing since the participants should try to argument as objectively as possible.

_Generosity_ is another communicative virtue which means that each and every participant is given the time and space to formulate or re-formulate an idea without interruption. This virtue is connected to _politeness_ which states that the participants should be able to resist from presenting their own ideas or opinions in order to help another participant in presenting his or her. The virtue of _Self-discipline_ is also related to these two qualities since it means that members of the seminar should be able to subordinate themselves to the rules of conduct and conversation.

The final two of the ten communicative virtues are _educational ability_ and _humbleness_. Educational ability means that the participant should be prepared to listen and take in what the others are saying with an open mind. Humbleness is the ability to give up presenting an opinion
because another person or the direction the discussion has taken is more important. (Pihlgren 28-29)

### 4.4.6 The structure of the conversation

The seminar leader chooses a text for the group to talk about; the text should be targeted so that it enables the discussion to become as giving as possible. Also, it is important for him or her to have an efficient and useful structure of the discussion. This creates a sense of order among the members of the group and helps to sustain a calm and creative environment for the discussion.

- **Pre-seminar**
  - Individual goal/s and group goal/s
- **SOCRATIC SEMINAR**
  - beginning question which everyone can answer
  - analysis (interpretive questions)
  - “Socratic question” (valuing question)
- **Post-seminar**
  - Evaluation of the seminar (were the goal/s reached?).
  - Remaining questions

### 4.4.7 Three types of questions

When having Socratic seminars it is important to separate different types of questions in order to know what we do or do not understand when reading the chosen text. By knowing which properties separate different questions from each other we can analyse the text deeper and understand it better.

- **Fact questions** – Questions that remind us of and helps us to summarize what we have read in the text. These questions are answered by the actual words in the text and cannot be interpreted in any specific way since the answers consist of pure facts. An example of a fact question could be “What do the two girls look like?” or perhaps “What kind of relationship do the two girls have?”. The answers for these two questions could be “they have golden/blond hair and rosy cheeks” or “they are sisters”. These answers can easily be supported by the actual text.

- **Interpretation questions** – Questions that help us understand what we have read since the answers must be searched for and found “between the lines”. These questions can focus
on what the painter or the author *means* by writing or painting the way he or she does. Interpretation questions have more than one answer and can be answered by referring to the text. An interpretation question could be “Why is Lizzy so worried about the origin of the fruit?” or “What do you think the fruit symbolises?”.

- **Valuing questions** – Questions that connect what we have read to our own life and experiences. These questions require us to step “outside of the text” and make us use our own ideas and values in order to take a stand if we agree with the author of the text we have read. The valuing questions are the most philosophical questions of these three types and allow us to investigate both the text and ourselves in a deeper way. Examples of this type of question could be “Is it important to be pure?” or “How important is friendship?”.

### 5.0 ANALYSIS

#### 5.1 The critique of a consumer society in Goblin Market

**5.1.1 Marxism and the poem**

The story of the poem GM concerns the two girls Lizzie and Laura and how they try to resist the temptations of the goblin men in the forest. The characters in the poem are Lizzy, Laura and the unnamed goblin men, whom we know nothing about except their animal-like features and the wares that they sell. The word goblin, however, suggests that they are evil-minded, violent and fairly unattractive. Also, the wares they sell are different types of fruit from all over the world, described in the poem by the writer as exotic and endless. Lizzy and Laura, on the other hand, are depicted as beautiful, pure and innocent. (The Victorian Web 2007.02.22. 141-144, 184-189 – when referring to the poem the line numbers are cited).

According to the article “*Come buy*: the Crossing of Sexual and Consumer Desire in Christina Rossetti’s *Goblin Market*” by Victor Roman Mendoza, the poem gives the reader a sense of an existing allegory in-between the lines of the poem, even though it was first treated as a children’s story (Mendoza 913). When this allegory is read through a critical perspective it can give the reader an interesting point of view on the British Victorian society. Moreover, when looked upon through the perspective of Marxism criticism the story underneath the poem tells the reader several things about both the British colonies and the individual’s role in this society.

