

Blood brothers by willy russell

Literature



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'Blood Brothers' is a play by Willy Russell set in the Liverpool of the vibrant 1960's - 1980's. One of the characters, called Mickey, who in the latter parts of the book is struggling to support himself, relates strongly to Willy Russell's experiences in life. I also find it interesting that the play has 2 different yet parallel timelines which both throughout the play uncover unique aspects of society in the Liverpool of the 60's - 80's. Mickey relates strongly to Russell and it seems as though Russell is telling us how he feels about society through the 60's - 80's by how Mickey expresses his feelings in the play.

Mickey had no father figure (like Russell) and was a bit mischievous; he dropped out of school and often skived. Showing Russell's concerns about education, that the working class weren't encouraged to go to school or further education. As a child Russell failed at all his academic subjects, except English and only came out with 1 English O level. He links this to the character of Mickey in a very dynamic way, using Mickey as a "mouth piece" his opinion of society and how it changed in the 60's and 80's. It also shows how his opinion was changed by various influences.

Russell also uses the interactions and situations of Eddie and Mickey in an interesting way, showing his concern about education and the interaction between the classes in general. The play is used to reflect Willy Russell's earlier life and Russell shows this by creating 'empathy' between the audience and the working class characters, "Once I had a husband... my husband had walked out on me" but he also presents things from Eddie's point of view, a rich friend trying to help but ending up getting the blame.

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Russell also uses the interactions and situations of Eddie and Mickey in an interesting way, showing his concern about education and the interaction between the classes in general. Such as in this extract " Policewoman; but I'd not let him mix with the likes of them in future. Make sure he keeps with his own kind, Mrs Lyons, not running round with them at the other end. Well, er thanks for the drink.

All the best now. Tarar. She Leaves]" Context: The police woman is talking to Miss Lyons about Eddie who was caught by her with a rock in his hand which Mickey had told him to throw, although the police woman didn't hear when she walked in she saw Eddie standing near Mickey with a rock in his hand, at which point Mickey says " Mickey: He's not with me... " In the above extract Russell shows his concern in a variety of ways, such as how the female upper class police officer speaks about Mickey and the lower class, " but I'd not let him mix with the likes of them in future. Make sure he keeps with his own kind, Mrs Lyons, not running round with them at the other end.

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Russell uses many literary devices to emphasise his point throughout Blood Brothers, Dramatic Irony being one, when the police woman says " Make sure he keeps with his own kind" unknowing that Eddie is in fact from a working class family and highlighting to the audience just how prejudiced the world is against the lower class, which then creates Empathy, within this Empathy Russell also uses another literary device, juxtaposition using the contrasting positions of Eddie and Mickey, Eddie getting off lightly, Mickey getting most of the blame even though he was innocent which makes the audience feel more empathy and a range of emotions, particularly sadness for the divided twins (Eddie and Mickey).

This Juxtaposition also links back to the paragraph before the extract; "
Policewoman: [To Mrs Johnston] And he was about to commit a serious crime, love a serious crime. Now do you understand that? [The Mother nods] You don't want to end up in court again, do you? Eh? [Shakes her head] Because that what's going to happen if I have more trouble from one of yours. I warned you last time didn't I, Mrs Johnston, over your Sammy, didn't I? [She nods] Well there'll be no more warnings from now on. You keep them in order or it'll be the courts for you, or worse. Won't it? [She nods] Yes, it will. [The Mother and Mickey exit. Policewoman turns and approaches Mrs Lyons] As I say it was more of a prank really, Mrs Lyons. I'd just dock his pocket money if I was you.

But on thing I would say and excuse me if I'm interfering but I'd not let him mix with the likes of them in future. " Russell uses these two Juxtapositions in a very similar way and in both the lower class ends up getting the blame. I think Russell used this Juxtaposition twice so that the effect really got

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through to the audience so that they could feel like Mrs Johnston and Mickey, that the whole world is prejudiced against them, that they don't have as many opportunities as the upper class and that they're always getting poorer.

Again Russell supports this device by the way the Police woman changes when she's speaking to Mrs Lyons, when she's speaking to Mrs Johnston she's very rude and abrupt " You don't want to end up in court again, do you? Eh? Showing us that she doesn't really care about Mrs Johnston's feelings, the effect of this is further enhanced by what the police woman says before this " Now do you under stand that? " almost as though she sees Mrs Johnston as mentally impaired, it could also be an insult.

Furthermore the fact that Mrs Johnston doesn't even dare speak to the police woman suggests she's scared of her, which in turn implies that Mrs Johnston is treated regularly like this by the police woman and possibly other officers of the law. This would shock a modern audience as we see police officers as polite, decent people and in my opinion this shock would further emphasise Russells point.

