**Revise the context of Blood Brothers**- Make a mind map based on the notes for your C1 coursework

**Plot Summary**

**Plot** – this refers to the events that make up the storyline of the play.

**Act I - Liverpool**

* The play opens with a prologue that tells us that the Johnstone twins were separated and then died on the day they found out about each other.
* Mrs Johnstone gives a brief history of her life and then starts her new job cleaning for Mrs Lyons.
* Mrs Johnstone finds out she’s having twins and wonders how she will cope. Mrs Lyons asks if she will give one twin to her as she is unable to have children of her own and can offer it a good life.
* When the babies are born Mrs Lyons takes Edward, and Mickey stays with his biological mother, Mrs Johnstone.
* Mrs Lyons then sacks Mrs Johnstone, threatening her with a superstition about separated twins dying if they ever find out about each other, to ensure she leaves Edward behind.
* There is a jump forward in time seven years and the boys meet playing on the street. They become firm friends and blood brothers.
* The boys get in trouble with the police and the Lyons plan to move to the country to get Edward away from the Johnstones.
* Mrs Johnstone gives Edward a locket before he leaves.
* The boys are lonely without each other.
* The Johnstones are rehoused to the country.

**Act II - Skelmersdale**

* Another seven years have passed.
* Mickey and his friend Linda get the bus to school but Mickey’s older brother Sammy robs the conductor.
* Edward gets suspended from his boarding school for refusing to give up his locket and Mickey and Linda get suspended for being rude to their teacher.
* The three friends meet and continue as close friends until they are eighteen.
* Just before Edward leaves for university he makes sure Mickey and Linda get together.
* Linda becomes pregnant and she and Mickey marry and move in with Mrs Johnstone.
* Mickey loses his job and is persuaded by Sammy to help with a garage robbery.
* Sammy shoots the garage attendant and Mickey gets seven years in prison.
* Mickey is depressed in prison and ends up on medication.
* Mickey is released early but is a shadow of his former self.
* Edward, who is now a town councillor, helps Linda get Mickey a job and their own home.
* Mickey refuses to stop taking his pills and Linda and Edward start an affair.
* Mrs Lyons tells Mickey about the affair and he gets Sammy’s gun and goes after Edward.
* Mrs Johnstone follows him and tells him not to shoot Edward because they are twins.
* Mickey’s gun goes off killing Edward and then Mickey is shot by the police.

**Time**

* No specific dates are given during the play but there are a few clues
* Marilyn Monroe was a star in the 1950s and died in 1962.
* In the 1960s there was large-scale rehousing of tenants from the centre of Liverpool to places such as Skelmersdale.
* Decimalisation was in 1971. • The films Doctor Zhivago (1965) and The Magnificent Seven (1960) were both released in the1960s.
* The economic recession that caused major job losses was in the 1970s.
* Using these we can estimate that the twins were born during the 1950s, moved to the country in the 1960s and Mickey loses his job during the 1970s depression.
* This means that he would have come out of prison in the late 1970s.

**Places**

* **Act I** is set in Liverpool in the 1950s and 1960s.
* This only shows Mrs Johnstone’s front door and inside Mr and Mrs Lyons’ house.
* Some of the action takes place in between these two on the streets and in the park.
* A simple opposition is operating where middle-class life seems to take place mostly inside the home whereas working-class life happens mostly outside.
* **Act II** is set in Skelmersdale from around 1960 and probably moving into the early 1980s.
* We still have the street immediately outside Mrs Johnstone’s new front door.
* Other locations such as the courtroom, the bus, the schools, the factory, the prison and the town hall are indicated by the judicious use of props such as tables and chairs.

**Props**

**Guns**

* Mickey’s toy gun serves to illustrate his treatment as the youngest in the family.
* In his first few lines on stage, aged seven, he complains to his Mum that ‘Sammy’s robbed me other gun’ but his Mum just says it’s because he’s ‘the youngest’.
* Linda’s confidence and the confidence she gives Mickey is shown when together, still aged seven, they take Sammy’s air gun to shoot at the Peter Pan statue.
* Eddie’s leaving gift for Mickey is a toy gun, which shows how close they have become in a short time as he understands exactly what Mickey enjoys playing with.
* Sammy’s possession and use of a real gun or ‘shooter’ in the garage robbery shows how serious his criminal activity has now become. The seriousness is emphasised when Sammy says ‘y’ don’t get up again’ which refers back to their childhood games when they could always jump up again. Now, however, it is different and the result is lengthy prison sentences.
* It is Sammy’s gun that fulfils the made-up superstition about twins separated at birth dying when they find out about each other. Mickey fetches it when he finds out about Linda and Edward and it goes off when he finds out that Edward is his twin.
* The guns start off being ‘just a game’ and something fun but then they become symbols of destruction as Sammy’s real gun lands Mickey in prison and in the end guns kill both Edward and Mickey.

