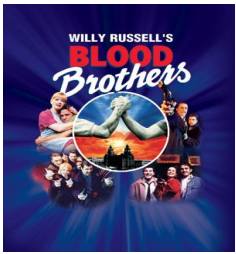


WILLY RUSSELL'S
BLOOD
Brothers

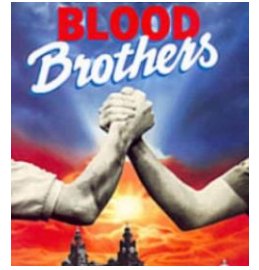


REVISION WORK BOOK

BY MR CR HARRISON



BLOOD BROTHERS CONTEXT



1. Where is the setting of Blood Brothers?

.....

2. What qualities are Liverpoolians known for?

.....

3. Which character typifies these qualities?

.....

4. What were the unemployment figures in Liverpool during the 1980's?

.....

5. At what time is Blood Brothers set?

.....

6. Why might Mrs Johnstone's neighbours disapprove of her?

.....

7. Find 5 key facts about education during this time.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

8. What was the name given to manual workers?

.....

9. What type of houses did most working class people live in?

.....

10. What were the conditions of the Council Houses like?

.....

.....

11. Why were 'New' towns created?

.....

12. What was the name of the 'New' town that was created?

.....

13. What effect did uprooting people have?

.....

14. What were the aims of the playwright?

.....

.....

.....

15. Which characters highlight this aim?

.....

BLOOD BROTHERS CONTEXT

Liverpool

Liverpool, because of its position on the River Mersey, was a prosperous seaport in the 19th century.

It is a city of many contrasts.

In the 20th century, because of the silting of the river, it was a place of financial depression, which led to unemployment and strikes.

There was a big gap between the rich and the poor.



The People of Liverpool

Liverpudlians are known for their warmth, hospitality and wit.

Liverpool is also famous for its football teams and impact on culture – the Mersey Beat (poetry), the Beatles (music) and playwrights, architects etc.

Mrs Johnstone's wit and warmth typify these qualities.



Unemployment

Unemployment reached 25% in the 1980s.

At the time the play is set, factories were closing down. At the start of act 2, Sammy is already on the dole, and the song 'Take a Letter Miss Jones' illustrates how this rising unemployment adversely affects Mickey's life and tempts him into crime.

Being out of work creates low self-esteem; particularly for traditional men who feel they need to support their family.



Views at the time

Blood Brothers is set in Liverpool, between the 1950s and the 1970s.

At the time, people strongly disapproved of sex before marriage and this is why Mrs Johnstone 'has to' marry quickly.

Divorce was uncommon and this is another reason the neighbours might disapprove of her.



Although the 1945 Education act had made grammar schools free, working class children had to pass the 11+ to gain entry to the grammar schools. The pass mark was kept deliberately high. Few children were allowed the privilege of a grammar school education, and even if they gained a place, there was no guarantee that they would leave with qualifications, as the school leaving age was 15.

Grammar Schools

Pupils at grammar schools studied academic subjects and took O levels. Some went on to take A levels, while others were under pressure from parents to leave school, get a job and bring money into the household.

There were far fewer university places then, so most would go into employment after school.



Secondary Modern Schools

Children who failed the 11+ would go to a secondary modern school to be prepared for life in the trades. Boys would study practical skills like bricklaying, alongside academic work, and girls would learn how to cook. Many of these schools were under-funded.



Qualifications

If pupils were not considered 'bright' they were not allowed to take CSEs. These qualifications were not worth as much as O Levels, taken at grammar school. (GCSEs are much more inclusive) So it was common for children to leave school without any qualifications at all. It was more difficult for them to get on in life.

Poverty

There is a clearly established link between poverty and under-achievement at school. Edward is sent to a private, fee-paying boarding school and will take O levels, A levels and go on to university.

Mickey leaves school and goes into employment; things go wrong when he is made redundant, whereas Edward has a much more secure 'white collar' job. Manual workers were called 'blue collar' workers; they were more affected by closure of factories and the scarcity of work connected with the docks.



