

The Victorians

Learning Objective:

To find out who the Pre-Raphaelites were and to explore their artwork.

NEXT

In the first part of the 19th century, the Royal Academy of Art in London was the ultimate in art tuition. The Royal Academy taught its pupils in a certain way which didn't allow them to explore their own artistic ideas. They were taught in the tradition of Raphael. Raphael (1483-1520) was one of the great artists from the Renaissance period. This style idealised nature and beauty and made objects, scenes and people more beautiful than perhaps they were in real life. Many artists did not like this and started to rebel against the established teachings.



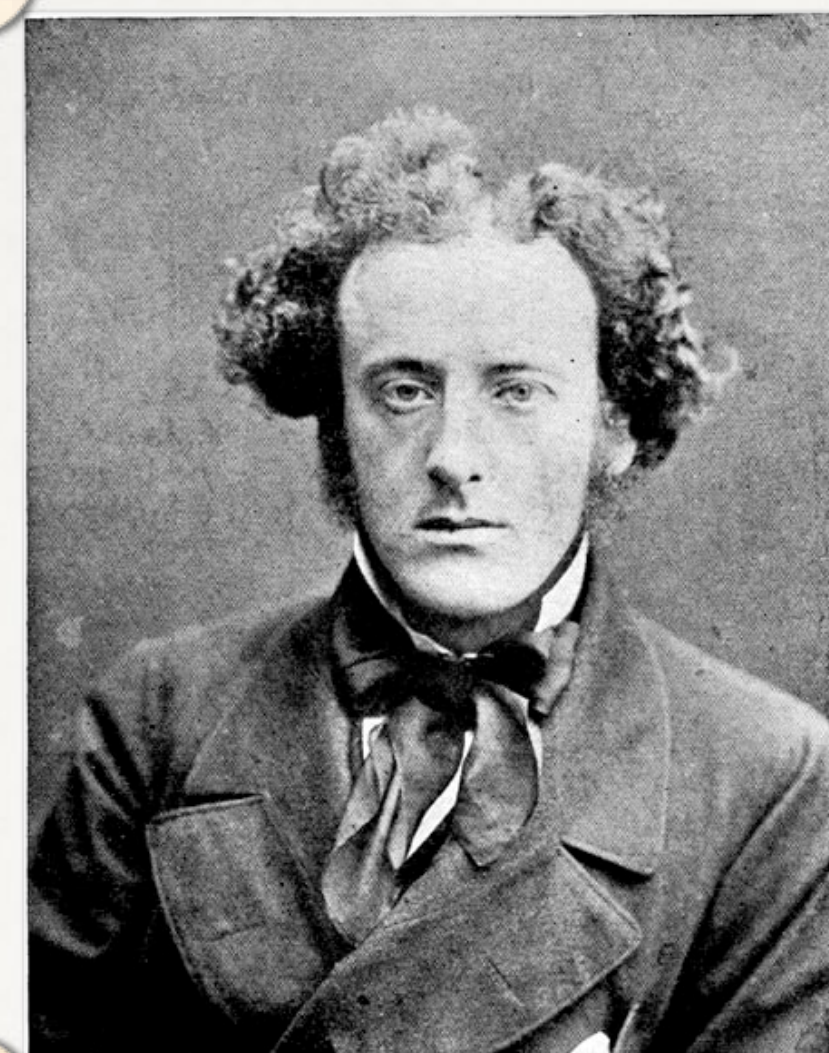
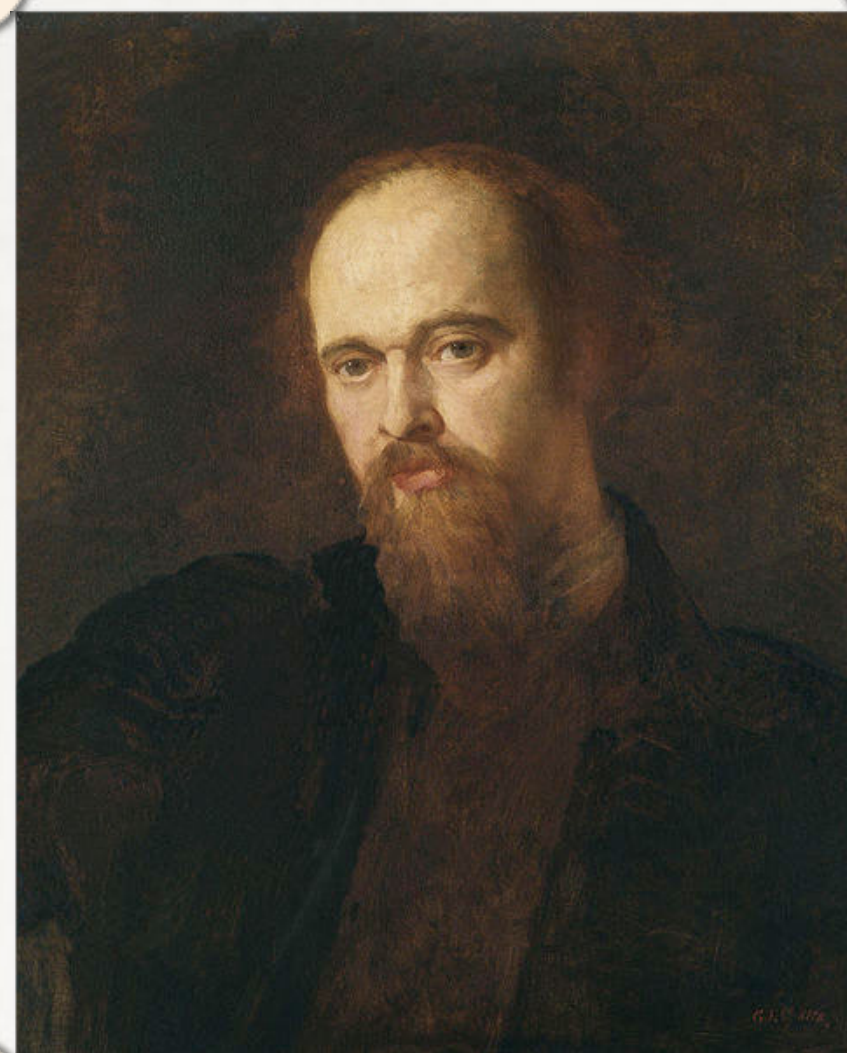
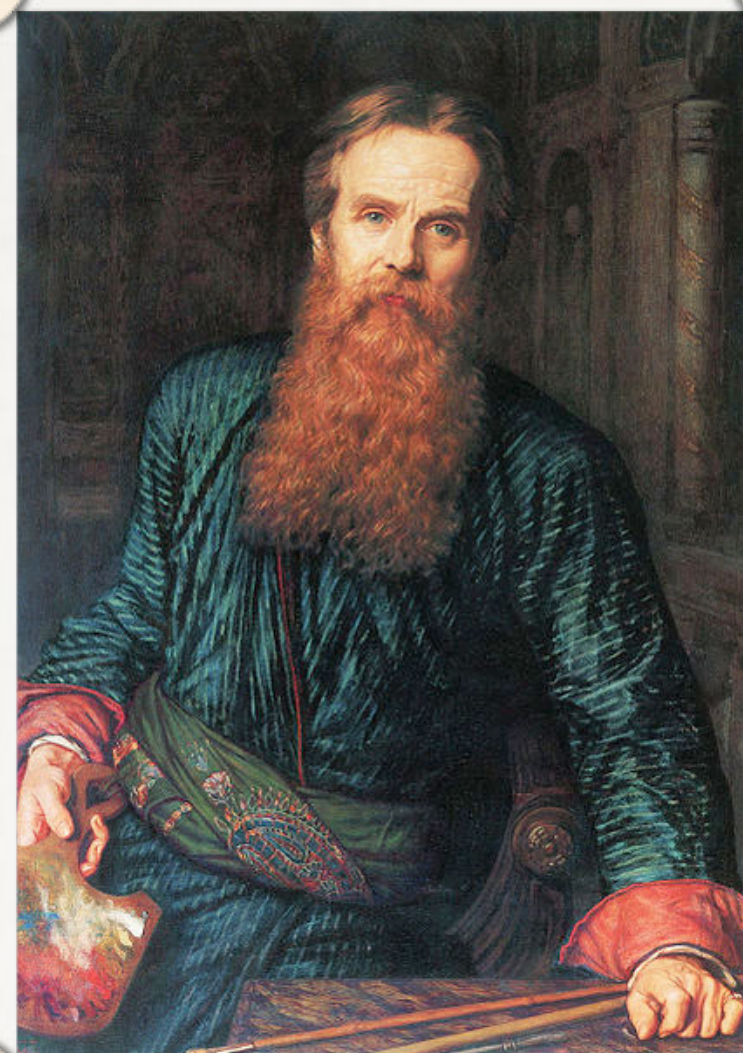
Raphael Sanzio, 1506