**Knives**

* The penknife that Mickey has as a seven-year-old indicates that he is streetwise and is important because he uses it to cut his and Edward’s hands to make them blood brothers.
* The two other knives are used to create threatening and violent scenes. The first is when Sammy threatens the bus conductor with a knife when he is stealing the fares, foreshadowing the more serious violence with a gun later.
* The second shows how unstable Mrs Lyons has become because she threatens Mrs Johnstone with a kitchen knife.

**Shoes**

* Shoes are used to illustrate superstitious beliefs and who believes
* them.
* Mrs Johnstone insists she removes them from the table but Mrs Lyons laughs at the superstition.
* Later, just before the end of Act I, Mrs Lyons’ deteriorating emotional state is symbolised by her ‘rushing’ at the table to remove shoes that Mr Lyons has placed there.
* It seems she now believes in the superstition that she laughed at earlier.

**Camera**

* A camera is used to create a happy atmosphere for the three teenage friends during ‘Summer Sequence’ as they take pictures with each other.
* It shows that they want to have a record of this time together.

**Tables**

* The table is a really useful prop because it can be used to create a formal sense of a room.
* It is used in the Lyons’ house, most notably to put shoes on to illustrate belief in superstition.
* It is then used in the Town Hall scene at the end to separate the councillors from their onstage audience.
* The table could also be used to create the courtroom scenes.
* Smaller tables or desks could be used in the school scene to create a classroom.

**The locket**

* The locket is a gift from Mrs Johnstone to Edward and contains a photo of her and Mickey.
* It serves as a symbol of his connection to her and his past. This symbol of his connection to his past and his refusal to give it up results in his suspension from school and precipitates Mrs Lyons’ deterioration in mental health and her threatening and destructive acts.

**Streetlight**

* The streetlight is used to create a street scene after Edward and Mickey have been to the cinema.
* It could imply romance, reminiscent of Gene Kelly’s scene in the 1952 film Singing in the Rain as it sets the scene for the romance between Linda and the two twins.

**Telephone**

* The telephone symbolises the connection between Linda and Edward.
* It is the way that they communicate and arrange to meet when they start their affair.

**Themes**

**Class**

* At the end of the play, straight after the twins die, the Narrator asks
* two questions - ‘And do we blame superstition for what came to pass?
* Or could it be what we, the English, have come to know as class?’
* Willy Russell is quite clear that he wanted to show that class splits these two brothers, that class keeps them apart, that class killed them.
* Mickey’s cry, when he finds out that Edward was given away; ‘I could have been him’ conveys his anger at the circumstances of his own life.
* Edward’s middle-class upbringing has given him a better education and a secure job and Mickey is angry that his working-class upbringing gave him none of the same opportunities but instead offered him insecure employment and exposure to crime and criminal behaviour.
* Mickey’s lack of opportunity, compared to Edward, means that he ended up spending many years in prison, has become dependent on drugs and thinks that he has lost his wife. It is the chronic unfairness of this when both brothers started off in life exactly the same but it leads to their tragic ends when the gun in Mickey’s hand explodes.
* The play does not however, present a simplistic view of class where the middle-class way of life is better than the working-class one.
* Edward’s private school is not perfect; he is teased and suspended for having a locket.
* Mr Lyons sometimes seems more interested in work than his family.
* Despite being deprived of financial security, educational and work opportunities Mickey does have the love and support of his mother and Linda and, while ‘Kids’ Game’ does show that the working-class kids are a bit rough it also looks great fun.
* Mrs Johnstone may be old before her time but she is shown to be happy with her life in Skelmersdale when she rejects Mrs Lyons’ offer of more money to move.
* By portraying both positive and negative sides to middle-class and working-class life neither is shown to be better than the other, instead it is the inequality of opportunity that is to blame.

