

KEY QUOTATIONS

BLOOD BROTHERS

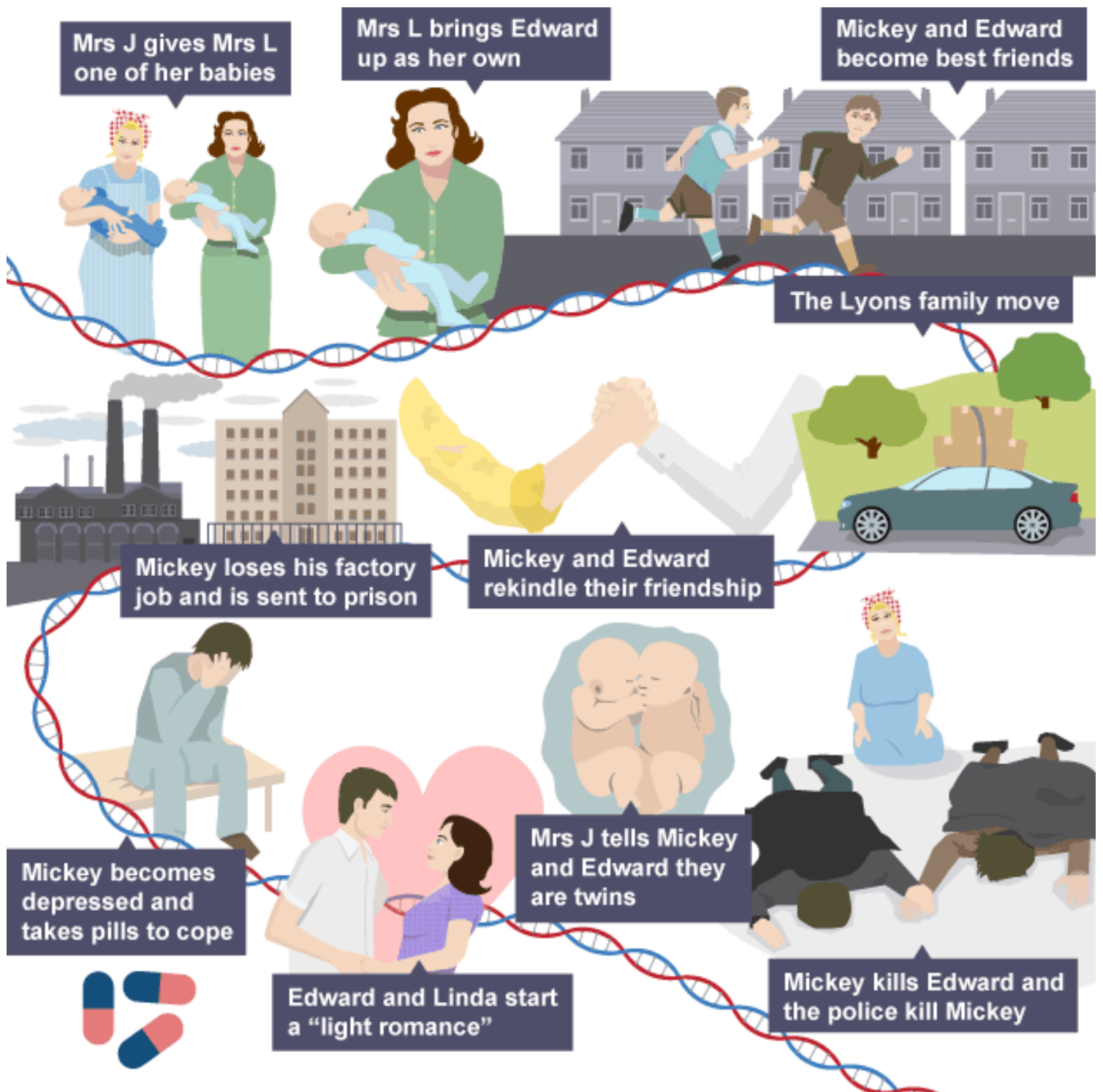
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Blood Brothers Timeline