BACK

NEXT

Who were the Pre-Raphaelites?

A group of 7 artists created a secret society in 1848 which they called the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. They took their inspiration from a group of painters in the 15th century before Raphael known as the Primitives, hence the name the Pre-Raphaelites. The 3 most famous of the brotherhood were William Holman Hunt (left), Dante Gabriel Rossetti (centre) and John Everett Millais (right).



BACK

NEXT

The ambition of the Pre-Raphaelites was to bring English art back to a greater “truth to nature”. They focused on observing nature and creating images that were true to life. They mainly painted scenes from literature (such as Shakespeare) or the Bible but mixed fantasy with reality. Whilst the subjects were often based on myth and fiction, the paintings themselves were very realistic, sometimes almost photographic.

Why does this painting look like a photograph?



BACK

NEXT

When Millais painted 'Ophelia', he spent five months on the banks of the Hogsmill River to accurately paint the scenery. A model called Elizabeth Siddal then lay in a bath fully clothed so he could paint an accurate depiction of Ophelia.



Elizabeth had to pose in winter and the bath was so cold that she ended up becoming ill from lying in cold water for so long.

BACK

NEXT

The Pre-Raphaelites were not received well by the critics. This painting by Millais entitled 'Christ in the House of His Parents' was very controversial and many people were disgusted by it.



Look closely at the painting. Why do you think it was so controversial?

BACK



NEXT

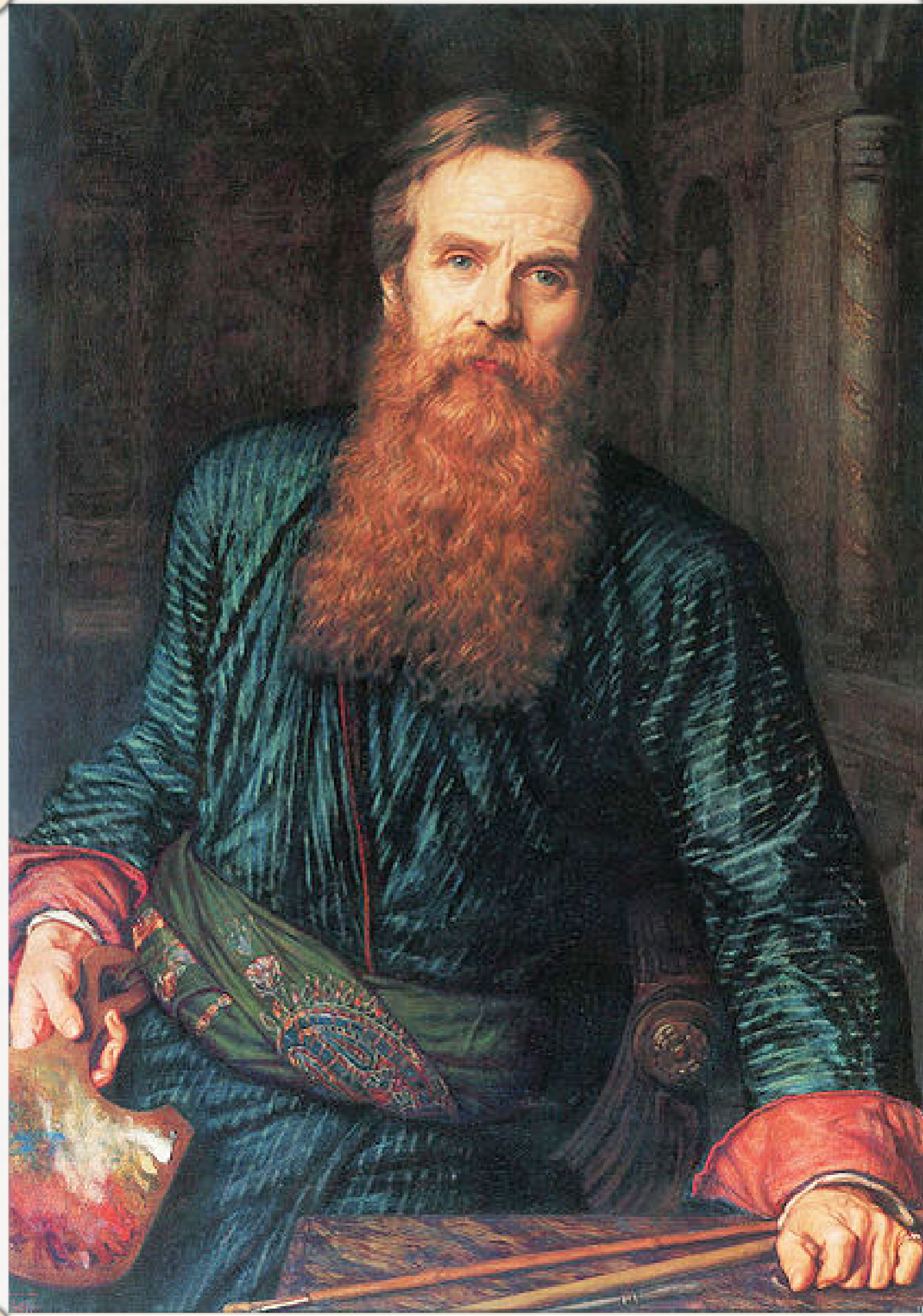
This is how one critic from The Times responded to Millais' painting:

"Mr. Millais' principle picture is, to speak plainly, revolting. The attempt to associate the Holy Family with the meanest details of a carpenter's shop, with no conceivable omission of misery, dirt, or even disease, all finished with the same loathsome minuteness, is disgusting."

Until this time, any pictures of Jesus and his family had showed them dressed in toga-like robes, often with halos, and depicting them as a family immune from the struggles of daily life. Millais' painting shows Joseph creating a door with sawdust and wood carvings all over the floor and dirt under his fingernails. Charles Dickens wrote that Christ himself looked like *"a hideous, wry necked, blubbering, red-headed boy in a bed-gown, who appears to have received a poke in the hand, from the stick of another boy with whom he has been playing in an adjacent gutter."* Showing Jesus in his family in this very human way was seen as 'improper'. The Pre-Raphaelites, however, were concerned with truth and showing scenes as they actually would have been.

BACK

NEXT



Have a look at these other paintings from the Pre-Raphaelites. What do you think of them? Which do you like best and why?



BACK

NEXT

The Hireling
Shepherd

William
Holman Hunt,
1852



BACK

NEXT

The Beloved
(The Bride)

Dante Gabriel
Rossetti 1866



BACK

NEXT

The Lady of
Shalott

John William
Waterhouse,
1888



BACK

NEXT

Pretty Baa- Lambs

Ford Madox
Brown 1851-1859



BACK

NEXT

On English Coasts

William
Holman
Hunt, 1852



BACK

NEXT

The Shadow of