**Superstition**

* Belief in superstition is seen at the beginning of the play and is an indication of being working class.
* Mrs Lyons laughs at Mrs Johnstone for being superstitious and then tells Edward that the ‘bogey man’ is something a ‘silly mother’ might tell her children about, but her fragile emotional state is demonstrated when Edward is missing by her suddenly pushing the shoes that Mr Lyons has put on the table to the floor.
* Edward mentions the superstition about magpies just after they move to the country to shows that despite Mrs Lyons’ he hopes he hasn’t lost his connection to the Johnstones and their beliefs just because they’ve moved away.
* The Narrator refers to other superstitions in the song ‘Shoes upon the table’ straight after Mrs Lyons makes up the superstition about twins separated at birth.
* Superstitions are repeated at key points during the play to build tension. The link between the Narrator and superstition makes him a kind of bogey man in the play and so superstition serves as a useful means of creating a sense of threat and tension.
* In the end Mrs Lyons’ made-up superstition about separated twins dying comes true.

**Nature versus nurture**

* The use of twins being separated makes the nature v’s nurture question more prominent than if it had been just siblings or friends who were being brought up in different types of homes.
* Nurture is made the focus because the two boys had an identical starting point (nature).
* Edward’s confidence, eloquence, education and success are clearly portrayed as being down to class rather than any innate qualities.
* In the same way Mickey’s unemployment, involvement in crime, depression and then violence are laid at the door of his class (nurture) rather than a character flaw (nature).

**Fate**

* The twins’ tragic fate is set from the very beginning of the play in the prologue when the narrator says that they ‘lay slain’.
* Like in all tragedies there is no sense that it is ever possible for them to escape from this end, the only question is how events will unfold to lead them there.

**Debt/repayment**

* Mrs Johnstone seems to be perpetually in debt to finance companies and catalogues for all her possessions.
* At the beginning of the play she is unable to repay what she owes so her things are repossessed.
* This idea of living with debt and the need to pay for what you have is
* extended into the rest of her life too.
* She describes her relationship to the twin she is going to give away as being on ‘borrowed time’ in the song ‘Easy Terms’. As soon as she agrees to give away one of her twins the Narrator describes it as a ‘reckoning’ and the phrase ‘a debt is a debt and must be paid’ is repeated through the play.
* The twins’ death is the price that Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons have to pay for the secret deal they make about separating them.
* Linda has to pay the price for loving them both by losing them both.

**Escape**

* Despite the inevitability of the tragic end of Blood Brothers the theme of escape is present in places.
* Mrs Johnstone justifies giving away one of her twins by imagining that she is allowing him to escape from the grinding poverty of her life.
* Mrs Johnstone dreams of escaping to somewhere where she can ‘start all over again’ and this comes true, to a certain extent, when they move to Skelmersdale at the end of Act I.
* Linda’s affair with Edward is seen as her trying to escape from her hard life as Mickey’s wife.

**Motherhood**

* The contrasting characters of Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons raise the theme of motherhood.
* Mrs Johnstone has a large chaotic brood and can’t offer them financial security but she does say she ‘loves the bones of every one of them’.
* While Mickey’s life chances are nothing compared to Edward’s he does seem to enjoy a warm relationship with his mother; Edward comments ‘she’s fabulous your ma’.
* Mickey and Linda need somewhere to live after they’re married Mrs Johnstone does not hesitate to let them stay with her.
* Mrs Lyons is able to offer Edward everything and dreams of caring for another child in reality there is not the same closeness between them as there is between Mrs Johnstone and Mickey. She says to Mrs Johnstone ‘I never made him mine’ and Edward seems naturally drawn to the Johnstones.
* While nurture might seem to win over nature when it comes to education and job opportunities the link between the biological mother and her biological child is presented as stronger than the one between the adoptive mother and child. Or could it be that the working-class family is being presented as closer than the middle-class one?

**Ideas and Messages**

**Fairness of opportunity**

The twins’ story illustrates the ways in which the working class are deprived of the same choices and chances that the middle class enjoy.

Willy Russell highlights the differences in their experiences of education, the way they are treated by the police and the job opportunities that are available, or not available, to them.

The Narrator’s question to the audience at the end about whether it is superstition or class that is to blame is designed to draw our attention to the different opportunities that different class backgrounds have offered them, and it is clear from Mickey’s anguished final cry ‘I could have been him!’ that Mickey blames his environment.