The founders of the political belief system called Marxism, Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, both lived a period of their lives in England during the Victorian age, like the writer of the poem GM, Christina Rossetti (The Victorian Web 2007.02.23). With the help of Marxist criticism we
can make the argument that Rossetti was influenced by her contemporary society. As mentioned earlier, every society must - according to Marxism - pass through three stages in order to develop. The third stage of society’s development, the *bourgeois* society, is a society where all means of production is controlled by one class in society and can therefore be interpreted as the Victorian society and its relationship with the British colonies during this time. This application of the Marxist society theory is probable since the industrialized country needed the support and exploitation of the working class and the colonies to maintain its form and function. Therefore it is possible to claim that the relationship between Victorian Britain and its colonies is depicted in the poem GM.

If we look at how the actual marketplace is depicted in the novel by using a Marxist perspective, we as readers will find strong criticism against the commercialism and colonisation acted out by the British Victorian culture. By investigating the different characters and the role they play in the poem, it is possible to find underlying meanings in the poem and about the society in which it was produced. The following sections will deal with these meanings.

### 5.1.2 The sisters and the fruit

The two main characters of the poem are the two young women Lizzie and Laura who live together and have a very strong bond in-between them. They are both portrayed by the author as innocent, pure and beautiful ([The Victorian Web](http://www.victorianweb.org/)) 37-44. Lizzie is depicted as the strong one of the two girls, since she is able to resist the temptations offered by the strange goblin men throughout the entire story. Laura, on the other hand, is weaker and in the end not able to resist the goblin men and what they offer. The temptations the two girls are exposed to are the luscious fruits that the goblin men sell in the forest. However, when exposed to the enticing cries of the goblin men, the girls’ reactions are very different. Lizzy reacts by covering her ears and running away from the cries and back home to safety. Laura, on the other hand, is thrilled by the offers described to her and cannot help but buying the dangerous wares.

The study of the fruits that the goblin men sell through a Marxist perspective is a very important part of analysing the poem. When considering the wares offered to the two girls, certain properties of the fruits are particularly interesting. The fruits are described by the author as tempting, sweet-tasting and luscious-looking ([The Victorian Web](http://www.victorianweb.org)) 1-31. They are also, evidently, exotic and not the kind of fruits which are grown in the typical British climate and nature. By using these exotic fruits as the bait with which to trap the innocent girls, the reader gets the feeling that the goblin men have travelled around the world in order to collect and
sell the fruit. The selling and consuming of this fruit can therefore be interpreted as the
conquering and exploitation of the British colonies all over the world (Mendoza 934).

When the girls first come in contact with the goblin men they are out on a quest for food.
When compared to the sustenance they need for their every-day survival, the fruit seems
unnecessary and a kind of food which they in reality do not need. Also, since the fruit is only
available to Lizzie and Laura through purchase, it creates a notion of the fruit not actually being
grown and harvested in the habitat where the girls live (Mendoza 919). This is also stated by
Lizzie as she in line 44 and 45 asks herself and Laura in which soil the fruits actually have been
growing and by doing this is questioning their need for it: “who knows upon what soil they fed
their hungry thirsty roots?” (Mendoza 918-919) (The Victorian Web 2007.02.22 44-45).
Therefore, by trying to convince the girls of buying and consuming something they do not need
for their actual survival it seems as if the author herself provides the reader with criticism
towards the need for unnecessary consumption in the Victorian age.

5.1.3 Currency and value

The critique of consumerism in Victorian society is also shown by the currency which Laura
chooses to pay with; her hair and her tears. The most valuable possessions the two girls have are
their moral purity and their appearances, features which were important for the social status and
acceptance in Victorian society (Tucker 129,420).

Mendoza also discusses the importance of the two sisters’ hair in his article, arguing that the
hair symbolizes the purity of the sisters (925-926). The loss of this innocence is vividly described
when Laura pays the goblin for their wares with a lock of her hair and a teardrop (The Victorian
Web 2007.02.22. 115-130). By offering a piece of her most valuable possession it can be
interpreted as Laura giving up a piece of her soul or her own ethics, especially since she sheds a
tear at the loss of her lock of hair. The golden hair which she chooses to pay the goblin men with
is valued as highly as real gold, since it is accepted as a means of payment. The golden hair must
therefore symbolize something as important and valuable as gold for Victorian women and could
therefore be seen as not only a lock of hair but instead the young woman’s own moral values and
purity (Mendoza 925). Since female innocence and virginity was crucial in Victorian England
the lock of hair can therefore also represent more physical qualities. The importance of female
purity and moral value is also depicted in the poem when Lizzie meets with the goblin men in
order to save her sister from the addiction to the goblin men’s fruit. She is violently attacked
when refusing to eat the fruit herself and is described in the poem as “…a royal virgin town” (The Victorian Web 2007.02.22 418).