1 Superstition & Fate

Narrator

“There’s shoes on the table an’ a joker in the pack”

“Someone broke the lookin’ glass”

“Now y’ know the devil’s got your number, y’ know he’s gonna find y’, y’ know he’s right behind y’”

“the salt’s been spilled”

“You’re walking on pavement cracks”

“The dealers dealt the cards, and he won’t take them back”

“There’s a black cat stalking and a woman who’s afraid”

Mrs Johnstone

“Oh God, Mrs Lyons, never put new shoes on a table...You never know what’ll happen”

“I’m not superstitious”

Mrs Lyons

“they say that if either twin learns that he was once a pair, they shall both immediately die”

Edward

“It’s just a secret, everybody has secrets, don’t you have secrets?”



Mrs Johnstone:
"You never put new shoes on the table"

2 Social Class

Edward

“Don’t you know what a dictionary is?”

“Pissed off. You say smashing things don’t you?”

“Are you feeling better now, Mummy?”

“Talk of Oxbridge” (Edward’s Teacher)

“I’m going away to tomorrow...to University”

Mickey

“Gis a sweet” / “Gis a ciggie”

“It used to be just sweets an’ ciggies he gave me”

“You sorted it out. You an’ Councillor Eddie Lyons”

“Well, how come you got everything...an’ I got nothin’?”

Sammy

“he’s a friggin’ poshy”

Mrs Johnstone

“I start a job next week. I’ll have money comin’ in an’ I’ll be able to pay y’”

“Havin’ babies, it’s like clockwork to me”

Mrs Lyons

“you are not like them”

“It’s a pretty house isn’t it? It’s a pity it’s so big”

The difference between the Johnstone and Lyons families draws attention to the impact that a person's social class can have on their opportunities in life.

Narrator:

**"A debt is a debt
and must be paid"**

**Edward: "Why...why is a
job so important? If I
couldn't get a job I just
say, sod it and draw the
dole, live like a bohemian"**



3 Nature Vs Nurture

Mrs Johnstone

“And when he grew up / He could never be told / To stand and queue up / For hours on end at the dole / He'd grow up to be / A credit to me”

Narrator

“There's a pact been sealed, there's a deal been born”

Mickey

“Ey, we were born on the same day...that means we can be blood brothers”

Mrs Lyons

“You learn filth from them and behave like this like a, like a horrible little boy, like them. But you are not like them. You are my son, mine, and you won't, you won't ever...”

“It's just...it's these people...these people that Edward has started mixing with. Can't you see how he's drawn to them?”

“Afraid he might eventually have forgotten you? On no. There's no chance of that”

“I started...just for a while I came to believe that he was actually mine”

Mickey

“Why didn't you give me away? I could have been...I could have been him!”



"So, did y' hear the story of the Johnstone twins?"

**As like each other as two new pins,
Of one womb born, on the self same day,
How one was kept and one given away?**

The relative significance of a person's inborn individuality, which is considered as "nature" versus individual experiences, which is "nurture", in shaping or causing differences in physical and behavioural character.

4 Teenagers

Mickey

“If I was like him I’d know all the right words”

“Naked knockers with nipples...”

“She’s a fuckin’ head case.”

“she even says she loves me all over the place, but it’s just like dead difficult”

Edward

“His hair’s dark and wavy, mine’s mousey to fair”

“Tennis with tits. Will Wimbledon ever be the same?”

“We have been undergoing a remarkable celluloid experience!”

“I love it when we’re together, the three of us, don’t you?”

“If I was him I’d bring you flowers and ask you to dance”

“Even if we had to live some worlds apart”

Narrator

“Life has no ending when you’re sweet sixteen”

“Everything is possible, the world’s within your reach”

“And only if the three of them could stay like that forever”

“And only if we could predict no changes in the weather”

“And only if we didn’t live in life, as well as dreams”

“And only if we could stop and be forever, just eighteen”

We see Edward & Mickey evolve from infants, to boys, to teenagers, to young men, and at each point playwright Willy Russell makes sure to show us the unique difficulties and preoccupations of that stage of life.



