

Blood Brothers (AQA Literature, Paper 2) – Knowledge Organiser

Plot Summary

Act 1

- Overture** - The Narrator introduces the story and asks us to judge Mrs Johnstone, in a scene that is reminiscent of a Shakespearian prologue.
- Marilyn Monroe** - Mrs Johnstone sings the song of Marilyn Monroe. We see her impoverished lifestyle and learn she is expecting twins. The Narrator appears as a milkman and a gynaecologist.
- My Child - Now in Mrs Lyons' house, the women compare lives. Mrs Johnstone reveals she is expecting twins and Mrs Lyons convinces her to give one to her.**
- Easy Terms** - Mrs Johnstone gives birth and comes home to find her things being taken away, and Mrs Lyons takes Edward.
- Shoes Upon the Table (Devil's Got Your Number)** - Mrs. Lyons fires Mrs. Johnstone, and tells her that she will never see Edward again because if the twins are ever told what they are, they will die, according to superstition.
- July the 18th - 7 years forward. Mickey recites 'I Wish I Was Our Sammy'. Mickey meets Eddie. The two "decide" to be best friends, and discover that they share the same birthday. They prick their fingers and mix the blood. They are now Blood Brothers.**
- Kid's Game** - Mickey plays games with Sammy, Linda, and the other children in the area. They pretend to be Cowboys and Indians, and the gun motif appears as they 'shoot' each other.
- Gypsies in the Wood/ Shoes Upon the Table (DGYN) Reprise 1** - the mothers tell their children not to play together, but they disobey and get in trouble with the police. Mrs Lyons tells Mr Lyons they must leave. Mickey and Eddie say their goodbyes and Mrs Johnstone gives Eddie a locket with a picture of her and Mickey.
- Long Sunday Afternoon/ My Friend** - Mickey, sings of his loneliness (Long Sunday Afternoon) and then sings of his very best friend. At the same time, Edward, upset and lonely in his new house, sings of Mickey (My Friend).
- Bright New Day** - Mrs. Johnstone is informed that the government housing that they will live in is to be torn down. She will be moved to the country. She is overjoyed, knowing she can start over afresh.

Act 2

- Marilyn Monroe Reprise 1** - Mrs Johnstone sings of the new life they are enjoying. She re-introduces Mickey, now 14, Sammy, 16 (who is still a troublemaker), and her other children. Sammy robs a bus conductor at knife point.
- Secrets** - in parallel scenes, we move to the classroom and see Mickey and Linda suspended from school. In his private school, Eddie is also suspended because he refuses to remove his locket for the teacher. At home, Mrs. Lyons is furious as she finds out the contents of the locket. Eddie confronts his mother, saying she must have secrets, too, and the Narrator reminds her of what she has hidden.
- That Guy** - Mickey and Eddie meet again in the country, not recognising each other at first and singing of how they wish they were the other. They go to see 'Nymphomaniac Nights'.
- Shoes Upon the Table (DGYN) Reprise 2** - A hysterical Mrs Lyons threatens Mrs Johnstone at knife point.
- Summer Sequence** - Micky, Eddie and Linda grow up to the age of 18 and we watch different moments in their lives.
- I'm Not Saying a Word** - Eddie realises he is falling for Linda, but puts it aside, telling Linda she should be with Mickey. He brings the two together and leaves for school.
- One Day in October** - Linda is pregnant. Mickey tells his mother, and she says she will give them her blessing for marriage.
- Take a Letter Miss Jones** - Mickey is sacked, along with many others, in a scene that highlights job losses under Margaret Thatcher's government. He desperately tries to find a job. He meets Eddie again on Christmas break, and Eddie offers him money, which Mickey refuses. Edward leaves; both men are mad at each other.
- The Robbery** - two parallel conversations are intermingled, with Eddie proclaiming his love to Linda, who rejects him, and Mickey agreeing to stand guard for Sammy on a robbery. In the robbery, Sammy accidentally shoots and kills the man. He flees, leaving Mickey the accused
- Marilyn Monroe Reprise 2** - Mickey is put in jail for seven years and is depressed. He is given pills, which he becomes addicted to.
- Light Romance** - Linda, upset and very frustrated, begins an affair with Eddie. Mrs Lyons spitefully goes to Mickey's work, and informs him of Linda and Edward.
- Madman** - Mickey is still delirious from his pills and in a rage because of what he has heard. He takes a loaded gun to the courtroom, where Edward is a councillor (Madman).
- The Council Chamber** - Mickey breaks down, accusing Edward of getting everything, even Linda now. Mrs. Johnstone doesn't know what to do, so she tells him not to kill Eddie because they are brothers. Mickey, even more jealous now, shoots Eddie. The police, in turn, shoot Mickey, fulfilling the superstition.
- Tell Me It's Not True** - The play is shown to be cyclical, as we end up back where we started. The two dead bodies lie there; the Narrator recaps the events. Mrs. Johnstone sings through her tears, asking the sad reality not to be true.

