

Tally's Blood

by *Ann Marie Di Mambro*

Teaching notes and discussion questions
for National 5 English

Gillian Sargent

As one of three dramas set by SQA for the Critical Reading component of the National 5 English exam, Ann Marie Di Mambro's *Tally's Blood* (first staged in 1989) is enjoying renewed popularity within Scottish schools.

Di Mambro is a Scottish writer (b. 1950) best known for her dramatic works for the stage and television. Di Mambro was born in Glasgow to Italian parents. As the playwright has suggested, *Tally's Blood* is a play which contains biographical resonance for her:

The Italian immigrant experience is one I know well from my own background [...] I was brought up with an awareness of my Italian identity and with stories of what happened to Italians in Scotland during the war. I frequently resented my Italian upbringing and the ways it stopped me fitting in with my peers [...]. (Introduction, *Tally's Blood*, Hodder Gibson (2016), p. v.)

Many of Di Mambro's family experiences as an Italian–Scot (e.g. her grandparents owned The Cosy Corner café in Hamilton) no doubt informed the rich depiction of the Pedreschi family and the evocation of setting.

The playwright's other works for the stage include: *Brothers of Thunder* (first staged 1994), a thematically complex piece exploring the difficult relationship between an HIV-positive man and the Catholic church; *The Letterbox* (first staged 1989), a play which takes as its subject a woman who has been domestically abused by her husband and who has been forced out of the family home; and *Ae Fond Kiss* (first staged 2004, and not to be confused with the film of the same name and year), a compassionate tale of the unlikely budding friendship between the central protagonist Zed, and Lola – a prostitute with whom Zed has been gifted an hour to spend for his birthday.

Di Mambro's screenwriting credits are extensive and include writing for prime-time favourites such as *Casualty*, *EastEnders*, *Taggart*, and *River City*, as well as for the first ever long-running Gaelic drama serial broadcast in Scotland, *Machair*.

In addition to writing prolifically for stage and screen, Di Mambro shares her academic expertise, shaping the next generation of screenwriters in her role as a lecturer-Professor at Glasgow Caledonian University.

RANGE:

- National 5 English / Drama

KEY TEXTS:

- *Tally's Blood* (Hodder Gibson, 2016)
- *Brothers of Thunder* (Nick Hern Books, 2015)
- *The Letterbox*, published in *Scot-Free* (Nick Hern Books, 1990)
- *Ae Fond Kiss* (unpublished)

PLOT

Taking place over the course of a turbulent nineteen-year period from 1936 to 1955, and with the setting moving between Italy and Glasgow, *Tally's Blood* follows the varying fortunes of three sets of couples: man and wife Rosinella and Massimo Pedreschi; Franco Pedreschi and his lover Bridget Devlin; and Hughie Devlin (Bridget's brother) and his best friend/eventual girlfriend Lucia Ianelli (the Pedreschi's niece). The Second World War forms an ominous backdrop to this play. When war breaks out, and Italy enters the fray as an ally to Hitler's Nazi Germany, the Pedreschi's find themselves embroiled in an ideological conflict in their adoptive homeland. Despite Rosinella's optimism that the family will not be made targets, and her assertion that 'Italians are good for this country. Who else is prepared to work till eleven o'clock every night, eh? [...] It's no as if we take any jobs away from any Scotch people.' (Act 1:10), the Pedreschi's shop comes under siege from local vigilantes armed with bricks and cries of 'Get the Tallies! Fascist bastards' (Act 1:12). Massimo is arrested and interned in a Prisoner of War camp before eventually being released. He is grief-stricken to learn of his father's death aboard the *Arandora Star*.

Directly mirroring the political conflict is Lucia's battle with her over-bearing adoptive guardian, Rosinella. Blinded by a deep-rooted prejudice against Scoto-Italian marriages, Rosinella attempts to engineer Lucia's romantic affairs by seeking out an Italian match for her niece. But as Lucia grows ever more headstrong and assertive she finds herself increasingly drawn towards her best friend, Hughie. Lucia becomes resentful towards her aunt Rosie and her overbearing meddling.

