2.14 Literature: Blood Brothers (Willy Russell): 1-hour Pack

AQA 8702 · about 60 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Analyse how Russell presents Linda's role in the story of the twins.

(Total for Question 1 is 10 marks)

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2 Write about how Russell uses dramatic irony across the play, since the audience knows from early on that Mickey and Edward are twins.

(Total for Question 2 is 12 marks)

3 Write about how Russell presents ideas about class in the play, and comment on why this message would have felt especially relevant to audiences watching in the early 1980s.

(Total for Question 3 is 15 marks)

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4 Write about the dramatic significance of the play's final scene, and comment on why its ending would have felt shocking to a first audience.

(Total for Question 4 is 15 marks)

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5 Starting with the moment Mickey and Edward first meet as boys and agree to become blood brothers, write about how Russell presents ideas about fate, class and family across the play as a whole, and evaluate how far a modern audience might respond differently to the play's central message than an audience watching in the early 1980s.

In your response you should discuss:
- how Russell presents fate, class and family in this moment and across the play
- the dramatic methods Russell uses to build his argument
- how far a modern audience's response might differ from an early-1980s audience's response

(Total for Question 5 is 30 marks)

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Mark scheme · 2.14 Literature: Blood Brothers (Willy Russell): 1-hour Pack

Question 1

Level 4 Convincing, well-structured analysis: tracks Linda's function across the play from childhood friend to catalyst for the final crisis, with judicious textual reference and confident terminology. **9-10**

Level 3 Clear analysis: explains at least two aspects of Linda's role with relevant textual reference. **6-8**

Level 2 Some analysis: identifies a relevant point about Linda with some textual reference. **3-5**

Level 1 Simple, limited analysis: makes a simple, undeveloped point with little textual reference. **1-2**

Indicative content:

- Linda grows up on the estate as Mickey's friend and, later, his wife, giving the audience a character whose affection crosses the class divide the rest of the play insists on, since she is also cared for by Edward
- her adult life, marked by a struggling marriage and financial hardship, mirrors Mrs Johnstone's own experience, suggesting that class and circumstance, not personality, shape a woman's options
- as Mickey's depression deepens, Linda's turn towards Edward for support drives much of the play's final tension, making her a catalyst rather than a passive figure
- Russell uses Linda's position, loved by and connected to both twins, to keep the audience aware of what the class divide has cost all three characters, not just the twins themselves

Question 2

Level 4 Convincing, well-structured response: sustained analysis of dramatic irony across several moments in the play, with judicious reference and confident subject terminology. **10-12**

Level 3 Clear response: explains dramatic irony at more than one moment, with relevant reference. **7-9**

Level 2 Some response: identifies a relevant moment of dramatic irony with some supporting reference. **4-6**

Level 1 Simple, limited response: makes a simple, undeveloped point with little or no reference. **1-3**

Indicative content:

- the boys' childhood pact to become blood brothers is especially poignant because the audience knows it is literally true, while the characters do not
- moments when the two mothers meet unexpectedly create suspense, since the audience fears the superstition might be triggered even though the characters on stage are unaware of the danger
- as the twins grow apart because of class, the irony sharpens the audience's sense of injustice, since they know the boys are equals by blood even as society treats them as unequal
- this sustained gap between what the audience knows and what the characters know builds steadily towards the final scene, where the truth is revealed to the characters at the same moment as the play's tragic climax

Question 3

Level 4 Convincing, critical response: sustained, perceptive analysis of class across several characters and methods, with judicious reference and confident terminology; contextual point about the early 1980s integrated fully. **12-15**

Level 3 Clear, relevant response: explains how class is presented through at least two characters/methods, with relevant reference and a clear contextual point. **8-11**

Level 2 Some, generic response: identifies relevant moments relating to class with some reference; makes a generic or partly relevant contextual comment. **4-7**

Level 1 Simple, limited response: makes a simple, undeveloped point with little or no reference; little or no contextual comment. **1-3**

Indicative content:

