

Theatre In Education (TIE) is theatre created for a particular age group or specific target audience. The aim of Theatre In Education is to educate the audience about a topic, issue or debate – while also entertaining them and inspiring them. TIE can also bring stories from history or literature to life.

The ground-breaking TIE movement was pioneered in 1965 by the Belgrade Theatre Company in Coventry. It was developed for young people and used theatre and drama to create a range of learning opportunities for young people to explore political, ethical and moral issues in a safe environment. Actor-teachers from the Belgrade Theatre Company would tour local schools where they would perform short pieces of theatre and lead workshops that allowed students to explore important issues and ideas in active and creative ways. The target audience isn't always school-aged. Present day the company also put on plays which explore shared heritage and religion.

Founded in 1982 Big Brum is another famous TIE company. They are based in the West Midlands and they run educational programmes which tour primary, secondary and other educational settings. Big Brum works across all ages, backgrounds and abilities, using theatre and drama to help young people make meaning of their lives and the world around them.

The National Trust is not only Europe's largest conservation charity, it also runs an award winning schools programme led by experienced facilitators and theatre practitioners, with workshops, plays and interactive drama for primary and secondary students.

Augusto Boal (a Brazilian Theatre Director) developed 'Forum Theatre' during the 1960s. He understood how Theatre could be a powerful tool to educate and empower people to make changes to their current situation.

Forum Theatre is best described as interactive Theatre. One of the characters in the play or scene has some kind of dilemma or problem that they are trying unsuccessfully to overcome. Audience members are allowed to stop the action and make suggestions as to what the character could do. The scene is replayed several times with different audience members' suggestions being tried until the problem is successfully overcome. Forum Theatre developed further when Boal invited a female member of the audience onstage to show the actor what she wanted to be acted out. This was because she became so frustrated and angry with an actor who did not understand her suggestion. This event led to the birth of the spect-actor!!!!

"Theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society. Theatre can help us build a future, rather than just waiting for it." Augusto Boal

- **Target Audience** — Who the play is aimed at e.g. different school year groups, university students, car drivers, the Elderly, young offenders, prisoners.
- **A Relevant Topic** — Something sensitive that could effect the Target Audience.
- **A Strong Message** — A clear aim and educational objective running throughout. TIE often explores issues from various viewpoints, so we can see the effect of an action upon a range of people.
- **Educational Information** — The inclusion of facts and figures to educate the audience.
- **Small Versatile Casts** — TIE tours between venues and is low budget so actors must multirole, operate technical equipment and sometimes play musical instruments.
- **Costume** — The costumes are simple and symbolic/representational, especially if actors have to multi-role.
- **Basic Set & Props** — The production design must be portable so the design must be simple and representational/symbolic.
- **Basic Lighting and Sound** — Often TIE companies use the venues house lights but some companies tour with a small portable lighting rig.
- **Audience Participation** — The audience are often spoken to directly (breaking the fourth wall) and asked to participate in parts of the performance — there is often a workshop after the show.
- **Forum Theatre** — A form of audience participation developed by Augusto Boal where the audience can suggest ways to change the outcome of the performance.
- **Balance between Theatre & Education** — One of the hardest things in TIE is finding the right balance between the theatrical experience and educating the audience.
- **Visual elements** — Use of Projectors/PowerPoint/Placards to emphasise the message.
- **Episodic** - Smaller scenes that can stand alone.
- **Use of Narrator/Narrating** — A storyteller. It could be someone who lives outside the world of the play or a character in the story.
- **Direct Address** — Characters acknowledge and talk to the audience, often asking for their advice.
- **Multi-roling** — Actors playing more than one part.
- **Stereotypes** — Characters in TIE are often stereotypical (caricatures) in order to make an immediate point to the audience.
- **Monologue** — A continuous uninterrupted speech by one actor. It could be to another actor or the thoughts of the character said aloud.
- **Movement & Physical Theatre** — Mime, physical theatre and movement work are often favoured over naturalism.
- **Music & Dance** — Music is a great way of quickly creating the correct atmosphere and dance is popular in TIE with younger target audiences.

