

SUBJECT: English

UNIT: Year 9 *Blood Brothers*



Overview and Context

Blood Brothers is a musical by Willy Russell that explores themes of social inequality, class, and fate.

The play is set in Liverpool in the 1960s and tells the story of twins Mickey and Edward who are separated at birth and raised in different environments.

The musical was written in 1981 and first performed in 1983, during a time of high unemployment and economic stagnation in the UK.

Plot Summary

Blood Brothers, a musical by Liverpool playwright Willy Russell, revolves around twin boys (Mickey and Edward) who are separated at birth and brought up in completely different environments in the city. Mickey is brought up with his seven older siblings by his struggling single mother, Mrs Johnstone. His twin brother, Edward, however is brought up as the only child of the wealthy Lyons family, who live nearby, after Mrs Lyons persuaded Mrs Johnstone to hand over one of her twins at birth. Mickey and Edward don't meet each other until they're seven years old, but immediately become best friends and 'blood brothers'. The bond continues when the boys are teenagers and both live in the countryside, despite them both being in love with Mickey's neighbour Linda. However, as they get older, the huge difference in their backgrounds pulls them apart and eventually leads to their tragic deaths.

Act One and Act Two Breakdown:

- Mrs Johnstone, a struggling single mother, finds out that she is pregnant with twins. Her employer, Mrs Lyons, persuades Mrs Johnstone to give her one of the babies.
- Mrs Lyons takes Edward and brings him up as her own, convincing her husband this is true.
- Aged seven, Mickey and Edward meet and become best friends, along with Mickey's neighbour Linda.
- Scared of Edward becoming close to his biological family, Mrs Lyons convinces her husband to move the family to the countryside. Soon afterwards, the Johnstones (and Linda's family) are rehoused by the council.
- As teenagers, Mickey and Edward meet again and they rekindle their friendship. Linda and the boys remain close throughout their teenage years before Edward goes to university.
- After marrying a pregnant Linda, Mickey loses his factory job. Unemployed, Mickey is involved in a crime with one of his brothers, Sammy, and both are sent to prison.
- Mickey becomes depressed and takes pills to help him cope.
- After Mickey comes out of prison and starts a new job, Edward and Linda start a light romance. Mickey finds out and is furious so he finds Sammy's gun and goes to find Edward at his workplace, the town hall.
- Mrs Johnstone follows Mickey and tells him in front of Edward that they are twins.
- Mickey waves the gun around and it accidentally goes off, killing Edward. The police shoot Mickey. The twins both lie dead.

Key Vocabulary

Galvanised - To shock or excite (someone) into taking action.

Marginalised - The treatment of a person, group, or concept as insignificant.

Disenfranchised - To deprive someone of a right or privilege.

Exploitation - The act of using someone or something unfairly for your own advantage.

Injustice - A lack of fairness or justice.

Social class - Social class refers to a group of people with similar levels of wealth, influence, and status.