- the contrast between the Johnstone and Lyons households, in housing, opportunity and expectation, presents class as the main force shaping the twins' different fates despite their identical nature
- Mickey's redundancy and Edward's continued success dramatise the unequal opportunities available to working-class and middle-class school leavers
- the superstition and fate motif runs alongside the class argument, offering the audience two possible explanations for the tragedy without ever fully separating them
- context: the play is set across a period of rising unemployment and industrial decline in Britain, and was first staged in the early 1980s, a time of high unemployment and sharp political debate about inequality
- audiences at that time were likely to recognise Mickey's situation as reflecting real, contemporary economic hardship rather than a purely fictional misfortune, giving the play's message immediate political relevance

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Question 4

Level 4 Convincing, critical response: sustained, perceptive analysis of the final scene's dramatic significance, with judicious reference and confident terminology; contextual point about a first audience's reaction integrated fully. **12-15**

Level 3 Clear, relevant response: explains the significance of the final scene through at least two methods, with relevant reference and a clear contextual point. **8-11**

Level 2 Some, generic response: identifies relevant features of the ending with some reference; makes a generic or partly relevant contextual comment. **4-7**

Level 1 Simple, limited response: makes a simple, undeveloped point with little or no reference; little or no contextual comment. **1-3**

Indicative content:

- the final scene brings together the superstition and the class divide simultaneously, as Mrs Johnstone's revelation of the truth arrives at the worst possible moment rather than in time to prevent tragedy
- the presence of a gun, obtained earlier through Mickey's involvement in crime, links his social decline directly to the play's violent climax
- the deaths of both twins fulfil the superstition literally, while also reading as the consequence of untreated depression, jealousy and long-building inequality between the brothers
- the shock for a first audience comes partly from the sudden double death of two previously sympathetic young characters, and partly from the Narrator's closing questions, which refuse to comfortably resolve whether fate or society caused the tragedy
- context: staged in the early 1980s, the ending's suggestion that ordinary social conditions can lead to violent tragedy would have resonated with contemporary anxieties about unemployment and inequality

Question 5

Level 4 Compelling, critical evaluation: sustained, sophisticated evaluation of fate, class and family across the whole play; judicious, precisely selected references; perceptive analysis of language, form and structure with consistently precise subject terminology; contextual understanding of early-1980s versus modern reception woven seamlessly into the argument. **25-30**

Level 3 Critical, exploratory evaluation: exploratory, critical response with a clear line of argument sustained across the play; judicious range of references; analyses effects of language, form and structure with precise subject terminology; contextual factors integrated fully where relevant. **17-24**

Level 2 Detailed, well-structured evaluation: consistently clear, detailed evaluation of fate, class and family; well-chosen range of references; explains effects of methods and structure with subject terminology used accurately; understanding of relevant context clearly shown. **9-16**

Level 1 Simple or clear evaluation: simple or clear response with some relevant reference; some comment on methods/structure with limited or accurate use of subject terminology; some or little awareness of context. **1-8**

Indicative content:

- the boys' instant, innocent friendship and blood-brother pact, formed in ignorance of their true relationship, sets up a direct tension between the family bond they already share and the class divide about to separate them
- the invented superstition, hanging over this friendship from the start, frames the rest of the play as heading towards a fixed, foreshadowed outcome, building sustained dramatic irony as the boys grow up unaware
- the widening gap between the twins' opportunities, culminating in Edward's success and Mickey's unemployment, depression and eventual crime, dramatises class as at least as powerful a force as fate in shaping their lives
- methods: the Narrator's recurring direct address, the use of song to comment on events, and the doubling of the twins' early behaviour work together to keep the audience judging the social argument even during the play's most emotionally naturalistic scenes
- the final scene fuses the superstition and the class argument into a single tragedy, refusing to let the audience settle on one explanation alone
- evaluation: an early-1980s audience, living through real mass unemployment and sharp political debate about inequality, was likely to receive the play's warning about class and circumstance as urgent and immediately relevant
- evaluation: a modern audience, more distanced from those specific historical conditions, may respond more to the play's treatment of mental health and depression in Mickey's decline, or read the story through current debates about social mobility and inequality, rather than experiencing the same immediate political urgency
- evaluation, counter-view: despite this distance, ongoing modern concerns about inequality, unemployment and family loyalty arguably keep the play's central warning widely resonant for contemporary audiences, even if the specific historical trigger has changed

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