



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Form: \_\_\_\_\_

### **HOMEWORK TASK 1**

**Research the playwright Willy Russell.**

**Produce a fact file that includes the following information:**

When he was born

Where he was born

What his parents did for a living

What kind of upbringing he had—social class

What kind of education he had

What jobs he had before he was a playwright.

### **HOMEWORK TASK 2**

**Research the musical Blood Brothers.**

**Produce a fact file that includes the following information**

The plot of the musical

When it was written

The themes and issues explored in the performance

### **HOMEWORK TASK 3**

Revise the information on your knowledge organiser for a test next lesson

# Year 9 Knowledge Organiser: Willy Russell – Blood Brothers

## WHO

Willy Russell was born in Liverpool in 1947, to a working class family; his father worked in a factory and his mother was a nurse. He left school at 15 and became a women's hairdresser, before returning to education age 20 and eventually becoming a teacher.

Willy Russell continues to be one of the most celebrated and widely produced writers of his generation with works regularly being produced throughout the world as well as in the UK.

## WHAT

The first play Russell wrote was *Keep Your Eyes Down* (1971) and performed at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 1971. In 1974 Russell wrote *John, Paul, George, Ringo and Bert*, a musical about The Beatles, winning the Evening Standard and London Theatre Critics awards for the best musical of 1974.

Alongside further stage works, *One for the Road* (1976) and *Stags and Hens* (1978). Commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company, *Educating Rita* premiered at the Warehouse, London in 1980 and transferred to the West End. In 1986.

Russell wrote *Shirley Valentine* which went on to an acclaimed West End and Broadway run. Both *Shirley Valentine* and *Educating Rita* became feature films with Michael Caine, Julie Walters and Pauline Collins all receiving Oscar nominations for their respective roles, as did Russell for his *Educating Rita* screenplay.

Russell's other worldwide theatrical success has been *Blood Brothers*, about a pair of twins separated at birth and brought up in completely different environments.

## THEMES AND ISSUES

CLASS	NATURE v's NURTURE	FATE
VIOLENCE	SUPERSTITION	

## BLOOD BROTHERS – PLOT

Deserted by her husband, Mrs Johnstone already has five children and is expecting twins. She cleans house for childless Mrs Lyons who offers unofficially to adopt one of the babies.

Mrs Johnstone reluctantly agrees; she knows that the child will be well brought up in a rich household. But, there is a prophecy that twins parted at birth will die when they discover the truth, and both mothers do their best to keep the twins, Mickey and Edward, separated.

The situation becomes harder for both women when Mickey and Edward meet while playing in the street and when an immediate bond is formed. They become "blood brothers".

Distraught Mrs Lyons moves to the country. Soon after, Mrs Johnstone is rehoused nearby and the boys meet again and fall in love with the same girl, Linda.

But as Edward goes on to higher education, Mickey must take a boring job as Linda is pregnant. After marrying Linda he loses his job. He turns to crime but gets caught and sent to jail. On his release he becomes dependent on tranquillisers. Linda turns to Edward, now a councillor, for help. Edward gets Mickey a job - and a house. Mrs Lyons tells Mickey that Edward is having an affair with Linda and Mickey goes after Edward with a gun. He finds him at a meeting but cannot shoot him - until Mrs Johnstone bursts in and tells them the truth - that she gave Edward, his twin, away.

Mickey kills Edward and in turn is shot by the police.

## DRAMATIC CONVENTIONS

**PROLOGUE** – A separate, introductory section of a play.

**DRAMATIC IRONY** – When the audience know something that the characters on stage don't.

**MULTIROLE – PLAY** – When one actor plays a range of roles in a performance.

**NON-NATURALISTIC** – A performance that does not look like real life. It may include a range of dramatic techniques such as tableaux, narration, thought tracking or song + dance.

**BRECHTIAN** - A performance in the style of Bertolt Brecht – a drama practitioner who believed that the audience should be made to think as well as feel.

**COMIC RELIEF** – A break from sad events in a play – creates a humorous response from the audience.

**ENSEMBLE** – A group of actors who perform together for a more theatrical impact.

**NARRATOR** - A character who directly addresses the audience with new information, tells us that time has passed, or gives opinions.

**FORESHADOWING**– The play begins with what happens at the end.

## HOMEWORK TASK 4

Learn the spellings and definitions of the key words below for a test next lesson

### BLOOD BROTHERS KEY WORDS

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## HOMEWORK TASK 5

Answer the following questions in your books about the scene that you performed between Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons.

You should write in full sentences that make sense without the questions being written.