When Laura buys a ware that is evidently unnecessary for her survival and pays with one of her most valuable possessions for a moment’s pleasure, the poem can be interpreted as offering critique of how the individual in Victorian society chooses to consume what is not essential for the individual’s own survival. By consuming what is not needed, the individual acts against his or her conscience and responsibility towards his or her environment and by doing this pays a very high price, just as Laura does in the poem. Laura’s ethics and virtues are corrupted by the goblin men in the market place, and this can be seen as a symbol of how the ethics and moral conscience of the Victorian society is transformed by capitalism.

5.1.4 The poem and colonization

If the fruit which is sold by the goblin men is looked upon as symbols of the different colonies of Great Britain during the Victorian age, the possibility for the girls to buy the fruit only once is also a form of critique of the exploitation of the Victorian age and society. When a country is once colonised, it would seem as if the innocence and purity of that country are presumably difficult to retrieve. This is shown by the relationship between the two girls and the exotic fruit. Once the girls tasted the fruit it is impossible for them to rediscover its sweetness and flavour in the same way, since they then have experienced eating the fruit before. This is shown in lines 154 - 156 where the fate of one girl is described after she tasted the forbidden fruit: “she pined and pined away; sought them by night and day, found them no more…” (The Victorian Web 2007.02.22. 154-156).

Moreover, the characteristics and features of the goblin men also provide the reader with a connection to the British colonies at the time during which the poem was written. The word “goblin”, as mentioned earlier, suggests that the features and looks of the fruit traders are strange with faces borrowed from animals like parrots, ratel and wombat (The Victorian Web 2007.02.22. 75,76,112). If we look at the origin of these animals they come from parts of the world which during the Victorian time period served as colonies for Great Britain (Mendoza 934). By borrowing faces from exotic and foreign animals the goblin men represent the countries from which the animals originate. Therefore, when looking upon the fruit and the characters of the goblin men in this way, the innocent girls can represent the Victorian nation before and after colonising and exploiting new civilizations.
5.1.5 The poem and Victorian society
In the poem the two main characters, Lizzie and Laura, have very different attitudes towards the goblin men and their fruits. Laura is intrigued by the goblin men and their exotic wares and therefore chooses to buy and eat the fruit. Lizzie on the other hand reacts to the goblin men by protecting herself from their tempting offers and runs away (The Victorian Web 2007.02.22. 64-70). If Laura symbolizes the consuming, curious and exploiting part of Victorian society, Lizzie then represents the conscience, ethics and morals of the same culture. In this poem Lizzy even expresses anxiety over where and under what conditions the fruits have been cultivated and harvested (The Victorian Web 2007.02.22. 44-45 and 134-135). Laura, on the other hand, is mainly concerned with how and when she will be able to taste and experience the exotic fruit again (The Victorian Web 2007.02.22 269-273).

Yet, even Laura ponders where the fruit comes from originally but in a much more romantic and naïve way (The Victorian Web 2007.02.22. 60-63). Mendoza also interprets the poem’s message concerning colonies and the conditions of labour under which the fruit is grown. In his article he questions the working conditions of the fruit pickers and the other kinds of labour which helped cultivate the exotic fruit which the goblin men sell (Mendoza 919). The poem consequently presents a metaphorical critique of the consumption of new and different cultures which instead of being consumed could be discovered peacefully without claiming ownership over its inhabitants. As a result of this it seems logical to choose young, beautiful and innocent girls to represent Victorian Britain, since their virginity and innocence was considered to be the most valuable possession they had (Tucker 420).