There's a few bob in your pocket and
you've got good friends,
And it seems that Summer's never coming
to an end,
Young, free and innocent, you haven't
got a care,
Apart from decidin' on the clothes
you're gonna wear.
The street's turned into Paradise, the
radio's singing dreams
You're innocent, immortal, you're just
fifteen

5 Violence

Narrator

“But you know that if you cross your fingers / And if you count from one to ten / You can get up off the ground again / It doesn't matter / The whole thing's just a game”

Mickey

“I'm gonna get a real gun soon”

“We always shoot at that, don't we Linda?”

Stage Directions

[Shoots down a few imaginary Indians but somehow the magic has gone out of genocide]

[his father produces a toy gun...he 'shoots' his father, who spiritedly 'dies']

[Sammy produces a knife]

[The gun explodes and blows Edward apart]

[They open fire and four guns explode, blowing Mickey away]

Sammy

“I got y', I shot y', An' y' bloody know I did”



Violence has a presence in the working class characters' lives from a young age. When we first meet Mickey as a seven year old, he has a toy gun and he plays games involving imaginary guns with his friends and neighbours. The violence escalates as the play progresses, culminating in the tragic death of Mickey and Edward.

Violence reflects a lack of control; when characters start to lose power in some way, they become more violent.

6 Mrs Johnstone

“Once I had a husband, / You know the sort of chap”

“He told me I was sexier than Marilyn Monroe”

There are several significant references in the play to Marilyn Monroe, the actress and film star who epitomised glamour and sexuality but died of a drugs overdose in 1963. These references to the romance and glamour of Hollywood – and the reality behind it – create a stark comparison between Mrs Johnstone’s romanticised hopes of a Hollywood ending and the reality that she must face.

“The Welfare have already been on to me”

“kids can’t live on love alone”

“A bike with *both* wheels on?”

“they’re a pair, they go together”

“But keep it a secret eh, Eddie? Just our secret, between you an’ me”

“We’re getting’ out, / We’re movin’ house, / We’re starting all over again”

“Do you still keep that locket I gave y’?”

“I don’t want your money”

“you’ve not had much of a life with me, have y’?”

“Tell me it’s not true, / Say it’s just a story”

THE MOTHER

Mrs Johnstone

JUDGED

"The mother, so cruel,
there's a stone in
place of her heart"

WORN OUT

"By the time I was
twenty-five, I looked
like forty-two"

UNEDUCATED - DOESN'T VALUE EDUCATION

"... silly gets play
with magnesium"

"We'll live like kings,
like bright young
things"

OPTIMISTIC

"Oh, bright new day,
we're movin' away"

POOR

"I'm starvin' an' there's
nothin' in. There never
bloody well is"

MANIPULATED

"You swore on the
Bible"

REALISTIC

"I'd buy more junk
and trash; that's all"

DISCRIMINATED AGAINST BY CLASS

"Well there'll be
no more bloody
warnings from
now on"



GUILTY

"You're always gonna
know what was done ...
You sold a son"

RESPONSIBLE

"You can't stop the milk. I
need the milk. I'm pregnant"

VULNERABLE

"They say I should
put them into care ..."

MATERNAL

"I love the bones of
every one of them"

SUPERSTITIOUS

"Never put new shoes on a
table ... You never know
what'll happen"

7 Mrs Lyons

“I believe that an adopted child can become one’s own”

“We bought such a large house for the – for the children – we thought children would come along”

“Already you’ve been threatened by the Welfare People”

Mrs Lyons is callous in using Mrs Johnstone’s fears against her. She shows a lack of empathy for the poorer woman and instead is focused on getting what she wants. Mrs Lyons also reveals her lack of understanding of Mrs Johnstone’s life, as saying ‘the Welfare people’ suggests she is unfamiliar with the term.

