

Act One – Musical Form

Some musicals are described as 'sung through'. (The story is entirely told through song and they contain no spoken dialogue). Blood Brothers however, contains far more dialogue than song and so it is important to consider why and where the writer chooses to use song.

One way in which Russell uses song is to express a character's thoughts and feelings without the need for that character to reveal them to another character. In effect, the songs have the same function as a '*soliloquy*'.

What is a soliloquy?

A Soliloquy is a device often used in plays or drama when a character speaks to themselves out loud; their thoughts and feelings when by oneself, thereby sharing them with the audience, giving off the illusion of being unspoken reflections. (Or talking to yourself out loud).

In Act One, Mrs Johnstone sings a song suggesting the romance with which her marriage began and her regret at the life of drudgery and financial difficulty in which it resulted. The song does, however, end on a positive note as it returns when she sings to her children, reassuring them that they will soon have plenty to eat.

Perhaps the events recounted in the first part of the song suggest that her hopes in the second part of the song will also be a disappointment.

The songs refers to Marilyn Monroe throughout, who is Marilyn Monroe & how could she be compared to Mrs Johnstone?

Mrs Johnstone's references to Marilyn Monroe in this section of the play suggest an ideal of beauty and glamour which is in ironic contrast to the reality of Mrs Johnstone's life. They also perhaps, suggest the tragic end to which the play is moving. Marilyn Monroe died of a drugs overdose, presumed intentional.

Look at the lyrics to the song Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons sing together (pg. 11). Can you identify any difference in their ideas of what makes a perfect childhood?

What theme/ idea might Russell be suggesting through this difference in maternal attitude?

List the ways in which Mrs Johnstone thinks her baby would have a better life with Mrs Lyons.