You should use a full range of terminology:

**VOICE** – pace, pitch, pause, tone, emphasis, volume, accent

**PHYSICALITY** – posture, gesture, facial expression, gait, movement, mannerisms

**GENERAL** – discipline, focus, confidence, timing, stage presence, levels

- 1) How did you show the difference in class between Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons in your performance? You should talk about the way that you used your voice and physicality.
- 2) How did you and your partner create tension in the scene?

## **BLOOD BROTHERS – ACT1, SCENE 8 – (abridged)**

Mrs L – Mr Lyons and I have been talking it over Mrs Johnstone and we both feel it would be better if you left.

**Mrs J – What? Left where?**

Mrs L – Your work here has deteriorated. We're just not happy with it.

**Mrs J – But I work the way I've always worked.**

Mrs L – Yes, well I'm sorry, but I'm not satisfied.

**Mrs J – What will I do? How are we going to live without me job?**

Mrs L – Yes, I've thought of that. Here... here's (Pushes money into the hand of the stunned mother) It's a lot of money. But we don't want you to suffer.

**Mrs J – (Thinking, desperate to get it together) OK. All right Mrs Lyons. Right. If I'm going, right ... well I'm taking Edward with me ... I'm taking my son.** (She goes to the cot but is dragged roughly away)

Mrs L – Oh no you're not! Edward is my son!

**Mrs J – I'll tell someone... I'll tell the police.. I'll bring the police in and ..**

Mrs L – No you won't. You gave your baby away. Don't you realise what a crime that is? You sold your baby.

*(Mrs J throws the wad of notes from her)*

**Mrs J – I didn't, I didn't...You told me ... You said... you said I could see him every day. Well I'll tell someone...I'm going to tell....**(She tries to exit but is stopped)

Mrs L – Oh no you will not. Because if you tell anyone and these children learn of the truth then you know what will happen don't you? You know what they say about twins secretly parted don't you?

Mrs J – (Terrified) **What, What?**

Mrs L – They say .. they say that if either twin learns he was one of a pair they shall both die immediately! It means Mrs Johnstone, that these brothers shall grow up unaware of the other's existence. They shall be raised apart and never, never ever told what was once the truth. You won't tell anyone, Mrs Johnstone, because if you do you shall kill them!

*(Mrs Lyons grabs the money and thrusts it into Mrs J's hand. Mrs L, breathing heavily, relieved. Mrs J shocked)*

## **HOMEWORK TASK 6**

Complete the evaluation that you started in lesson

### **PERFORMANCE IDEAS – ACT 1 SCENE 8**

- 1) Who would you like the audience to sympathise with in this scene and why?
  
- 2) How would you create sympathy for your chosen character?
  
- 3) Mrs Lyons is lying when she says that the standard of Mrs Johnstone's work has deteriorated (got worse), how would you communicate this to the audience?
  
- 4) Mrs Johnstone tries to raise her status when she threatens to take Edward. How would you perform this line vocally to communicate this? (pace, pitch, volume, tone, emphasis)
  
- 5) Mrs Lyons says 'Oh no you're not! Edward is my son!' What would your posture be like at this point and which, if any gestures would you make? What would you want this to communicate to the audience?
  
- 6) In the section of the extract after the gap how would you want the actors to use movement around the set to show that Mrs Lyons is regaining her status?

**EXTENSION** – Choose any of the lines you haven't spoken about and describe exactly how you would perform it vocally and physically and say what you would hope to communicate to the audience by doing this.

## **HOMEWORK TASK 7**

Learn your lines for your performance of the meeting between Mickey and Edward when they are seven years old.

Strategies:

- ◆ Copy out your lines
- ◆ Ask someone to test you
- ◆ Act the scene out—don't just read it
- ◆ Line learning apps

## HOMEWORK TASK 8

Make notes in the back of your exercise book on the following things:

- ◆ Two things that you were pleased about in your performance.
- ◆ Two things that you would improve about your performance if you were able to perform again.
- ◆ Two performances that you thought were effective and the reasons why.

## HOMEWORK TASK 9

Complete the evaluation that we started in lesson.

Remember to use full sentences and make the answers make sense without the questions being written.

### YEAR 9 DRAMA – BLOOD BROTHERS EVALUATION

- 1) Write out your 3 dramatic aims and give examples of how you achieved these in your performance.
- 2) Which were the most effective lines that you said? Copy out 2 lines and then describe exactly how you performed them using your voice and physicality.  
**(VOLUME, PACE, PITCH, PAUSE, TONE, EMPHASIS, ACCENT)**  
**(POSTURE, GESTURE, FACIAL EXPRESSION, PROXEMICS, ORIENTATION)**
- 3) Explain what the impact of your 2 lines was on the audience.
- 4) Describe a reaction that you gave – what did it communicate to the audience?
- 5) What was the most effective thing about your performance and why?
- 6) What would you have liked to improve about your performance and why?
- 7) Whose performance did you most admire and why?
- 8) Set yourself 2 targets for your future work.

