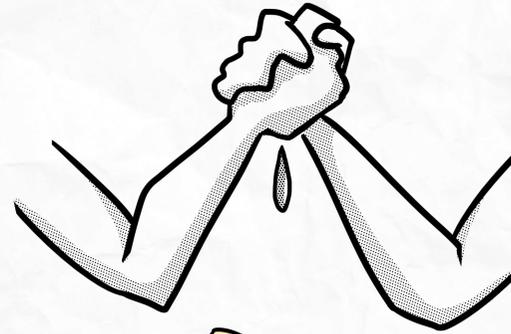
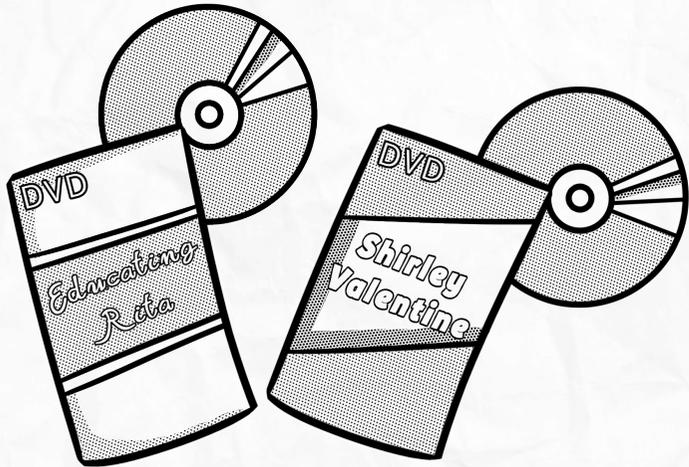


Blood Brothers *Willy Russell*



GraspIT

The Plot

- Write a brief summary of the plot (story) of the play in **six** sentences. Make sure you include all of the information which you think is necessary for someone who has never seen or read the play before. Now try to make your summary more **concise** by reducing it to **three** sentences without removing any of the important details.
- Make a **storyboard** using no more than **ten** pictures with captions to tell the story of the play.
- In a group: Create a series of **ten still images** which tell the story. You don't have to use every person in the group in every image but everyone should be in at least **five**. (You can use different members of the group to represent the characters at different ages if you wish.) Perform/create your series of images for the rest of the group using the track Tell Me It's Not True as background music.

Writing Beyond the Text

- Write the conversation that happens in the Johnstone household after the policeman who has delivered Mickey home in Act One leaves.
- You should remain true to the characters and include stage directions (to explain what is happening on the stage) as well as dialogue. You can include additional characters to Mickey and Mrs Johnstone – for example, Sammy and/or the other Johnstone children.
- Write the conversation between Edward and his university friends after his encounter with Mickey and then Linda in Act Two on returning from his first term.

Top Trump Cards

- In a pair: Each of you should make five Top Trumps-style cards to represent five characters from the play (choose different characters from each other).
- You could include categories such as age, status, class, appearance, intelligence, personality etc.
- Each person picks a card from their selection randomly. Discuss which character has the most merit. The person coming up with the best argument wins the card. The person with the most cards overall, once all of the cards have been debated, wins the game.
- (Note: a ready-made resource for this game is available from PiXL for this text.)

Willy Russell

- Willy Russell was brought up in working-class Liverpool. Although he would argue that most of his plays could be set anywhere in the country, he tends to set them in the environment with which he is familiar. Similar themes are also explored in a lot of his plays. One of these is the idea of people trying to escape from their backgrounds to something better.
- In Blood Brothers, Eddie escapes by being moved into a different social class.
- Research more of Russell's work to explore this theme. How does Rita try to 'escape' in Educating Rita? How about Shirley in Shirley Valentine?

Acting Skills

- Read Mickey's 'I wish I was our Sammy' monologue in Act One.
- Consider how you would use your acting skills to portray the character of Mickey Johnstone, aged seven, in this piece.
- How would you use voice, face, body language, movement and gesture?
- What **stage business** could you employ to bring out the comedy of the piece?
- Make some initial 'blocking' notes in your text, rehearse the piece and then perform a 'prepared reading' of the extract for the rest of your group or a partner.
- Listen to comments (WWW/EBI) and try to adapt/improve your piece based on the feedback, before delivering a second performance.

Audience Response

- Theatre should be able to do so much more than simply entertain an audience. It should be able to make them roar with laughter, gasp with shock or cry real tears. A good production of Blood Brothers should be able to do all of these things.
- Find and list moments in the play when you would want the audience to:
 - laugh
 - cry
 - gasp with shock or surprise
 - be on the edge of their seats
- How would you try to achieve this aim as an actor/director?

Theatrical Conventions: Flashback

- Blood Brothers is told as a flashback i.e. it begins at the end and then goes back to tell the story. In some ways, therefore, there is no real suspense as the audience know what is going to happen – they just don't know how! The tableau at the beginning of the play should be replicated exactly at the end.
- As a group, using a recording of the narrator's voice (or a member of the group to read the opening words) slowly build up the tableau described in the prologue with all the relevant characters e.g. the two brothers, Mrs Johnstone, Linda, the policemen, councillors etc.

Set Design

- Read the notes in your text to discover what is required for the set of Blood Brothers. How does the set need to change from Act One to Act Two?
- What type of staging do you think would be best suited to the production and why?
- Using your own preferred type of staging/audience configuration, design a set which you feel would work well for the play.
- You should consider use of levels, ramps, steps; positioning of entrances/exits; use of gauzes/backdrops/cyclorama; use of projection; texture and colour.