**Crime and punishment**

* Mickey, as a working-class boy is shown to be far more vulnerable to harsher treatment by the police, the courts and the penal system, than Edward.
* Mickey’s desperation for money when he is unemployed is something that Edward, a middle-class boy never experiences and so the temptation towards criminal behaviour is something that only the working-class twin encounters.

**Violence**

* Violence permeates both families in the play and runs as a threatening undercurrent from the very beginning. This is presented through the use of the guns and also the knives. It is not just
* Sammy uses violence
* Mrs Lyons hits Edward when he is a small boy
* Mrs Lyons attacks Mrs Johnstone with a knife when the boys are teenagers.
* Although Mickey kills Edward, the police then kill Mickey which means that the fatal violence at the end is enacted by both the working-class and figures in authority.
* The violent acts and violent ending cut across the class barriers both in those who perpetrate them and those who are the victims.

**The Writer’s use of language**

**Spoken language**

Russell sees working with spoken language as something that strongly references working-class culture.

**Differences in vocabulary by different classes**

* Different vocabulary and accents are used to signify the different classes. This is used for comic effect when Mickey and Edward are seven and Edward appears to trade his sweets for swear words and then later when Edward is able to draw on his wider vocabulary and eloquence when talking about girls.
* It is also used to make more serious points about the unfairness of the system in the way the policeman talks to the two families.
* The terrible consequences of unemployment for the working-class are disguised in ‘Sign of the Times’.

**Economic terms (debt and the price paid for actions)**

* The metaphor of debt and a ‘price being paid’ is used throughout the play to symbolise the consequences that Mrs Johnstone, Mrs Lyons, Mickey, Edward and Linda all have to face due to the twins being ‘secretly parted’.
* The image of a life overshadowed by debt is a pertinent image for the impending tragedy as it highlights the difference in the financial circumstances of the two boys.

**Structure**

**Two Acts**

* Act I takes place in Liverpool
* Act II takes place in Skelmersdale.

**Prologue and inevitable end**

The prologue introduces the story and tells us the tragic end. This provides an overall structure for the story as the events that unfold are all going to lead to this inevitable end.

The repeated references to superstitions, the bogey man, the devil, and a price needing to be paid serve to foreshadow and hold all the events together that are progressing towards the death of the twins.

**Episodic structure**

* The action of the play stretches across approximately 25 years, starting in the 1950s and finishing in the late 1970s.

The episodes are not evenly spaced but jump between key points.

* We start around the twins’ birth
* Then move to when they are seven years old
* Then fourteen years old
* Then eighteen years old
* Finishing when they are around twenty five (Mickey serves less than seven years getting out early for ‘good behaviour’ but it is unclear how much time passes between him coming out of prison, getting a job, moving house and then seeing Edward and Linda together).

**Contrast**

* The play is structured to contrast the two lives of the twins.
* The Johnstones and Lyons families and homes are contrasted
* The twins use of language is contrasted
* The policeman’s approach to the families is contrasted
* The twins educational experiences are contrasted

These pairings are not quite as strong in the later episodes of the play as the focus is on Mickey’s life and the way its disintegration leads to the tragic end.

**Characterisation**

**Narrator**

The Narrator is a choric character. **A choric character comments on the action and usually doesn’t take much part in the main action. The idea of a chorus (a group of performers) comes from Greek tragic drama where they could take part in, comment on or provide the poetic or musical parts of plays.**

The Narrator is the first character, in fact the sole character we see on the stage at the start of the play.

He enters and exits the stage frequently highlighting points of tension and serving as a point of transition between the scenes.

When he appears and sings verses from ‘Shoes upon the Table’ the audience knows that another piece of the action has just fallen into place to lead to the tragic end.

He is there when Mrs Johnstone agrees to give one of the twins to Mrs Lyons and comments that they’ve ‘overlooked the fact’ that ‘a debt is a debt, and must be paid’.

He’s there when Edward becomes friends with Mickey and Linda.

As the bus conductor, he reminds Mrs Johnstone that ‘no one gets off without the price bein’ paid.’

He’s there when Sammy and Mickey commit their robbery.

Towards the end of Act II it specifies in the stage directions that he ‘watches Linda’ when she telephones Eddie; this draws attention to this moment as being the turning point that precipitates the chain of events that lead to the inevitable end.