“Mrs J, nobody must ever know. Therefore, we have to have an agreement”

“You swore on the bible”

“You won’t tell anyone about this, Mrs Johnstone, because if you do, you will kill them”

“I’m talking about thousands if you want it. And think what you could do with money like that”

“Wherever I go you’ll be just behind me”

“I curse the day I met you. You ruined me” – “I curse you. Witch!”

“I took him. But I never made him mine”

“Even when – when he was a tiny baby I’d see him looking straight at me and I’d think, he knows...he knows”

Mrs Lyons

WEALTHY

"I'm talking about thousands if you want it"

"I've dreamed of all the places I would take him"



CHILD-LESS



"We've been trying for such a long time now"

"Mrs J. We must make this a binding agreement Mrs Lyons should the 'Bible'"



CUNNING

"You sold your baby"



DECEITFUL

"Since the baby arrived she ignores most of her work"

"You said yourself, you said you had too many children already"



MANIPULATIVE



"They say that if either twin learns that he once was a pair, they shall both immediately die"

THREATENED

"We're safe here, aren't we?"

PROTECTIVE

"... mixing with boys like that"

PARANOID

"Wherever I go you'll be just behind me..."

LONELY

"You'll be glad when he's back won't you? The house won't feel so empty then"

SUPERCILIOUS/SUPERIOR

"(laughing): Oh... you mean you're superstitious?"

OPPORTUNISTIC

"It's wonderful, it's perfect (...) I tell him we were wrong, the doctors were wrong"



Mickey

“Gis a sweet”

“I wish I was our Sammy”

“Yeh, I know loads of words like that. Y’ know, like the ‘F’ word”

“I don’t wanna die”

“Am I the last survivor / Is everybody dead?”

“Yeh an’ it’ll really help me to get a job if I now what some soddin’ pygmies in Africa have for their dinner!”

“Gis a ciggie”

“You sound dead funny swearin’ in that posh voice”

“You’re great, you are, Mam”

“They’ve started layin’ people off in the other factory”

“I don’t want your money, stuff it”

“while no one was looking I grew up”

“you shot him, you shot him”

“Leave me alone, will y’? I can’t cope with this”

“That’s why I take them. So I can be invisible”

“Well, how come you got everything...an’ I got nothin’?”

“Does my child belong to you as well as everythin’ else?”

“I thought I was gonna shot y’. But I can’t even do that”

“Why didn’t you give me away!”

“I could have been him!”

Mickey Johnstone

STREET-WISE

"I know loads of words like that. Y'know, like the 'F' word"

VALUES

LOYALTY

"This means we're blood brothers and that we'll always have to stand by each other"

DEPRIVED

"you've not had much of a life with me, have y'?"

MISCHIEVOUS

"Aah... take no notice. We've been caught loads of times by policemen..."

NON-ACADEMIC

"You don't know. I told y' two minutes ago, lad."

DESPERATE

"the jury found him guilty, sent him down for seven years"



HAS RESPONSIBILITIES

"Linda's pregnant!"

OVERWHELMED

"I can't cope"

"Why didn't you give me away!"

RESENTFUL

"... while no one was looking I grew up. An' you didn't because you didn't need to..."

SHY

"... I promise meself I'll ask her but, but the words just disappear"

PROUD

"No. I don't want your money, stuff it."

UNFORTUNATE

"They've started layin' people off ..."

9 Edward

“Don’t you know what a dictionary is?”

“Is that your mummy?”

“Mickey says smashing things. We’re blood brothers aren’t we Mickey?”

“Mummy, how do you spell bogey man?”

“If you loved me you’d let me go out with Mickey”

“You’re a fuckoff!”

“It’s a magpie, never look at one magpie. It’s one for sorrow...”

“You can take a flying fuck at a rolling doughnut! But you shall not take my locket!”

