Blood Brothers Events LIT 2B

Blood Brothers tells the story of the Johnstone twins, Mickey and Eddie, brothers separated at birth who reunite and become friends in their childhood, unaware of their relation to each other or of the consequences their relationship will bring about.   
  
At the start, Mrs. Johnstone learns she is pregnant with twins and confides in her employer Mrs. Lyons about her fears that she will not be able to support both children. Mrs. Lyons, a wealthy and deceitful woman unable to have children herself, persuades Mrs. Johnstone to give up one of her boys with the promise that she will raise him in the lap of luxury. But when Mrs. Lyons fires the mother in hopes of making Eddie all her own, she is unable to separate herself and Eddie from the Johnstone family or from the lies of the past, leading both families towards a tragic end.   
  
Blood Brothers also explores class differences and the gap between classes through the way both the sons and mothers choose to live their lives. Mrs. Johnstone and Mrs. Lyons are in two very different classes, yet they are unable to avoid each other because of the connection their sons share. The differences in lifestyle, values, and morals of the two families are stark yet subtly done.   
  
The most prevalent theme is within the constant reference to Marilyn Monroe and the relevance of this is strong. At the start, Mrs. Johnstone tells of her carefree youth, comparing every aspect of her life to that of the blond bombshell. Although beautiful and successful, Marilyn Monroe led a complex life and in many ways brought on her own destruction. Her memory is framed by her bitter end just as the story of the Johnstone twins is framed by the image of the two brothers lying dead on the floor. Seemingly every major player in Blood Brothers is a tragic figure, meeting their own end through their own tragic means.   
  
Blood Brothers is a variation on an old theme - twin brothers parted at birth, but is also filled with raw emotion, deception. Blood Brothers is a moving production that is sure to leave you thinking.

Blood Brothers Characters Lit 2B

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| **Mrs Johnstone**   * She is 25 years old at the start of the play and has already had seven children. Russell might also be hinting at religious rulings against contraception. Often she makes rash decisions on impulse about money especially. She is naturally a kind and loving mother and finds it hard to discipline her children. * She is uneducated and does not value education. She is lively and has a zest for life. This can be clearly seen in her love of dancing, but also in her general attitude, which could almost be said to be happy-go-lucky. She follows her instincts, believing them to be her best guide through life. She is poor and trapped by poverty. | **Mrs Lyons**   * She is presented by Russell as a lonely housewife, with a cold character who finds it difficult to be affectionate towards others. She and her husband are unable to have children naturally and her husband spends long periods at work away from home. She is wealthy. She is self-centred and uses other, doesn’t work or do the housework. She hires Mrs Johnstone to do the cleaning for her. Once Mrs Johnstone has handed over Edward, she no longer needs her and cruelly discards her, manipulating her through preying on her uneducated and superstitious mind. She is an over-protective mother and anxious. She becomes unreasonable and is possibly mad when she attacks Mrs Johnstone. |
| **Mickey**   * He is created by Russell to be a friendly, excitable boy in Act One. He likes to play adventure games with others and sneak off to pull pranks. He looks up to his older brother Sammy and helps in Sammy’s crime. He is very shy about his emotions He becomes even more withdrawn after becoming unemployed. He is energetic, bright and witty, but not very well educated. He does not show interest in his schooling and gets suspended. He is more interested in getting a job. He likes Edward’s generosity and, in turn, enjoys being able to show him new things. Edward gives Mickey a chance to shine and be a leader and escape the oppression he feels from his brother, school and general poverty. | **Edward**   * Edward is presented by Russell as a friendly, generous character. He searches out Mickey to play with and perhaps naively offers him sweets in an attempt to impress him. He joins in with Mickey and Linda’s games and unselfishly tries to get Mickey to express his love for Linda. * He is raised in a middle-class home and is educated at a private school. He feels restricted but he revels in Mickey’s liveliness, bad language and risky games. He is shown to be an impulsive character and one who doesn’t think too deeply about the consequences of his actions. He seems to lack compassion and does not sympathise with Mickey’s plight. Instead, he tells Mickey to use his dole money to live like a ‘Bohemian’. Later, he arranges for Mickey to have a job, but does so condescendingly by keeping it secret. |
| **Sammy**   * He is an aggressive and threatening kind of character who the audience would recognise. From the start of the play he is shown to enjoy making fun of others, especially Mickey. He is presented as anti-social and criminal, threatening a bus conductor with a knife and killing a filling station worker. He has no outlet for his hostile tendencies, he has no job or money. | |

