

Blood brothers essay sample



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The dictionary definition for hardship defines it as adversity: a state of misfortune or affliction; “ debt-ridden farmers struggling with adversity”; “ a life of hardship”, asperity: something hard to endure; “ the asperity of northern winters”. The Blood Brothers play was written by a Willy Russell who lived a life in some ways familiar to both blood brothers Micky Johnston and Edward Lyons. Willy Russell was born in Whiston near Liverpool in 1947. There was a strong tradition of storytelling in his family, who were ‘ thinking’ working class.

His school career in the ‘ D Stream’ was undistinguished at fifteen he left school with one ‘ O’ Level, in English Language, with little idea of what he wanted to do beyond a vague notion of wanting to become a writer. He was unsure of how to enter that world, so he drifted into hairdressing.

Subsequently he spent more time writing songs than setting hair. Eventually he left hairdressing and worked in several industrial jobs before deciding to return to full-time education at the age of 20. He then became a teacher and also later a playwright. Russell lived through the time and experienced Thatcherism.

Thatcherism was when Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979 and inflation and unemployment were high, She realised that a new kind of economics was necessary. Some commentators contend that she was responsible for renewing the British economy, although others argue that she was responsible for mass unemployment and a vast increase in inequality between rich and poor. The main effect of Thatcherism was that it made the rich become richer and the poor become poorer. Having considered all of the above it is therefore not surprising that in Blood

Brothers Willy Russell treats the themes of unemployment and the class system.

Indeed the play was more than likely set anytime between the 1970's and 1980's. the novel is briefly about the two classes rich and poor and how one mother of the poor class sells her child being a twin to another mother of the rich class but unfortunately both twins die at the end as they find out they were twins. Russell uses a lot of dramatic devices for instance juxtaposition; he uses this for the school scenes when comparing the rich posh school when the teacher is shouting at Edward to the poor school when the teacher is shouting at Micky.

He also uses the narrator very well as he is always speaking the conscience of the characters and sings the song about the devil which is very effective ' But y' know the devil's got your number'. Another effective dramatic device used by Russell is the timing/flow/pace of the play. Russell keeps the flow constant with very few breaks within the play from scene to scene. Marilyn Monroe has a huge influence on the play and on the characters as she mirrors the character of Mrs Johnston as she was also good looking and also Micky's character has a life similar to Marilyn Monroe as he gets a slight drug addiction.

Marilyn Monroe's life was full of hardship as she was Hollywood's most popular sex symbol and was constantly bothered by the media. Marilyn Monroe is a big influence throughout the play as Willy Russell compares her to the characters especially Mrs Johnston. Examining the hardship within the play I notice that a lot of it is mostly affecting the Johnston family more than

the Lyons although Mrs Lyon's superstition acts up on her and she then suffers. The first main episode where Russell portrays hardship is the scene when Micky and Edward meet for the first time.

In this scene Micky and Edwards different use of words and their vocabulary shows their different backgrounds. For example when Edward tells Micky he'll look it up in the dictionary and Micky doesn't know what a dictionary is. This is very comical but yet shows the difference in their education as Edward is well educated and Micky isn't. This is hardship is in Micky's case. Also in the same scene there is the same form of hardship when this time Micky doesn't know the right name for a side plate again showing that Mickey is not well educated comparing to Edward and that he is not as posh either.

Eg. Edward " a plate. a dinner plate? " Mickey " I don't think so, ' cos our Sammy's head's not really dat big. I think it must have been one of them little plates that you have bread off. " Edward " a side plate? " Mickey " No its on the top" The next time we see hardship is where the policeman talks to Mr Lyons about Edward compared to how he talks to Mrs Johnston about Mickey. In speaking to Mr Lyons he is polite in saying " An', er, as I say it was more of a prank, really. Comparing to when he talks with Mrs Johnston when he says " And he was about to commit a serious crime, love. Now, do you understand that? ".

This shows how the difference in classes between rich and poor were treated which is totally unequal. Russell cleverly mixes comedy with tragedy when the children are playing with a condom not knowing what it is. As we find this

humorous it is also disheartening as Russell expresses their lack of education due to poverty. Russell also uses the theme of superstition to exacerbate Mrs Johnston's hardship a lot.

He mainly does this most effectively by using the narrator mainly singing the song about the devil. Then effectively he uses the same effect of the narrator singing to play upon Mrs Lyons superstition. ' An' they've been watchin' you, '. Another thing done well by Russell is in the scene of the two schools when he practically places them beside each other and how both Mickey and Edward get suspended at the same time in trying to emphasis how although the have different lifestyles they are still alike. Eg. Edward " You can do exactly as you wish sir.

You can take a flying fuck and a rolling donut! But you shall not take my locket". Teacher (in Edwards school) " I'm going to ... I'm going to have you suspended, Lyons. " Teacher (in Mickeys school) " Your both suspended" Overall I think that Russell added certain aspects of comedy into the play but only to grab the attention off the audience and keep them interested. Mainly I think that he intends the play to be about hardship and about the troublesome times that he grew up in and the influence of Thatcherism on these times.