

Answers: Blood Brothers

Answers to the AQA exam-style and practice questions are indicative only and highlight the key things that should be included in your response. You may cover other points. It's how your answer is written and how it fits with the mark scheme that will determine the quality of your answer.

CHRONOLOGICAL SECTION

ACT 1

p.12 Do it!



For example:

- He had been influenced by *Romeo and Juliet* which is also about destructive conflict between families and the workings of fate.
- He didn't want the audience to wonder whether the play would have a happy ending: he wanted the audience to see how the fate of the brothers was inevitable, not whether it was inevitable.

p.12 Stretch it!



For example: Gain: He makes sure that the audience is not distracted from the play's meaning by wondering whether the ending will be happy. Because the audience know that the end will be tragic, they can concentrate on how the tragedy occurs.

Lose: Perhaps knowing the end will take away tension and expectation for the audience, and that might make them less interested in the play and its meaning.

p.13 Do it!



The rank order is up to you. The exercise is designed to help you to think about your reactions to Mrs Johnstone and how Willy Russell guides those reactions. When deciding on the rank order, do take into account what Willy Russell might want us to think about Mrs Johnstone, not just what you would think about a real person like Mrs Johnstone.

p.14 Do it!



For example:

- the narrator's comments and how they might be spoken by an actor
- how we might compare Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons
- the effect of the bass note heartbeat.
- Certainly the audience is likely to feel apprehensive for Mrs Johnstone, and to worry that she has made a mistake.

p.15 Do it!



For example:

- the way they speak (accent and dialect) throughout the play
- wealth/poverty
- being trusted/not trusted (for example, by the Policeman later in the play)
- education.

p.15 Stretch it!



For example, Mickey explains to Edward, ‘Cos, if our Sammy gives y’ a sweet he’s usually weed on it first.’ The abbreviated words ‘cos and y’ are typical of working-class speech in the play. They make Mickey sound energetic and ‘naughty’ and actually this is exactly what Edward finds refreshing and attractive. Edward responds with his own class dialect: ‘super fun’. This makes Edward sound, by contrast with Mickey’s speech, innocent and also pompous and childish at the same time.



p. 15 AQA exam-style question

- Consider the impact of poverty: Mrs Johnstone having to give away a baby to make ends meet; compare with Mrs Lyons having the wealth to be able to afford to ‘buy a baby’.
- Explore Mrs Johnstone’s attitude towards her difficult circumstances. How do we feel about her attitude?
- Compare Mrs Lyons’ attitude towards her favoured circumstances. How do we feel about her attitude? Does she exploit Mrs Johnstone?
- Consider how (bad) luck leads to poverty, or how social class determines a child’s life chances. (‘Do we blame superstition... Or...class?’ – the Narrator at the end.)
- Explore what is more important in determining how someone turns out – birth or upbringing? Contrast the twins’ different lives – for example, Mickey’s school and what it can offer in terms of opportunity versus Edward’s boarding school leading to university; what does Russell say about this?
- Evaluate how society views the actions of the boys, for example, through the response of the Policeman: a criminal act or a childish ‘prank’?
- Consider how the well-off characters contribute to others’ poverty: the Lyons sack Mrs Johnstone and, later, Mickey. Does wealth cause poverty?
- Evaluate themes of social responsibility, class and justice and Russell’s message and its relevance today.

p.16 Do it!



Try to think not just about how you do react to the two women, but also how you think Willy Russell wants you to react. You might consider how the two women are in a sense both victims of their circumstances: Mrs Johnstone is desperate due to poverty, while Mrs Lyons is desperate for a child. They each have what the other needs.

p.17 Do it! (top)



The student makes a clear point, but it is perhaps a bit simplistic. After all, they don’t consider why Mr Johnstone might have abandoned his family, and why his new girlfriend would be willing to go along with that. You might consider how Willy Russell seems to be suggesting throughout the play that desperate circumstances make people do things that they would normally consider terrible – giving away a baby, for example.

p.17 Do it! (bottom)



Think about the role of the Narrator throughout the play. For example, is he just summarising and pointing things out, or is he acting like a devil, enjoying the characters’ misfortunes?

p.19 REVIEW IT!



- 1 At a dance.
- 2 Seven (with two on the way).
- 3 Cleaning for Mrs Lyons.
- 4 Because he says it wouldn’t be his own.
- 5 She puts a pair of new shoes on the table.
- 6 She is expecting twins.

p.19 REVIEW IT!



- 7 By using stuffing under her clothes to suggest that she is pregnant. Her husband is away for nine months and she will tell him she must have become pregnant just before he left, but didn't want to tell him in case she had a miscarriage.
- 8 She often imagines her child playing outside her window. She says that her imagination is so strong that she can actually see and hear him.
- 9 Piles
- 10 Because the women have agreed on their deal and sworn on the Bible. Therefore 'a pact's been sealed, there's a deal been born.'
- 11 That it was not funny at the time, and that she is being bitter and sarcastic about it.
- 12 Her husband is returning the next day.
- 13 Picking him up.
- 14 Her work isn't good enough anymore.
- 15 She tells her that 'they say' that if parted twins later discover they are twins, then they both die immediately.
- 16 He means that the devil cannot be escaped: Mrs Johnstone – in agreeing to 'sell' her son – has made a pact with the devil. In other words, she has done something that everyone else would condemn as evil and unforgivable. Therefore she is forced to keep it secret, and she will always be forced to stick to the agreement however much pain and regret it might cause her.
- 17 They are both unsupported by their husbands. They are both desperate – for different reasons. They both love children. For both of them, their main role is to support their families – Mrs Johnstone's children and Mrs Lyons' husband.
- 18 Mrs Johnstone is desperate and afraid of losing all her children to 'the Welfare'. Mrs Lyons realises this and offers her a way to keep almost all of her children. She expresses her desperate need for a child and this moves Mrs Johnstone. She threatens, frightens and bribes Mrs Johnstone.
- 19 The catalogue tempts people to buy things 'on easy terms' – low weekly repayments – but the terms turn out to be unaffordable rather than easy and the goods are taken back. She is applying this lesson to her lost baby too: she came to an easy agreement with Mrs Lyons, but now her baby has been taken away. Of course if she had been unable to afford to look after her babies, 'the Welfare' – just like with the catalogues – would have taken them away.
- 20 Another way of looking at this is to ask yourself how much control Mrs Johnstone has over her fate and that of her family. She is a strong and determined woman, but she seems to have little control over what happens to her. She got pregnant over and over again, but probably her husband required it of her, and she was very young. Perhaps she was foolish to be won over by her husband's flattery and his taking her out dancing. Poverty becomes an enemy that is far too strong for her and all her misfortunes seem to come from her understandable efforts to escape from it. Overall, she is a sort of defiant victim.

p.20 Do it!



For example: Edward's privileged upbringing enables him to be generous with his sweets. He knows that he will be able to get more sweets if he wants them so doesn't need to guard them from others. In contrast, Mickey's upbringing has resulted in him being suspicious of people's motives for giving away anything for free. He sees this behaviour as 'soft' – a weakness – rather than generosity, and because of Sammy's cruelty he immediately thinks there must be something wrong with the sweets.

p.20 Stretch it!



Some critics have said that Russell has avoided aligning Sammy's behaviour to his upbringing or his class. Instead he attributes his behaviour to the plate in his head. The fact that he was dropped as a baby refers to a joke and common saying at the time the play was written. The 1980s audience would recognise this.

p.21 Do it!