When Lucia is called for by her father, Luigi, to return to Italy, Hughie and Rosinella are left heartbroken. In a revelatory scene, Bridget's admission that Rosinella played a hand in her decision to abort her baby shames the matriarch into action. She makes Hughie her co-conspirator in a plot to reconcile the lovers, defying Luigi's wishes for Lucia to be married

to a man that he has arranged for her. The play ends on an up-beat note, a happily ever after of sorts, with two couples reuniting and reaffirming their love.

THEME IN *TALLY'S BLOOD*

The first wave of Italian immigrants arrived in Scotland in the 1890s, ostensibly driven by the lack of economic opportunity at home. By the 1930s, when the events of *Tally's Blood* begin, many Italian families had established businesses – particularly cafes and shops – in Scotland. As a result, Italians were generally regarded as industrious and hard-working. However, when the Italian dictator Mussolini declared war on Britain in June 1940, the relatively positive experience of Italians living in Scotland was to be marked indelibly. Established Italian communities were subject to vigilante attacks, with many Scottish people viewing this minority group within Scotland as an enemy of the British state. Many Italians were faced with internment or deportation. In one of the highest profile incidents involving the deportation of Italians, the *Arandora Star*, a ship transporting an estimated 734 Italian prisoners of war to Canada, was torpedoed by a German U-boat. Many Italian families in Scotland were affected profoundly by this attack, with most people knowing someone who died in this attack at sea. Di Mambro weaves the sinking of the *Arandora Star* into *Tally's Blood* as an incident which directly and profoundly affects the Pedreschi family when Massimo's father dies. Racial hostility – both directed towards the Italian Pedreschis and generated by the family's matriarch, Rosinella – underpins this play. The title, *Tally's Blood*, as well as being a colloquial name for the raspberry sauce poured over ice cream, indicates the play's main concerns with familial relationships, national identity and conflict. The antagonism between Italian and Scottish communities is played out at the microcosmic level in the play with the bickering and infighting of the Pedreschis and Devlins.

Whilst the context of the Second World War is perhaps the most important one for

understanding the theme of conflict, there are other important historical issues that this play engages with. Scotland in the 1930s found itself affected by a global economic depression. Mass unemployment led to increased numbers living in poverty, which in turn resulted in diminishing living standards for the working classes. The Devlins are the theatrical embodiment of this economic privation. In one of the most humbling scenes in the play, Bridget Devlin is forced to ask for a loan of money from Mr Pedreschi – a loan which we later learn will pay for Bridget to abort her – and Franco’s – baby.

Through the character of Bridget Devlin and the storyline concerning her abortion, Di Mambro also attempts to explore the moral question of family planning and birth control, a complex issue at the time (as it remains today) owing to a general lack of awareness and availability of birth control in the period in which the play is set. This issue would have been more complex within Catholic communities, given that the Catholic Church fundamentally opposed (as it still does) the use of contraception. The law in Scotland did not support women who wished to terminate pregnancies; a change in the law did not occur until 1967. In this context, then, Bridget is acting unlawfully in seeking and subsequently going through with an abortion. Rosinella’s ‘increasing horror’ (Act 2:8) as Bridget’s secret is revealed, would be a commonplace reaction for someone of Rosinella’s generation and faith. However, the audience is arguably encouraged to be more sympathetic towards Bridget as, largely through Rosinella’s meddling in her private affairs, Bridget has convinced herself that she has no option but to go through with the abortion, given that her child would not be economically or emotionally supported by its father or its extended family.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Task One: Exploring the Big Issues

Although this play was first staged in 1989, its themes and issues are still very much relevant to contemporary Scotland. Preliminary group discussions or homework research activities on the text might take into consideration the following topics and sub-categories:

1. The migrant experience in present-day Scotland

social interaction between groups / the integration of migrants into host culture / shared notions of nationhood / the benefits of migration to the Scottish economy / Brexiteers vs Remainers and the issue of border control

2. Poverty in Scotland

Child poverty / the concept of the working poor / pensioners and material deprivation

3. Women’s rights

Abortion in Northern Ireland (as a part of the United Kingdom)

Pupils might find it rewarding to pursue one of these issues in a broadly discursive N5 folio piece.

