

# Reading

# Thematic Overview

## 'Blood Brothers' – Willy Russell

*Blood Brothers* by Willy Russell explores themes of social class, inequality, and how these issues shape individuals and their communities. The story follows two brothers, separated at birth and raised in very different social environments, but also connects to significant historical events like the fight for voting rights and the First World War.

### English

*Blood Brothers* introduces Pupils to the social and economic struggles of working-class life in Liverpool, making it an ideal play for analysing 20th-century British society. Pupils can examine how Russell uses dramatic techniques like foreshadowing and tragic irony to address themes of class, fate, and superstition, encouraging discussions about societal structure and individual agency.

As a work of fiction, *Blood Brothers* presents complex characters and universal themes, like family, friendship, and identity, which can be analysed to understand narrative and character development. Pupils can examine the contrast between Mickey and Eddie's upbringings and how Russell's portrayal of nature versus nurture affects their eventual paths.

### Art

Pupils can create character portraits based on the protagonists, Mickey and Eddie. They could use photography techniques to capture expressions and emotions that reflect the themes of the play, such as innocence, class struggle, and the impact of choices.

Have Pupils create a piece of art inspired by a specific scene or theme in the play, using techniques reminiscent of Francis Bacon. They could experiment with abstraction and distortion to represent the chaotic nature of the characters' lives and choices.

### Geography

Though *Blood Brothers* doesn't directly focus on natural disasters, it deals with instability and unpredictability, much like earthquakes and volcanoes. The characters' struggles with social inequality and poverty reflect the risks faced by people in unstable environments, like communities vulnerable to natural disasters.

The issues facing Africa, such as poverty and economic challenges, link to the play's exploration of systemic oppression. The stark divide between Mickey and Edward mirrors the economic struggles of many African nations. Yet, like Africa's potential for growth, the play carries a hopeful message, highlighting dreams for a better life despite adversity.

### Science

The twins' vastly different upbringings showcase how environmental factors influence individuals, providing an opportunity to discuss nature vs. nurture and the basics of genetics. Pupils could explore genetic inheritance and variations, examining how family traits are passed down but expressed differently in varying environments.

### Technology

Pupils can research traditional British dishes mentioned in the play, exploring their origins and how they reflect cultural influences. They can then create a presentation or a digital cookbook featuring these dishes, discussing the ingredients and cooking methods.

### History

The play reflects the struggle for voting rights, particularly for women and the working class, by highlighting social inequality. Mickey and Edward's contrasting lives illustrate the class divides central to the fight for suffrage, with Mickey symbolising those who lacked political influence. The story connects to the broader movement for equality, emphasising the importance of having a voice in government.

The impact of World War I is also key in *Blood Brothers*. The war reshaped British society, affecting class systems and gender roles. Set during a time of significant social change, the play mirrors these shifts, especially in working-class communities deeply affected by the war. Themes of loss, trauma, and survival show how the war's legacy continued to influence families and society.