Council Housing



Council houses were the homes of most working class people in the 1950s and 1960s. The terraced houses had a lot to recommend them, but they were also cramped and lacked inside toilets and bathrooms. They did not have central heating and were heated mostly by coal fires. Their inner city locations were often dirty and there was nowhere for children to play as they rarely had gardens.

'New' Towns

To improve standards of living, the government moved people away from the terraced houses into new council accommodation in the countryside. 'New' towns were created like Skelmersdale, and existing places were developed, like Runcorn and Winsford. Some high rise blocks were built also.



Bright New Day

Mrs Johnstone's family is certainly helped by their move, although not as much as she had hoped.

In many ways, it is already too late for the older children, and the unemployment situation was often worse away from the city.

Also, many missed the people and the amenities that they had known before, and the support network that existed all but vanished. Uprooting people can cause stress and depression.

Willy Russell's Aim

One of the playwright's aims is to show us that there are disadvantages to being poor and working class.

The failure to succeed in life is not because of a lack of ability, but a lack of opportunity. This can clearly be seen in Edward and Mickey.

We must ask ourselves whether this is still true in the 21st century.



SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY

Write a synopsis of the play

Act one

Act two

10 KEY EVENTS OF BLOOD BROTHERS

MRS JOHNSTONE

Appearance:



Key events in the play that link to Mrs Johnstone:

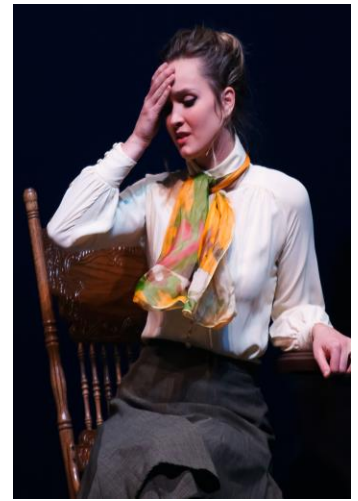
Important quotes which tell us about Mrs Johnstone and her character:

What other people think of Mrs Johnstone:

Important themes that Mrs Johnstone links to:

MRS LYONS

Appearance:



Key events in the play that link to Mrs Lyons:

Important quotes which tell us about Mrs Lyons and her character:

What other people think of Mrs Lyons:

Important themes that Mrs Lyons links to:

MICKEY

Appearance:



Key events in the play that link to Mickey:

Important quotes which tell us about Mickey and his character:

What other people think of Mickey:

Important themes that Mickey links to:

EDWARD

Appearance:



Key events in the play that link to Edward:

Important quotes which tell us about Edward and his character:

What other people think of Edward:

Important themes that Edward links to:

LINDA

Appearance:



Key events in the play that link to Linda:

Important quotes which tell us about Linda and her character:

What other people think of Linda:

Important themes that Linda links to:

SAMMY

Appearance:

Key events in the play that link to Sammy:

Important quotes which tell us about Sammy and his character:

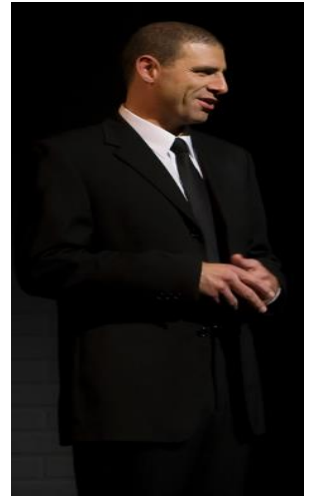
What other people think of Sammy:

Important themes that Sammy links to:



NARRATOR

Appearance:



Key events in the play that link to Narrator:

Important quotes which tell us about Narrator and his character:

What other people think of the Narrator:

Important themes that the Narrator links to:

FIND THE KEY QUOTES FOR THE FOLLOWING POINTS IN THE TEXT.