Concerning the connection between the individual and society GM offers its readers an interesting angle on social criticism if we apply a Marxist critical perspective. The consumption and colonization of other cultures by a fairly small island kingdom is depicted in the poem through the consumption of the forbidden fruit and the loss of the girls’ purity. When the author of GM wrote this poem she, naturally, had a specific thought behind the story and the different parts of the poem. Today we can only make qualified guesses of what she might have intended when writing this intriguing piece of art. With such a vivid picturing of the different characters and the fruits the poem allows us to investigate not only the society which GM was written in, but also the world we ourselves live and are a part of.
5.2 Using Goblin Market in the classroom through the Socratic Dialogue method

5.2.1 How to reach the syllabi’s goals by using the Socratic Dialogue method

The syllabi clearly state the need for the students to have proficiency in discussing texts and arguing in a logical, balanced and understandable way (Skolverket 2007.05.01). The need for the pupils to be able to read, write and speak English freely is mentioned in at least six of the goals in the syllabi. These goals can be strived for by using Socratic seminars when handling a text of some sort. By taking a poem like GM and letting the pupils read the text several times before discussing it, the poem and its content become familiar to the pupils and this makes it easier for them to discuss the text freely and comment on it later on. Moreover, by giving the pupils time to read and prepare the text it also becomes easier for the students who find it more difficult to assimilate a text and its content to take an active part in the seminar later on. However, even though the text is prepared by the students the seminar will most likely handle subjects and topics which cannot be prepared, like “love”, “bravery” or “friendship”. This way the student are given the opportunity to reach the goal of taking part in conversations about familiar topics which are not prepared.

Another goal in the syllabi concerns the ability to read and understand easily accessible fiction and through the literature expand the student’s knowledge of culture in English-speaking countries (Skolverket 2007.04.30). When reading and discussing the poem GM it is important to give the pupils an understanding of what society looked like at that certain time in Great Britain. This will expand their outlook on Victorian Britain before actually discussing the poem and the cultural conditions under which it was written. By bringing up the opinions of the Marxist criticism perspective the students can get a sense of the importance of society’s influence on the written text. This can later on during the seminar lead to a deeper discussion of the poem and Victorian society, without the students having to agree with neither Marxist criticism theory nor the different ways of interpreting the text. The important thing during the Socratic discussion is to find your own opinions on factual or/and objective ground, whether you agree or not with the text or topics.

The syllabi also put emphasis on the student’s ability to express opinions, emotions and values in written form, as well as improving his or her writing skills (Skolverket 2007.04.30). When using the Socratic Dialogue Method you cannot only discuss but also choose to give the pupils a written assignment in addition to the conversations. The written assignment should focus on the same values as the seminar and not on the gathering and summarizing of facts. One of the founding thought of Socratic seminars is to develop the individual’s ability to reason logically.
and to investigate texts and phenomenon as objectively as possible. These abilities can be
developed while writing as well. The written assignment should therefore consist of one or
several discussion questions or ethical statements which the student has to discuss as thoroughly
and logically as possible.

5.2.2. The poem and the Socratic seminar
The reasons for using the poem GM for my lesson plan are that the poem is a text which is short
enough to be easily accessible for the students but also that the poem gives an opportunity to
investigate and discuss the Victorian society through an interesting perspective, Marxist
criticism. By using GM and the main issues from analysing it through a Marxist perspective the
pupils can analyse, discuss and therefore learn more about interesting issues like the female role,
consumption and colonization during that time. When discussing these issues during the Socratic
seminars it is then possible to compare these topics during the Victorian time period and today’s
society. By analysing these topics during Socratic seminars the students can be more aware of
their own behaviour concerning these issues. That way the pupils can get new perspectives on
how people lived both in Victorian society and how people live today which develops their sense
of democracy and human worth.

There are a number of passages in the poem which can be used during the seminars. These
passages can work as a foundation for deeper analysis but also as a way of strengthening
arguments and opinions during the discussion. These passages can also be used by the seminar
leader as a way of keeping the conversation focused on the text. The actual seminar starts with a
beginning question which each of the participants should be able to answer individually. The
beginning question of the two seminars in the lesson plan could for example be “- Which of the
two girls in the poem do you think you would be and why?” (The Victorian Web 2007.02.22. 64-70).
This question requires not only knowledge of the text but also an answer well founded on
the text from the participants. Examples of questions which could help the discussion or analysis
of the texts are:

- What do you think the fruit symbolises? Why is the fruit depicted in such a detailed way
  (The Victorian Web 2007.02.22. 1-31)?
- Why is Lizzy so worried about the origin of the fruit (The Victorian Web 2007.02.22 42-45)?
- Why do you think the goblin men have animal faces? Can they symbolize something
  (The Victorian Web 2007.02.22. 71-77, 107-114)?
• Why does Laura stop hearing the goblin men cry for buyers after she has eaten the fruit? How come Lizzie still hears them (The Victorian Web 2007.02.22. 253-256)?

