



Read and Respond

Blood Brothers

by Willy Russell

Please note: This support might be useful for exploring aspects of the drama with students. It is part of a series of supports available on www.jct.ie/english

Background to the drama:

Blood Brothers is a musical drama set in Liverpool in the 1960s-1980s. The plot centres around twin boys who are separated at birth and brought up in contrasting environments. They meet by chance as young boys and despite their differences they become best friends. Their journey through adolescence and adulthood is intertwined.

Learning Outcomes in Focus:

Oral Language 13	Develop their spoken language proficiency by experimenting with word choice, being creative with syntax, being precise, stimulating appropriate responses relative to context and purpose
Reading 8	Read their texts to understand and appreciate language enrichment by examining an author's choice of words, the use and effect of simple figurative language, vocabulary and language patterns, and images, as appropriate to the text. ○★
Writing 12	Demonstrate an understanding of how syntax, grammar, text structure and word choice may vary with context and purpose. ★

Possible links to L2LP:

Communication and Literacy:	1.13 Use simple rules and text conventions that support meaning, e.g. pause at a full stop.
-----------------------------	---



The following activities may be completed in oral and/or written format.

Introductory Activity:

1. Have you ever seen a play / musical drama on stage or on screen?
2. *Blood Brothers* is a musical drama. What do you expect to experience when reading/watching a musical drama?
3. Before engaging with this text, discuss your understanding of the following words with a peer:
 - Dialogue
 - Dialect
 - Sentence structure
 - Tone
 - Expression

***Blood Brothers* – Engaging with an extract from Act 1**

In this extract, one of the main characters, Mickey, is discussing his relationship with his brother, Sammy.



Clip 1



Clip 2

4. Click on the play icon above to listen to both clips.
As you listen, consider some of the following aspects of the character's delivery :
 - Word choice
 - Dialect
 - Expression
 - Tone



5. In your opinion, which audio clip is more effective? Give reasons for your answer and discuss in pairs/groups.

Having listened to the above clips, read the next part of this scene below. In this section, twin brothers, Mickey and Edward meet for the first time.

While you read, pay close attention to the **dialect**, **sentence structure**, **word choice** and **expression** used by the characters.

Bored and petulant, Mickey sits and shoots an imaginary Sammy. Edward, also aged seven, appears. He is bright and forthcoming.

Edward Hello

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 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 bleeding give y'one. Sometimes our Sammy does but y' have to be careful if Sammy gives y'a sweet.

Edward Cos, if our Sammy gives y' a sweet he's usually weed on it first.

Explore the following questions based on the above extract:

1. Discuss how Mickey's **dialect**, **word choice** and **expression** shape and reveal more about his character to the audience.
2. What do you notice about the variations in sentence structure in the above extract? Does this shape the character profile of Mickey and Edward in any way? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Having explored Mickey's use of language, compare some of the differences in Mickey and Edward's Liverpoolian dialects. Refer to the extract to support you answer.



4. Select a line of your choice. Rewrite this line in your own dialect. What do you notice about your dialect and that of the characters in this drama?

Possible Extended Writing Task:

Using this scene, imagine you are directing a production of this play.

Explain **three things** that you would do to best stage this scene for the audience. Consider possible aspects of stagecraft and/or performance below.

Aspects of stagecraft might include:

- **Costumes** - how might costuming be used to reflect the age and social background?
- **Props** - do you think the actor should use any personal props? What props and why?
- **Lighting** - how might mood/atmosphere be created through lighting
- **Music** - how might the musical score complement the narrative

Aspects of performance might include:

- **Positioning** - how might the actor(s) use body language to emphasise the words in the script to the audience?
- **Expression** - how might the actor convey humour in certain lines? What facial expressions would you ask the actor to perform/show?