

Blood Brothers– Knowledge Organiser

Plot summary:

Act One

The Narrator introduces the twins and gives an overview of the story. We see a preview of the play's final moments- Mickey and Edward both die. Mrs Johnstone sings about how her husband left her with seven children and she can't afford to feed them. Mrs Johnstone goes to clean at Mrs Lyons' house. Mrs Lyons reveals that she and her husband can't have children. Mrs Johnstone finds out she is pregnant with twins. Mrs Lyons persuades her to give her one of the babies.

The babies are born. Debt collectors repossess Mrs Johnstone's belongings. Mrs Lyons takes one of the babies. Mrs Lyons fires Mrs Johnstone and tells her that both boys will die if they ever find out they are twins.

When the twins are seven, Mickey and Edward meet near Mickey's house. They bond immediately. Mrs Johnstone is horrified when she realises who Mickey's new friend is. She tells Edward to leave and not to come back. Mickey goes to see Edward but Mrs Lyons sends him away. Edward is angry and uses swear words he learnt from Mickey. Mrs Lyons hits him. Edward sneaks out to play with Mickey and Linda. Mrs Lyons tells her husband that they need to move away, but he's unconvinced. Soon afterwards, a policeman catches Edward, Mickey and Linda misbehaving, which persuades Mr Lyons to move his family. Edward goes to Mrs Johnstone's house upset about moving. She gives him a locket with a picture of her and Mickey in it. The Johnstones find out that they're being moved to Skelmersdale.

Act Two

The Johnstones are happier in Skelmersdale. When Edward is fourteen, he is suspended from his boarding school. Mickey and Linda are also suspended from their comprehensive school. Back home, Mickey and Edward meet and recognise each other. They renew their friendship. Mrs Lyons sees the boys together. She tries to bribe Mrs Johnstone to move away. When she refuses, Mrs Lyons tries to attack her with a knife. Mickey, Edward and Linda meet and the play moves through scenes in which they age from fourteen and eighteen. Edward reveals his love for Linda but then encourages Mickey to ask her out. Edward leaves for university. Mickey and Linda get married because Linda is pregnant. Mickey loses his job and has to go on the dole. Edward comes home from university. Mickey resents him and they fall out. Edward asks Linda to marry him. Linda admits she has feelings for him but tells him she's married to Mickey. Sammy persuades Mickey to act as a lookout for a robbery but it goes wrong and Sammy shoots the petrol station attendant. Mickey's sentenced to seven years in prison. He becomes depressed and is put on pills.

Mickey is released early but he is still depressed. Linda begs him to stop taking the pills. Linda gets them a new house and a job for Mickey. Mickey knows that Edward, who is now a local councillor, is responsible for both. Linda and Edward kiss. Meanwhile, Mickey stops taking his pills. Mrs Lyons shows Mickey that Edward and Linda are together. Mickey takes Sammy's gun and goes to confront Edward at the Town Hall. Mrs Johnstone tells the boys they are brothers. Mickey loses control and accidentally shoots Edward. The police shoots Mickey in response.

