

# Our day out by willy russell essay sample



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The play is set in 1970's Liverpool; this was when many factories had closed down and the docks were being mechanised, ultimately, this led to poverty. During that time, there were few minorities and therefore racism. There were also many council estates and the pollution levels were high. There was a huge increase in vandalism and prostitution. Any of these factors about Liverpool could have motivated Willy Russell to write the play: this is due to the fact that he was brought up in 1970's Liverpool; therefore could be reflecting his experiences via the play.

He may be exhibiting how life can be for inner-city kids. Russell created the characters Mr. Briggs and Mrs. Kay with explicit contrast between the two. Mrs. Kay is a "Woolly-headed liberal..." Whereas Mr. Briggs is more conservative and is a "fool" and the children are working class and "factory fodder." The character Mr. Briggs is depicted as a conservative, bossy and disrespectful person, he accuses Mrs. Kay of being "on their side... Willy Russell, the playwright, uses second person pronouns "you" to emphasise who the character is addressing, it is also repeated for even more emphasis; the order in which the pronouns are used could indicate anger which shows the audience the sort of person Mr. Briggs is; it also shows disrespect-this is due to the fact that he could be using sarcasm "aren't you?" As he is "(accusing)" Mrs. Kay it gives the audience the impression that Mr. Briggs is antagonistic and in some ways is an 'accusing' person.

Russell's use of stage and voice directions is frequent for example when Mr. Briggs doubts Mrs. Kay's attitude towards teaching; "(the castle loom[s] behind him)" Russell symbolises the castle as Mr. Briggs' 'backup' against

Mrs. Kay also this shows the audience that the castle behind is like him being the bad person showing Mrs Kay he has more power than her.

Another example of Russell's use of stage or voice directions is when Mrs. Kay reacts towards Mr. Briggs: as she is "(Beginning to lose her temper ever so slightly. )" This shows that Russell has made Mrs. Kay's character more patient than Mr. Briggs' character, as she "(... lose[s] her temper ever so slightly. )" Russell cleverly brings the characters and situations to life by creating the characters with real emotions for instance the stage direction of Mrs. Kay losing her "temper" and in other parts of the play she's "(laughing)" whilst she indirectly tells Mr. Briggs that the kids are 'stupid', Russell deliberately lets us have an open interpretation on the character Mrs. Kay: she has either given up on the kids or she feels sympathetic towards them and wants them to have fun.

He cleverly leaves it so that we interpret it for ourselves rather than telling us whether she has given up on the kids or whether she simply feels sympathy for them and wants them to have fun; this is effective because the audience is given chance to think about it or to interpret the characters for themselves. The character Mrs. Kay is portrayed as a "liberal..." person and Mr. Briggs thinks her "liberalism..." doesn't do "... the kids a scrap of good." Her educational philosophy conflicts with Mr. Briggs' educational philosophy. Although Mrs. Kay shows the children "... love and kindness..." She has 'given up' on them and classes them as "... factory fodder." This shows the audience the bitter side of Mrs. Kay; she can also be assertive, she tells Mr. Briggs to "... listen," and to "... stop fooling..." himself.

The audience, initially, feel that she is sympathetic towards the children, as she is like a "... mother hen rather than a teacher..." This shows that she has sympathy for the children, on the other hand some of the audience may feel she is 'slack' or has given up on them and believes that they're lacking love for example Andrews (one of the children) is "belted" by his "dad" "because [he] won't give him... a cigarette. This may also show that they are working-class because Andrews' dad might not be able to afford his own cigarette which is why he forces his son to supply him with cigarettes; this could show that Andrews' dad is unemployed.

The playwright has contrasted the two characters like the contrast between night and day. One of the dramatic devices Russell uses is symbolism... Willy Russell draws attention to the bear in the zoo; the audience may feel that the bear is symbolising the children. The children are ill-mannered, they display "... wo fingered gestures." To the shopkeepers, this could be because they have been poorly-parented, likewise the bear in the zoo may have been poorly parented which is why it is in a zoo.

This means, to some audiences, that the children are from working class backgrounds-the reason why they are in such situations could be because of the factory closures. Russell could be using this symbolic reference to highlight that the children are both a product of and trapped by their social and geographic environment for example when Mrs. Kay tells Mr. Briggs that "There's nothing for [the children] to do..." and "... most of them were born for factory fodder, but the factories have closed down."

Russell wants us to believe that the children are controlled by their environment for instance as the factories have closed the children have "... nothing... to do," which shows us that they are likely to be unemployed which makes them part of the cause of the high unemployment rates of the era. Mrs. Kay believes that the children should have fun instead of being educated, as they have "... plenty of time. to go and visit " the zoo" even though they're on an educational visit.

This causes conflict between the two teachers and forms the basis of dramatic tension in the play as the audience are left to interpret the characters in many different ways therefore cannot predict what, exactly, is going to happen later on in the play. Some of the audience may feel that there is going to be a major physical or verbal conflict involving the two teachers; whereas others may feel that the two teachers are going to ' make up' and settle it with peace. Mr. Briggs can be classified as a stubborn, self-centered or strict person; although he does show some sort of concern towards educating the children.

We, as the audience, are also shown a less-disrespectful or ' nicer' side of Mr. Briggs, as he "... wraps his arms around... " Carol-he practically saves her life when she is about to fall off the cliff, he "... grabs out quickly and manages to pull her to him. " To some audiences this can be classed as self-preservative however it may also show the ' loving' side of Mr. Briggs. The play may be portraying the working-class background of Russell.