- Narrator's description on Mrs Johnstone 5
- Description of Mrs Johnstone 5/6
- Mrs Johnstone being poor 6/7
- Mrs Lyons wants children 8
- Mrs Johnstone on superstition 9
- Mrs Johnstone worries about having two new babies 11
- Mrs Lyons asks for a baby 11/12
- Mrs Johnstone is persuaded by Mrs Lyons 13/14
- Mrs Lyons takes the baby 18
- Mrs Lyons wants Mrs Johnstone to leave 21
- Mrs Johnstone wants to take the baby 22
- Mrs Lyons threatens Mrs Johnstone if she tells someone about the pact 23

- Narrator on superstition 23
- Mickey looks up to Sammy 26/27
- Mickey and Edward meet 27/28/29
- Mickey and Edward become Blood Brothers 30/31
- Sammy's description of Edward 31
- Mrs Johnstone meets Edward 32/33
- Mrs Lyons won't let Edward play with Mickey 35/36
- Linda is introduced to Edward 42
- Linda and Mickey tell Edward what to say to the policeman 43
- Mrs Lyons worries about Edward 45
- Mrs Johnstone gives Eddie a locket 50
- Mickey describes Eddie 53
- Eddie describes Mickey 53/54

- The Johnstones move away 56/57
- Linda loves Mickey 67/68
- Mickey loves Linda 71
- Mickey and Eddie are reunited 73
- Edward gives Mickey advice about flirting with Linda 74
- Mrs Lyons confronts Mrs Johnstone 77/78/79
- Narrator describes Mickey, Linda and Eddie growing up 82/83
- Edward leave for university 86/87
- Linda is pregnant 87
- Mickey and Linda get married 89
- Mickey loses his job 91/92
- Mickey agrees to help Sammy 93/94
- Mrs Johnstone explains what happened to Mickey 97
- Mickey starts taking pills 97/98

- Linda hides Mickey's tablets 99/100
- Narrator describes Mickey 103/104
- Mickey threatens to kill Eddie 105/106
- Mrs Johnstone tells Edward and Mickey they are brothers 106
- Narrator questions the audience 107
- Mrs Johnstone is upset by Edward and Mickey's death 107/108

THEMES IN BLOOD BROTHERS

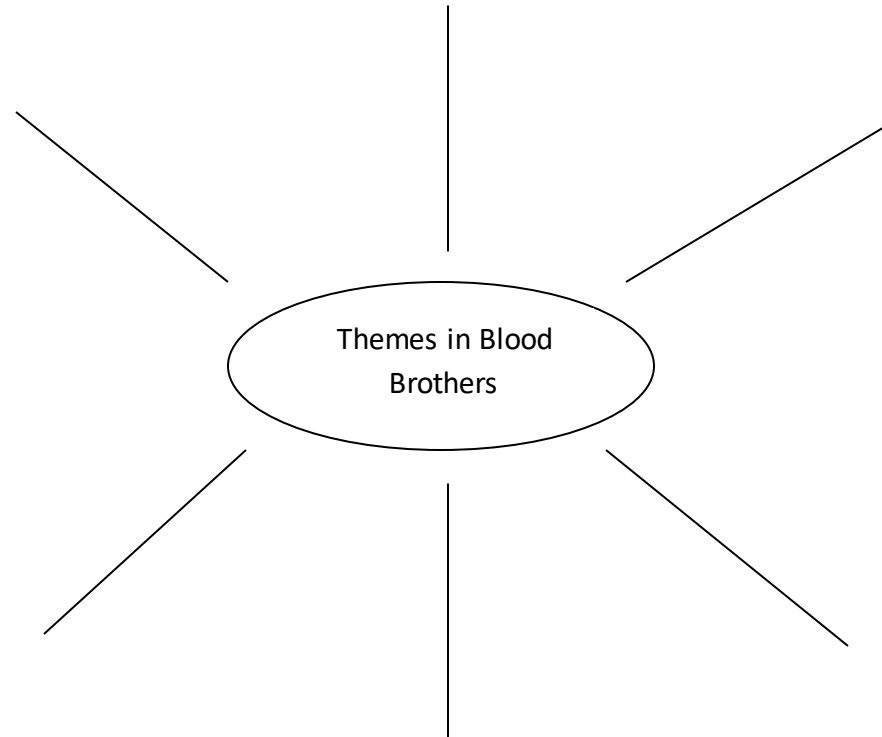
Task: Identify the key themes highlighted in Blood Brothers from the images in the mov

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-

Complete the mind map on the following page to show the themes from Blood Brothers.