- 1 They share a mother, blood and, most importantly, Linda.
- 2 'He robbed me toy car y'know' – Sammy's criminal behaviour began as a child and continues as an adult. His criminal behaviour leads to Mickey's downfall.
'He wees straight through the letterbox' – Sammy has no conscience or care for others. This antisocial behaviour continues in his adult life as he bullies those around him.

p.22 Stretch it!



Willy Russell is signposting the violence that will come later in the play. Some studies have reported that children who hurt or kill animals can demonstrate violent tendencies in later life. It could be argued that Russell is hinting at this.

p.22 Do it!



Mickey

Suspicious – Mickey is suspicious of Edward's motives when he offers him sweets.

Protective – Mickey protects Edward against Sammy's bullying.

Enlightening – Edward is enlightened by Mickey's world as he has been sheltered by his mother.

Streetwise – Mickey is streetwise, knowing how to swear and how to handle Sammy.

Edward

Trusting – Edward is trusting and open with Mickey. He has had no cause to suspect other people's motives.

Generous – As he knows there will always be more sweets, Edward is able to be generous.

Admiring – Edward admires Mickey and his streetwise ways.

Innocent – Edward's sheltered upbringing means that he is innocent of the ways of the world, unlike Mickey.

p.23 Do it!



For example:

- Mrs Lyons loves her son, but becomes paranoid that she will lose him. This desperation prompts a violent outburst when she hits Edward 'hard' in Act One. She even moves house in her attempts to keep the twins apart. The audience feels sympathy because they understand that by wanting to keep him to herself, she only ends up pushing him away.
- At the end of the play, all of Mrs Lyons' deceit and paranoia leads her to cause the one thing that scared her the most: losing her son. The audience's sympathy is lost when she tells Mickey about Edward and Linda solely to cause trouble.

**p. 23 AQA exam-style question**

Support for this question is offered in the p.23 Do it! activity above.

p.24 Do it!



For example:

Willy Russell includes the scenes of children's games to illustrate how the careless violence of childhood can escalate into violence between adults and even world wars. It is interesting to note that Linda steps in to challenge Sammy at the start of scene and also that Sammy is depicted with a water-filled condom as a bomb. Russell is successful because the contrast of the children with such violent scenes is shocking for the audience. The casual 'cross your fingers' attitude towards death allows the audience to consider which people within our society see their role in violent acts as just a game. Russell seems to be suggesting that children are influenced by television and film in their use of violence. This was a common concern in the 1980s.

p.25 Do it!



For example:

- Russell's stage direction tells us that Mickey should be 'greatly impressed' by Linda's and Mickey's daredevil behaviour. Edward's questions show that he is ignorant, excluded and trying to catch up with his friends.
- Mickey and Linda use vague, informal nouns in their explanations - 'things', 'sorts', 'somethin'. These informal nouns indicate their position as working class characters, but the words are also chosen deliberately for their vagueness to tease Edward's curiosity and to leave him on the outside of the group.
- Mickey and Linda tease and exclude Edward also by mirroring each other's words, creating an alliance between them: 'don't we, Linda?'/ 'don't we, Mickey?'; 'like, like'/ 'like like'.
- Shared language by Mickey and Linda shows the supportive nature of their relationship.
- Edward's response - with its characteristically middle class word choices of adjective - 'Goodness', 'fantastic' - emphasises the class differences between Edward and Linda and Mickey, who use language that is more colloquial (for example, 'things') and abbreviated (for example, 'y'know', 'waitin').

p.27 REVIEW IT!



- 1 Mickey suggests that Mrs Johnstone thought it was the rent man.
- 2 Mrs Johnstone explains that it is because Mickey is the youngest.
- 3 Mrs Johnstone responds with 'Good'. This response suggests that either she wasn't really listening to his chatter or she didn't care.
- 4 In the song, Mickey tells us that Sammy 'robbed' his car, took the wheels and the roof off and now the 'thing won't go'.
- 5 Mickey is suspicious because his upbringing has taught him not to trust a gift of this kind. This is because Sammy 'weed' on sweets before handing them out.
- 6 The worms die and need to be buried.
- 7 Mickey gives Edward the name 'Eddie'. Eddie is a name linked with the working classes and by naming Edward, Mickey is showing his bond with him.
- 8 Mrs Lyons uses the adjective 'silly'.
- 9 Edwards says, 'I like him more than you', to his mother when she is trying to stop him from seeing Mickey. This is significant because the blood bond is stronger here.
- 10 Linda says this to Sammy. It is during the children's games song when Sammy is singing 'I shot ya'. Linda is referring to action hero films where the hero can stop bullets.
- 11 Sammy. He is carrying a water-filled condom to represent the atomic bomb.
- 12 If you swear you will die and go to hell.
- 13 You need to cross your fingers and count from one to ten.
- 14 This stage direction shows how Linda comforts Mickey and tries to protect him. The gesture is also a maternal gesture - like a mother would dry his tears, again showing protection and comfort.
- 15 Mickey has Sammy's airgun.
- 16 The first thing Edward tells them is that he 'haven't got to play with you.'
- 17 She says they have been caught 'hundreds of times'.
- 18 Edward is impressed by their tales. He says it is 'fantastic'.
- 19 The lyric is 'the devil's got your number'. The lyric suggests that Mrs Lyons will be caught out for her deceit. It suggests that she cannot escape being found out.
- 20 We are shown Sammy killing worms. This action will escalate later to killing the filling station worker. He indulges in antisocial behaviour, for example, weeing on sweets and through next door's letter box. He draws 'nudey' pictures and carries a condom filled with water as a bomb, suggesting that he is sexually aware at a young age. He bullies Edward, calling him 'poshy'.

p.28 Do it!



The speech confirms the prejudice against working-class people. The Policeman treats what Edward has done almost as a joke. The Policeman even ‘laughs’ about it, and suggests that a fitting punishment would be for his pocket money to be stopped briefly. This contrasts with his suggested punishment for Mickey which involves a threat of court action. The Policeman is relaxed and friendly as he speaks. His acceptance of a glass of whisky suggests that his visit is partly a social rather than a professional one. The fact that he has removed his helmet shows either that he was willing to stay for a while, or that he wants to show respect to the Lyons – or both.

p.28 Stretch it!



His leaving out of letters in words (An’, y’) indicates that this is another member of the working class working on behalf of the middle class. The hesitant ‘fillers’ in his speech (for example, ‘well’, ‘er’) show that he feels a little awkward with his social ‘superiors’ and doesn’t want to offend them. The same is shown by the hesitant phrase ‘if y’ don’t mind me sayin’ ’.



p. 29 AQA exam-style question

- How could this be seen as true of Mrs Johnstone? Focus on her circumstances and how she can’t escape them. Does she have any real control over her life?
- How this could be seen as true of Mrs Lyons? Are there surprising parallels between the two women?
- Consider the Narrator’s song that evokes the image of a devil tracking them down. Analyse the language in that song and how it is applied to both women.
- Explore how Russell plots the play so that both women try to escape but their eventual re-entanglement always feels inevitable.
- Does one woman seem to have more freedom than the other?

p.29 Do it!



You may have annotated:
 ‘both Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons’ – suggestion of similarities despite contrasts
 ‘hunted’ and ‘trapped’ – something creeping up on them: guilt? Justice?; web of secrets/pretence/can’t get away
 ‘How far do you agree’ – can agree and disagree, probably agree overall
 ‘two women say and do’/‘what others say’ – this is the evidence base
 ‘how Russell presents’ – How does he make us feel about it? What methods does he use?
 Other words/phrases to use: can’t escape/get away; paranoid; dread; apprehensive.

p.31 Do it!