Some productions have the Narrator observing the action from the side or above on a balcony making him a constant, foreboding presence.

He is typically dressed in a dark suit making him seem like an undertaker, which adds to the atmosphere of tragedy.

He could be seen as a symbol of the devil or a bogeyman,

The Narrator also takes on several small parts in the play including: the milkman, the gynaecologist, the bus conductor, the teachers and different roles during the three friends’ teenage summer together.

**Mrs Johnstone**

At the beginning of the play Mrs Johnstone is a single mother of seven children who is described in the stage directions as ‘aged thirty but looks more like fifty’.

In her opening song Mrs Johnstone describes herself as ‘twenty-five’ but looking ‘forty-two’ either way she is young but her life has aged her prematurely.

Mrs Johnstone is depicted as a tragic figure through her comparison to Marilyn Monroe.

Her tragic flaw is perhaps her gullibility but she could also be seen as the victim of her circumstances, a single mother with little money who tried to give one of her children the chance of a better life.

**Mrs Lyons**

* Mrs Jennifer Lyons is the middle-class contrast to Mrs Johnstone.
* She has a big house, plenty of money, a husband but no children.
* Mrs Lyons’ vulnerability is revealed through her verse in the song ‘My Child’ in which she confesses her dreams of having her own child.
* She is presented as quite manipulative, asking her husband for a substantial sum of money which she says is for things for the baby and nursery and then using the money to pay Mrs Johnstone to leave.
* She threatens Mrs Johnstone with prison and when that does not seem to work, makes up the superstition that twins ‘secretly parted’ will ‘immediately die’ if they ever learn that they are a twin.
* She is portrayed several times as violent.
* When Mrs Johnstone says she will take Edward Mrs Lyons ‘roughly drags her out of the way’.
* She hits Edward ‘hard and instinctively’ when he swears.
* She tries to attack Mrs Johnstone with a kitchen knife when she refuses to leave Skelmersdale.
* Mrs Lyons’ mental state is shown to gradually disintegrate during the play.
* One key way this is conveyed is through the way she reacts to superstitions. At the beginning of the play she laughs at them but then as she becomes more desperate about losing Edward, she starts to believe them.
* She is referred to as a ‘mad woman’ by kids’ voices (offstage) in a chant just after she threatens Mrs Johnstone.

**Mr Lyons**

* Mr Lyons is distant from the most of the domestic scenes in the play.
* He always seems to be rushing off to work, the stage direction when we first meet him just after the twins have been born has him ‘glancing at his watch’ and then saying ‘I’ve got a board meeting I really must dash’.
* He is traditional about the division of their responsibilities, feeling that the decisions about their home are his wife’s ‘domain’.
* Unlike Mrs Johnstone Mr Lyons is treated with respect by the policeman, who calls him ‘sir’ and the two men are able to resolve Edward’s ‘prank’ over a drink.
* Mr Lyons’ final scene is as a managing director who is making lots of workers, including Mickey, redundant.
* He sings ‘Take A Letter Miss Jones’, which takes quite a cavalier approach to laying people off, blaming ‘the times’, ‘the world situation’ and ‘the recession’.
* Throughout the play Mr and Mrs Lyons represent a comfortable middle class who are never troubled by money troubles or financial insecurity.
* Edward inherits this secure existence, enabled by his private school and university education.

**Mickey**

* Mickey (Michael) Johnstone is the twin that stays with his mother Mrs Johnstone.
* He is the youngest of the Johnstones and seems to suffer at the hands of his older brother Sammy.
* At seven Mickey is streetwise, shown through his knowledge of swear words and the fact that he has a penknife.
* When playing with the other kids Mickey gets singled out and has to rely on his friend Linda for protection and comfort.
* Mickey at fourteen is presented as a typical teenager, self-conscious about his appearance and starting to be interested in girls.
* The scenes on the bus and in the classroom show that Linda is still supporting and defending him.
* When he leaves school his narrow range of job opportunities is represented by him having a boring factory job making cardboard boxes, which disappears when the economy turns bad.
* The effect that losing his job has on Mickey is presented by his aggression towards his blood brother when Edward returns from university.
* This turns to depression after his involvement in the robbery when Sammy shoots the garage worker.
* While in prison he is compared to Marilyn Monroe because she struggled with depression and was prescribed medication.
* Mrs Johnstone’s song continues to narrate his release from prison but describes him as looking ‘fifteen years older’ and having slow speech, presumably the effects of the medication he is taking.
* Mickey could be seen as the tragic hero of the play, his disappointment with his life leading to his plan to shoot Edward for taking Linda.
* The real tragedy happens however, when Mrs Johnstone arrives at the end where she tells them that they are twins and Mickey’s displays his fury at this and his rage that if he had been given away instead of Edward then he would have had a better life. This causes his gun to go off, killing Edward.