Blood Brothers Characters Lit 2B

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| **Linda**   * A naturally kind and compassionate character. She comes to Mickey’s aid both when he is suspended from school and when he is mocked by the other children. * She is quite feisty and humorous, joining Edward and Mickey in their games and often leading the way. Linda is strong-willed and very supportive of Mickey. She tries to protect him and keeps pushing him to give up his drugs. Linda is from a poor family like Mickey. Her lack of education and money allows her no real chance of happiness once Mickey becomes a depressed drug addict. As a last resort, she asks Edward for help before having an affair with him. | * **Policeman, Milkman, Judge, Teachers** * These minor characters are created for various dramatic purposes. They either lack sympathy or are unfair and two-faced when dealing with others. They represent social institutions, which Russell seems to suggest are prejudiced. * The policeman is friendly at the wealthy Lyons’ house, but in contrast is harsh when dealing with the Johnstones. * The milkman won’t listen to Mrs Johnstone’s valid excuses initially, but once she has some money at her new home he is pleasant and flirts with her. * The judge gives Sammy a lighter sentence than would have normally have been handed out, but this is only because he is attracted to Mrs Johnstone’s appearance. * Edward’s schoolteacher is petty and takes the side of Edward’s bullying classmates. Mickey is certainly awkward and disrespectful to his teacher, but he and Linda are suspended for minor things. The teacher does not bother to answer Mickey’s questions, even though they seem quite justified. |
| **Mr Lyons**   * He is presented as a wealthy businessman who spends long periods of time away from his family. He becomes the managing director of the factory where Mickey worked before Mickey was made redundant. He is a distant figure to his wife and son. Instead he provides money and homes in wealthy areas as well as expensive schooling for Edward. He seems indifferent to the people whose lives he can directly affect - his workforce. He sends Mickey a heartless redundancy letter. | **The Narrator**  Russell creates a ‘character’ of the narrator, who acts a little like the Greek ‘Chorus’ from ancient tragedy whose role is to explain some of the key action on stage. The narrator also involves the audience by asking them directly to judge what they see. He helps to make sure that the audience stay a little ‘detached’ from the events of the play. He also helps them remember that this is a ‘story’.  He reveals that the brothers die at the very start of the play and from then on constantly reminds the audience of the twins’ fate. He presents the themes of fate, destiny and superstition throughout the play, but at the end he asks the audience to consider if it was social forces rather than 'fate' that caused the tragedy. |

Themes in Blood Brother LIT 2B

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| Family  Mrs Johnstone values her family and has 7 children and is pregnant with twins  Mrs Lyons can’t have children  Illegally adopts Edward  Mr Lyon doesn’t know  Sets up the catalyst for the chain of events in the play | Poverty  Epitomised through the Johnstone family  They have no money  Live in inner city Liverpool  Neighbours look down on them  They were sent to the country as part of the new deal  Buy things on the ‘never, never’ a form of credit |
| Wealth  Shown by the Lyon family  They own a four bedroomed house  Move to the country to escape the Johnstone family or to make a better life for themselves | Social Class  Huge divide in society due to wealth and poverty exemplified by the way different characters talk – Johnstone family slang and in a Liverpool accent- the Lyon family in proper English |
| Revenge  For loving Linda or having an emotional affair with her  Revenge for having had a better life than Mickey (jealousy was at the root of a lot of the division in the characters)  Shown when Mickey shoots Edward | Deception  Underpins the whole novel.  Mrs Johnstone deceieves the whole family when she gives Edward up  The illegal adoption  Mrs Johnstone deceives herself that it was the right thing to do  Mrs Lyons deceives her husband and son by not telling them where Edward originated |
| Death  Metaphorical death of friendship comes when Eddie comes home from university and Mickey has lost his job  Death during an unknown burglary resulting in mickey going to prison and losing his mental stability  Death of both Edward and Mickey at the end of the play | Friendship  Blood Brothers – cut each other and swear at age 7 to always be true  Structure of the novel revisits their friendship every 7 years as they grow into adults  Mickey and Edward are separated and then meet again in the country |
| Love  Both Mickey and Edward love Linda  Linda and Mickey get together  Love for family: Mrs J and Mrs L both show this | The Illegal adoption  The pivotal incident in the whole play  Starts a chain of events which led to the death of the twins |

EDUQAS Example practices below:

Example Extract Question linking to whole play LIT 2B

EDWARD *reaches his home and walks in. His mother hugs him and his father produces a*

*toy gun for him.* EDWARD*, delighted, seizes it and ‘shoots’ his father, who spiritedly*

*‘dies’ to* EDWARD*’s great amusement.* EDWARD *and his father romp on the floor.*

MRS LYONS *settles herself in an armchair with a story book, calling* EDWARD *over to*

*her.* EDWARD *goes and sits with her,* MR LYONS *joining them and sitting on the arm of*

*the chair.*

MRS JOHNSTONE *turns and goes into her house at the end of the song*.