However in the extract when she's talking to Mrs Lyons she describes the incident as " it was more of a prank really" which contrasts with the fact that to Mrs Johnston she describes it as " a serious crime, love a serious crime. " Showing how the rich at the time could possibly have even used there money and influence to decide the outcome of court cases, or to avoid a court case altogether. And when she speaks to Mrs Lyons in the first extract she seems nervous " Well, er thanks for the drink. All the best now. Tarar. "

This is almost a complete reversal of roles, when previously the police officer dominated the conversation, she's now nervous and Mrs Lyons hadn't even spoken.

Showing that when Mrs Lyons asked Mrs Johnston for the baby Mrs Johnston didn't stand a chance, this highlights to the audience just how dominating Mrs Lyons is, as even the police woman (a figure of authority) is intimidated. Russell also shows in the play Eddie and Mickey's different and unique experience of state/private education and how it changed their interaction with the world and more importantly each other.

Showing his concern, about just how easily a young child's perception of the world can be twisted by their parents and background, like the way Mrs Lyons speaks about Mickey after having shown him the door, " You see... you see why I don't want you mixing with boys like that. Filth; you learn filth and you behave like this... like a horrible little boy... like them," In this scene we see how Mrs Lyons represents the lower class, as 'horrible little boys' , she even goes far enough to say 'you learn filth' almost as though the lower class are a disease that's slowly spreading, it's easy to see how , without Mickey, Eddie could have been twisted by his mum feeding him this every day and lose his innocence and become like her, looking down at the working class and exploiting them (in Mrs Lyons's case she exploited Mrs Johnston for a baby). Adding more depth to a great play, showing again that Russell intentionally added these subtle hints of his opinion. In the play Russell also reveals various intricate flaws and strengths of the state standard of education and the private standard of education.

He shows how although they are close friends in their early years an awkwardness develops between them as their innocence is tainted by the differences in their upbringings which become more apparent as they grow up and the difficulties for Mickey in the era of 'Thatcherism' and the idealism of "there's no such thing as society", there may not be 'society' but there was 'class' upper class and lower class and it was this difference that forced Eddie Mickey to grow up and that took their childhood innocence.

In their childhood differences were apparent for example, " Mickey: Michael Johnston. But everyone calls me Mickey. What's yours? Eddie: Edward. Mickey: and they call you Eddie? Eddie: No! Mickey: well I will. This shows that although there are differences (Eddie seems shocked at the idea of a nickname) they ignore showing that the children are innocent and not really affected by the class gap I think that Russell set this up so that it contrasts with later scenes where the childhood innocence is gone and Eddie and Mickey are really in the middle of the events leading to the shooting of Eddie.

As Eddie grows up it becomes apparent that he just can't communicate with Mickey and Linda any more, for example " Eddie: Look, why don't we have a drink together some time? Mm? [Mickey looking around him, nervously] Mickey: Look it's ... It's the other lads ... they're looking. This shows that Mickey no longer wants anything to do with Eddie because he feels he'll no longer fit in with working class ('the other lads'), which links back to my point about just how easily a young child's perception of the world can be twisted by their background as Mickey feels that he'll no longer fit in with the working class if he's friends with someone from the upper class.

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High lighting one of the disadvantages and dangers of private education at that time they were taught business skills but not how to interact with other people, social skills. When he was younger he communicated well with Mickey, but a long stretch of private education destroyed this and furthered the gap between them. This also makes seem arrogant fuelling the 'posh' stereotype of the 1960s-1980s further increasing the working and upper class divide.

This is further increased by Mickey who speaks 'slang' which almost the exact opposite of Eddies business like talk which is polite yet detached , as Mickey " slang" is rude but very upfront for example " Mother, will you open the bleeding door or what? ". This awkwardness is turned into an absolute fight when in the later parts Mickey becomes increasingly aware that Eddie has more status, more opportunities, more power and more money than him and to a certain extent he becomes jealous, again, this fulfils the stereotype of the violent working class" who used to be considered violent drunks. Eddies wealth and influence cause Mickey to blame his problems on Eddie.

As Eddies influence and wealth grow Mickey grows further and further away from him and even sees him as a threat to his marriage. Stating Russell concern that the money divide between classes will never truly allow the classes to trust each other. Money and power play a big role in Blood Brothers Russell shows how they twist Mickey and Eddie against each other. Two best turned against each other by something as trivial as money, money? Could you believe that scraps of paper could rip apart two lifelong friends? Would you be able to until you see the pressure that they are under, money is power to them. Money is not the only aspect covered by Russell he <https://assignbuster.com/blood-brothers-by-willy-russell/>

cleverly links in other sub-aspects in, such as power which comes with money.

Constantly through the play Miss Lyons and Eddies influence and power are highlighted. Their power is highlighted by various scenes when Mrs. Lyons their power is highlighted by various scenes for example when Mrs Lyons shoves money in Mrs Johnston's hands. In this scene Mrs John stone is powerless to resist Mrs Lyons. She's so tempted by the money, but why? Because to her these scraps of paper represent power, she feels they've been given some of Mrs Lyons power. In my opinion this is Russell saying that the upper class have all the power and that with this 'power' they can bend the working class to there will and keep them in this viscous circle of poverty.