

MICKEY

MICKEY'S ROLE IN THE PLAY

Mickey is one of Mrs Johnstone's twins – the one she keeps. In the play, he:

- meets Edward in the street when they are both seven, and becomes his blood brother
- is suspended from school, aged fourteen
- leaves school and gets a job in a factory
- finally tells Linda how he feels about her and becomes her boyfriend
- marries Linda when they discover she is pregnant
- is made redundant
- takes part in a robbery with his brother Sammy, as a result of which he is sent to prison
- discovers Linda is having an affair with Edward
- accidentally shoots Edward dead and is shot dead by police marksmen.

EXAM FOCUS: WRITING ABOUT MICKEY

A01



Key point	Evidence/further meaning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throughout the play, Russell creates parallels and contrasts between Mickey and Edward. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'I know loads of words like that. Y' know, like the "F" word.' (Act One, p. 28) • At the age of seven, Mickey seems far more worldly wise than naive Edward.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mickey cannot bring himself to tell Linda how he feels about her. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Linda, I wanna kiss y', an' put me arms around y' ... but I don't know how to tell y' ' (Act Two, p. 71) • This suggests a shyness and vulnerability which becomes even more apparent as he fails to cope with the pressures of adult life.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mickey seems destroyed by his time in prison. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'I can't cope with this. I'm not well ... I can't do things ... Leave me alone ...' (Act Two, p. 98) • Mickey pushes Linda away, and becomes totally dependent on the pills which make him feel 'invisible' (Act Two, p. 100).

TOP TIP: CHANGES IN MICKEY

A01

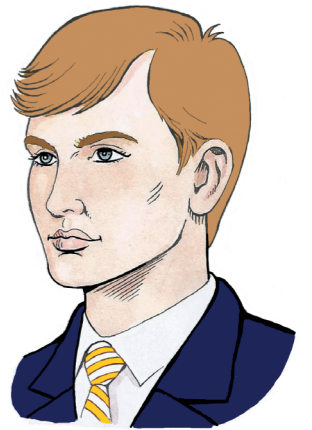
Think about the ways in which Mickey's relationship with Edward changes. As a child, Mickey seems dominant, for example taking sweets from Edward, teaching him swear words, bragging to Edward about how he was disrespectful to policemen. As an adult, however, Mickey is unable to cope, while Edward helps him, organising a new house and job for him. While Mickey seems to teach and influence Edward in childhood, Edward seems much better prepared for life as an adult.

EDWARD

EDWARD'S ROLE IN THE PLAY

Edward is the twin whom Mrs Johnstone gives to Mrs Lyons. In the play he:

- meets Mickey in the street when they are both seven and becomes his blood brother
- is told by Mrs Lyons not to see Mickey again
- is given a locket by Mrs Johnstone when he moves away
- is suspended from school when he is fourteen
- persuades Mickey to tell Linda how he feels
- goes to university
- comes home for Christmas and tells Linda he has always loved her
- becomes a local councillor and begins an affair with Linda
- is shot dead by Mickey.



EXAM FOCUS: WRITING ABOUT EDWARD

A01



Key point	Evidence/further meaning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edward leads a much more protected and privileged life than Mickey. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mrs Lyons: 'I'll give you some more lessons when you're home for half term.' (Act Two, p. 61) • Edward goes to boarding school and is taught how to waltz by Mrs Lyons.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In childhood, Edward's naivety makes him susceptible to Mickey's influence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mickey: 'when they ask what y' name is, we say things like, like "Adolf Hitler"' (Act One, p. 43) • Edward believes Mickey, copies him and gets all three of them into trouble with the police.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In their teenage years and adulthood, Edward supports Mickey. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Will you talk to Linda?' (Act Two, p. 86) • It is Edward who persuades Mickey to tell Linda how he feels – despite his own feelings for her. Later, he arranges a new job and house for Mickey.

AIMING HIGH: THE PLAY'S CLIMAX



Think about the role that Edward plays in the climax of *Blood Brothers*. After going to university, he appears much less frequently on stage, appearing only once, with one line between Mickey's arrest and his death: 'Hey' (Act Two, p. 101). His affair with Linda, which is so significant to the plot, is conveyed largely visually rather than through **dialogue** and in the final scene he says very little. Mickey's downfall dominates and is the focus of the play's **resolution**. Look, for example, at the final scene (pp. 105–6): compare Mickey's dominance in this scene with Edward's responses to it.

