

# Characters themes and dramatic techniques in our day out



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`Our Day Out` was written by Willy Russell to show people life in the inner city of Liverpool. There are a lot of scenes which create tension, excitement and disappointment in Our Day Out. One humorous part is Les the lollipop man, just after Carol has explained what the purpose of the progress class is, he replies " By Christ, I bet she's kept busy, they're all bloody backward around here". The use of slang " I'll keep dixie" and swearing " right, dickheads move" create a realistic impression of the characters. Accents are also used in Our Day Out, mainly by Carol who has a distinguishable accent... Agh, ey Les... ".

Using slang, swearing and accents creates a personal image in the viewer's mind which will help them to understand the play better. The play contains realistic characters, such as Briggs and Mrs Kay. Briggs sets a strict example of a teacher, while Mrs Kay is a completely different individual. Briggs shouts at the children, and has no empathy for them... " Stop! Slater, walk... walk!... " This shows how Briggs wants to retain control by issuing orders. Mrs Kay however, is very laid back and relaxed and lets the children run amok while she has coffee.

There is a considerable difference between the personalities of Mrs Kay and Briggs. Russell creates personality changes in certain characters further on in the play, as we shall see later. The author is skilful in making the audience alter their opinions. For example, in the scene where Mrs Kay tells of the deprivation of sweets and lemonade, we feel sorry for the children. However we are equally appalled at the behaviour of the children, in other scenes, particularly when they are stealing in the cafe. Mrs Kay is by far the kids preferred teacher.

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This is because she is very relaxed and motherly towards the children. She cares for the children and listening to their points of view, gives her a good understanding of them. Her caring nature comes across through her use of familiar expressions when dealing with the children... " Well, you could try couldn't you, love? " Later in the play Mrs Kay has an argument with Briggs. She supports the kids a great deal during the argument... " You're on their side, aren't you? " Briggs challenged, " Absolutely, Mr Briggs, absolutely! Her relaxed nature is evident from her actions and demeanour, particularly in those scenes where she is seen sitting with a coffee, while the kids play havoc... " Stocking feet curled under her".

Briggs is a completely different person to Mrs Kay. Throughout the play, he repeatedly snaps comments at the children... " Reilly, Dickson, Sit down! " The constant snapping, shouting and staccatos from Mr Briggs, proves his lack of empathy for the children. Briggs has a problem, in that he doesn't understand the children's deprivation - their lack of parental affection, poor educational background and generally the good things in life.

Briggs cannot agree with Mrs Kay, when she expresses her views on the children's destiny... " You are in a job that is designed and funded to fail. " She says Briggs job is worth nothing because there is no point teaching the kids, because they will never get out of their life in Liverpool. Carol is one of the trapped pupils in Mrs Kay's class. She is a naive and inarticulate girl. Due to Brigg's poor understanding and a parental lack of care, she feels she can only express her emotions to Mrs Kay. Russell shows Carols lack of education... "... f I started to work hard an` learned how to read... " In the play, she is often to be seen in Mrs Kay's company.

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The cliff-top scene is one of the most dramatic parts of the play. It is also the scene where both Briggs and Carol have a change in their personality. Carol becomes rude and rebellious (like Linda) and starts calling him "Briggsy". She begins to use unfamiliar words and phrases... "friggin" and also has a change in attitude, from being well-mannered to being cheeky in a cocky sort of way. She also begins to ignore him at times, which she wouldn't have done previously.

Briggs however, becomes somewhat more considerate and develops empathy for Carol and her classmates. To begin with, he expects to be obeyed, but later realises that he is not getting the desired response from the children. After Carol tells him how selfish he is, he takes it into consideration and tries a different approach by smiling at the children. The constant camera changes from Briggs to Carol and vice versa, create tension, as does the scene where Carol steps towards the edge of the cliff.

The use of tension in this scene, creates questions in the readers mind... will she jump?... will Briggs fall? Within the zoo scene, Russell uses the bear in the pit as a metaphor to emphasize the children's lifestyle. Therefore it will help the reader to understand the play easier. Ronson's comment... "like the way people have stopped it livin'" this suggests that the children have been prevented from living by being deprived. Briggs reply... "well, I wouldn't be so sure about that, Ronson" indicates his thoughts on the children's inner city lives, and futures. Clothing is a vital part of a character, as it expresses life as well as style.

Carol only has one set of clothing that we know of... School uniform, which doubled as her street outfit and her Sunday best. Linda Croxley's clothing shows her rebellious nature... She is dressed in the prevailing pop outfit of the day. The length and order of the scenes, maintains the readers interest throughout the play. The emotions brought out by the various scenes, range from pity to shock and disappointment . I enjoyed the play and found the humorous scenes very entertaining. The cliff-top scene was tense and therefore exciting.

When Briggs destroyed the roll of film I was disappointed. Russell gave the impression that Briggs was a changed man. I think he saw the photographs as evidence of the kind of person he could be, if he chose to be. I also think he didn't want to be reminded that he had enjoyed the day out, and by destroying the film, he changed back to his usual self. This also came across to the viewer, when he straightened his tie on arriving back in the city. He had only changed for the duration of the day out, and in fact he hadn't really changed at all.