Secret	How it is introduced	Significance
The locket	After Edward puts the locket round his neck, he looks at Mrs Johnstone ‘a moment too long’. This is a deliberate direction from Russell, clearly meant to signal the significance of this pact.	Perhaps Russell means that Edward’s look is a moment ‘too long’ for safety: knowledge is dawning on him. When Mrs Lyons discovers the locket, the fact that it was a secret gift makes her not trust Mrs Johnstone, and that leads to her crazed knife attack.

p.32 Do it!



Mr Lyons: jokey, light-hearted; tries to deflect Edward’s opposition to the proposal; he is going to get his own way by not discussing the issue with Edward.
 Mrs Johnstone: sympathetic, soothing; tries to reassure Edward with love and comfort; does not engage directly with Edward’s real concerns.
 Some relevant words to use in your paragraph: by contrast; on the other hand; meanwhile; whereas; similarly; in the same way.

p.32 Stretch it!



For example:

- People are not entirely honest and use deflection tactics when another character seems to be heading in the direction of the truth.
- The toy gun Edward gives Mickey is presumably the one that he was earlier given by his father.
- The locket gift is a secret, but also is a clue to the truth and threatens a disastrous revealing of the truth.

p.33 Do it!



You could write about specific details such as what each twin admires about the other, and how the reader/audience might feel about each twin. Write about the effect of Russell's use of identical words in each twin's verse: for example, 'like...like...like'. Perhaps this shows us that they don't just complement each other's qualities but are becoming the same person.



p. 35 AQA exam-style question

- Explore aspects of Edward's admiration for Mickey and the aspects of Mickey's character that he envies, such as his freedom from respectable restraints so that he can swear and get up to mischief.
- Explore connections with other characters' desires, for example, Edward's desire to escape from the stifling respectability of his home; Mrs Johnstone's desire to escape from the trap of poverty.

p.35 Do it!



On your spider diagram, you could note down aspects of Edward's admiration for Mickey and the aspects of Mickey's character that he envies, such as his freedom from respectable restraints so that he can swear and get up to mischief. Look for connections with other characters' desires. For example, Edward desires escape from the stifling respectability of his home, while Mrs Johnstone desires escape from the trap of poverty.

p.37 REVIEW IT!



- 1 To move.
- 2 By putting his shoes on the table.
- 3 Probably because he keeps missing the target while Linda keeps hitting it. He feels jealous or embarrassed.
- 4 Adolph Hitler.
- 5 Calling it a mere 'prank'; suggesting a very small punishment; laughing; treating his visit to the Lyons as partly a social occasion (accepting a whisky).
- 6 He inquires after her health. She is not used to a child asking after the health of an adult.
- 7 They are opposites: he wants to stay in the area and she wants to get away.
- 8 A picture of Mrs Johnstone with Mickey.
- 9 He puts it round his neck.
- 10 That Edward will take time to adapt; he will be fine in days; he will soon forget his old home.
- 11 He seems to have forgotten that Edward has moved; he misses him; he wants to know if the new people in the house know Edward's new address.
- 12 She has received a letter telling her that the family is being rehoused in a different area.
- 13 To talk to him about an accusation of his latest robbery.
- 14 The neighbourhood will be calmer and quieter; there will be no graffiti.
- 15 'A gentleman friend' will take her dancing.

p.37 REVIEW IT!



- 16 She sees it as an escape from the restraints of her old life and the bad reputation the family has gained. The family will be able to improve its prospects significantly.
- 17 Because he thinks her fears are irrational – just delusions, due to her ‘nerves’, but she won’t agree with him and see a doctor. She calls him away from his precious work to help her solve problems with Edward.
- 18 It suggests that he looks at her longer than would be explained just by being grateful for the gift. Perhaps he suddenly has a glimmer of understanding that Mrs Johnstone has some special connection to him. His following words explain that he is surprised to realise that she likes him and that he likes her very much too: he says she is ‘smashing’.
- 19 She sings, and her song opens with quick rhymes suggesting she is jumping up and down with childish delight. She thinks of the move as something more than just a change of location: it is a ‘bright new day’, a metaphor that captures the idea of a new beginning, a new start. Moving will allow them to escape her reputation. She exaggerates the benefits of moving – vast garden, air so clean it will make them ‘drunk’. She has amusing fantasies of the pope coming round for tea.
- 20 Yes: Her enthusiasm, expressed through dancing, singing and humour, would be infectious. What Mrs Johnstone is looking forward to is what she deserves: she is a good woman doing her best. She is also admirably strong: she never gives up and she never blames others for her hardships. No: Mrs Johnstone’s secret pact with Mrs Lyons (and the ‘devil’) is threatening to resurface. The narrator has kept reminding the audience that a price will have to be paid eventually. Mrs Lyons is increasingly unstable and that might lead to dangerous actions if she feels threatened.

CHRONOLOGICAL SECTION

ACT 2

p.38 Do it!



Mrs Johnstone jokes that Mickey has reached the age that ‘When you mention girls or courting/He flies into a rage’. This shows how he finds it difficult to manage his feelings. She teases him about Linda which causes him to deny that he wants to see her and tells her that when he was talking about Linda in his sleep it was ‘a line out the school play!’ Linda is straightforward and unashamed of her feelings for Mickey. He complains that she is ‘always sayin’ that’ she loves him and that she said it in assembly the previous day in front of ‘five hundred others’. Linda emphasises that she doesn’t ‘care who knows’. She just loves him.

p.40 Do it!



Parallels between scenes	Edward	Mickey
What the audience learns about Edward and Mickey’s future prospects	Edward is destined for Oxbridge – either Oxford or Cambridge University.	Mickey is asked ‘how the hell do you hope to find a job’. The teacher implies he is destined to be unemployed.
How the teacher speaks to Edward and Mickey at the start of the confrontation	The teacher ‘looks down his nose’ at Edward and tells him that he is ‘rather too big for his boots’, suggesting that he is arrogant.	The teacher makes fun of Mickey’s lack of response to his question by ‘mimicking’ his reply. He calls Perkins, another member of the class, ‘a boring little turd’.
The ‘offence’ committed by Edward and Mickey	Edward wears a locket. The teacher points out that ‘this is a boys’ school’ and he should ‘behave’ like a boy before threatening with the punishment of ‘flogging’.	Mickey isn’t listening in class, so is unable to respond to the teacher’s question.
How Edward and Mickey react to the teacher	Edward refuses to hand over the locket before using the ‘f-word’ that Mickey taught him in response to the teacher’s threat. This shows that Edward and Mickey are close in temperament and thinking.	Mickey tells the teacher that the class is ‘borin’. He swears at the teacher referring to ‘soddin’ pygmies’. He then makes the class laugh at the teacher when he tells him that the lesson would only be useful if he was ‘lookin’ for a job in an African restaurant’.

p.41 Stretch it!

One practical reason that Russell doesn't explicitly say that they are identical twins could be to do with casting. It would be difficult to find identical twin actors.

p.41 Do it!

In this song we see that each of the boys envies the other one. Firstly, Edward envies Mickey for knowing some 'real birds' (remember, he attended an all-boys boarding school). They both admire each other's hair with Mickey's view of his own hair as the 'colour of gravy' whereas Edward sees it as dark and wavy. Each one of them wants to be 'that guy'. This envy will, of course, come to a head at the end of the play, fuelled by the corrupting influence of Mrs Lyons.

