

# Our day out by russell



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The play 'Our Day Out' is set in Liverpool and on a school trip to Conwy Castle. It is set in the 1970s; children would have been separated into two different schools - grammar school and the comprehensive school. The play is about the progress class, which is a class for children with reading/writing problems.

In 1970 the progress class students would not have had a good career prospects as there was already high unemployment and more factories were shutting down. Willy Russell didn't like school much. He repelled against factory work strongly, he hoped to be an author in the future. Like the other students in his play, he struggled against a society which expected him to fail. Russell presents us with two different teachers, Mrs Kay and Mr Briggs, both of them had different ways of teaching. Mrs Kay chooses to use the pastoral way of teaching and likes to have a calm, motherly relationship with the students.

She knows that her students will most properly go on to do factory work, so she wants them to have a happy childhood 'Most of them were rejects on the day they were born .....

Can't we just try and give them a good day out? Mr Briggs on the other hand, believes in a strict, academic teaching style. His relationship with the students is up tight and cautious. He doesn't trust any of the children and looks unimpressed with some of the other members of staff 'I've learned trust is something you don't understand' this is showing how Briggs doesn't trust the children. When he says 'well, that a profession to have', he is being sarcastic and is judging Mrs Kay's teaching. The students in 'our day out'

have low expectations in their education, as they are not given the opportunities they want.

In the play the public's view on the progress class is also low, even though they don't know the student individually. In scene 1 we see Les the lollipop man, meeting Carol, a student in the progress class, we see an example of the judgement the students receive- 'they're all backward round here'. This shows how he as a third person sees the students as one. We see how students have a lack of money, in the stage directions.

They tell us how the children come across in appearance '... wearing a school uniform which doubles as a street outfit and her Sunday best..

.. Clutching a supermarket carrier bag' both of these quotes can show us that the children in the progress class are not from the wealthiest families and are actually quite poor. Her outfit, it seems, is her outfit for almost every occasion and the carrier bag is just a much cheaper school bag. Russell uses different ways to tell his story and convey his message, including humour.

Russell can be sarcastic and humourous but at the same time he can make quite a strong point. For example, when Ronny, the driver tells the children not to eat on the coach, Mrs Kay talks to him in a sarcastic manner but actually to a point quite true 'the kids with me today don't know what it's like to look at a bar of chocolate. Lemonade never touches their lips (we almost here the violins)... looking, longing and never getting.

.. left to wonder the cold cruel streets'. It's meant to show us how really the children do suffer but not to bore us. So by exaggerating it we feel a sense of

humour. When the students visit the zoo, a character ronson adds another important point to the play.

Ronson sees a large bear in a pit and sympathises for it he believes that if the bear was to be free it wouldn't feel the need to kill humans. He thinks that it only wants to kill humans because humans have locked it up ' it must no other ways of living... Free..

. people have stopped it living. It only kills cos it's trapped. If it were free it wouldn't bother people at all' if you change the story round it would fit into the life of the characters, ronson must feel that even though his life is restricted he does know what he is missing out on in life. When the play is starting to come to an end we see a bit of a drama from carol. During the trip she has seen what's there in the world.

She knows what's available now ' why cant I just stay here, eh? Why cant I live here in one of them nice white houses an do the garden an that? ' Carol understands that if she was born into a different lifestyle she may have had better opportunities ' sir sir, ya know if you'd have been my old fellar. I woulda been all right wouldn't I? meaning if she had been bought up into a world with money and a more educated family the she would have had better opportunities then she does have know, with a poor family with parents most properly factory workers and with her acidic side she is basically expected to follow in her parents shoes. All of these points prove that in the play the children are not well off in life and don't have much expected of their life. The children do know this and don't like it! Russell uses many different techniques to show the different views of education. One

used is conflict. We see in a conversation between Colin and Mr Briggs two different views ' I don't know what you think but I think her philosophy is totally confused' Colin replies ' actually I don't think its anything to do with philosophy' this shows different views on Mrs kays teaching.

At the docks we see how Russell uses the use of location ' look, those buildings... don't you even look at what's around you? ' ' It's only the docks replies Reilly. This shows how different status appreciates things differently. Russell also uses the attitudes of the characters to show the views from the public.

In scene 19 we see how a cafe?? owner reacts when the coach approaches them ' the shutters are coming down, the coaches welcome sign is replaced be ' absolutely no coaches' and the open sign by one saying closed. The doors are locked and bolted' this is to show that the public automatically think badly of them. The play ends simply by arriving back in Liverpool. As the play progressed we saw how some of the characters changed their attitudes, for example at the start Reilly was disrespect full to girls- wolf whistling and at the end he is a considerate boyfriend. Briggs character changes extremely form strict, spoil sport to a let lose have a laugh teacher. He sees the children differently now even though he will always be strict at school.

We see both academic and pastoral teaching; one without the other is too much students need a variety so it is balanced. The issue of education shouldn't be treated in a humorous way because it serious however you

could argue by creating an amusing screenplay Russell gets his message across to the audience.