You should try to include:

- **Key quotes**
- **Characters**
- **Events**



EXAM QUESTIONS

16. *Blood Brothers*

Answer part (a) and **either** part (b) **or** part (c).

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on part (a), and about 40 minutes on part (b) or part (c).

- (a) Read the extract on the opposite page. Then answer the following question:

Look closely at how Mr and Mrs Lyons speak and behave here. What does it reveal about their relationship? [10]

Either,

- (b) For which character in *Blood Brothers* do you have the most sympathy? Show how Willy Russell's presentation of your chosen character creates sympathy for him or her. [20]

Or,

- (c) Write about the Johnstone family and the way they are presented to an audience. [20]

MRS LYONS: Oh Richard, Richard.

MR LYONS: For God's sake Jennifer, I told you on the phone, he'll just be out playing somewhere.

MRS LYONS: But where?

MR LYONS: Outside somewhere, with friends. Edward . . .

MRS LYONS: But I don't want him out playing.

MR LYONS: Jennifer, he's not a baby. Edward . . .

MRS LYONS: I don't care. I don't care . . .

MR LYONS: For Christ's sake, you bring me home from work in the middle of the day, just to say you haven't seen him for an hour. Perhaps we should be talking about you getting something for your nerves.

MRS LYONS: There's nothing wrong with my nerves. It's just . . . just this place . . . I hate it. Richard, I don't want to stay here any more. I want to move.

MR LYONS: Jennifer! Jennifer, how many times . . . the factory is here, my work is here . . .

MRS LYONS: It doesn't have to be somewhere far away. But we have got to move, Richard. Because if we stay here I feel that something terrible will happen, something bad.

MR LYONS *sighs and puts his arms round MRS LYONS.*

MR LYONS: Look, Jen. What is this thing you keep talking about getting away from? Mm?

MRS LYONS: It's just . . . it's these people . . . these people that Edward has started mixing with. Can't you see how he's drawn to them? They're . . . they're drawing him away from me.

MR LYONS, *in despair, turns away from her.*

MR LYONS: Oh Christ.

He turns to look at her but she looks away. He sighs and absently bends to pick up a pair of children's shoes from the floor.

I really do think you should see a doctor.

MRS LYONS: (*snapping*): I don't need to see a doctor. I just need to move away from this neighbourhood, because I'm frightened. I'm frightened for Edward.

MR LYONS *places the shoes on the table before turning to her.*

MR LYONS: Frightened of what, woman?

MRS LYONS: (*wheeling to face him*): Frightened of . . . (*She is stopped by the sight of the shoes on the table. She rushes at the table and sweeps the shoes off.*)

16. *Blood Brothers*

Answer part (a) and **either** part (b) **or** part (c).

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on part (a), and about 40 minutes on part (b) or part (c).

- (a) Read the extract on the opposite page. Then answer the following question:

With close reference to the extract, show how Willy Russell creates mood and atmosphere for an audience here. [10]

Either,

- (b) Imagine you are Mrs. Johnstone. At the end of the play you think back over its events. Write down your thoughts and feelings. Remember how Mrs. Johnstone would speak when you write your answer. [20]

Or,

- (c) At the beginning of *Blood Brothers*, the narrator's first speech tells the audience how the story ends. How, then, does Willy Russell keep the interest of an audience throughout the play? [20]

We see MRS LYONS staring at a piece of paper. EDWARD is standing before her.

MRS LYONS: (*incredulously*): Suspended? Suspended? (*She looks at the paper.*) Because of a locket?

EDWARD: Because I wouldn't let them have my locket.

MRS LYONS: But what's so . . . Can I see this locket?

There is a pause.