**p. 43 AQA exam-style question**

Support for this question is offered in the p.43 Do it! activity below.

p.43 Do it!

A further bullet point could examine how Willy Russell wants to view the characters. Is Mrs Johnstone's ability as a mother totally positive? Sammy doesn't turn out well despite her nurturing nature. Is Mrs Lyons a victim of her guilt? If she were part of a loving relationship with her husband, would she have been a more secure parent? Finally, your last bullet point could explore what Willy Russell is telling the audience about motherhood. Is he saying that the blood tie is key?

p.44 Do it!

Directly after this scene, Edward, Mickey and Linda tangle with the police again and shortly after this we see Edward's unrequited love for Linda. This marks how the three friends will go separate ways as Linda and Mickey become a couple. Willy Russell is pointing out that the giddy happiness that Edward enjoys with his friends will not last because the 'three of them' can't 'stay like that forever'. Time and life will march on.

p.45 Do it!

This is your own opinion, but you may have outlined: Edward's loyalty towards Mickey shows his noble nature; he values his friendship with his 'blood brother'; if he declared his love for Linda and she rejected him, or even accepted him it would alter the dynamic of the group; if Linda told Mickey that Edward loved her, it might have triggered the violent outburst at this point in the play. The outcome might have been different though, because they would not have had the same access to weapons.

p.47 REVIEW IT!

- 1 Mrs Johnstone says the house is lovely and the neighbours only argue at the weekends.
- 2 Mrs Lyons is teaching Edward to waltz. Even at the time the play is set, this dance would be considered as old-fashioned.
- 3 Mrs Lyons seeks confirmation from Edward that they are 'safe' in their new house, showing her fear and paranoia.
- 4 Mrs Johnstone says he has been talking about Linda. Mickey denies it and says that it was a line from the 'school play'.
- 5 The Narrator, as fate, means that they will all have to face up to their mistakes and receive justice.
- 6 Sammy says he is 14 – the age for a 'fourpenny scholar'.
- 7 Linda stops him getting off the bus. It is important because he would have been arrested with Sammy if he joined him.
- 8 Edward gets suspended for swearing at a teacher when he was told to hand over the locket.

p.47 REVIEW IT!



- 9 Mickey gets suspended for swearing at a teacher when he was told off for not knowing an answer and not paying attention.
- 10 Mrs Lyons wants to know why Edward is in the picture with Mrs Johnstone. She stares at Edward 'deep in thought'.
- 11 Edward yells, 'It's just a secret, everybody has secrets, don't you have secrets?'
- 12 Their reply to the Policeman is 'Adolph Hitler'.
- 13 This reply is what Mickey and Linda claimed to have said to the policemen when they met as children. It is funny because Russell changes over the answers to the Policeman's questions. This is the answer to 'what is your name?'
- 14 The Narrator talks of 'broken bottles in the sand' and 'oil on the water'.
- 15 The 'broken bottles in the sand' and 'oil on the water' represent how life will go wrong. Up until this point everything has looked idyllic for the three friends, but just like glass hidden in the sand, things will get worse for them.
- 16 Edward is heading to university.
- 17 Linda is joking that she 'will be a pensioner before he gets around to it'.
- 18 Linda says, 'I know you would. Cos y' soft you are'.
- 19 Edward replies, 'It's a deal'.
- 20 Finally at this point in the play, things seem to be getting better for Mickey. There is a sense that everything is starting to go right. Of course after this, Mickey discovers that Linda is pregnant and things begin to fall apart for him.

p.48 Do it!



For example:

Character	New insights	Links to themes/ideas/other parts of the play
Mrs Johnstone	We see here how tolerant Mrs Johnstone is. She is wise enough to know what is important – not that Mickey has unwisely got Linda pregnant, but that he loves her.	Mickey is asked 'how the hell do you hope to find a job'. The teacher implies he is destined to be unemployed.
Mickey	Here we see how vulnerable Mickey really is: he feels defeated by his sacking, and he quickly becomes desperate and reckless.	His gun play from earlier in the action now looks ominous. His predicted tragic fate seems to be getting closer.
Edward	Here Edward seems proud of his class position: he is part of a circle of mates who mutually tease and insult each other. This seems to have made Edward less sensitive to the feelings and the realities of others.	Earlier in the play Mickey and Linda teased Edward with his class difference and used their class bond to partly exclude him. Now he is happy with his class difference. He is part of a group whose customs - nicknames, mock insults, casual relationship with money - now alienate Mickey.

p.50 Do it!



Fate or the past is personified as a 'black cat stalking', making it sound more ominous and relentless, even malevolent. There is an ominous tone. 'Getting off' is slang for being forgiven or avoiding a punishment. The slang is harsh and threatening and appropriate for the ordinary life being led by the Johnstones. The rhyme 'afraid'/'paid' has a doomy, enclosing feel: the couplet suggests Linda is trapped in a pincer. The audience will be pessimistic for the Johnstones and expect something disastrous to happen to them.

p.53 Stretch it!



Mr Lyons: You could suggest that he maintains a light-hearted tone throughout, more appropriate for a prize-giving than a mass sacking. He could pause before each delivery of the line 'sign of the times' and give a friendly wink as he delivers it almost as though it's an entertaining curiosity to be enjoyed. He could also be counting up the money he is saving in wages.



p. 52 AQA exam-style question

- Consider Linda as a child and how Russell makes us feel about her.
- Discuss how Linda behaves when Sammy holds up the bus conductor. Explore how Russell presents her as a changing, maturing character.
- Think about Linda as a wife, mother and daughter-in-law and how Russell makes us feel about her. Evaluate her relationship with Mrs Johnstone.
- Compare Linda’s self-reliant strength as a contrast to Mickey’s doubts and weakness.
- Explore Linda’s mistakes and weaknesses and our overall reactions to her.

p.53 Stretch it!



For example:

- The different upbringings of the twins allows one to have influence and the other to need help. This gives Edward the power over Mickey that Mickey resents.
- It is the poverty of Mrs Johnstone and the wealth of Mrs Lyons that leads to the separation of the twins as babies.
- The police are biased towards middle-class well-off people, and against poor people. This bias makes it harder for people from poor backgrounds to make an honest living..

p.54 Do it!



Point in the play	Exploration
The meeting with the Policeman in the park	Edward plays the game of giving the Policeman a joke explanation for their behaviour, and a joke name. He doesn't realise that the situation is serious, and that Linda and Mickey are not playing along. Jokes change into tears.
The Narrator comments on the behaviour of young Linda, Mickey and Edward.	The narrator says that eighteen-year-olds enjoying themselves without responsibilities don't need to tell the difference between reality and make-believe: they don't understand 'How living could be anything other than a dream.'

p.55 Do it!



For example:

1 Some unanswered questions:

- What happened to Sammy and the other Johnstone children?
- What is the attitude of the Narrator? Is he cruel? Is he neutral? Why does Russell give him a working-class accent like the Johnstones?
- Is Mrs Lyons sorry for telling Mickey about Edward and Linda?
- What is happening in Linda’s, and Mrs Johnstone’s lives a year later?
- What will happen to Linda’s daughter?