MR LYONS *gets up and walks towards the door.*

EDWARD Daddy . . . we haven’t finished the story yet.

MR LYONS Mummy will read the story, Edward. I’ve got to go to work for an hour.

MRS LYONS *gets up and goes to her husband,* EDWARD *goes to the bookshelf and leafs*

*through a dictionary.*

MRS LYONS Richard you didn’t say . . .

MR LYONS Darling, I’m sorry, but if, if we complete this merger I will, I promise you, have more

time. That’s why we’re doing it, Jen, If we complete this, the firm will run itself and I’ll

have plenty of time to spend with you both.

MRS LYONS I just – it’s not me, it’s Edward. You should spend more time with him. I don’t want – I

don’t want him growing away from you.

EDWARD Daddy, how do you spell bogey man?

MR LYONS Ask mummy. Darling, I’ll see you later now. Must dash.

MR LYONS exits.

EDWARD Mummy, how do you spell bogey man?

MRS LYONS Mm?

EDWARD Bogey man?

MRS LYONS *(laughing)* Edward, whever did you hear such a thing?

EDWARD I’m trying to look it up.

MRS LYONS There’s no such thing as a bogey man. It’s a – a superstition. The sort of thing a silly

mother might say to her children – ‘the bogey man will get you’.

EDWARD Will he get me?

MRS LYONS Edward, I’ve told you, there’s no such thing.

*A doorbell is heard.*

MRS LYONS *goes to answer the door.*

MICKEY *(off)* Does Eddie live here?

MRS LYONS *(off)* Pardon?

MICKEY *(off)* Does he? Is he comin’ out to play, eh?

EDWARD *(shouting)* Mickey!

MICKEY *enters pursued by* MRS LYONS

MICKEY Hi-ya, Eddie. I’ve got our Sammy’s catapult. Y’ comin’ out?

***Blood Brothers***

*You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on this question.* **You should use the extract below and your knowledge of the whole novel to answer this question.**

Write about the character of Edward and how he is presented throughout the novel.

In your response you should:

refer to the extract and the novel as a whole;

show your understanding of characters and events in the novel. [40]

Example Extract Question linking to whole play LIT 2B

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

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 ir *still puzzled.* MICKEY *looks round to check that* *he cannot be overheard, then whispers the word to* EDWARD.

EDWARD: What does it mean? *The two of them immediately wriggle and giggle with glee.*

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.

***Blood Brothers***

*You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on this question.* **You should use the extract below and your knowledge of the whole novel to answer this question.**

Write about the characters relationship here and how he is presented throughout the novel.

In your response you should:

refer to the extract and the novel as a whole;

show your understanding of characters and events in the novel. [40]

Example Extract Question linking to whole play LIT 2B

MICKEY: The meaning of words, yeh. Our Sammy'll be here soon. I hope he's in a good mood. He's dead mean sometimes.

EDWARD: Why?

MICKEY: It's 'cos he's got a plate in his head.

EDWARD: A plate. In his head?

MICKEY: Yeh. When he was little, me Mam was at work an' our Donna Mane was supposed to be lookin' after him but he fell out the window an' broke his head. So they took him to the hospital an' put a plate in his head.

EDWARD: A plate. A dinner plate?

MICKEY: I don't think so, 'cos our Sammy's head's not really that big. I think it must have been one of them little plates that you have bread off.

EDWARD: A side plate?

MICKEY: No, it's on the top.

EDWARD: And . .. and can you see the shape of it, in his head?

MICKEY: I suppose, I suppose if y' looked under his hair.

EDWARD *(after a reflective pause):* You know the most

smashing things. Will you be my best friend?

MICKEY: Yeh. If y'want.

EDWARD: What's your name?

MICKEY: Michael Johnstone. But everyone calls me Mickey. What's yours?

EDWARD: Edward Lyons.

MICKEY: Do they call y' Eddie?

EDWARD: No.

MICKEY: Well, I will.

EDWARD: Will you?

MICKEY: Yeh. How old are y' Eddie?

EDWARD: Seven.

MICKEY: I'm older than you. I'm nearly eight.

EDWARD: Well, I'm nearly eight, really.

MICKEY: What's your birthday?