**Edward**

* Edward is the twin who is taken by Mrs Lyons to bring up as her own.
* Mrs Johnstone, Mickey and Linda all immediately shorten his name to Eddie, which shows us the more informal life he would have had if he had stayed with Mrs Johnstone.
* Edward’s social status or class is represented by the way he speaks, especially when compared to Mickey.
* His accent and his higher level of vocabulary represent his middle-class upbringing.
* When the twins meet aged fourteen Edward says ‘shag the vicar’ and Mickey laughs at his ‘posh voice’.
* Edward is presented as more confident about expressing himself than Mickey due to his superior education. He has a wider, more mature expressive vocabulary.
* He is able to create a parody of romantic clichés about how to speak to girls because he’s ‘read about it’.
* Edward appears more confident overall, he is the one who suggests they go and watch ‘Nymphomaniac Nights and Swedish Au Pairs’ and who dances around shouting ‘tits, tits, tits’ in the street afterwards, and who jumps around the lamp post and says ‘Adolf Hitler’ to the policeman.
* He orchestrates Mickey and Linda finally getting together just before he goes off to university, despite the fact that he loves Linda too and is able to articulate his feelings much more eloquently than Mickey.
* Edward’s more privileged upbringing is there to serve as a contrast to Mickey’s working-class life and to demonstrate the sort of life Mickey could have had if he had the same opportunities.
* Edward’s life is not presented as perfect as his dad is absent a lot as he is at work; he is teased by other students at school and bullied by his teacher.
* His relationship with Mrs Lyons is sometimes difficult
* He loses the girl he loves to Mickey.

**Linda**

* Linda is the same age as Mickey and Edward and lives close to Mickey.
* She comes across as feisty, confident, and unafraid to stand against the larger groups of older kids in defence of Mickey.
* During the ‘Summer Sequence’ there is a premonition of what is to come when the scene freezes as she is between the two twins playing piggy-in-the-middle, here Linda is presented as an innocent victim caught up in the tragic story of the twins.
* After Mickey comes out of prison Linda’s physical appearance and demeanour has changed.
* The stage directions describe how she ‘is weighed down with shopping bags and is weary’.
* Her renewed contact with Edward is described by the Narrator at the beginning of ‘Light Romance’, as her trying to rediscover the ‘girl inside the woman’.
* At the end of the play Mrs Johnstone retakes the central position between the two boys that had been occupied by Linda.

**Sammy**

* Sammy is Mickey and Edward’s older brother.
* Mrs Johnstone’s seventh child.
* Mickey admires him for having ‘two worms and a catapult.
* Other attributes include spitting, playing with matches, going to bed late, drawing ‘nudey women’ and weeing through next door’s letter box.
* There is however, a slightly darker side to Sammy, even at ten – he takes Mickey’s toys, including his gun and his car, which he breaks.
* Mickey tells Edward that when Sammy was little and had been left in the care of his big sister Donna Marie, he ‘fell out the window an’ broke his head’ which meant that he had to have a plate put in it (this would be a metal plate put in to replace a broken or missing piece of skull).
* Sammy takes a lead role in ‘Kids’ Game’ in the opposite gang to Mickey and Linda and tends to come out on top.
* Linda is the only one who gets the better of him when she threatens to tell her mother ‘why all her ciggies always disappear when you’re in our house’.
* The move to the country doesn’t seem to improve Sammy.
* We learn from Mrs Johnstone’s opening in Act II that ‘our Sammy burnt the school down’ and then he robs the bus conductor at knifepoint.
* The character Sammy is always hovering in the background of Mickey’s life as a warning of the road he shouldn’t take, both Linda and Mrs Johnstone warn Mickey not to be like Sammy.
* Sammy is aligned with guns from the start of the play.

