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A lesson written for every student in the room

FREE LESSON SAMPLER

Blood Brothers: A stone in place of her heart

Why does Russell show us the ending before the story begins?

Lesson 3 of 31 from the scheme of learning

Teacher notes, slides and student pages at all three levels

Written for the AQA specification



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What is in this sampler

This is one complete lesson from our Blood Brothers scheme for Literature Paper 2, Section A. It comes exactly as it appears in the full scheme, so you can teach it next week and see how our lessons work.

Teacher notes	Timings with slide numbers, Do Now answers, the exploded quotation, the hinge question and what each answer tells you, the task at three levels, a model and notes on misconceptions and adapting the lesson (next pages).
Slides	The editable PowerPoint deck for Lesson 3, with teacher notes on every slide (separate file).
Student pages	The lesson's pages from the student booklet: one question, with the Securing, Strengthening and Soaring support side by side (at the end of this document).

How every lesson works

Know	Do Now from memory, vocabulary, then the reading. The five Do Now questions build on what students learned in Lessons 1 and 2 of the full scheme.
Apply	Explode one quotation together; a hinge question checks understanding.
Master	One shared task, with Securing, Strengthening and Soaring support; then a model and an exit ticket. Most Master tasks are What–How–Why paragraphs, and some are creative or other forms: in this lesson, a story opening.

Three levels of support

Every student answers the same question in every lesson. What changes is the support on the page, so the whole class does the same lesson:

Securing	The most support: a word bank, a choice of quotations, a worked example and sentence starters. For students working towards a grade 4.
Strengthening	Prompts for What, How and Why, a paragraph planner and a checklist. For students working at grades 5 and 6.
Soaring	A debatable statement, prompts to think further and an argument planner. For students aiming at grades 7 to 9.

The names describe the support, never the student. The hinge question shows who might start where, and students move between levels from lesson to lesson.

In the full scheme

- 31 lessons like this one, with editable slides and a teacher handbook (lesson notes, unit map, assessment guide and knowledge bank)
- A student booklet with every lesson and all three levels of support, plus the same lessons as one pack per level
- Six weeks of independent practice homework at three levels
- Four Feedback Loop progress checks with whole-class feedback sheets and improvement tasks

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- An exam-style end-of-unit essay with a teacher guide, level guidance and annotated model answers
- A Soaring stretch booklet for students aiming at the top levels
- A catch-up sheet for every lesson, for students who missed it
- An inclusion guide: pre-teaching, SEND, EAL and pupil premium notes for every lesson
- The revision workbook and the model answer pack, to print for every student
- Every licence for the scheme also includes its 30 Raising Achievement drills for intervention sessions

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Lesson 3: A stone in place of her heart

SEQUENCE 1: CONTEXT AND THE BARGAIN · 60 MINUTES

Why does Russell show us the ending before the story begins?

By the end of the lesson, students can

- Explain what the Narrator tells the audience in the prologue, before the story begins
- Analyse how Russell uses the Narrator's question and the deaths acted out at the start to shape the audience's judgement
- Write the opening of a story that tells the reader how it ends, then goes back to the start

Lesson at a glance

Time	Phase	What happens	Slides
0–8	Know	Do Now: five quick questions on Lesson 1 and the KS3 terms. Students self-mark from the answer slide.	2–3
8–18	Know	Pre-teach "prologue", "narrator", "foreshadowing", "cyclical structure" and "ballad". Students read the prologue in their own copies, using the scene guide, then note what the audience knows before the story starts.	4–7
18–28	Apply	Explode the quotation together. Think aloud about the noun "stone" and the question mark, then students annotate their copy of the play. Before you reveal any notes, students try the four empty boxes on the first explode slide, on their own or after you model one box.	8
28–33	Apply	Hinge question on mini-whiteboards. Use the answers to decide who starts on which level of support.	9–10
33–53	Master	Students write the opening of a story that begins with its ending, using their level of support in the student booklet. Share the model opening in the last five minutes and ask students to check their full stops and the punctuation of any speech (AO6).	11–12
53–60	Master	Exit ticket. Collect and sort into three piles to plan the start of Lesson 4.	13

Do Now answers

1	In which year, and in which city, did the full musical of Blood Brothers first open?	1983, at the Liverpool Playhouse in Liverpool
2	What does Russell say largely decides a person's life chances?	The class they belong to
3	Which town near Liverpool was named a new town in 1961?	Skelmersdale
4	What job did Russell leave school to do in 1962?	Ladies' hairdresser
5	What does redundancy mean?	Losing your job because the employer no longer needs that work done

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Vocabulary

prologue	an opening section that comes before the main story begins
narrator	a figure who tells the story to the audience and comments on it
foreshadowing	hints early in a story about what will happen later
cyclical structure	a shape in which a story ends where it began, like a circle
ballad	a song or poem that tells a story, often in short rhyming verses

Reading

Act One: the prologue

In your copy, read the opening of the play, from Mrs Johnstone's first two lines to the stage direction that gives her age.