EDWARD: July the eighteenth.

MICKEY: So is mine.

EDWARD: Is it really?

MICKEY: Ey, we were bom on the same day . . . that means we can be **blood** **brothers**. Do you wanna be my **blood** brother, Eddie?

EDWARD: Yes, please.

MICKEY *(producing a penknife):* It hurts y' know. *(He puts a* *nick in his hand.)* Now, give us yours.

***Blood Brothers***

*You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on this question.* **You should use the extract below and your knowledge of the whole novel to answer this question.**

Write about the differences and similarities in the characters here and how this is presented throughout the novel.

In your response you should:

refer to the extract and the novel as a whole;

show your understanding of characters and events in the novel. [40]

Example Extract Question linking to whole play LIT 2B

MRS JOHNSTONE: What have I told you about playin up near

there. Come here. *(She grabs him.)*

MICKEY: It wasn't my fault. Honest.

MRS JOHNSTONE: So whose fault was it then?

MICKEY: The Indians. They rode up that way, they were tryin' to escape.

MRS JOHNSTONE: Don't you ever go up there. Do you hear me?

MICKEY: Yeh. You let our Sammy go up there.

MRS JOHNSTONE: Our Sammy's older than you.

MICKEY : But why ...

MRS JOHNSTONE: Just shut up. Never mind why. You don't go

up near there. Now go on, get out an' play. But you stay outside the front door where I can see y'.

MICKEY: Ah but, Mam, the . . .

MRS JOHNSTONE: Go on!

MRS JOHNSTONE *exits.*

MICKEY *makes his way outside. He is fed up. He shoots down a few imaginary Indians but somehow the magic* *has gone.*

MICKEY *sits, bored, looking at the ants on the pavement.*

MICKEY *(reciting):*

I wish I was our Sammy

Our Sammy's nearly ten.

He's got two worms and a catapult

An' he's built a underground den.

But I'm not allowed to go in there,

I have to stay near the gate

'Cos me Mam says I'm only seven,

.. But I'm not, I'm nearly eight!

I sometimes hate our Sammy,

He robbed me toy car y' know,

Now the wheels are missin' an' the top's broke off,

An' the bleedin' thing won't go.

An' he said when he took it, it was just like that,

But it wasn't, it went dead straight, '

But y' can't say nott'n when they think y' seven

An' y' not.y' nearly eight.

I wish I was our Sammy,

Y' wanna see him spit,

Straight in y' eye from twenty yards

An' every time a hit.

He's allowed to play with matches,

And he goes to bed dead late,

And I have to go at seven,

Even though I'm nearly eight.

Y'know our Sammy, \*

He draws nudey women,

Without arms, or legs, or even heads

In the baths, when he goes swimmin'.

But I'm not allowed to go to the baths,

Me Mam says I have to wait,

'Cos I might get drowned, 'cos I'm only seven,

But I'm not, I'm nearly eight.

Y' know our Sammy,

Y' know what he sometimes does?

He wees into the letterbox

Of the house next door to us. " "

I tried to do it one night,

But\_ I had to\_stand on a crate/

'Cos I couldn't reach the letter box

But I will by the time I'm eight.

*Bored and petulant,* MICKEY *sits and shoots an imaginary*

*Sammy.*

***Blood Brothers***

*You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on this question.* **You should use the extract below and your knowledge of the whole novel to answer this question.**

Write about the way fear and apathy are shown in the characters here and how this is presented throughout the novel.

In your response you should:

refer to the extract and the novel as a whole;

show your understanding of characters and events in the novel. [40]

**AQA Example Questions below:**

**Willy Russell: *Blood Brothers***

**How does Russell use the characters of Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons in *Blood Brothers* to explore ideas about class?**

Write about:

* how Russell presents Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons
* how Russell uses these characters to explore ideas about class.

**How does Willy Russell present childhood and growing up in *Blood Brothers*?**

Write about:

* + the ways particular characters change as they grow up
  + how Russell presents childhood and growing up by the ways he writes.

**How does Russell use a range of characters in Blood Brothers to explore ideas linked to family and love?**

Write about:

* The ways Linda, Sammy and the narrator are presented
* How Russell presents love and family with these characters in the way he writes

**How does Russell present the characters of Edward and Mickey to explore ideas about class?**

Write about:

* how Russell presents Mickey and Edward
* how Russell uses these characters to explore ideas about class in the way he writes.

**How does Russell present loyalty in the play Blood Brothers?**

Write about:

* How Russell shows loyalty changes throughout the play
* How Russell presents loyalty in the way he writes