Task Two: Group Activity on Theme

There are three main themes covered in the play:

- Conflict
- Love (both romantic and familial)
- Identity

Working collaboratively in small groups, pupils should demonstrate their knowledge of theme by synthesising and condensing their detailed notes on each issue to create an infographic. Completed infographics might be photocopied and distributed to class as a key revision tool.

Teaching Activity: Group Activity on Setting

As we learn more about the circumstances of the Pedreschi's – they own and run a successful shop and are fully integrated members of the community – and as we understand more about their employee Hughie, we get the impression that place is a significant factor in shaping the identity of each character. Working in groups of four or five, pupils should undertake the following carousel activity:

What does the shop mean to

- Massimo
- Lucia
- Hughie
- Rossinella

What does Italy mean to

- Lucia
- Rosinella
- Massimo

Where would each character call home?

- Lucia
- Rosinella
- Franco
- Massimo

Extension:

Working independently, pupils should make detailed notes with supporting evidence from the text for each place listed in the carousel activity (above). Pupils should remember to state clearly what place means to each character and why it holds such significance.

Questions on Setting

- **Read Act 1:1.** Explain how Di Mambro's employment of dramatic techniques effectively establishes setting in this opening scene.
- **Consider Act 1:4.** Massimo and Rosinella worry that Lucia is struggling to fully integrate into the community. Explain how this anxiety is conveyed by the playwright.
- The threat of war becomes a reality for the Pedreschi when Franco enlists (**Act 1:8**). What is Massimo's reaction to Franco's decision to sign up? Make reference to the text in support of your answer.
- Look at the passage in which the Pedreschi's shop comes under attack from local vigilantes (**Act 1:12**). Analyse the use of stage directions to convey the fear of the Pedreschi and Lucia throughout this attack.
- Think about the symbolism of the shop. What might this attack in **Act 1:2** symbolically represent?
- In **Act 2:9** we see Lucia back in Italy. How does the playwright effectively convey Lucia's anxiety in her new environment?
- Hughie is comically like a fish out of water in Italy. Re-read **Act 2:11** and explain how any two features of language used by the playwright prove this assertion.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

I. ROSINELLA PEDRESCHI

Rosinella immediately strikes the audience as the archetypal Italian matriarch, yet the unfortunate irony is that she is childless. In dialogue with Franco, Rosinella indicates her vexation at never having been able to start a family of her own: 'And look at me! It's no fair, is it. Twelve years I've been married – and nothing. Me an Italian as well' (**Act 1:2**). Such a deep-rooted longing for children is channelled by Rosinella into a fierce protectiveness of her extended family. Taking over the guardianship of her niece, Lucia, in the wake of the child's mother's death allows Rosinella to enact the role of mother to the best of her abilities. She utterly dotes on Lucia, 'fussing over her with delight' (**Act 1:2**) and making small sacrifices in order to make the child happy:

MASSIMO: Listen, Rosie, I thought you went to Glasgow to buy yourself a new coat.
ROSINELLA: Oh, but when I saw that wee dress I just had to get her it. My heart's breaking for that wee lassie these days. (**Act 1:2**)

She seethes with hatred on hearing the news that Luigi – Lucia's father – has remarried. She sneers bitterly '[I] don't know what he thinks he's playing at. Starting a new family, he cannie even take care of the one he's got' (**Act 1:2**). The audience understands completely the sense of injustice Rosinella feels for her niece. Yet, when Franco suggests early in the play that Luigi might one day want his daughter back, the very thought of it dismays Rosinella and she dramatically '*clutches at her heart*' (**Act 1:2**). He goes further, surmising that it might be best for Lucia to be sent back to Italy, if war were break out. But Rosinella is wilfully ignorant to his suggestions. Franco warns his sister-in-law not to become too attached to Lucia: 'She's not your lassie, Rosinella. You're getting to love her too much' (**Act 1:4**). Even as Massimo faces internment, Rosinella's primary concern is her

niece: 'It's not what I would have wanted for your confirmation but I'll make it up to you. Here, try on the veil' (**Act 1:17**).