2 Perhaps what Russell wants us to learn:

- Your chances in life are more down to your upbringing than your birth.
- Snobbery and prejudice trap people in poverty and unhappiness.
- It is better to improve your life by making strong and open decisions, rather than by making secret deals whose consequences are likely to be disastrous in the end.
- There is no such thing as living on the ‘never never’ or on ‘easy terms’: don’t make deals that you can’t live up to.
- Good parenting is about guiding your children and supporting their independence, not closely controlling them and trying to keep them to yourself.

p.57 REVIEW IT!



- 1 Because he loves Linda, and because she would be a hypocrite to condemn him for getting Linda pregnant: she too got pregnant very young and before she was married.
- 2 The 'world situation/The shrinking pound, the global slump, /And the price of oil'.
- 3 Mr Lyons' (the managing director's) secretary.
- 4 No parties have been organised as promised by Mickey when Edward went away. Also Mickey is unfriendly.
- 5 Because Edward doesn't understand anything, and because he still values childish games like the blood brother bond. Mickey implies that Edward is childish in the sense that he has no responsibilities.
- 6 By promising that the gun will not be used; by offering him fifty pounds; by making him feel guilty about not being able to afford to treat Linda at Christmas.
- 7 Sammy shoots the attendant when he sets off an alarm.
- 8 He takes antidepressant pills.
- 9 As a reward for his good behaviour.
- 10 She tells Mrs Johnstone that she got them through someone 'on the housin' committee'. Later we discover that the person is Edward.
- 11 To get some relief from the drudgery of her life, and because Mickey won't give up his pills in order to 'come back to life' and let her love him.
- 12 Talk, laugh, kiss, hold hands, part.
- 13 The gun that Sammy hid after the petrol station robbery.
- 14 Speaking at a council meeting.
- 15 She tells Mickey that he and Edward are twin brothers.
- 16 He becomes very angry. He is enraged by the unfairness that gave Edward and not him a comfortable, successful life. He blames his mother for this. This rage makes him fire the gun by accident, killing Edward.
- 17 He creates a bitter comic effect. The song is funny because it is lively and it includes surprises such as the sacking of the person who has been informing everyone else that they have been sacked. The humour is bitter though because it is making light of a disaster – lots of people losing their means of a living. The overall effect is ironic: Willy Russell is implying that the people in power, represented by Mr Lyons, are looking after themselves with no real concern for the welfare of others.
- 18 Probably we should sympathise with him. We can understand why he is so depressed. He didn't really want to do the robbery and he did not predict the consequences. He agreed through weakness. On the other hand, we know that Linda is – in a sense – also imprisoned and is working hard to find a way out for both of them. In some ways, Mickey seems defeatist and ungrateful.
- 19 The prediction does come true: Mrs Johnstone tells the twins who they really are, and this news immediately causes their deaths. However, the 'curse' is only fulfilled accidentally – Mickey fires by mistake. The play suggests that the twins are fated by their class origins, not by a curse. Perhaps the fulfilment of the curse is just Russell's way of heightening the dramatic effect of the tragic end.
- 20 The answer is up to you. However, here are some things to consider:
 - The play's ending has a dramatic finality that is signalled by its beginning. For the audience there might be something satisfyingly circular about this: a loop is closed.
 - The ending is often foreshadowed through the Narrator's ominous warnings, the increasingly serious playing with guns, and the sense – reinforced throughout – that a debt must be paid, that fate cannot be escaped.
 - On the other hand, perhaps Linda and Mrs Johnstone, whose side the audience will be on, deserve a happy ending.

CHARACTERS SECTION

p.58 Do it!



Your paragraph will depend on your own viewpoint but you could include the following points: Mrs Johnstone stands firm at the end of the play as she begs that the events could be viewed as a ‘game’ which could be started over. She can be viewed as the central character of the play meeting hardships with good nature and good humour.

p.59 Do it!



This response will be your own personal opinion, but here is one solution:

Manipulative: She preys on Mrs Johnstone to persuade her to give her the baby, then sacks her to get rid of her; she betrays her own son to fire up Mickey.

Desperate: Mrs Lyon’s desperation to have a baby leads her to take drastic action; the guilt from this crime leads her to behave irrationally and violently.

Unbalanced: Mrs Lyons’ guilt causes her to behave in an unbalanced way; she spies on her son, she attacks Mrs Johnstone.

p.60 Do it!



For example:

Self-doubting – Mickey’s self-doubt leads him to lack confidence to ask Linda out and begin his envy for Edward’s middle-class assured behaviour.

Broken – the cheerful, open child at the start of the play becomes a man broken by his loss of work and the lack of opportunities for young men of his class by the end of the play.

p.60 Stretch it!



Two other words to describe Mickey could be: ‘loyal’ – he is loyal to both Linda and Edward throughout the play. The crime he commits with Sammy is done to get money to take her out; ‘threatened’– Mickey is threatened by Edward’s success and this leads him to make poor decisions. He wants to give Linda the same lifestyle that someone like Edward could provide, but the only way he could do this is through crime.

p.61 Do it!



The response critically explores the play in relation to the question and also chooses precise details from the play to clinch points. This is a strength of the response. It also includes contextual detail (AO3).

Although the response shows understanding of Russell’s methods, it needs to analyse in detail Russell’s methods, and how these influence the audience.

p.62 Do it!



Linda is an equal to the boys – she is the best shot: ‘we hear a metallic ping’. In the 1970s and 1980s, women were making strides towards being viewed as equal. As Linda doesn’t need to be rescued, she represents this movement.

Linda declares her love for Mickey directly and unashamedly even in front of the class, ‘I love you’.

When Edward says that he loves her, she hesitates and doesn’t answer directly: ‘I suppose, I suppose I always...loved you, in a way’.

Linda is left alone with a child at the end of play – just like Mrs Johnstone. In the final scene we are told that she ‘runs down the aisle’ towards the two dead men who loved her. Like Mrs Johnstone, Linda represents the strong women who often appear in Russell’s plays.

p.63 Do it!



Both of these scenes show temptation. Sammy is tempting Mickey to join him in a robbery, which will net him money. Edward and Linda face the temptation of the illicit love that will end in terrible consequences.

p.64 Do it!



The idea of the 'fourth wall' comes from conventional theatres where the actors are surrounded by three walls and the audience. The 'fourth wall' is therefore the audience. The actors normally behave as though they are alone and are behaving realistically. The audience accepts this convention too, staying quiet and not interacting with the actors on stage. 'Blood Brothers' often breaks this 'fourth wall' convention by having the narrator speak directly to the audience. The effect can be startling as audiences are not used to it. It means that audiences can be made to feel directly involved with the drama, almost responsible for it. This helps them to understand that the play is about real situations, issues and people, rather than being just a story for their entertainment. Breaking the fourth wall in this way can make the audience feel very uncomfortable and/or thrilled. In Blood Brothers the narrator comments on the events in the play in a similar way to a chorus in ancient Greek theatre.

p.65 REVIEW IT!



