

## Language Guide Sheet

This guide sheet is to help you with your essay, using a highlighter highlight key points & add notes to improve your essay. You will not get any credit for simply pointing out the name of a language device. You must always comment on its effect.

Language is something that you have already looked at earlier when comparing the language of Mrs Johnstone & Mrs Lyons. (The Agreement – Mrs Johnstone Mrs Lyons Worksheet) and also of Edward & Mickey (Themes-Class Worksheet).

### Overview – A Quick look back.

As a late twentieth-century play, much of the dialogue in *Blood Brothers* is intended to be realistic, to suggest that the characters are ordinary people, speaking in ordinary voices, facing everyday problems. To achieve this Russell uses dialogue to help create his characters: the working class characters' dialogue is given elements of accent and dialect while the middle class characters' speak in Standard English.

There is little imagery within this realistic dialogue; imagery is largely restricted to the Narrator who, for most of the play, stands outside the action, looking in and commenting upon it.

### Language Device: Accent and Dialect

What is accent?	A particular way of pronouncing words, which can reveal where the speaker is from.
Example	'Y' better hadn't or I won't be in love with y' any more!' (Act Two, p50)
Effect	Russel uses abbreviation and phonetic spelling to represent some of the characters' Liverpudlian accents.

What is dialect?	Vocabulary that is used only a group of people from a particular area.
Example	'You're soft' (Act One, p25).
Effect	Russell uses Liverpudlian dialect, such as 'soft' meaning 'silly', to differentiate the working class characters from the middle class characters.

Key types of dialogue Russell uses include:

- **Abbreviation:** shortening words, marking omitted letters with an apostrophe to suggest pronunciation.  
e.g. - 'nothin'. (Act Two, p60).
- **Phonetic spelling:** spelling a word as it is pronounced.  
e.g. - 'yeh' (Act Two, p66).
- **Contraction:** merging two words together to suggest pronunciation.  
e.g. – 'y' ma' (act One, p34).
- **Slang:** very informal language choices.  
e.g. – 'bunk' (Act One, p34), 'poshy' (Act One, p25).

It is immediately noticeable that the working class characters' dialogue is written to suggest their accent and their use of dialect and slang.

When you write about a character's use of language, you can often reinforce your point by comparing it to another character's language.

In a novel the writer can use narration and description as well as dialogue to create a range of effects: setting, characterisation, relationships, action, mood, atmosphere etc. However, in a play script, the writer must convey everything through the character's dialogue or through stage direction.

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### Notes

### Language Device: Character and voice.

What is voice?	The language the writer chooses to suggest the way a character speaks.
Example	<i>'Oh, that sounds like super fun... You say smashing things, don't you?'</i> (Act One, p23).
Effect	Edward's use of the adjectives 'super' and 'smashing' suggests his social class, his enthusiastic personality and his immediate admiration for Mickey.

Russell makes careful vocabulary choices to establish and develop character. An example of language choices Russell uses when creating the characters of Edward & Mickey as seven year olds.

Edward... 'Are you going to come and play up there again?'  
Mickey 'No. I would fob u I'm not allowed'.  
Edward 'Why?'  
Mickey 'Cos me mam says'.  
Edward 'Well, my mummy doesn't allow me to play down here actually'. (Act One, p22).

Both characters have a limited vocabulary and use relatively simple sentence structures, typical of a seven year old. However, Edward speaks in complete sentences while Mickey speaks in sentence fragments; Edward refers to his mother as 'mummy', while Mickey refers to his mother as 'mam'. Russell's choices suggest that Edward's speech is more formal while Mickey's is more informal, reflecting their home lives and social class.

Russell also uses character's voices to suggest their relationship. Compare Mrs Johnstone's and Mrs Lyons' dialogue as they admire baby Edward.

Mrs Lyons 'If he needs picking up, I shall pick him up. All right?'  
Mrs Johnstone 'Well, I just thought, I'm sorry, I...'. (Act One, p17).

Mrs Lyons voice is given dominant aggression using the authoritative 'shall' and the confrontational 'all right?' while Mrs Johnstone's submissive hesitation is reflected in the use of ellipsis and incomplete sentences

Ellipsis – A punctuation mark of three dots (...) suggesting an incomplete sentence or pause.

In addition to the action on stage, Russell uses the Narrator to create and change the mood and atmosphere of the play. For example, just before Edward goes to university, the audience sees a montage of events from Mickey, Edward & Linda's teenage years. The Narrator emphasises the carefree optimism of three teenagers on the verge of adulthood:

*'everything is possible, the world's within your reach'*. (Act Two, p64).

The Narrator then signals a change of mood using the metaphor of the seasons changing to suggest that their optimism is misplaced:

*'It was one day in October when the sun began to fade, And winter broke the promise that the summer had just made'*. (Act Two, p85).

In the scene that follows, Mickey announces Linda's pregnancy and their marriage, but then learns that he has lost his job.

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### Notes

**Language Device- Dramatic initiative** (taking control of the events on stage and of the audience's attention).

When considering characters' relationships and interactions, you should consider what they say, but also how much they say and the extent to which this gives them the dramatic initiative: the extent to which they control the events in that scene. Looking back at the confrontation between Mrs Lyons & Mrs Johnstone, Mrs Lyons speaks the majority of the dialogue: her lines are full of aggressive questions while Mrs Johnstone's are full of hesitant ellipses. However, Mrs Johnstone delivers her longest speech of the scene when she refuses to accept Mrs Lyons' money, effectively taking the dramatic initiative from her. This victory is challenged as Mrs Lyons tries to attack her with a knife but is reaffirmed when Mrs Johnstone disarms her and sends her away, so regaining the dramatic initiative.

**Language Device: Imagery**

What is imagery	Language chosen to convey an idea by creating a visual image in the reader or audience's mind
Example	The Narrator describes Mickey, Edward and Linda on the beach: 'An' you don't even notice broken bottles in the sand'. (Act Two, p 64).
Effect	The visual image created by this metaphor suggest that, while the teenagers enjoy themselves at the beach, hidden dangers lie in their path and they should be wary.

Willy Russell is a realist. His aim, in the language he gives to his characters, is to re-create the voices of real people. The Narrator, however, is placed outside the events of the play and is often given lines that make use of imagery to convey or comment on the events of the play:

His repeated allusions to superstition are images of impending doom intended to build tension in the audience.

Allusions – An indirect reference to something, e.g. another text.

His references to 'debt' (Act One, p) refer ; literally to the debt which Mrs Johnstone owes the Milkman and Catalogue Man, and the baby she agreed to hand over to Mrs Lyons – but are also intended as a metaphor suggesting that she will one day pay a much greater price for entering into this agreement.

Metaphor – A figure of speech in which something, someone or an action is described as something else in order to imply a resemblance.

Also think of the Russell's use of motifs in the play: images or ideas that recur throughout the text, suggesting their significance to the text as a whole. E.g. References towards Marilyn Monroe, dancing & guns.

**Improving your notes Task:** Looking at three of the Narrator's long speeches, consider how he uses imagery to direct the audience's response to the character's actions and choices or to hint at how the plot will develop.

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**Notes**