

Scene-by-Scene Summary – Alongside key quotations from each section of the play.

Beginning of Act I

The play opens with Mrs Johnstone begging the Narrator to tell her 'it's not true', and the Narrator revealing that the Johnstone twins were separated at birth, and only found out when they died. Mrs Johnstone (a 30-something woman who looks much older) tells of her life having a shotgun wedding, having many children at a young age, and her husband leaving her. Mrs Johnstone cannot pay her bills, and her children are hungry. In the next scene, Mrs Johnstone is seen cleaning for the wealthy Mrs Lyons, who laments not being able to have children. Mrs Johnstone finds out that she is having twins (she cannot afford them both). Mrs Lyons begs her to give one of them to her. Initially, Mrs Johnstone is horrified, but Mrs Lyons is able to convince her. Mrs Lyons plays on Mrs Johnstone's belief in superstition to have her swear on a bible to tell no one. The deal is final.

*"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?"*

Middle of Act I

Mrs Johnstone gives birth to twins, and when she returns from hospital creditors take her possessions to pay for bills. Mrs Lyons enters and forces Mrs J to give up the twin, as promised. Reluctantly, she does so. When returning to the house the next week, Mrs J plays with the twin she gave away – Mrs L arrives and is furious - she fires her. Mrs J threatens to take her baby with her, and then to tell someone, but Mrs L makes up a new superstition about twins secretly parted, who learn their origins, immediately die.

*"Surely, it's better to give
one child to me. Look, at
least if the child was with
me you'd be able to see
him every day, as you
came to work."*

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End of Act I

7 years later, Mickey remarks to his mother that he is sick of his older brother, Sammy, bullying him. By chance, he then meets Edward, and the two instantly become best friends – they realise that they have the same birthday and agree to become ‘blood brothers.’ When Mickey introduces Edward to his mother, she is alarmed, and sends him home. When Mrs L finds out the two have become friends, she is also incensed. Mickey and Edward decide to play together against their mothers’ wishes. With Linda, they play with a toy gun, then throw stones at a window, but are caught by a Policeman. The Policeman acts v. differently to the Johnstones and the Lyons families. The Lyons move to the country. Edward and Mickey both miss each other dearly. Not too long after, Mrs J is receives a letter stating that her family is being relocated to the country. She sees it as a fresh start.

"See this means that we're blood brothers an' that we always have to stand by each other. Now you say after me: 'I will always defend my brother. I will always defend my brother.'"

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<p>Beginning of Act II</p>	<p>Mrs J sings happily about her new house and life. She pays bills on time. Mickey is now 14 and has begun to notice girls. Meanwhile, Edward now attends boarding school. Mickey now clearly has a crush on Linda. They get on a bus together, which Sammy attempts to rob before being chased away. Linda warns Mickey never to turn bad like Sammy.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Edward is suspended at school for wearing a locket given to him by Mrs J (with a picture of her and Mickey in it) before he left. Mickey and Linda are also suspended from their school for answering back to a teacher. Leaving school, Mickey longs to be able to tell Linda how he feels. He bumps into Edward, and the two recognise one another. They begin to talk about girls, and decide to go and watch a pornographic film together, in order to get some tips. Mrs Lyons watches their whole exchange, and follows them.</p>	<p><i>"Linda...Linda...Don't ...Linda, I wanna kiss y', an' put me arms around y' an' kiss y' and kiss y' an even fornicate with y' but I don't know how to tell y' because I've got pimples an' me feet are too big..."</i></p>
<p>Middle of Act II</p>	<p>The boys stop at Mrs J's house to get money. She is shocked but happy to see Edward. She gives them money for a movie. Mrs Lyons (now increasingly unstable) confronts Mrs J, offering her large amounts of money to leave the area. Mrs J refuses. Angered, Mrs L tries to stab Mrs J, but Mrs J disarms her. Mrs L is becoming known as a 'mad woman.'</p> <p>Edward and Mickey emerge from the movie, impressed. Linda also emerges, having been at the same movie. Edward, excited, stands on a car, and the three are chased away by a policeman. The three spend a great deal of time together, and we see them grow from 14 to 18. At 18, Mickey now works in a factory, and Edward is going away to University. Although Edward clearly has feelings for Linda, he loyally encourages Mickey to ask her out, which he does. Mickey soon reveals to Mrs J that Linda is pregnant, and that they will marry soon. They get married, but shortly afterwards, Mickey is made redundant from the factory.</p>	<p><i>"Due to the world situation The shrinking pound, the global slump And the price of oil I'm afraid we must fire you, We no longer require you, It's just another Sign of the times"</i></p>

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End of Act II

Edward returns from university buoyant, however when he meets the depressed and cynical Mickey, the two argue. As they leave one another, Edward sees Linda, and confesses his love for her. Sammy then convinces Mickey to help him out in a robbery, which inevitably goes wrong – Mickey has to spend time in prison. When he is eventually released, his drug induced apathy (he's addicted to anti-depressants) prevent him from getting a job. Linda gets help from Edward (now on the housing committee) to get Mickey and her a new house. Mickey, however, continues to be cynical and depressed. Linda and Edward begin an affair. Mrs L shows Mickey Edward and Linda together, and Mickey is enraged. He finds the gun that Sammy hid in the botched robbery job, and tracks down Edward (who is at the town hall). Mrs J and Linda, realising what is going on, pursue him. He finds Edward and points the gun at him. A policeman asks Mickey to put the gun down. Mrs J emerges and reveals the two are brothers. Mickey, hysterical, torments his own position, and accidentally shoots Edward. The police then shoot Mickey.

“And do we blame superstition for what came to pass? Or could it be what we, the English, have come to know as class? Did you ever hear the story of the Johnstone twins, As like each other as two new pins”