1. Decide on the **target audience**
2. Decide on the **topic** of the scene
3. Agree the **key message/educational information**
4. **Research** the topic
5. **Setting**— Consider where the play takes place
6. **Write/devise** the scene/play
7. **Audience participation**
8. **Evaluation**

BLOOD BROTHERS KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

Plot Summary



- Mrs Johnstone, a struggling single mother of seven, finds out that she is pregnant with twins. Her employer, Mrs Lyons persuades Mrs Johnstone to give her one of the babies.
- Mrs Lyons takes Edward and brings him up as her own, convincing her husband this is true. Mrs Johnstone goes back to work but fusses over Edward, leading to Mrs Lyons firing her.
- Aged seven, Mickey and Edward meet and become best friends, along with Mickey's neighbour Linda. The three get into trouble with the police when they begin to throw stones at windows.
- Scared of Edward becoming close to his biological family, Mrs Lyons convinces her husband to move the family to the countryside. Soon afterwards, the Johnstones (and Linda's family) are rehoused by the council.
- As teenagers, Mickey and Edward meet again and they rekindle their friendship. Linda and the boys remain close throughout their teenage years before Edward goes to university.
- After marrying a pregnant Linda, Mickey loses his factory job.
- As they grow older Eddie secretly helps Mickey by getting him a new job and helping his family to get moved up the waiting list for a house.
- Edward and Linda start a light romance. Mickey finds out and is furious so he finds Sammy's gun and goes to find Edward.
- Linda tells Mrs Johnstone what is happening. She rushes to find Mickey and tells him in front of Edward that they are twins.
- Mrs Lyons enters with a gun, clearly suffering from a mental breakdown. She shoots the brothers 'they were born and they died on the self same day'.

THEMES

Social Class - Willy Russell uses the separation of the twins to question how equal society really is, showing that even with identical DNA, Mickey and Edward's lives become completely different because of the social classes they are raised in. Written during Thatcher's Britain, when working class areas like Liverpool faced severe unemployment, the play contrasts the struggling Johnstones with the comfortable Lyons family to highlight how opportunity is shaped by class. As the boys grow up, their childhood friendship cannot overcome the widening gap between their experiences, and Russell challenges Thatcher's belief that hard work alone leads to success. Mickey wants to achieve more, but without Edward's advantages, his chances are restricted from the beginning.

Superstition and Fate - Superstition enters the play through Mrs Johnstone, whose beliefs allow Mrs Lyons to manipulate her into giving up one of the twins. The narrator repeatedly reminds the audience of the boys' tragic ending, creating a sense that their deaths are unavoidable and that Mrs Lyons' invented superstition has come true. However, Russell uses this idea of fate to raise a deeper question about whether the twins are doomed by superstition or by the social forces that keep them apart. Although fate frames the story, the play strongly suggests that class inequality, rather than destiny, is what ultimately leads to Mickey and Edward's tragic end.

CHARACTERS

The main characters in *Blood Brothers* are the twins Mickey Johnstone and Edward Lyons, along with their mothers Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons. Linda, who grows up with the boys and later marries Mickey, is also central to the story. The Narrator remains on stage throughout, speaking directly to the audience rather than taking part in the action.

Mickey changes the most across the play. At seven he is open and emotional, as a teenager he becomes awkward and unsure of himself, and as an adult he is angry and depressed by the lack of opportunities in his life.

Edward begins as a friendly, eager child and grows into a cheerful teenager, although he fails to understand Mickey's struggles. As an adult he becomes a successful professional.

Mrs Johnstone stays warm, loving and down to earth, but her superstition makes her vulnerable to **Mrs Lyons**, who begins the play confident and controlling but becomes increasingly unstable.

The Narrator is a constant, mysterious presence who comments on events and links the audience to the story, sometimes played as threatening and sometimes more neutral.

KEY TERMINOLOGY

Acts and Scenes — The version you are studying is split into 5 Acts. Each act is divided into 5 scenes. The scenes in each act are not evenly distributed.