- 1 Mrs Johnstone
- 2 Mrs Lyons persuades her by frightening Mrs Johnstone with veiled threats about 'the Welfare' taking her children; preying on Mrs Johnstone's warm heart by talking about how much she wants a baby and preying on Mrs Johnstone's superstitious nature.
- 3 Sammy
- 4 Sammy laughs at Edward's voice and calls him a 'friggin' poshy'.
- 5 A moll is the female sidekick/girlfriend to a gangster. It is significant because this is the role she will have forced upon her later in the play.
- 6 Linda tells him not to fear death because he will see his 'twinny again' and that he won't have to go to school.
- 7 Linda and Mickey plan to shoot off the 'little thingy' from the statue of Peter Pan.
- 8 This plan tells the reader that she is full of mischief and is as mischievous as the boys. She and Mickey are a team.
- 9 These words show that Mr Lyons wants a 'quick fix' of Mrs Lyons' anxieties, rather than to spend time on listening to and helping her.
- 10 Mrs Johnstone will be free from her past and it signals a hopeful new start for the family.
- 11 This quotation shows the audience that the teacher is not to be trusted. He says this because he believes Edward is behaving in an arrogant manner. Throughout the play, despite his privileged upbringing, Edward does not show any hint of arrogance. The teacher is therefore not right. We know that his real motive is to mock and belittle Edward, perhaps because the teacher is jealous of him.
- 12 You could have: open, honest, lively/funny, depressed, desperate.
- 13 You could have: trusting, vibrant, friendly, misguided, innocent.
- 14 You could have: lively, protective, good-hearted, mischievous, challenging.
- 15 Linda describes him as 'gorgeous', trying to make Mickey jealous. It is Edward and he looks like Mickey, of course. It foreshadows the love-triangle that will happen at the end of the play and Mickey's jealousy that leads to the fatal shootings.
- 16 As Linda leaves, Mickey is able to say how he feels for her.
- 17 Edward describes his hair as mousy fair. Mickey describes his hair as the colour of gravy.
- 18 Russell portrays Mr Lyons as the wealthy employer who callously laid off their workforce while making sure that they kept their money. Mickey is one of the people who lost their jobs.
- 19 Mickey tells Edward to 'do me a favour and piss off' as he throws the money to the ground.
- 20 Mickey says, 'I could have been him'. In this speech, Mickey reveals his envy of Edward's upbringing. This is the first clear rift between Edward and Mickey. Here we see Mickey rejecting Edward's friendship which signals another step in the journey to the final tragic events.

THEMES AND CONTEXTS SECTION

p.66 Do it!



For example:

- Sammy's hiding of the gun. The gun is not found but Mickey knows where it is and in an impulse he goes and gets it when he hears that Edward has secretly met Linda. It is the gun that kills Edward.
- Linda and Edward's secret meeting in the park. The meeting is probably relatively innocent and Linda would not have allowed it to turn into an affair, but because Mickey discovers their secret meeting, he assumes they are having an affair.

p.67 Do it!



For example:

- The pronoun 'you' presumably refers to Mrs Johnstone, but because it is delivered to the audience, they might feel as though it refers to them.
- The repetition of 'Did you forget...' has a rhetorical power – as though it is part of a speech. Its question form again seems to involve the audience, making them feel guilty and at risk.
- The rhyme 'pay'/'day' reinforces the directness of the Narrator's question, allowing the Narrator actor to adopt a sneering tone.

p.67 Stretch it!



For example:

- the Milkman's lack of sympathy for Mrs Johnstone's inability to pay her bill
- the Finance Man's lack of sympathy for Mrs Johnstone because she knew 'she wouldn't be able to pay'
- Mrs Johnstone's realisation that 'What can't be paid/Must be returned', implying that the same rule applies to her children.

These references make the idea of debt and the day of reckoning increasingly ominous. Mrs Johnstone expresses her defiance, but she is powerless to defend herself. Mrs Lyons, too, expects to have no consequences to her agreement with Mrs Johnstone. We increasingly sense that there will be consequences.

p.68 Do it / Stretch it!



Mrs Lyons asks Mrs Johnstone, 'doesn't one get piles when one's pregnant?' The use of the word 'one' is very precise, formal and even old-fashioned. It is a mark of upper middle-class respectability. Its use probably makes the audience feel that Mrs Lyons is stiff and superior: it suggests she is a snob.

Shortly afterwards Mrs Johnstone asks Mrs Lyons, 'What you goin' the shops for?' By contrast with Mrs Lyons, Mrs Johnstone speaks informally, missing out words ('are' and 'to') and a letter (the g of 'going'). Many audiences will take this style of speech as indicating Mrs Johnstone's naturalness – she doesn't suggest something she is not. They are likely to feel that Mrs Johnstone is more real and trustworthy than Mrs Lyons.



p. 68 AQA exam-style question

- Compare the poverty of the Johnstones and contrast with the comfort of the Lyons.
- Explore the snobbery and superiority of the Lyons and their class.
- Explore the desperate measures adopted by the Johnstones: selling a baby, crime, buying on credit, and the effects of these measures.
- How does class inequality drive the plot towards 'fate' and tragedy?

p.69 Do it! (top)



It is up to you how much control you feel you have. Some areas you might consider include:

- school and education
- family relationships
- he effects of something you did in the past
- missed opportunities.

How much were you (or family members) to blame for what did or didn't happen?

p.69 Do it! (bottom)

Other possible subtopics that fit with the question focus:

- the overall role of fate in the play
- the significance of the Narrator's adoption of other roles such as the Milkman and the Gynaecologist
- the attitude and tone of the Narrator and alternative ways he might be presented by an actor
- the effect of the Narrator's final hint that class and not fate and superstition are to blame.

**p. 69 AQA exam-style question**

- Explore the overall role of fate in the play.
- Discuss the significance of the Narrator's adoption of other roles such as the Milkman and the Gynaecologist.
- Explore the attitude and tone of the Narrator and alternative ways he might be presented by an actor.
- Discuss the effect of the Narrator's final hint that class and not fate and superstition are to blame.

p.70 Do it!

For example: humiliation, social isolation, being abandoned by their father, being blamed.

**p. 70 AQA exam-style question**

- Explore how poverty ruins lives, for example, through depression, crime and prejudice.
- Discuss whether and how poverty is a trap that cannot easily be escaped.
- Consider the arrogance and insensitivity of those who have money and their attitudes towards the poor.
- Evaluate the non-sentimental presentation of poverty, focusing on how the poor do not always stick up for each other and the contrast between Sammy and Mickey.
- Explore the heroic efforts made by some – Mrs Johnstone, Mickey and Linda.

p.71 Do it!

Some possible points to explore:

- Mrs Johnstone (and Linda) have to find solutions to problems, and they have to be creative and brave.
- Mrs Johnstone is both realistic and romantic in her attitude towards life's challenges. Although life is grim, she is still a dreamer.
- By contrast, Mr Johnstone (and Mr Lyons) avoid their responsibilities and concentrate on their own needs. They are therefore in a sense trivial rather than serious in their responses.

p.72 Do it!

The rank order is up to you, but make sure you consider:

- not just how you react to the play, but also what you think Willy Russell meant
- the evidence that supports your rank order choices.

You are unlikely to find any genuine evidence that supports these two 'meanings':

- girls and young women should use contraception and not blame others if they get pregnant
- poor people have only got themselves to blame for their poverty.

**p. 71 AQA exam-style question**

- What is admirable about Mrs Johnstone? Discuss her resourcefulness, willingness to express her opinion, knowing when to fight and when to give in.
- Examine Linda's admirable qualities and how Russell develops her character so as to make her believable.
- Consider Mrs Lyons – is her class more important than her gender?
- Explore ways in which Mrs Johnstone/Linda are not heroic/admirable.
- Does Russell present men as villains – Mr Johnstone, Mr Lyons, Sammy?

p.72 Stretch it!

For example, you might explore the points/evidence below to support this meaning: we are all responsible for one another.