The Socratic Dialogue method is, according to this essay, both versatile and developing for the student and it can be applied to many different types of texts. Therefore, this method of handling texts is an excellent way of teaching literature and poetry during English lesson, but can also be used as a way of discussing, for instance, articles and movies.

5.2.3 Socratic seminars through a didactic perspective
When using a teaching method like Socratic seminars it is important to know in which ways this method is developing the students’ linguistic skills. In order to do this it is necessary to look into what didactics in general say about the method in question. As mentioned previously, the Socratic Dialogue method focuses on developing the argumentative and analytical skills of the seminar participants. However, when using this method as a part of teaching English in an upper secondary school there are also certain linguistic benefits which will develop the students understanding of English as a language.

One of the didactic perspectives that exist today is the constructivist perspective. This viewpoint focuses on language as communication between individuals, instead of language as a form of knowledge (Brown 245). Teachers who support this theory handle language teaching as an opportunity of meaningful, rewarding and interactive language exchange between the students, emphasising the language learners’ interactions with others (Brown 245). From a constructivist’s perspective, Socratic seminars are quite useful as a way of teaching language through communication and interaction between pupils. Due to the fact that participants of Socratic seminars need to be prepared to communicate both experiences and opinions, in addition to listening to what the other participants are saying, the constructivist perspective appears to support the use of the Socratic Dialogue method.

Another linguistic term is communicative competence. According to its founder, Dell Hymes, communicative competence is a feature of our language knowledge which enables the learner to receive, understand and interpret messages (Brown 246). Communicative competence is hence the linguistic knowledge that enables the learner to communicate in a successful way. This part of language knowledge is depending on the communication and language performance of at least two persons (Brown 246).

When trying to define communicative competence as a linguistic term four subcategories were founded. The first subcategories grammatical competence is the part of communicative
competence which is associated with understanding and using the linguistic code of a language. This also includes understanding grammatical relations and rules. The second definition is called *discourse competence*, which is the learner’s ability to form meaningful passages and sentences out of a series of words and sounds. The third subcategory of communicative competence is referred to as *sociolinguistic competence*. This part of linguistic knowledge concerns the sociocultural rules of a language. Sociolinguistic competence requires the learner to understand the social context of how the specific language is used. The fourth and last of the definitions is *strategic competence*. This part of language knowledge deals with both the sort of verbal and non-verbal communication which helps the language learner to express him-or herself when his or her knowledge of the language is imperfect. In short, this definition consists of communicative strategies like hesitation, guessing and avoidance (Brown 246-247).

When using Socratic seminars in the upper secondary language classroom, communicative competence is one of the students’ linguistic skills which is used and developed. The first two of the four subcategories, grammatical and discourse competence, are practiced and used when the pupils have discussions during the seminars. By communicating in a natural way during the seminars through expressing opinions, thoughts and ideas, the students are exposed to the grammatical codes of the language. They are also forced to practice putting words and sounds together forming meaningful sentences and messages. Moreover, when having the Socratic discussions the students’ sociolinguistic competences are developed through practicing maintaining the seminar rules and focusing on the communicative virtues. The type of English language which is used during the seminars applies to certain social and seminar rules as for example mutual respect. This respect is shown by listening to the other participants, being non-judgemental and investigating the topic in a thoughtful way. The fourth and last of the communication competence-definitions, strategic competence, is also developed when using the Socratic Dialogue method. Since the pupils take part in discussions without any manuscript or rehearsed phrases and sentences they are forced to use any linguistic strategy they know in order to convey a message to the other seminar participants.

