

Blood Brothers - Willy Russell - Knowledge Organiser

1. Context: Willy Russell was born in 1947 into a working-class family near Liverpool.	8. Characters: Mrs Lyons: Pays Mrs Johnstone to give her one of her twins. Upper class.
2. Context: There was a large social gap between working and middle class in Britain during this time.	9. Characters: Linda: Begins as a tomboyish young girl but both twins fancy her from an early stage
3. Context: Margaret Thatcher: The first female Prime Minister in power during that time. She was responsible for lots of working-class people losing their jobs.	10. Characters: Narrator: All-knowing and always slightly menacing-takes many roles throughout the play.
4. Context: Marilyn Monroe: A famous Hollywood movie star from the 1950s who Mrs J is compared to. She is known for being glamorous, but also struggled with depression which led her to commit suicide (by painkillers).	11. Characters: Sammy: He is Mickey's older brother. Mickey wishes to be like him but Sammy lurs Mickey into a life of crime.
5. Characters: Mickey Johnstone: The lower-class twin.	12. Themes: Superstition: The audience is constantly reminded of this. The narrator asks us if superstition is to blame for boys' fate.
6. Characters: Edward Johnstone: The upper-class twin.	13. Themes: Class: Russell shows us the injustice of the class divide - criticising education, opportunity and power.
7. Characters: Mrs Johnstone: Biological mother of the twins and a horde of other children. Working class.	14. Themes: Nature vs. Nurture: Splitting up the twins shows us how the environment can have a huge impact on life chances.
15. Beginning of Act 1: The play opens with Mrs Johnstone begging the Narrator to tell her 'it's not true', and the Narrator revealing that the Johnstone twins were separated at birth, and only found out when they died. In the next scene, Mrs Johnstone is seen cleaning for the wealthy Mrs Lyons, who laments not being able to have children. Mrs Johnstone finds out that she is having twins (she cannot afford them both). Mrs Lyons begs her to give one of them to her. Initially, Mrs Johnstone is horrified, but Mrs Lyons is able to convince her. Mrs Lyons plays on Mrs Johnstone's belief in superstition to have her swear on a bible to tell no one. The deal is final.	
16. Middle of Act 1: Mrs Johnstone gives birth to twins, and when she returns from hospital creditors take her possessions to pay for bills. Mrs Lyons enters and forces Mrs J to give up the twin, as promised. Reluctantly, she does so. When returning to the house the next week, Mrs J plays with the twin she gave away – Mrs L arrives and is furious - she fires her. Mrs J threatens to take her baby with her, and then to tell someone, but Mrs L makes up a new superstition about twins secretly parted, who learn their origins, immediately die.	
17. End of Act 1: 7 years later, by chance, Mickey meets Edward, and the two instantly become best friends – they realise that they have the same birthday and agree to become 'blood brothers.' When Mickey introduces Edward to his mother, she is alarmed, and sends him home. When Mrs L finds out the two have become friends, she is also incensed. The Lyons move to the country. Edward and Mickey both miss each other dearly. Not too long after, Mrs J receives a letter stating that her family is being relocated to the country. She sees it as a fresh start.	
18. Beginning of Act 2: Mickey is now 14 and has begun to notice girls. Meanwhile, Edward now attends boarding school. Linda warns Mickey never to turn bad like Sammy. Leaving school, Mickey longs to be able to tell Linda how he feels. He bumps into Edward, and the two recognise one another. Mrs Lyons watches their whole exchange, and follows them.	
19. Middle of Act 2: The boys stop at Mrs J's house to get money. She is shocked but happy to see Edward. She gives them money for a movie. Mrs Lyons (now increasingly unstable) confronts Mrs J, offering her large amounts of money to leave the area. Mrs J refuses. Angered, Mrs L tries to stab Mrs J, but Mrs J disarms her. At 18, Mickey now works in a factory, and Edward is going away to University. Although Edward clearly has feelings for Linda, he loyally encourages Mickey to ask her out, which he does. Mickey soon reveals to Mrs J that Linda is pregnant, and that they will marry soon. They get married, but shortly afterwards, Mickey is made redundant from the factory.	
20. End of Act 2: Edward returns from university buoyant, however when he meets the depressed and cynical Mickey, the two argue. As they leave one another, Edward sees Linda, and confesses his love for her. Sammy then convinces Mickey to help him out in a robbery, which inevitably goes wrong – Mickey has to spend time in prison. His addiction to anti-depressants prevents him from getting a job. Linda gets help from Edward (now on the housing committee) to get Mickey and her a new house. Linda and Edward begin an affair. Mrs L shows Mickey Edward and Linda together, and Mickey is enraged. He finds the gun that Sammy hid in the botched robbery job, and tracks down Edward.. He finds Edward and points the gun at him. A policeman asks Mickey to put the gun down. Mrs J emerges and reveals the two are brothers. Mickey, hysterical, torments his own position, and accidentally shoots Edward. The police then shoot Mickey.	