EDWARD: I suppose so . . . if you want to.

EDWARD *takes off the locket from around his neck and hands it to his mother. She looks at it without opening it.*

MRS LYONS: Where did you get this?

EDWARD: I can't tell you that. It's a secret.

MRS LYONS: (*finally smiling in relief*): I know it's from a girlfriend, isn't it? (*She laughs.*) Is there a picture in here?

EDWARD: Yes, Mummy. Can I have it back now?

MRS LYONS: You won't let Mummy see your girlfriend. Oh, Edward, don't be so . . . (*She playfully moves away.*) Is she beautiful?

EDWARD: Mummy can . . .

MRS LYONS: Oh, let me look, let me look. (*She beams a smile at him and then opens the locket.*)

Music.

EDWARD: Mummy . . . Mummy what's wrong . . . (*He goes to her and holds her steady.*) Mummy!

MRS LYONS *takes his arms away from her.*

What is it?

MRS LYONS: When . . . when were you photographed with this woman?

EDWARD: Pardon!

MRS LYONS: When! Tell me, Edward.

EDWARD *begins to laugh.*

Edward!

EDWARD: Mummy . . . you silly old thing. That's not me. That's Mickey.

MRS LYONS: What?

EDWARD: Mickey . . . you remember my friend when I was little. (*He takes the locket and shows it to her.*) Look. That's Mickey . . . and his mother. Why did you think it was me? (*He looks at it.*) I never looked a bit like Mickey.

EDWARD *replaces the locket around his neck. MRS LYONS watches him.*

MRS LYONS: No it's just . . . (*She stares, deep in thought.*)

EDWARD: (*looking at her*): Are you feeling all right Mummy? You're not ill again, like you used to be . . . are you?

MRS LYONS: Where did you get that . . . locket from, Edward? Why do you wear it?

EDWARD: I can't tell you that, Ma. I've explained, it's a secret, I can't tell you.

MRS LYONS: But . . . but I'm your mother.

EDWARD: I know but I still can't tell you. It's not important, I'm going up to my room. It's just a secret, everybody has secrets, don't you have secrets?

16. *Blood Brothers*

Answer part (a) and **either** part (b) **or** part (c).

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on part (a), and about 40 minutes on part (b) or part (c).

- (a) Read the extract on the opposite page. Then answer the following question:

Look closely at how Edward and Mickey speak and behave here. What does it reveal about them at this point in the play? [10]

Either,

- (b) Give advice to the actor playing Mickey on how you think he should present the character to an audience. [20]

Or,

- (c) At the end of the play the Narrator says, “And do we blame superstition for what came to pass?” How important do you think superstition is in affecting the outcome of the play? [20]

Bored and petulant, MICKEY sits and shoots an imaginary Sammy.

EDWARD, also aged 'seven' appears. He is bright and forthcoming.

EDWARD: Hello.

MICKEY: *(suspiciously)* Hello.

EDWARD: I've seen you before.

MICKEY: Where?

EDWARD: You were playing with some other boys near my house.

MICKEY: Do you live up in the park?

EDWARD: Yes. Are you going to come and play up there again?

MICKEY: No. I would do but I'm not allowed.

EDWARD: Why?

MICKEY: 'Cos me mam says.

EDWARD: Well, my mummy doesn't allow me to play down here actually.

MICKEY: 'Gis a sweet.

EDWARD: All right. *(He offers a bag from his pocket.)*

MICKEY: *(shocked)* What?

EDWARD: Here.

MICKEY: *(trying to work out the catch. Suspiciously taking one)* Can I have another one. For our Sammy?

EDWARD: Yes, of course. Take as many as you want.

MICKEY: *(taking a handful)* Are you soft?

EDWARD: I don't think so.

MICKEY: Round here if y' ask for a sweet, y' have to ask about, about twenty million times. An 'y' know what?

EDWARD: *(sitting beside MICKEY)* What?

MICKEY: They still don't bleedin' give y' one. Sometimes our Sammy does but y' have to be dead careful if our Sammy gives y' a sweet.