> The play begins at its end. Mrs Johnstone sings two short lines, beginning "Tell me it's not true". Then the Narrator steps forward and tells the whole story in rhyming verse, like a ballad.
>
> He tells the audience about twin brothers, born on the same day and "As like each other as two new pins". Listen for his question: "How one was kept and one given away?" He tells us the brothers died on the day they learned the truth. The audience then sees both brothers die, acted out on stage, before the story goes back to the beginning.
>
> Notice how the Narrator speaks. He talks straight to the audience, and he asks them to judge the mother. Has she really got "a stone in place of her heart"? He does not answer. He leaves the audience to decide.
>
> Now read the stage direction for Mrs Johnstone as the story starts: "She is aged thirty but looks more like fifty". Ask yourself what might age a woman twenty years.
>
> Everything after this page shows how the ending came about. Ask yourself: if we already know how it ends, what keeps us watching?

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Word help **Narrator**: the figure who tells the story in verse and speaks to the audience

Explode the quotation

Method
A question from the Narrator in the prologue, spoken straight to the audience. It is the first time the play asks them to judge.

Zoom in
"stone" is a hard, cold concrete noun put where a living heart should be. It suggests a mother who feels nothing.

"There's a stone in place of her heart?"

Effect
The audience is asked to judge Mrs Johnstone before they have met her. The question mark leaves the verdict open.

Purpose
Russell sets the audience up as a jury. Once they see her poverty, he wants them to change their verdict and ask who is really to blame.

Hinge question

The Narrator tells the audience at the start that the twins will die. Why does Russell do this?

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A. So the audience watches to see how and why it happens, and judges what caused it. **(the right answer)**

B. Because the Narrator is wrong, and the twins survive at the end.

C. So the audience knows nothing important is left to happen in the play.

What the answers tell you

B means the student has not trusted the prologue: point out that the deaths are acted out on stage, then start them on Securing. C means the student thinks a known ending removes tension: ask why people rewatch films they know, and point to the Narrator's question about the mother, then start them on Securing or Strengthening.

Why the answer is right

Once the audience knows the ending, they stop asking what happens and start asking why, which is the question Russell wants them to answer.

Master task: story opening

Write the opening of a story that begins by telling the reader how it ends, then goes back to the start. Use two of Russell's methods: an ending told first, and a question that asks the reader to judge.

Securing aiming for a 4

A frame for each part of the opening, lines from the prologue to learn from and a word bank.

"As like each other as two new pins"

"How one was kept and one given away?"

"She is aged thirty but looks more like fifty"

Strengthening aiming for grades 5 to 6

Prompts for each part of the opening and a success checklist.

Open with the ending, told plainly, as the Narrator does

Ask the reader a question that invites them to judge one character

Turn back to the beginning with a clear signal of time

Describe the first scene so that the reader can already sense the ending

Soaring aiming for grades 7 to 9

Write the opening so that the reader's knowledge of the ending changes how they see the first, ordinary scene. Ask the reader to judge, and then give them a detail that makes the judgement harder.

Model story opening

Everyone on Mill Row knows how the story ends. One sister left on the morning train and never wrote. The other stayed in the house with the green door until the day the council pulled it down. There is a car park there now, and a sign that says No Overnight Parking.

You may have heard that Kath was the selfish one. People say she took the chance that should have been Mo's, and never looked back. Would you blame her? Most people did.

Before you decide, let me take you back.

It is a hot August, and the tar is soft on the road. Two girls sit on the front step of number twelve, sharing a bag of chips and a secret. Kath is eleven. Mo is ten, and she has her sister's old sandals on, a size too big, flapping when she walks.

Inside, their mother is counting coins on the kitchen table. She is thirty-five, and her hands look older than that. She counts the coins twice, as if they might change their minds.

On the mat by the door there is a long white envelope. Neither girl has opened it. Neither girl knows it has only one name on it.

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