



Exploring Junior Cycle Texts *Belfast* directed by Kenneth Branagh

Belfast directed by Kenneth Branagh is a film included as part of the Prescribed Material for Junior Cycle English (For the student cohorts commencing Junior Cycle in 2025, 2026 and 2027 and presenting for examination in 2028, 2029 and 2030).

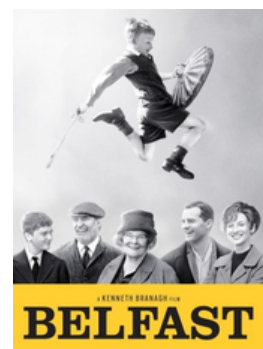


Image courtesy of
Rotten Tomatoes

Please note:

- The following tasks might be completed over a series of lessons.
- You may like to adapt and adjust the tasks to suit your context.
- *Belfast* covers themes which could be considered sensitive or controversial. You may wish to consult with our READY Framework to support you in your study.



Scan the QR code or click here to
access a Getting Started with Guide
for this Text

Before You Watch...(Teacher Guidance)

1. Setting the Scene

Explain that *Belfast* is set in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s. Ask students questions about what they already know about Belfast during this time, what daily life have been might have like for ordinary families and how might conflict affect children or communities?

2 Character Prediction

Show the students the film poster. Guide pupils to discuss who the main character might be and what kind of story will be told. Have pupils a short paragraph predicting what the film *Belfast* might teach us about family, belonging, and growing up

3. Vocabulary Builder

Introduce students to key vocabulary for the film such as *Protestant, Catholic, The Troubles, segregation, riot, community, emigration, peace*. In pairs, have pupils discuss meanings and connotations. Then, have ask them to choose two of these words and write a short sentence predicting how they might appear in the film.

4.Research and Presentation: Historical Context of Belfast

Have students work individually or in pairs to research The Troubles in Northern Ireland (1960s–1990s) and present their findings to the class.

Scaffolding questions could be provided as a starting point: *When and why did The Troubles begin? Who were the main communities involved? What were the main issues causing conflict? How did The Troubles affect ordinary families and children?*

From this students could create a one-page fact sheet or mini-poster to accompany their oral presentation.



Activities Based on Film Still and Clip (Teacher Guidance)

The following may be completed in written or oral format,
as individuals or as part of a group activity.

1. Reading body language and expression (Film Still 1)

Ask pupils to observe Buddy's body language and facial expression and consider what these reveal about his feelings. Help pupils to analyse how his mother's reaction conveys her emotions. Encourage pupils to discuss in pairs how the image captures movement or urgency and make notes on their observations.

2. Analysing cinematography and mise-en-scène (Film Still 2)

Have pupils examine the still for cinematography and mise-en-scène, including lighting, composition, and the use of black and white. Ask them to write an explanation about how these elements contribute to the mood and meaning of the scene.

3. Responding to mood and theme (Film Still 3)

Ask pupils to reflect on how the still makes them feel as viewers. Lead a class discussion on the thoughts and emotions it evokes about leaving home or starting somewhere new.

4. Analysing a film clip (Oscars Scene at the Academy)

Watch the clip carefully and, as a class, identify how the filmmaker uses cinematography, sound, character actions, dialogue, and mise-en-scène to create comedy, tension, or entertainment. This could be done as a mind map initially. Encourage pupils to select one or two specific moments from the clip or actor interviews to illustrate their points and write an analysis paragraph about the techniques and their effects.

1.



2.



3.



Images courtesy of IMDB



Reflect and Respond

The following questions may be based on the clips included or form part of your extended study of the Film. Students may like to complete the activities individually or collaboratively.

1. Reflective Essay

Ask pupils to write a reflective essay in response to the statement, “Our memories shape the stories we tell about our lives.” Help them consider how *Belfast* is told through memory and guide them to explore how recollection can alter or colour understanding of past events. Encourage them to describe a specific moment from their own lives that feels different when viewed in hindsight.

2. Themes & Ideas (Discussion / Reflection)

Have students work collaboratively to explore and discuss the key themes and ideas in *Belfast*, considering how Kenneth Branagh uses film techniques, characterisation, and storytelling to express them. In small groups, provide them with the following prompts.

- Which themes are most obvious in this film?
- What challenges does *Belfast* reveal about growing up in a divided society?
- In what ways does *Belfast* celebrate the strength and resilience of ordinary people?
- How is the theme of innocence explored through Buddy’s character?

Then, students could write a personal response based on summarising the group discussion.

3. Debate/ Persuasive Argument

Lead a class debate on the topic, “Do you agree that Buddy’s mother is the true hero of *Belfast*?” Ask pupils to support their answers with reference to scenes, character actions, and film techniques that demonstrate her strength, sacrifice, and importance. Divide the class into two teams, For and Against, and guide each team to prepare three to four main points with supporting examples.

4. Poetry Connections

Give pupils a copy of Patrick Kavanagh’s poem *In Memory of My Mother*. In pairs, ask pupils to make notes on the similarities and connections between the poem and *Belfast*. Help them consider how both texts use memory as a lens; *Belfast* through recollection and Kavanagh’s poem in celebration of his mother’s presence in remembered moments. In pairs, have pupils prepare a mini talk or poster presentation that pairs film stills with key quotes, highlighting the shared themes of the two texts.



Click [here](#) for a copy of Kavanagh’s poem ‘In Memory of My Mother’, courtesy of [allpoetry.com](#)