“Mummy...you silly old thing. That’s not me. That’s Mickey”

“It’s just a secret, everybody has secrets, don’t you have secrets?”

“Come on then, before my Ma sees me. She’s off her beam, my Ma”

“If I was him I’d bring you flowers/ And ask you to dance”

“I’ve got money, plenty of it”

“I haven’t been to so many parties in my life”

“Mickey? Well shag the vicar”

Edward Lyons

FRIENDLY

"Do you want to come and play?"

ARTICULATE

"We have been undergoing a remarkable celluloid experience!"

SHELTERED

"My mummy doesn't allow me to play down here actually"

NAÏVE

"Yes, I gave you one for Sammy, remember?"

CONFIDENT

"He is bright and forthcoming"

HONEST

"I've always loved you"

SECURE

"Why is a job so important?"

CARE-FREE

"If I couldn't get a job I'd just say sod it and draw the dole, live like a bohemian"

INFLUENTIAL

"Now it's a job and a house. You sorted it out (...) an' Councillor Eddie Lyons"

MIDDLE CLASS

"He's a friggin' poshy."

"Take as many as you want"

GENEROUS

"Look, look, money, lots of it, have some..."

ROMANTIC

"If I was him I'd bring you flowers and ask you to dance"

DISLOYAL

"Play their part in a light romance"

WELL-EDUCATED

"When I get home I'll look it up in the dictionary"

"Talk of Oxbridge"



10 Narrator

“There’s one lone magpie overhead”

“There’s a pact been sealed, there’s a deal been born”

“Someone said the bogey man was seen around the town”

“There’s a black cat stalking and a woman who’s afraid”

“There’s no getting off without the price being paid”

“And maybe if you counted to ten and keep your fingers crossed,
it would all just be a game and then no one would have lost”

“There’s a mad man, there’s a mad man”

The narrator is a choric omniscient character and is a foreboding presence.

The ‘devil’ represents fate closing in:

“He’s starin’ through your windows”

“He’s creepin’ down the hall”

“He’s moved in down the street from you”

“Someone said he wants to speak to you”

“Someone said they’d seen him leanin’ on your door”

“He’s running right beside you”

“He screamin’ deep inside you”

“Someone said he’s calling your number up today, today, TODAY”

And do we blame superstition
for what came to pass
Or could it be what we, the
English, have come to know as
class?



11 Setting & Context

Russell wrote 'Blood Brothers' in 1981, and it was first performed as a musical in 1983. This was during the period that Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was in power. There was very high unemployment during this time, particularly in industrial working-class areas in northern England, such as Liverpool - where Russell is from and where the play is set. Mickey and his family represent the working classes, who were badly affected by the economic downturn, whereas Edward and the Lyons family embody the middle classes, who thrived in the 1980s.

Margaret Thatcher believed that anyone could be successful if they worked hard.

