2.14 Literature: Blood Brothers (Willy Russell): Test Pack

AQA 8702 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 List four facts we learn about Mrs Johnstone's circumstances before she agrees to let Mrs Lyons bring up one of her twins.

(Total for Question 1 is 4 marks)

2 Explain how the social and economic conditions of the period help to explain what happens to Mickey after he leaves school.

(Total for Question 2 is 8 marks)

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3 Analyse how Russell presents the differences between Mickey's and Edward's lives as they grow older.

(Total for Question 3 is 10 marks)

4 Write about how Russell presents the theme of fate versus upbringing across the play, and comment on how the play's structure keeps this question open rather than settling it.

(Total for Question 4 is 15 marks)

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Mark scheme · 2.14 Literature: Blood Brothers (Willy Russell): Test Pack

Question 1

she already has several other children to support (oe)	**B1**
her husband has recently left the family	**B1**
she is in debt/behind on payments and worried about how she will manage financially	**B1**
any other valid fact, e.g. she cleans Mrs Lyons' house for money / she has just learned she is expecting twins / she fears she cannot afford to keep all her children	**B1**

Answer: Any four of: she already has several children; her husband has left the family; she is in debt and struggling financially; she works cleaning Mrs Lyons' house; she has just discovered she is expecting twins, which she fears she cannot afford to keep.

Question 2

Level 4 Clear, well-supported explanation: analyses how Mickey's redundancy and lack of prospects reflect the wider economic conditions of the period, with well-chosen textual reference and clear understanding of context.	**7-8**
Level 3 Clear explanation: explains how context relates to Mickey's situation, with relevant textual reference and some understanding of context.	**5-6**
Level 2 Some explanation: identifies a relevant point about Mickey's circumstances with some textual reference.	**3-4**
Level 1 Simple, limited explanation: makes a simple or general comment on Mickey's situation with little development.	**1-2**

Indicative content:

- Mickey leaves school into a job market with high youth unemployment, unlike Edward, who is able to go on to university
- his inability to find work is presented as a social problem caused by wider economic decline, not simply a personal failing
- financial pressure and boredom contribute to his involvement in his brother Sammy's crime, which eventually leads to a prison sentence
- this reflects real conditions in Britain in the period the play covers, when industrial decline and rising unemployment hit working-class communities like Mickey's especially hard
- Russell uses Mickey's story to argue that circumstance and opportunity, not personal nature, decide how a life turns out

Question 3

Level 4 Convincing, well-structured analysis: tracks the widening gap between Mickey's and Edward's lives from school through adulthood, with judicious textual reference and confident subject terminology.	**9-10**
Level 3 Clear analysis: explains at least two contrasts between the twins' lives with relevant textual reference.	**6-8**
Level 2 Some analysis: identifies a relevant contrast with some textual reference.	**3-5**
Level 1 Simple, limited analysis: makes a simple, undeveloped point with little textual reference.	**1-2**

Indicative content:

- differences in schooling and expectation are established early, with Edward's education preparing him for university while Mickey's prepares him for little beyond leaving school to find work
- when the boys get into the same mischief as children, Edward's background allows him to avoid serious consequences in a way Mickey cannot, exposing an early double standard
- as adults, Edward moves into a respected, comfortable career while Mickey struggles with unemployment, showing how the twins' identical nature leads to completely different outcomes
- by the play's later stages, the gap has widened into a stark contrast between Edward's continued success and Mickey's depression and dependency on medication, which Russell uses to argue that circumstance, not nature, decided their fates

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Question 4

Level 4 Convincing, critical response: sustained, perceptive analysis of fate versus upbringing across the whole play, with judicious reference and confident terminology; contextual point integrated fully. **12-15**

Level 3 Clear, relevant response: explains the tension between fate and upbringing through at least two moments/methods, with relevant reference and a clear contextual point. **8-11**

Level 2 Some, generic response: identifies relevant moments relating to fate or upbringing 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 twins' near-identical instincts and behaviour as young boys suggest a shared nature, before their different environments visibly begin to shape them apart
- the invented superstition offers the audience a supernatural explanation for the tragedy that the play never straightforwardly confirms or denies
- the final scene fulfils the superstition literally, since both twins die once the truth is revealed, while also being caused by entirely explicable social and emotional pressures, including unemployment, jealousy and grief
- Russell sustains this ambiguity rather than resolving it, deliberately leaving the audience to weigh a social explanation for the tragedy against a fatalistic one
- context: the play's closing question about whether we are shaped by fate or by the conditions we are born into reflects wider debates about inequality current when the play was first performed

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