

How is the narrator portrayed in blood brothers and what is his function



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

In *Blood Brothers* the narrator is a ubiquitous and enigmatic character whose function is to act as a dramatic device to continue the story, foreshadow events and allow the audience to see a projection of the consciousness of some of the characters, particularly Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons.

He is only present during sad and intense dramatic points in the play, and therefore brings a grave presence to the play. He brings in the themes of superstition, violence and social class, which are key to the play, but also gives the play a darker side through his link with evil and the devil throughout the play. Firstly, the appearance of the Narrator is very important in understanding his character. His outfit of a black shirt is very versatile, allowing him to move in and out of different scenes while remaining anonymous. This may be done to accentuate his mysterious and ghost like atmosphere, adding to his connection with the underworld.

However, it could also be said that his attire is similar to that of someone attending a funeral or business meeting, foreshadowing and constantly reminding the audience of the ultimate tragedy and the contractual 'bargain' that Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons share. At the start of the play he tells us what is to happen to Mickey and Eddie; how they will die "on the self same day". The Narrator uses a biblical discourse when speaking here, saying "of one womb born". This accentuates the grave ending of the play through his almost apocalyptic tone. Russell may use prolepsis in this way to engage the audience using the Narrator always to keep their attention by constantly reminding them of the tragedy, and also creating tension. "... never knowing that they shared one name until the day they died".

He also refers to Mrs Johnstone as “ the mother, so cruel”, however this may juxtapose with our idea of her as a sympathetic character. This could invoke the idea that she will be the most judged for “ what came to pass” in the eyes of society, involving the theme of social class. In his second appearance, the Narrator alerts us to the horror of the ‘ pact’ between Mrs Lyons and Mrs Johnstone by alluding to “ Jesus” and “ the devil”, reminding us of the inhumane and unreligious act of “ selling a son” which foregrounds the idea that her sins will catch up with her. He reflects the business like agreement between the two women by saying “ pact” and “ deal”.

This imagery is continued when he says “ but a debt is a debt and must be paid”. This idea of a debt, both financial and moral being central to the play. Also the monosyllabic words and there rhyming couplet reflects the intensity of the situation. The Narrator is also important as Mickey and Edward grow older.

His appearance and song ‘ Gypsies in the wood’ intensify the lack of control Mrs Lyons has over Edward as he goes to play with Mickey and Linda. The title of the song suggests that Edward is being stolen from her, however this is ironic as we know she almost stole him from Mrs Johnstone. This again invokes the theme of social class because it suggests that Mrs Lyons has more of an ownership over Edward, even when she doesn’t because of her high social status. We see him again during the ‘ summer sequence’ as he foreshadows the impending doom of Mickey, Edward and Linda. “...and who dare tell the lambs in spring/what fate the later seasons bring”. This dark imagery emphasises the innocence of the friends adding to the tragedy at

the end, and helps to add to his evil atmosphere, furthering his diabolical aura.

Finally, the narrator plays an important role at the end of the play, adding to the tension and foreshadowing Mickey's actions by using authorial intrusion, by calling him a "madman" and says "he's screaming deep inside you", which heralds the urgency of the moment the prophecy will come true. He then asks the audience directly possibly what Russell wanted to ask throughout the play; "do we blame superstition for what has come to pass or what we, the English have come to know as class? ending the play by forcing the audience to consider who or what was responsible for the death of Mickey and Edward. Therefore we can see that the Narrator is an essential dramatic device used by Russell to accentuate key moments and themes throughout the play. He creates a chilling atmosphere that adds to the audiences' experience and deliberately juxtaposes with the joyful atmosphere elsewhere in the play. He acts as a constant reminder to the audience of Mickey and Edward's fate as a result of Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons 'contract', by adding to the deliberate tragedy of the story considerably.