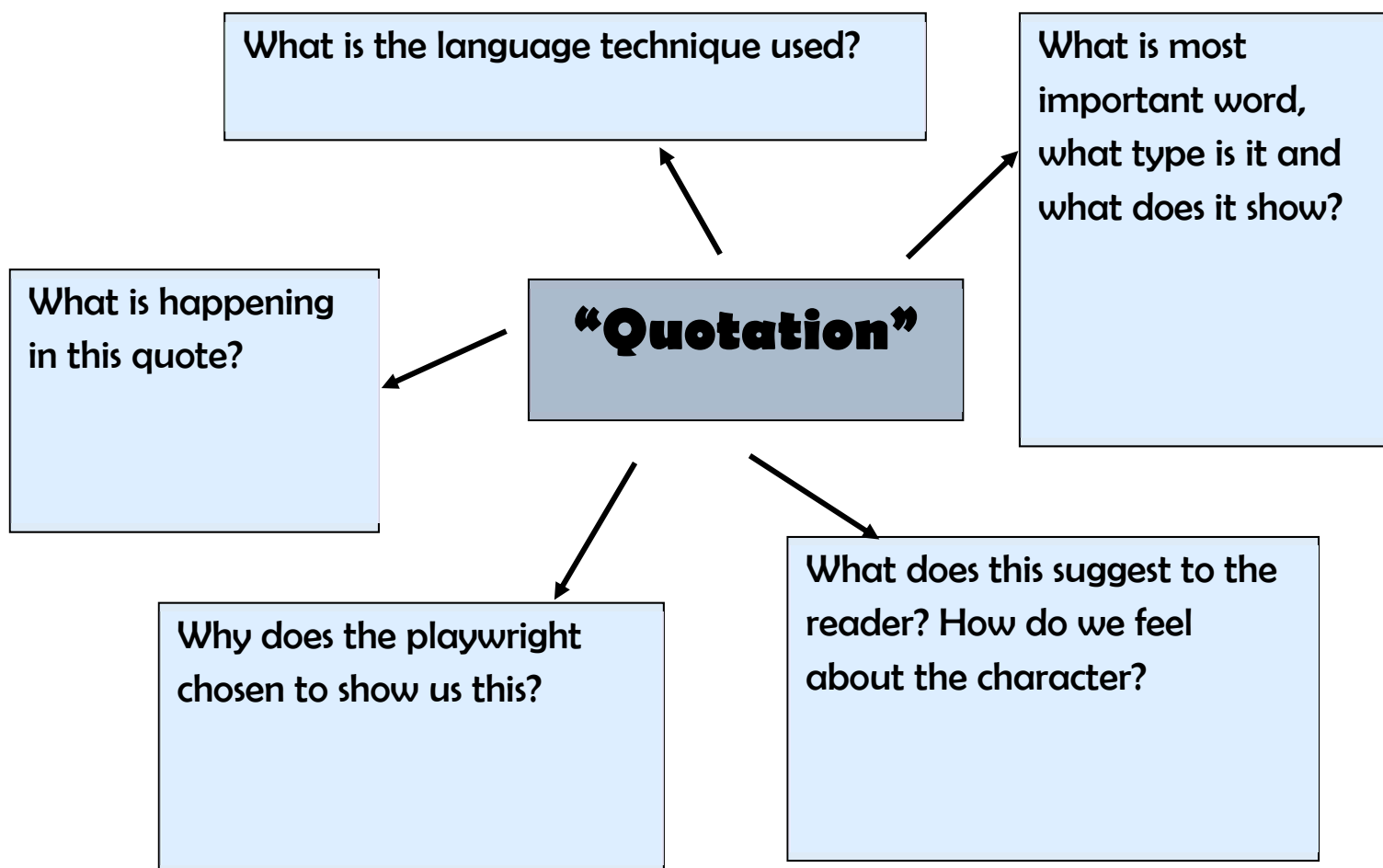
Russell demonstrates that for Mickey this is not true.



DAVE SINCLAIR



How to explode a quotation:



What is the language technique used?

Marilyn Monroe is a metaphor for untimely death which we know is inevitable due to the cyclical structure. It is also an example of dramatic irony as the audience know the true fate of Marilyn Monroe whereas the characters do not.

What is most important word, what type is it and what does it show?

'Sexier' implies Mrs Johnstone used her youthful sex appeal to manipulate men. The pronoun 'He' represents the absent husband and father which is mirrored by Mr Lyons' absence due to work, thus emphasising a matriarchal society.

"He told me I was sexier than Marilyn Monroe"

What is happening in this quote?

Mrs Johnstone informs the reader of her youth and time with her husband who has since left her for a younger woman and left her with many children to take care of.

Why does the playwright chosen to show us this?

'Marilyn Monroe' is a motif that occurs throughout the play. She signifies the inescapable fate of self-destruction despite glamorous outward appearances.

What does this suggest to the reader? How do we feel about the character?

This may evoke sympathy for Mrs Johnstone who is struggling to raise her children. Perhaps she thinks a comparison to Monroe is flattering, when in fact the audience are aware of the sinister connotations.