Key characters	Key themes	Historical context	Stylistic features and symbols
<p>Narrator – takes on multiple roles</p> <p>Mrs Johnstone – Mother of the twins, impoverished.</p> <p>Mrs Lyons – takes Eddie, privileged.</p> <p>Mickey – poor twin, frequently downtrodden</p> <p>Eddie – rich twin, not streetwise</p> <p>Sammy - delinquent brother to Mickey</p> <p>Linda – Mickey's girlfriend and Eddie's secret love</p> <p>Mr Lyons – Father of Edward</p>	<p>Nature vs. Nurture – we are encouraged to wonder whether it is genetics or their upbringing that has influenced the boys' lives.</p> <p>Class – the contrast between the Johnstone and Lyons' backgrounds dominates much of the play.</p> <p>Superstition – Mrs Lyons manipulates Mrs Johnstone's superstitious character, creating the central conflict in the play.</p> <p>Motherhood</p> <p>Power</p> <p>Judgement</p> <p>Love</p> <p>Destiny/ Fate</p>	<p>Marilyn Monroe – An icon of glamour and luxury, she was also troubled and died of an overdose after becoming addicted to various drugs.</p> <p>Margaret Thatcher – Blood Brothers was completed in 1981, two years after Thatcher became prime minister. Thatcher's decision to leave Liverpool to 'managed decline' meant 30% of the workforce became unemployed, emphasising the differences between the upper and lower classes.</p> <p>Willy Russell - Willy Russell was born in 1947 in Liverpool, where the play is set. He came from a working class family and became a hairdresser after leaving school at fifteen. In later life he decided to go back to college. It was at college that he started writing plays.</p>	<p>Reprise – a song or part of a song that is repeated. Often it is intermingled with a new song. E.g. Marilyn Monroe.</p> <p>Motif – A dominant or recurring image or idea in a text e.g. the gun.</p> <p>Juxtaposition – Two opposite ideas are near each other in a piece of writing.</p> <p>Foreshadowing – when the author alludes to what is to come in the text.</p> <p>Parallel – two corresponding things that run side by side, e.g. the school scenes.</p> <p>Cyclical – the structure of the play is cyclical as it starts and ends in the same place.</p> <p>Soliloquy – when a character speaks their thoughts aloud, to themselves. It is different to a monologue which is one character speaking, but in front of others</p> <p>Antihero – a central character in a story, film, or drama who lacks conventional heroic attributes.</p> <p>Narrator – echoes the function of the Greek Chorus, asks the audience to detach and judge.</p> <p>Stage Directions – used prolifically by Russell to describe the movement and actions of characters.</p>