## HOMEWORK TASK 10

Read the review below and annotate the bold words with their meanings.

### Blood Brothers Review—Birmingham Live 2019

The legendary tale of two tragic brothers is back at the Birmingham Hippodrome - and it had every single member of the audience standing by the end of the **compelling** performance.

Written by Liverpoolian playwright Willy Russell, the musical follows two twins as they grow up on opposite sides of the **class system** after becoming separated at birth.

It's brilliant **nature-vs-nurture** plot has won numerous awards and is one of only three musicals to achieve the milestone of 10,000 performances in London's West End. And it's no wonder the play is so **critically-acclaimed** as from start to finish the talented 12 strong cast had the audience both **captivated** and on the brink of tears.

It cleverly opens with the **tragedy** we're all familiar with, and works backwards to explore the **contrasting** journeys of Mickey and Eddie - displayed by the backdrop of a neglected council estate and the bright green hills of the countryside.

It lasts almost three hours including the interval, but every moment as we build up to the inevitable ending is well-acted, dramatic and draws upon real emotion - whether that's humour, sadness or shock.

Lyn Paul's portrayal of single mum Mrs Johnstone is incredibly **authentic** and our heart really bleeds for her, especially during her **timeless** scores, 'Easy Terms', 'Marilyn Monroe' and 'Tell Me It's Not True'.

Joel Benedict was less convincing in his role as upper-class Eddie, but was exceptional as he serenaded Mickey's love interest with the wonderfully romantic, 'I'm Not Saying A Word'.

The whole musical is very dramatic throughout, keeping the audience on the edge of their seats as the powerful voice of the narrator **interjects** - reminding the characters of their fate.



## BLOOD BROTHERS – FINAL SCENE

*(Mickey enters carrying a gun, he is shaking and breathing heavily.)*

**Eddie** – Hello, Mickey.

**Mickey** – I stopped takin' the pills.

**Edward** (pause) oh.

**Mickey** – I began thinkin' again because there was one thing left in my life. (pause) Just one thing I had left, Eddie – Linda – an' I wanted to keep her. But it was too late. D'y' know who told me about... you ... an' ...Linda ... your mother.

**Edward** – Mickey, I don't know what she told you, but Linda and I are just friends ...

**Mickey** – (shouting) Friends! I could kill you. We were friends weren't we? Blood brothers, wasn't it?

**Edward** – Yes Mickey, I remember

**Mickey** – Well how come you got everything ... an' I got nothing? I've been thinkin' again – you an' Linda were friends when she first got pregnant, weren't y'?

**Edward** – Mickey!

**Mickey** – Does my child belong to you as well as everythin' else? Does she Eddie?

**Edward** – No, for God's sake!

**Mickey** – What am I doing here Eddie? I thought I was gonna shoot y' but I can't even do that. I don't even know if the thing's loaded

**Mrs Johnstone** – Mickey, don't shoot him, he's your brother. You had a twin, I couldn't afford to keep you both and his mother couldn't have kids. I agreed to give one of you away!

**Mickey** – You! You! Why didn't you give me away? I could have been .... I could have been him!

## HOMWORK TASK 12

Complete the written work that we started in lesson.

Remember to write in full sentences that make sense without the questions being written.

You should use a full range of terminology:

**VOICE** – pace, pitch, pause, tone, emphasis, volume, accent

**PHYSICALITY** – posture, gesture, facial expression, gait, movement, mannerisms

**GENERAL** – discipline, focus, confidence, timing, stage presence, I levels

### PERFORMANCE IDEAS – FINAL SCENE

1) You are playing the role of Edward – explain how you would use your vocal and physical skills to perform the line ***‘Mickey, I don’t know what she told you, but Linda and I are just friends ...’*** and explain the effects you want to create.

2) You are playing the role of Mickey – describe how you would respond to the line above and perform your reply of ***‘(shouting) Friends! I could kill you. We were friends weren’t we? Blood brothers, wasn’t it?’*** and what this would communicate about your character?

3) Focusing on the section after the gap, how would you want the actors to use the space and their physicality to create tension for the audience in the build up to the gunshots?

4) After the gunshots Linda and the Narrator approach the bodies, how would you direct them to do this and what impact would you want this to have on the audience?