At the end of the play, both mothers lose out. Mrs Lyons has always put her own interests above those of Edward's natural mother, and in the end this selfish approach has failed even to satisfy her own needs – to be a loved mother forever. Perhaps if she had helped Mrs Johnstone and collaborated in the twins' upbringing, she could have been a co-mother to both twins. Sacking Mickey with no thought about how he would survive drives Mickey into desperate measures that eventually contribute to the death of Edward.

p.74 Do it!

For example:

- The desperate poverty Willy Russell saw in his native Liverpool when he was growing up.
- Poor people had their dreams of a better life inspired by the lifestyles they saw in popular films, such as those starring Marilyn Monroe.
- Dreams of a better life were sometimes expressed in unwise buying from catalogues that seemed to offer a better life 'on easy terms'.

p.75 REVIEW IT!

- 1 Something the play is about.
- 2 You could have: destiny, fortune, chance, luck.
- 3 You could have: private, concealed, hidden.
- 4 You could have: debt, hardship, destitution, penury, starvation.
- 5 You could have: unfairness, bias, privilege, disadvantage/advantage.
- 6 Mr Lyons, Mrs Lyons, Edward (and Edward's university friends)
- 7 They have suggested that she cannot control her children, and although she loves them, she cannot feed them.
- 8 When she buys something on credit, the terms are not as 'easy' as is suggested because she will be unable to afford the repayments. She also fears that her agreement with Mrs Lyons will turn out not to be easy as it will probably have consequences that will disadvantage her.
- 9 You can't escape the consequences of your actions. It is as though your inevitable fate is waiting to claim you.
- 10 We don't know: she seems to accept it as though she has no choice.
- 11 Class and poverty
- 12 Mrs Johnstone offering to take one of Mrs Johnstone's twins to save the whole family from 'the Welfare'.
 - The Catalogue Man apologising for having to repossess goods.
 - Edward offering money to Mickey when he is out of work.
 Of course, we do have to consider characters' motives in being generous.
- 13 Although Mickey had done the same thing as Edward, the Policeman threatened his mother with the courts. This shows the routine prejudice against working-class people – even by members of their own class.
- 14 Mrs Lyons referring disparagingly to her working-class neighbours as 'these people'. The Johnstones' neighbours assume that all members of the Johnstone family are criminals and vandals.

p.75 REVIEW IT!



- 15 The words give an unsettling image of the devil or fate as being sneaky and unable to be shaken off. The devil seems calm and calculating and very patient.
- 16 You could choose Mickey's speech in Act Two when Edward returns from university for Christmas from 'Yeh' down to 'sick, right.' Here Mickey tries to point out the differences in his and Edward's lives, and how someone as comfortable as Edward does not need to 'grow up'.
- 17 You could choose the final speech of the play, spoken by the whole Company. Here they take up the theme introduced by Mrs Johnstone and seem to adopt it as an outlook on life for everyone. Do these lines suggest that dreams can be strong enough to compensate for harsh reality? Or do the lines regret that dreams are not strong enough?
- 18 You could choose the children's song in Act Two just after Mrs Lyons' knife attack on Mrs Johnstone. Is Willy Russell suggesting that Mrs Lyons is just a mad woman?
- 19 You could explore the moment in Act One when Mrs Johnstone gives Edward the locket, from 'She removes a locket' down to 'round his neck'.
- 20 Other themes you could consider: jealousy, rivalry, friendship, male-female relationships.

LANGUAGE, STRUCTURE AND FORM SECTION

p.76 Stretch it!



Your response to this task will reflect your personal opinion. However, Willy Russell was born and raised in Liverpool so was seeking to recreate the accent and dialect of the people he was surrounded by as he grew up.

p.76 Do it!



Mrs Lyons speaks in Standard English. She uses the standard form of 'Hello' not 'Hi'. Mrs Lyons also uses the formal 'Is the job working out all right for you?', rather than the informal, 'Is the job going OK?' This use of language signals that she is a member of the middle class, but it is also an appropriate level of formality for her role as Mrs Johnstone's employer.

p.77 Do it!



For example:

In the scene at Christmas when Mickey is facing unemployment and Edward is home from university, Russell uses language to increase the dramatic tension. In this scene, Edward's language is positive, focusing on fun. He says that university is 'tremendous' and he talks of 'parties' and urges Mickey to 'celebrate'. Mickey's language is negative. He shows the futility of his life as he talks of how he 'hated' his job, 'never doin' nothing' but putting cardboard boxes together. However, in the depths of unemployment he would 'crawl' back to the job. The gulf between the life experience of the two boys is clear which raises the tension until Mickey threatens, 'Go on...beat it before I hit y'.

p.78 Do it!



You could analyse 'paying the price' or 'the devil's got your number. of the bond between Edward and Mickey as blood brothers; Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons as powerful mothers; Russell's use of the Narrator and the children as the chorus; the catastrophe being Linda's pregnancy and unemployment; how fate is used throughout the play – the characters cannot escape their destiny.

p.79 Do it!



The key lesson in the play is the question posed by the Narrator:
'And do we blame superstition for what has come to pass?
Or could it be that we, the English, have come to know as class?'

p.79 Stretch it!



Events in the play move in a linear, chronological sequence following the prologue/opening summary. However, the prologue depicts the end of the play, therefore it is cyclical.

p.80 Do it!



Mrs Johnstone	Things in common	Mrs Lyons
Living in poverty	Family ties. Both raise a son from the same set of twins.	Living in wealth and affluence
Too many children	Both abandoned by their husbands: physically by Mrs Johnstone's husband and emotionally by Mrs Lyons' husband.	Childless/unable to have children
Loved by her children – and Edward	Both feel guilt and regret for their actions.	Distanced by Edward
	Both live with the threat of being found out.	
	Both love their children/sons.	
	Both have sons who die violently.	



p. 80 AQA exam-style question

- Explore how Russell presents the deal made between the two women and the references to superstition, fate and the devil.
- Discuss how Russell presents the fate of the twins and how their lives mirror each other. Edward is shown to be successful in terms of education and class but is poor in family love; Mickey is presented as the opposite.
- Evaluate how Russell presents the tragic love triangle between Linda/Mickey/Edward.
- Discuss how Russell uses the Narrator to remind the audience about the role of fate and the devil.
- Consider how Russell uses structure to show the decline of Mickey's fortune after his key moment of hope when he asks Linda out.

p.81 Do it!



For example:

- The audience might be surprised and confused at first.
- Being able to use the same actors throughout the play will allow the audience to appreciate the effects of getting older.
- Having adults playing small children will have a lot of comic potential.

p.82 Do it!



The features you could have included in your paragraph are: the use of the prologue (or opening lines fulfilling the function of a prologue by summarising the whole play) to set the tragic tone of the play; the use of a hero – perhaps Mrs Johnstone with a superstitious nature as her tragic flaw; the plays focus on family and how these families boundaries shift because of the bond between Edward and Mickey as blood brothers; Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons as powerful mothers; Russell's use of the Narrator and the children as the chorus; the catastrophe being Linda's pregnancy and unemployment; how fate is used throughout the play – the characters cannot escape their destiny.

p.83 REVIEW IT!