Key Quotations	
<p>The Narrator</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'There's a stone in place of her heart' 2. 'Y' know the devil's got your number' 3. 'Who'd tell the girl in the middle of the pair/ The price she'll pay just for being there' 4. [As the conductor] 'You've got to have an endin' if a start's been made. No one gets off without the price bein' paid'. 5. 'And do we blame superstition for what came to pass? Or could it be what we, the English, have come to know as class?' 	<p>Other Characters</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sammy – 'he's a friggin' poshy' 2. Linda – 'When you die you'll meet your twinny again, won't y'?' 3. Policeman – 'Well there'll be no more bloody warnings from now on. Either you keep them in order, missis, or it'll be the courts for you, or worse, won't it?' /'An', er, as I say, it was more of a prank, really, Mr Lyons.' 4. Mr Lyons – 'It's just another sign of the times, Miss Jones' 5. Kids - 'But you know that if you cross your fingers/ And if you count from one to ten/ You can get up off the ground again/ It doesn't matter/ The whole thing's just a game.'
<p>Mrs Johnstone</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'By the time that I was twenty-five looked like forty-two' 2. 'The welfare have already been onto me' 3. 'I love the bones of them' 4. 'Never put new shoes on the table... you never know what'll happen' 5. 'And treats his ills with daily pills just like Marilyn Monroe' 	<p>Mrs Lyons</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'You said it yourself, you said you had you many children already' 2. 'And think about what you could do with money like that' 3. 'They say...they say that if either twin learns that he once was a pair that they shall both immediately die.' 4. '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' 5. 'You see, you see why I don't want you mixing with boys like that! You learn filth from them and behave like this like a, like a horrible little boy, like them. But you are not like them.'
<p>Mickey</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'I wish I was our Sammy' 2. 'See this means that we're blood brothers, an' that we always have to stand by each other' 3. 'That was kids' stuff, Eddie. Didn't anyone tell y? But I suppose you still are a kid, aren't ye?' 4. 'I don't wear a hat I could tilt at the world' 5. 'Why didn't you give me away? I could have been...I could have been him!' 	<p>Eddie</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'I'll look in the dictionary' 2. (to Mrs Lyons, about Mickey) 'I like him more than you' 3. 'She's fabulous your ma', isn't she?' 4. 'I've got money, plenty of it' 5. 'Why is a job so important?'
Critical Vocabulary	
<p>Russell presents the character of Mrs Lyons as...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fixated – obsessed with something. 2. Privileged – having a high and/or special status. Wealthy. 3. Conniving – calculating and manipulative. 4. Exploitative – willing to take advantage of someone else's weaknesses. 5. Deceitful – deceptive; a liar. 6. Immoral – someone without morals. 7. Neurotic – unstable and hysterical. 8. Paranoid – anxious and suspicious. 9. Possessive – demanding total attention/love. 10. Reprehensible – someone who is unforgivable. 	<p>Russell presents the character of Mrs Johnstone as...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Impulsive – quick to act, without thinking of the consequences. 2. Irresponsible – someone who is not responsible. 3. Sympathetic – someone we feel sorry for. 4. Downtrodden – someone who is oppressed by people in power. 5. Gullible – easily convinced of something. 6. Maternal – motherly. 7. Blithe – overly cheerful and light-hearted when they shouldn't be. 8. Lackadaisical – laid back: a daydreamer. 9. Remorseful – filled with sadness and guilt. 10. Impoverished – very poor.
<p>Russell presents the character Eddie as...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Naïve – innocent and gullible. 2. Isolated – lonely; cut off from the world. 3. Unworldly – unaware of the ways of the world; not streetwise. 4. Ingratiating – someone who is friendly and welcoming in order to fit in. 5. Affable – sociable, friendly and jolly. 6. Refined – good-mannered, upper-class, gentlemanly. 7. Eloquent – well-spoken and articulate. 8. Magnanimous – generous and charitable. Big-hearted. 9. Condescending – talks down to others. Patronising. 10. Oblivious – totally unaware of something or someone's feelings. 	<p>Russell presents the character of Mickey as...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inarticulate – unable to express yourself in words. 2. (feeling) inferior – if you feel inferior, you feel like you are 'less than' somebody else. 3. Guarded – someone who 'has a wall up'. Protective of themselves. 4. Disadvantaged – not having the advantages in life of others. 5. Oppressed – forced down by others. 6. Boastful – trying to impress, bragging about yourself. 7. (having) bravado – if you show or have bravado, you are putting on a show of courage to cover up the fact that you are scared or worried underneath. 8. Devoted – loyal. 9. Volatile – emotional and changeable. Angry. 10. Frenzied – desperate and frantic.