EDWARD: Why?

MICKEY: 'Cos, if our Sammy gives y' a sweet he's usually weed on it first.

EDWARD: *(exploding in giggles)* Oh, that sounds like super fun.

MICKEY: It is. If y' our Sammy.

EDWARD: Do you want to come and play?

MICKEY: I might do. But I'm not playin' now 'cos I'm pissed off.

EDWARD: *(awed)* Pissed off. You say smashing things don't you? Do you know any more words like that?

MICKEY: Yeh. Yeh, I know loads of words like that. Y' know, like the 'F' word.

EDWARD: *(clueless)* Pardon?

MICKEY: The 'F' word.

EDWARD is still puzzled. MICKEY looks round to check that he cannot be overheard, then whispers the word to EDWARD. The two of them immediately wriggle and giggle with glee.

EDWARD: What does it mean?

MICKEY: I don't know. It sounds good though, doesn't it?

EDWARD: Fantastic. When I get home I'll look it up in the dictionary.

MICKEY: In the what?

EDWARD: The dictionary. Don't you know what a dictionary is?

MICKEY: 'Course I do . . . It's a, it's a thingy innit?

EDWARD: A book which explains the meaning of words.

16. *Blood Brothers*

Answer part (a) and **either** part (b) **or** part (c).

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on part (a), and about 40 minutes on part (b) or part (c).

(a) Read the extract on the opposite page. Then answer the following question:

Look closely at how Linda speaks and behaves here. How might it affect an audience's feelings towards her? [10]

Either,

(b) What do you think about Mrs. Lyons and the way she is presented to an audience? [20]

Or,

(c) How does Willy Russell present the theme of social class in *Blood Brothers*? [20]

MICKEY and LINDA are in their new house. In the lounge LINDA is preparing MICKEY 's working things.

LINDA: (Shouting): Mickey, Mickey, come on, you'll be late . . .

MICKEY enters his house.

MICKEY: Where's me . . .

LINDA: Here . . . here's y' bag. Y' sandwiches are in there . . .

He ignores the bag and begins looking through a cupboard drawer.

Mickey, what y'lookin' for?

MICKEY: Y' know what I'm lookin' for.

LINDA: Mickey, Mickey listen to me . . .

MICKEY: Where's me tablets gone, Linda?

LINDA: Mickey you don't need your tablets!

MICKEY: Linda!

LINDA: Mickey. You're workin' now, we're livin' on our own – you've got to start makin' an effort.

MICKEY: Give them to me, Linda.

LINDA: You promised.

MICKEY: I know I promised but I can't do without them. I tried. Last week I tried to do without them. By dinner time I was shakin' an' sweating so much I couldn't even work. I need them. That's all there is to it. Now give.

Pause.

LINDA: Is that it then? Are y' gonna stay on them forever?

MICKEY: Linda.

LINDA: Look. We've . . . we've managed to sort ourselves out this far but what's the use if . . .

MICKEY: We have sorted ourselves out? Do you think I'm really stupid?

LINDA: What?

MICKEY: I didn't sort anythin' out Linda. Not a job, not a house, nothin'. It used to be just sweets an' ciggies he gave me, because I had none of me own. Now it's a job and a house. I'm not stupid, Linda. You sorted it out. You an' Councillor Eddie Lyons.

LINDA doesn't deny it.

Now give me the tablets . . . I need them.

LINDA: An' what about what I need? I need you. I love you. But, Mickey, not when you've got them inside you. When you take those things, Mickey, I can't even see you.

MICKEY: That's why I take them. So I can be invisible. (*Pause.*) Now give me them.

Music. We see LINDA mutely hand MICKEY her bag.

MICKEY quickly grabs the tablets.

MICKEY exits.

The NARRATOR enters.

The NARRATOR watches LINDA. She moves to telephone, but hesitates.

NARRATOR: There's a girl inside the woman

Who's waiting to get free

She's washed a million dishes

She's always making tea.

LINDA: (*speaking on the 'phone*): Could I talk to Councillor Lyons, please?