- 1 The use of a prologue (or lines fulfilling the function of a prologue) to summarise the story of the play conforms to the conventions of Greek tragedy. It adds to dramatic tension as the audience knows what is going to happen so is keen to find out how these 'blood brothers' come to end in such tragedy.
- 2 For example, after Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons swear on the Bible, there is a bass note 'repeated like a heartbeat'.
- 3 The Policeman describes Edward's offence as a 'prank' and Mickey's as a 'serious crime'.
- 4 Russell uses this device to show the differences between the treatment of working-class and middle-class people.
- 5 One example could be Mrs Lyons and the locket. Here the audience knows what is in the locket and waits for her to see the photograph of Mickey and Mrs Johnstone.
- 6 Russell uses music during Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons' struggle with the knife. Each movement is 'punctuated by a note'.
- 7 Edward uses these words wrongly as he calls his mother 'a fuckoff', showing his innocence but also the corrupting influence of the Johnstone family (and also causing laughter from the audience). Edward's mother hits him.
- 8 The narrator uses the word 'chippy' which is a dialect term for the fish and chip shop.
- 9 The Giro was a type of cheque received as unemployment benefit. These could be cashed at the post office.
- 10 Edward has been at university having a 'great' time with lots of parties.
- 11 The play begins and ends at the same point.
- 12 The characters use natural speech patterns. They do not use verse, other than in the songs.
- 13 Mrs Johnstone pays in the loss of two sons to a violent death and the regret and guilt she feels.
- 14 Mrs Lyons pays in the death of her son because of her treachery and betrayal. She also descends into erratic behaviour and paranoia, showing that she loses her stability because of her guilt and regret.
- 15 Linda pays the price of losing both of the men that she loved.
- 16 The features you could have included in your paragraph are: the use of the prologue (or lines fulfilling the purpose of a prologue) to set the tragic tone of the play; the use of a hero – perhaps Mrs Johnstone with a superstitious nature as her tragic flaw; the play's focus on family and how these families' boundaries shift because of the bond between Edward and Mickey as blood brothers; Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons as powerful mothers; Russell's use of the Narrator and the children as the chorus; the catastrophe being Linda's pregnancy and unemployment; how fate is used throughout the play – the characters cannot escape their destiny.
- 17 This is Edward, a member of the middle classes, speaking. He speaks in Standard English with no shortened words to show accent. The word 'tremendous' is likely to be used by a member of the middle classes.
- 18 Russell uses abbreviated words, for example, 'Ey' 'Nothin'" and he uses dialect words such as 'Mam' and 'chippy' to show the accent and the class of the speaker.
- 19 'Come along, escape under your fence. Your Mother will not see you.'
- 20 This response is your personal opinion, however, Mrs Johnstone is the central figure who is at the heart of the play. Her superstitious nature forms her tragic flaw.

DOING WELL IN YOUR AQA EXAM

p.88 Do it!



Answer A sets out the basic position that the student is going to support in the following paragraphs. The introduction fixes in the mind of the student and the examiner that this answer is going to be completely relevant to the question. Answer B is really a waste of time: rather than explaining what they are going to do, this student should just get on and do it! No introduction would be better than this one, which just uses up valuable time.

p.91 REVIEW IT!



- 1 45 minutes
- 2 The poetry anthology and the unseen poems.
- 3 Two
- 4 One
- 5 For example:
How and why does Edward change in Blood Brothers?
Write about:
 - how Edward responds to other characters
 - how Willy Russell presents Edward by the way he writes.
- 6 For example:
How does Willy Russell explore the dangers of secrets in Blood Brothers?
Write about:
 - the ideas about the dangers of secrets in Blood Brothers
 - how Willy Russell presents these ideas in the way he writes.
- 7 For example:
Do you think Sammy is an important character in Blood Brothers? Write about:
 - how Willy Russell presents Sammy
 - how Willy Russell uses Sammy to present ideas about social class.
- 8 5-10 minutes
- 9 It helps you make sure you have really thought about what the question is asking, otherwise you risk answering the question that you want to see, rather than the question that is actually there.
- 10 Brief mentions of an event in a play or what a character says or does.
- 11 Because there are four marks for this (AO4) in the Blood Brothers answer.
- 12 30
- 13 AO1 covers understanding, responding and using evidence, and is worth 12 marks.
- 14 AO2 covers language, form and structure and subject terminology, and is worth 12 marks.
- 15 It is a bad idea because that essay is unlikely to be relevant enough to the exam question. Your friend is likely to lose a lot of marks through irrelevance.
- 16 It is true, but a useful introduction and/or conclusion can improve your answer.
- 17 Base all your revision on planning and writing answers to exam questions.
- 18 Do you think Linda is an important character in Blood Brothers?
Some possible paragraph topics:
 - the strong impact on the audience made by Linda as a child
 - how Linda develops from reckless youngster to responsible young adult
 - Linda's characteristics and their importance to Russell's presentation of women
 - Linda's importance to Russell's theme of improvement and escape from poverty
 - Linda's effect on other characters.

p.91 REVIEW IT!



19 How does Russell explore family relationships in *Blood Brothers*?

Some possible paragraph topics:

- Mrs Johnstone's relationship with her own children
- relationships within the Lyons family
- the natural bond between Edward and Mrs Johnstone
- differences between Edward's and Mickey's relationship with their parents
- the role of love and possessiveness as bonds within the family.

20 It's how your answer is written and how it fits with the mark scheme that will determine the quality of your answer. Use the mark scheme on page 78 of this *GCSE 9–1 AQA English Literature Study Guide* to help you understand how to improve your answer.

AQA EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

**p.92 Practice question 1**

- Explore Mickey's childhood relationship with Edward.
- Discuss Mickey's relationship with his mother.
- Explore Mickey's relationship with Linda.
- Evaluate Mickey's 'dark side': his jealousy, rejection of Edward, reaction to prison.
- Discuss the ending and how we feel about Mickey.

**p.92 Practice question 2**

- Consider Mrs Johnstone's poverty and how she copes (or doesn't).
- Show how the Lyons exploit the Johnstones' poverty.
- Explore the themes of snobbery and prejudice, for example, as shown by the Policeman and Mrs Lyons.
- Discuss how Mrs Johnstone tries to maintain standards and escape poverty.
- Explore the Narrator's comments about fate and class.

Each point needs to be considered in relation to how Russell guides our reactions.

**p.93 Practice question 3**

- Explore the Narrator's central, repeated comments about not escaping debt – being held responsible for past actions.
- Consider the Narrator's constant presence – especially in other roles – to remind us/the characters about their responsibilities.
- Evaluate how the Narrator's language increasingly conveys the impression of debts being 'called in'.
- Discuss how an actor/director could plausibly interpret the Narrator in performance.
- What is the significance of the Narrator's words near the end – especially about fate and class: who is to blame?

**p.93 Practice question 4**

- Consider Mr Lyons' role as a husband: to what extent does he support and sympathise with his wife at the beginning?
- How does his attitude towards his wife develop?
- Explore Mr Lyons' treatment of Edward: what model of fatherhood does Russell convey through him?
- Explore Mr Lyons' role as an employer, responsible for the welfare of his employees.
- How believable is Mr Lyons? Is he a fully created character by Russell? Is he no more than a cipher or a stereotype?

**p.93 Practice question 5**

- Explore the relationships based on loyalty and trust, for example, Edward/Mickey and their blood bond.
- Explore the relationships based on agreement and secrecy, for example, Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons.
- Discuss social and economic relationships, for example, the neighbours, Mr Lyons as employer/sacker, the state and individuals.
- Evaluate how Russell shows that how people relate to each other (or are forced to) is central to how society works.
- Consider whether relationships are important as a theme, but that they serve to highlight other themes, for example, inequality.