Wasyl Cajkler and Ron Addelman states that communicative competence is dependent on the constant and equal development of the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing (Cajkler & Addelman 39). According to Cajkler and Addelman language lessons can each time focus on one or two of the language skills (Cajkler & Addelman 40). By doing this the lessons develop the students’ linguistic knowledge. The Socratic Dialogue method requires the use of texts, amongst other things, as foundation for an investigating discussion between the participants. It also involves all four language skills: listening to the other seminar participants,
speaking when expressing opinions, reading texts and - to some extent - writing down arguments and performing written exercises. These four language skills are equally important for the pupils to practice when learning a language. When using a poem as a seminar text the students develop their understanding of both the text and the language which the text is written in.

Another theoretical view on second language acquisition is *Say what you mean and mean what you say* (Lightbown & Spada 122). This didactic theory is based on the principles of the integrationists’ hypothesis where the idea is that languages are learnt through interacting together with others. The “say what you mean and mean what you say”-perspective claims that it is necessary for the language learner to have access to meaningful language input. This input is in forms of interaction through conversation with teachers and other students, creating a natural and inspiring environment for language acquisition. The advocates of this pedagogic theory argue that these interactive conversations and discussions create a desire within the students to express opinions, thoughts and intentions. This then leads to the students acquiring the language’s forms, grammar and structures in a natural and motivating way (Lightbown & Spada 122). Socratic seminars are therefore suitable for teaching English as a second language, according to this theory.

Judith A. Langer states in *Envisioning Literature – literary understanding and literature instruction* that students through reading literature “…become the literate thinkers we need to shape the decisions of tomorrow.” (Langer 1). When reading a text, according to Langer, the pupils practise becoming an independent thinker and create better strategies for making sense of what they read when they are reading it (Langer 38).

Thus, by using the Socratic Dialogue method together with a poem like GM the students’ linguistic skills and understanding of the English language are developed.

6.0 CONCLUSION
When studying the poem GM through a Marxist literary perspective the environment which the author herself lived in becomes an important target for investigation. Marxist criticism claims that the society which authors live in affects not only the author herself but also the work he or she creates. Having this in mind it is, according to this essay, possible to find signs of Christina Rossetti interpreting different parts of Victorian society in her poem GM. Concerning the consumption of Victorian Britain there are parts of this poem – especially concerning the fruit that the goblin men sell - which quite easily can be interpreted as the author offering a critique of both Victorian Britain’s colonization of foreign cultures and the consumption of the different and
exotic wares that these cultures produced for Great Britain at that time. The way the two female characters are depicted in the poem can also through a Marxist perspective be interpreted as offering a critique of the female ideal of that time.

This essay has shown has shown that the poem GM is an excellent poem to use in the upper secondary classroom. By having both oral seminars by using the Socratic Method and handing out a written assignment many of the goals in the syllabi for English level A and level B are met and the pupils develop and improve their English proficiency. Moreover, by using the Socratic Dialogue Method when discussing the poem the students are free to interpret the poem in any way they like, as long as they can justify why they interpret the poem in any specific way and support their opinions in the text itself. This way the pupils can practice their reasoning skills and learn that there seldom are any “right” or “wrong” answers when interpreting and discussing a text.

Furthermore, by using the Socratic seminars as a mean of teaching it is possible to give the pupils a rich picture of the society which the poem was written during and discover possible underlying messages from the author to the reader. By using this method of teaching the students also get to practice their critical thinking and learn that the information they are handed can be investigated further instead of simply accepting what authorities are telling them. The importance of making founded choices and opinions through investigating information is becoming increasingly important as our society expose people to more and more information in an ever quicker pace.
7.0 WORKS CITED


8.0 APPENDIX

8.1. Lesson plan

8.1.1. Lesson 1

The first lesson focuses only on the Socratic Dialogue Method and how we are going to use this method in the classroom. During this session the teacher will go through the history behind this way of discussing and what the intentions with it are. The different parts of the Socratic conversation are brought up and also the rules to follow and why they must be followed. To give the pupils something to strive for we talk about the communicative virtues and why we use individual and group goals while discussing the text. It is also important to point out that this method is going to be a re-occurring event when working with different texts, pieces of art or movies. This way they will hopefully not feel as pressured to “perform” since they will have more opportunities to affect their grade. Naturally, these discussions will still be a part of grading the students but since the intention is to use this type of seminars when discussing other topics and texts, the pupils will have several occasions to practise their conversational virtues and discussion skills.