**Relationships**

**Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons**

* At the beginning of the play Mrs Lyons seems to hold most of the power in the two women’s relationship.
* She is the employer and she is able to control and manipulate Mrs Johnstone through threats and through a created superstition. However, this control slips away from Mrs Lyons as she becomes paranoid about losing Edward to his birth mother Mrs Johnstone.
* When Mrs Lyons tries bribing and threatening Mrs Johnstone later in the play Mrs Johnstone refuses to give in, even when attacked with a knife.
* At the end of the play it seems that Mrs Lyons’ desire for revenge causes her to point out Linda’s infidelity to Mickey, which leads to Mickey going after Edward with the gun.
* Mrs Johnstone is the one left grief-stricken and distraught between her two dead twins.

**Mrs Johnstone and Mickey**

* Mrs Johnstone and Mickey seem to have a good relationship through the play.
* Despite not being able to offer him all the toys he wants when he is a child, there is good-natured teasing when Mickey is a teenager. Mrs Johnstone supports Mickey when Linda becomes pregnant and they need somewhere to live.
* At the very end of the play Mickey rejects his mother, revealing that he resents the life he has led and wishes that he could have been Edward.

**Mrs Johnstone and Edward**

* Edward is taken from Mrs Johnstone by Mrs Lyons just after he is born.
* After their first meeting, when Mrs Johnstone sends him away their relationship seems close.
* Mrs Johnstone gives Edward a secret locket which represents the connection between them.

**Mrs Lyons and Edward**

Mrs Lyons is very over-protective of Edward, sacking Mrs Johnstone to keep her away from him and not wanting him to go out to play.

Mrs Lyons’ relationship with 14-year-old Edward, in contrast to Mrs Johnstone’s with Mickey, is a little stilted and awkward.

When she is trying to teach him how to waltz and when she kisses him goodbye he tells her to ‘stop fussing’.

When he is suspended from school and Mrs Lyons sees the locket he keeps the secret about where he got it from her.

**Mickey and Edward**

* After being separated at birth Edward and Mickey next meet when they are seven and despite the differences in their upbringings they immediately become friends and blood brothers.
* When Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons find out that the boys have met they both do their best to separate them but the boys continue to seek each other out.
* During their teenage years they become very close, as demonstrated by ‘Summer Sequence’
* When Edward leaves for university and Mickey loses his job they drift apart.
* The love triangle between the twins and Linda causes tragedy when Mickey finds out that Linda and Edward have begun an affair.
* Mickey goes to confront Edward with a gun and it is only then that they find out they are twins and Mickey shoots Edward.

**Mickey and Linda**

* Linda is Mickey’s friend and protector when they are seven-year-olds playing on the street.
* At 14 she continues in this role but in addition has become his love interest too.
* Her not-so-subtle advances include saying she loves him in assembly and asking him to put his arms around her waist.
* Linda attempts to make him jealous by saying that she thinks ‘another feller’s gorgeous’, the irony being that the other boy is Edward, who she ends up having an affair with.
* In the end she gets fed up with Mickey.
* It is Edward who has to force Mickey to ask Linda out and then their relationship progresses at a lightning pace with Linda quickly becoming pregnant and then their marriage.
* When Mickey comes out of prison Linda organises a job for him and a home for them but Mickey is resentful as it is only with Edward’s help that this has been possible.
* It is Linda’s affair with Edward that pushes Mickey into madness as he retrieves the gun and goes after Edward.

**Edward and Linda**

* Edward is introduced to Linda by Mickey when they are seven but it is not until the ‘Summer Sequence’ that they spend a lot of time together.
* Edward declares his love for Linda in ‘I’m Not Saying A Word’.
* Linda turns to Edward for help when Mickey comes out of prison she phones him and begins an affair with him.

**Mickey and Sammy**

* Mickey looks up to Sammy when they are young, admiring his spitting and his worms.
* Mickey is also a little afraid of Sammy as he takes his toys and only gives Mickey a sweet if he has ‘weed on it first’.
* When Sammy gets in trouble on the bus he tries to get Mickey to go with him but Linda stops Mickey.
* When Mickey is unemployed and broke he cannot resist Sammy’s promise of ‘fifty notes’ for helping with a robbery.
* Involvement with Sammy results in Mickey’s seven-year prison sentence and his descent into depression.