Death

William Holman
Hunt
1870



BACK

NEXT

Peace Concluded

John Everett
Millais
1856



BACK

NEXT

April Love
Arthur Hughes
1855



BACK

NEXT

The Vale of Rest

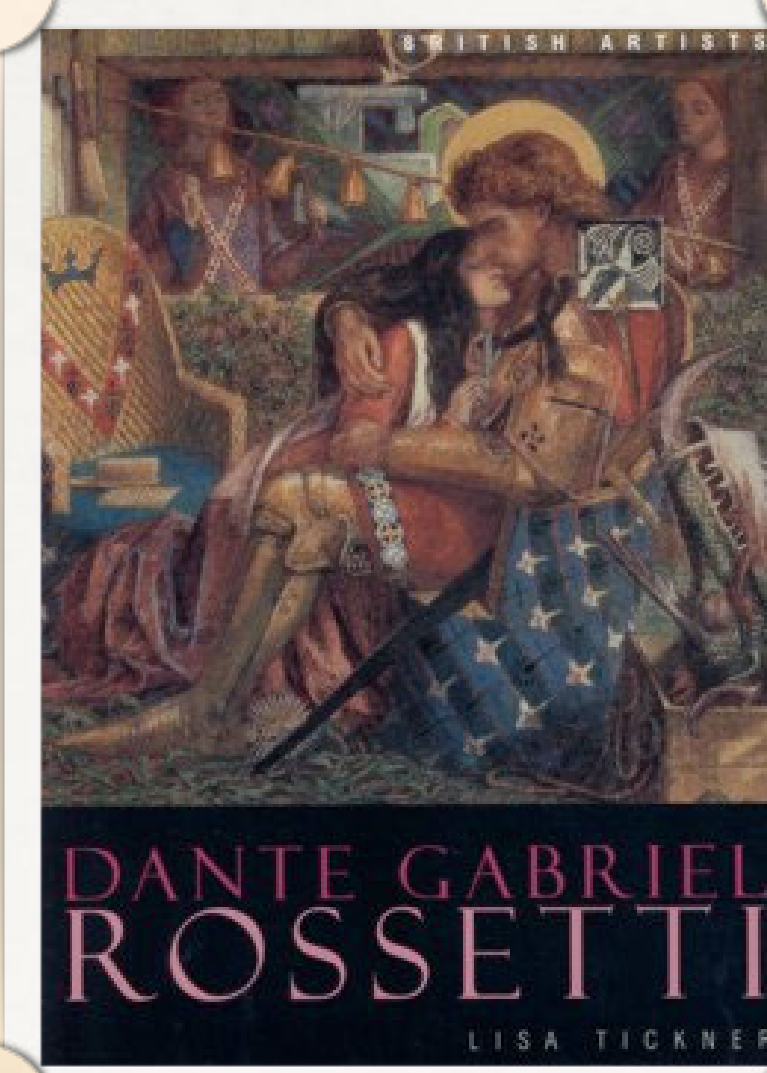
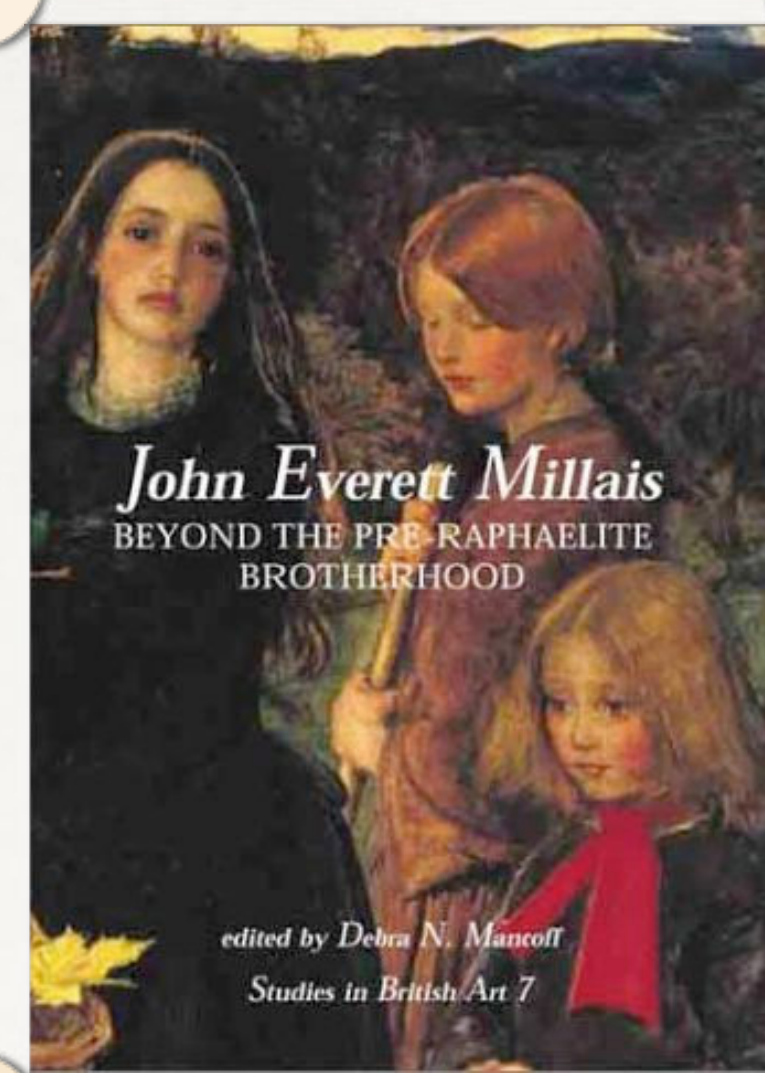
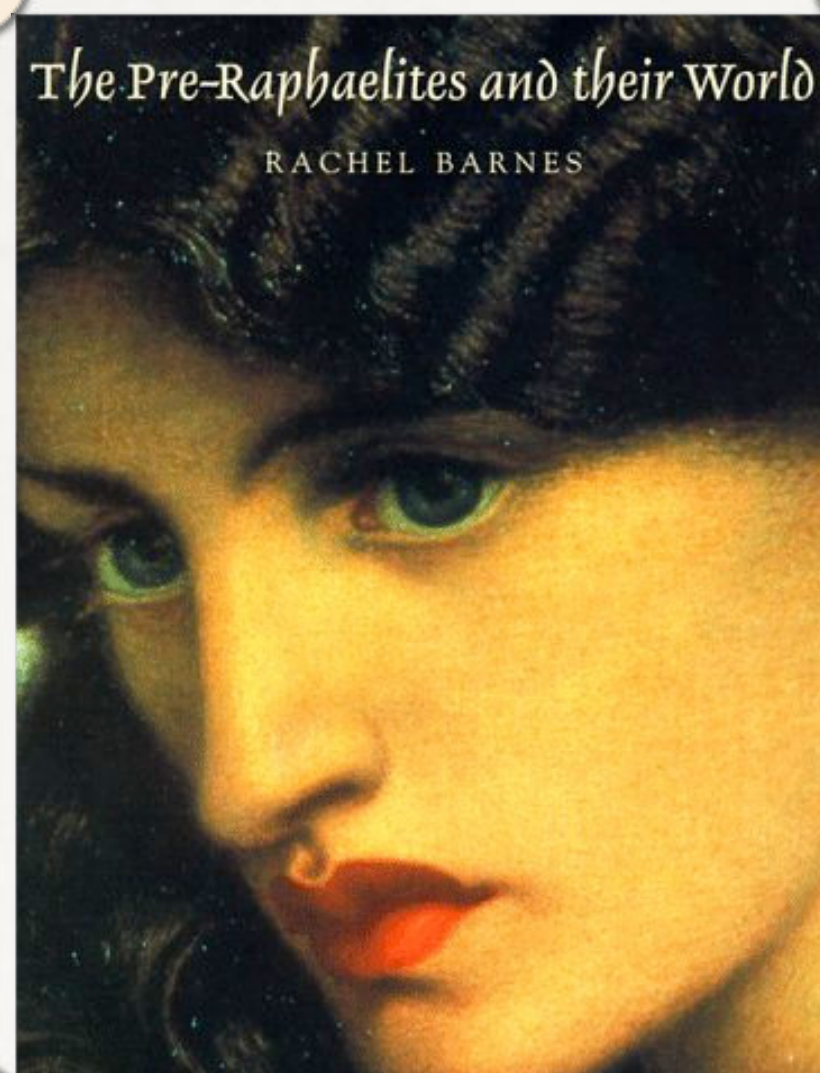
John
Everett
Millais,
1858



BACK

NEXT

The Pre-Raphaelites were a ground-breaking group. The work they did in breaking away from the establishment led to other art movements, such as the Arts and Crafts movement and Art Nouveau. Even though they were not always well received at the time, the Pre-Raphaelites are now seen as a fundamental stage in art history. The original brotherhood have had several films and books made about their lives and experiences.



BACK

NEXT