Narrator — The narrator appears throughout the play and only talks directly to the audience. He always speaks in rhyming couplets.

Monologue — The play has several monologues (uninterrupted speeches). The most notable is Mickey's 'I wish I was our Sammy' speech in Act 2.

Chorus — Alongside the main characters there are a group of unnamed supporting actors who work as an ensemble when necessary (backing singers, other Johnstone children), help with scene transitions and also take on minor speaking roles.

Multi-rolling — There are times in *Blood Brothers* when actors play more than one role.

Song — This is only used in Act 1 and used to explain Mrs Johnstone's backstory. Willy Russell would later add more songs to the play and turn it in to a smash West End musical.

Naturalism — The main scenes in *Blood Brothers* have a realistic and believable feel. However the Narrator and Chorus add stylisation to the piece.

Freeze Frame — This is used to mark the key moment when 'the plan' was thought of by Mrs Lyons.

Comedy — There are some very funny moments in the first half of *Blood Brothers* but these disappear as the play gets darker.

Language — Willy Russell uses language to show the contrast between the working class and middle class characters.

Accent — The play is often performed with Liverpudlian accents (except for the Lyons family who speak in a contrasting 'posh' way).

Montage — This is created through a series of still images in Act 4 to show time passing for the teenagers from age 14-18.

Dramatic Irony — When the audience knows something a character doesn't.

Mark Wheeler (Knowledge Organiser)



About the Playwright — Mark Wheeler started his career as a **Secondary School Drama Teacher** and is now a **full time playwright** and part time **Artistic Director for the Romsey School Community Youth Theatre**.

Although Mark's name is not well-known outside schools and colleges, he is one of the most-performed playwrights in Britain. **Too Much Punch For Judy** (about the dangers of drink driving) has been performed over **6,000** times. **Hard to Swallow** based on Catherine Dunbar's battle with anorexia is now a GCSE set text alongside world renowned playwrights William Shakespeare and Bertolt Brecht. His most recent play **I Love You, Mum—I Promise I Won't Die** focuses on teenage drug use (in particular MDMA/Ecstasy).



Documentary Theatre

Most of Mark's plays are based on **true stories** and can be categorised as **Documentary Theatre** or **Docu-Drama**. This is a style/genre of *theatre* making where **documentary material** such as **interviews, reports, media material and transcripts** are used as the **primary** source for the script.

In the case of **Hard to Swallow** Mark used **Maureen Dunbar's book 'Catherine'** as the basis for the play alongside **interviews** with Maureen and Catherine's actual **diaries** to create the script.

His plays could also be categorised as **'Theatre in Education'** as they often have a clear **target audience** and strong **educational message**.

Key Terminology

Physical Theatre — A style of theatre where movement and music is equal or more important than dialogue when telling a story. Mark Wheeler's plays include **Car Crashes, Fairground Rides, Burning Buildings and Rooftop Plunges**. Wheeler encourages these moments to be as physical and creative as possible.

Body Props — An element of Physical Theatre where actors use their bodies to become any required props or set in a performance.

Precis Theatre/Two Touch Theatre — A device where a sentence is condensed into just one or two words.

Sound Collage — Actors layer their voices (words or sounds) to suggest a mood, location or atmosphere.

Direct Address — When performers talk directly to the audience.

Monologue — An uninterrupted speech by an actor.

Multi-rolling — When an actor plays more than one role in a play.

Split Stage — When the stage is divided and two scenes take place at the same time. One side remains frozen whilst the other has the audience's attention.

Chorus — A group of actors working together using vocal and movement skills to communicate thoughts, feelings and ideas.

Areas of the Stage

Crossover		
Wings	Upstage Right	Upstage Centre
	Centre Stage Right	Centre Stage
	Downstage Right	Downstage Centre
Audience		

Raked Stage/Seating

Older theatres used a sloping or **Raked Stage** to improve the view for the audience.

Modern theatres use **Raked Seating** for the same reason.