TOP TIP

A02

Compare this summary of Edward's role in the play with the summary of Mickey's role on the page opposite. How many parallels and similarities can you identify?

RESPONDING TO WRITERS' EFFECTS

The two most important assessment objectives are **AO1** and **AO2** (except for Edexcel, where you will only be examined on AO1, AO3 and AO4). They are about *what* writers do (the choices they make, and the effects these create), *what* your ideas are (your analysis and interpretation) and *how* you write about them (how well you explain your ideas).

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE 1

AO1

What does it say?	What does it mean?	Dos and don'ts
<p>Read, understand and respond to texts.</p> <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maintain a critical style and develop an informed personal response ● Use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations 	<p>You must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use some of the literary terms you have learned (correctly!) ● Write in a professional way (not a sloppy, chatty way) ● Show that you have thought for yourself ● Back up your ideas with examples, including quotations 	<p>Don't write ...</p> <p><i>Mickey is really poor and Russell makes him speak really bad English to show he is working class.</i></p> <p>Do write ...</p> <p><i>Russell uses abbreviation and phonetic spelling to create Mickey's Liverpudlian accent. He tells Edward to 'Gis a sweet' when they first meet. Russell suggests the class difference between them when Mickey teaches Edward to swear which Edward, using middle class vocabulary, describes as 'smashing'.</i></p>

IMPROVING YOUR CRITICAL STYLE

Use a variety of words and phrases to show effects:

Russell suggests ..., conveys ..., implies ..., presents how ..., explores ..., demonstrates ..., shows how ...
The audience infer ..., recognise ..., understand ..., question ..., see ..., are given ..., reflect ...

For example, look at these two alternative paragraphs by different students about Mickey. Note the difference in the quality of expression.

Student A:

Vague

Willy Russell shows that Mickey is really rough all the time. He says he wants to urinate through people's letter boxes and he thinks Sammy is impressive because he can spit in people's eyes. This shows that Mickey does not really care about other people. This shows that he is rough. Russell is showing that Mickey is just a child but is also entertaining for the audience.

Chatty and informal

Unclear whether 'He' refers to Russell or Mickey

Repetitive - better to use an alternative

Repeats the point from the beginning of the paragraph - better to develop it

Student B:

Appropriate language choice to comment on the ways in which Mickey is shown

Clear and precise language

Focuses on the audience's likely response

Russell presents Mickey as a mischievous boy who admires his older brother's antisocial behaviour when he first appears on stage, aged seven. Russell emphasises his frustration at being treated like a seven year old when he's 'nearly eight' with constant repetition of the phrase as the refrain to his song. Russell introduces Mickey as a naughty but endearingly entertaining boy, typical of all seven year olds.

Clear and precise language

Good variety of vocabulary

Focus on language choice

Looks beyond the obvious with personal interpretation

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE 2

AO2

What does it say?	What does it mean?	Dos and don'ts
<p>Analyse the language, form and structure used by the writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.</p>	<p>'Analyse' - comment in detail on particular aspects of the text or language.</p> <p>'Language' - vocabulary, imagery, variety of sentences, dialogue/speech, etc.</p> <p>'Form' - how the story is told (e.g. dialogue, song, the role of the Narrator)</p> <p>'Structure' - the order in which events are revealed, or in which characters appear</p> <p>'create meanings' - what can we, as an audience, infer from the characters and their dialogue? What is implied by particular speeches, or events?</p> <p>'Subject terminology' - words you should use when writing about plays, such as 'character', 'imagery', 'setting', etc.</p>	<p>Don't write ...</p> <p><i>The Narrator tells you what happens in the play so you can understand the story.</i></p> <p>Do write ...</p> <p><i>Russell uses the Narrator to explain the story, but more importantly to create tension as he never allows the audience to forget the play's ending which he revealed at its beginning. He makes constant allusions to superstition and to the devil 'starin' through your windows' to emphasise that every action and decision the characters take will eventually have devastating consequences.</i></p>

IMPLICATIONS, INFERENCES AND INTERPRETATIONS

- The best analysis focuses on specific ideas or events, or uses of language and thinks about what is implied.
- This means drawing inferences. On the surface, Mickey and Edward's games at the age of seven are depicted as harmless fun, but what deeper ideas do they suggest and foreshadow about Mickey's attitude to guns and to figures of authority such as the Policeman, and about the relationship between Mickey and Edward?
- From the inferences you make across the text as a whole, you can arrive at your own interpretation - a sense of the bigger picture, a wider evaluation of a character, relationship or idea.