However, after each seminar the students will get individual comments on how they behaved during the discussions and these comments will affect their final grades. The comments and grades of the seminars will be based on how willing they are to participate during the discussions and how much they take in to account the seminar rules and communicative virtues. Since each and every student will answer the opening question of the seminar they will have at least one opportunity of participating actively. Later on during the seminar the students will have to choose if they want to take an active or passive part in the conversation, simply by deciding to express opinions, ask questions or share experiences during the discussion. The written assignment which is handed out is also graded. This way they can follow their own progress and feel that they are in control of their own grades.

8.1.2. Lesson 2

First of all approximately twenty minutes of the lesson will be set aside to introduce the class both to Victorian England and what they are going to be working with during the following lessons. When presenting the information on Victorian society there are many parts of the country which need to be introduced to the class, for example how men and women lived, the different colonies Britain owned and what society looked like at that time. It is important, no
matter what you are teaching, to inform the pupils of the lesson plan so that they get an overview of the project and that there is a purpose with the assignments. During this lesson the poem GM will be handed out to the class. The poem will be read out loud together in the class, each student reading a piece each and after that they have some time to ask questions about the poem, the time period and the task we are going to work with the following sessions.

8.1.3. Homework
When using Socratic conversations homework is not a way of giving an extra assignment, it is a way of giving the students extra time to prepare them on the text before having the seminar. The homework for next time is simply for them to read the poem as many times as they need in order to feel comfortable when discussing the text. However, while they are reading the poem at home the teacher asks of them to think of as many questions as possible to ask about the text and to write them down. He or she also asks them to write down thoughts that perhaps occur when they read the text and to bring them along with the questions to the next lesson. The purpose of doing this is to prepare their minds for curious investigation of the poem and to help them practicing at reading texts contemplatively. The homework includes reading, writing and analysing.

8.1.4. Lesson 3
During this lesson the poem is read once more. The historical background of when it was written will also be gone through one more time. This includes talking about how the author herself lived in order to give the students a wider perspective on the poem, together with information about religion, female professions and how the society at that time could affect the people. The teacher also repeats the main parts of the Socratic Dialogue Method. Since the classes in upper secondary school in Sweden can consist of up to thirty or more students the class might have to be divided into two groups. The purpose of doing this is to make sure that the groups do not consist of too many pupils. If the conversation group has too many students the discussion will be shallow and only a few of the participant will have time or courage to speak their minds. The teacher will therefore hand out another assignment to the class and the pupils will have time to do this the next lesson while the other group is having their Socratic conversation on the poem. This assignment can for example be to choose from a number of interpretation questions that the teacher has written down concerning the text and then to write a short paper answering that question. The questions can for example be:
• Why does Laura pay for the fruit with her hair and a teardrop? Why does not Lizzie try to pay in the same way (The Victorian Web 2007.02.22. 123-128, 386-389)?
• How are Victorian women depicted in the poem and why (The Victorian Web 2007.02.22. 184-189, 189-214)?
• What do you think the poem says about Victorian England? Is the writer affected by her society and in that case – how (The Victorian Web 2007.02.22. 199-209)?

8.1.5. Lesson 4 and 5
These lessons are the lessons where we begin with the actual conversations and the written assignment and each lesson will contain one Socratic seminar. Two lessons will be used for the discussions since it is important not to rush the students while discussing the text. Depending on how long the lessons are the teacher will use approximately thirty to forty minutes for each discussion, while the other group of students answer their question of choice. The other group will then have enough time to answer one (or perhaps two) of the interpretation questions and vice versa during the next lesson. The purpose of the question is not to write as much as possible when answering it, it is to make them qualify their answer in an as objective way as possible.

At the end of each conversation we will go through if the pupils feel that they have reached their individual goal/s and if the group reached the goal/s they set up together. When having the seminars the seminar leader (the teacher) is not allowed to give any hints of any personal ideas or interpretations of the poem. However, it is his or her task to prepare different philosophical topics or themes which could be discussed by the group in case the group runs out of subjects to talk about. Examples of such topics could be the female role – both in Victorian England and now, colonies and the part they play in society, human worth – then and now and what they think the author herself wants to tell the reader through this poem.