Key characters		Key themes	Context and Literary Tradition	Stylistic features & relevant terms
Mrs Johnstone	Mickey, Edward and Sammy's mother. She gives up Edward so he'll have a better life.	Money Social Class Fate Superstition Friendship Coming of age Identity Gender	Teenager became a properly recognised age group. It was widely accepted that young people had their own culture (music, fashion and hobbies) and ways of behaving, which made them different to adults and children.	Foreshadowing Pathos Structure Form Imagery Motifs Phonetical Standard English Tension Humour Tension Irony Juxtaposition Stage Directions Cyclical Structure
Mrs Lyons	A middle-class woman who longs for a child. She manipulates Mrs Johnstone into giving Edward to her.		Families were expected to have a 'nuclear' structure- a mother, a father and their children. Single-parent families like Mrs Johnstone were less common and were frowned upon by many.	
Mickey Johnstone	The twin Mrs Johnstone keeps. He's a friendly child but ends up unemployed and in trouble with the law.		There was a large gap between working and middle class in Britain, even before the industrial decline. The Johnstones and Lyonses are class stereotypes. A lot of working class people struggles financially, even if they were in work or on the dole. The Middle class were largely unaffected by the industrial decline, as they had jobs like teaching or accountancy. There was also a class divide in education, whether you went to a public and private schools often decided your job in the future.	
Edward Lyons	The twin Mrs Lyons takes. He's well- educated and grows up to be a successful local councillor.		Tragic Conventions Blood Brothers is a typical tragedy. The first part builds up the turning point (Mrs Johnstone giving up Edward and keeping Mickey), and the second part deal with the consequences of this, which leads to the main character's downfall.	
Linda	Mickey and Edward's friend. Both boys fall in love with her. She marries Mickey.		Liverpool depended heavily on traditional industries, so it was badly hit by the industrial decline in the late twentieth century. The city's working-class areas were very poor and things went from bad to worse.	
Sammy Johnstone	Mickey's older brother. He's always in trouble as a child and ends up as a criminal.		A prologue is an opening to a story that establishes the setting and gives background details. It gives clues to what is going to happen in the main story.	
Mr Lyons	A wealthy businessman who spends more time at work than with his family. He makes Mickey redundant.		Marilyn Monroe was a famous Hollywood film actress in the 1950s. She was known for being glamorous, however she tragically died young.	
The Narrator	Helps to tell the story. He also plays several minor characters throughout the play.		The play is a musical. Willy Russell uses songs to either reveal a character's thoughts and feeling (like a soliloquy) or to move the plot along. Songs can also highlight key motifs and themes.	

Key quotations	Useful vocabulary	Responding to the (extract, question, etc)
<p>"So did y'hear the story of the Johnstone twins?/ How one was kept and one given away?" (The Narrator)</p> <p>"They say...they say that if either twin learns that he once was a pair, that they shall both immediately die." (Mrs Lyons)</p> <p>"But y'know the devil's got your number, Y'know he's gonna find y', Y'know he's right behind y'," (The Narrator)</p> <p>"Ey, we were born on the same day...that means we can be blood brothers. Do you wanna be my blood brother, Eddie?" (Mickey)</p> <p>" No. I took him. But I never made him mine. Does he know? Have you told..." (Mrs Lyons)</p> <p>"E: I'm exactly the same age as you, Mickey. M: Yeh. But you're still a kid." (Edward and Mickey)</p> <p>"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' Councilor Eddie Lyons." (Mickey)</p> <p>"Mickey. Don't shoot Eddie. He's your brother. You had a twin brother." (Mrs Johnstone)</p> <p>"You. You! Why didn't you give me away? I could have been...I could have been him!" (Mickey)</p> <p>"And do we blame superstition for what came to pass? Or could it be what we, the English, have come to know as class?" (The Narrator)</p>	<p>Pathos Monetary Contrast Juxtaposition Dramatic Irony Motifs Dole Prejudice Manipulates Consequences Vulnerable Foreboding Foreshadow Judgemental Sympathy Stigmatised Monologue Prologue Dialogue Transitions Cyclical Cautionary Repetition Ominous Hyperbole Poetic Atmospheric</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can I interpret the key ideas that the Willy Russell is communicating through his text? (<i>What?</i>) ▪ Can I explore and develop explicit and implicit techniques that create meaning for the audience? (<i>How? For what effect?!</i>) ▪ Can I identify Willy Russell's techniques such as foreshadowing and non-standard English, and explore their effect on the audience? ▪ Can I explore and comment on Willy Russell's intention within the text? ▪ Can I respond personally to the text and suggest alternative interpretations? ▪ Can I use evidence selectively to support/justify my ideas? ▪ Can I explore and explain the use of techniques/conventions? ▪ Can I explore how Willy Russell uses language to develop/create point of view and tone and atmosphere? ▪ Can I focus on individual words to suggest how they create meaning for the audience and might influence them? ▪ Can I explode quotations and refine my skills for writing a lot about a little. ▪ Can I develop my ideas fully and fluently? ▪ Can I link my comments to the context of the text when appropriate?