Nonetheless, in pursuing her dream of being a good mother to Lucia, Rosinella has only spoiled Lucia. The child knows how to emotionally manipulate both her aunt Rosie and her uncle Massimo in order to get what she wants: LUCIA: (*Confident: her answer to everything*) 'I'll just cry' (**Act 2:2**). Rather than gratitude towards her aunt and uncle for their continued guardianship, Lucia displays resentment towards her aunt for stifling her ('You never let me do anything', Lucia, **Act 2:2**). Though she seems to suffocate Lucia, it never crosses Rosinella's mind that her niece might be attracted to Hughie Devlin (and not fellow Italian Silvio Palombo): 'He asked you – to go with HIM ... The cheek of him!' (**Act 2:2**).

In the opening scenes, Rosinella is painted as a relatively selfless character – Massimo admits to being worried about her, noting how she forsook a new coat in order to buy jumpers to send home to her impoverished family in Italy. Yet, her prejudice and anti-Scottish sentiment throughout make it very difficult not to regard Rosinella as a negative influence in the lives of other characters. This is never more obvious than in her dealings with Bridget Devlin. Throughout the play, Rosinella attempts to zealously combat both real and perceived threats to her family unit. Rosinella's misguided belief that no Scottish person is good enough to be with any member of her family initially comes across as a laughable assertion from an overprotective matriarch yet when Rosinella applies this theory to Franco and Bridget's relationship her beliefs and actions have devastating consequences for Bridget.

It is only with Bridget's devastating admission that she aborted Franco's child, that Rosinella re-evaluates her behaviour. Cut to the core by Bridget's suggestion that Rosinella was in some way implicated in her decision-making process, Rosinella is forced – through guilt – to change her attitudes towards Bridget (in the

first instance) and Hughie Devlin in the second. A fresh perspective on her own behaviour allows Rosinella to challenge her own assumptions about relationships. Thus, she realises the need for Lucia and Hughie to be together and works to secure their reconciliation. A play fraught with conflict, can therefore resolve itself with love.

Teaching Activities on Character

Task One: Questions on Rosinella

- Read **Act 1:2** from '*Lucia (age five) preening in brand new party frock...*' to '*Rosinella looking on, adoring.*' With reference to two different techniques employed by the playwright, show how Rosinella is depicted as caring and compassionate towards Lucia in this extract.
- Read from '*FRANCO I've got a date on ...*' to '*Lucia in from the front shop*' (**Act 1:2**). Summarise Rosinella's key concerns as expressed to Franco in this extract.
- Read from '*Rosinella up to Lucia with a half-made long white dress ...*' to '*by now Rosinella has finished putting the veil on Lucia and is preoccupied with it.*' (**Act 1:17**). Show how Rosinella is shown to have an optimistic outlook at this point in the play.
- Read from '*You like Silvio Palombo, don't you?*' to '*Nobody loves their families like the Italians.*' (**Act 2:2**). Quote two things said by Rosinella in the dialogue between her and Lucia which show she is wilfully ignoring her niece's feelings.
- Find three quotations from across the play (beginning, middle and end) that show Rosinella's formidable side.

Task Two: Revision Questions on Rosinella

- With reference to **Act 2:2** and to **at least one other scene** in the play, discuss the relationship between Rosinella and her niece Lucia. (**8 marks**)
- In **Act 1:1** Rosinella takes guardianship of Lucia. With reference to this scene and to **elsewhere in the play**, discuss the different roles played by Rosinella. (**8 marks**)

- In **Act 1:4** Franco tries to give his sister-in-law Rosinella some advice on how to look after Lucia. With reference to this scene and to **at least two other scenes** within the play, discuss how the theme of family relationships is explored. (**8 marks**)

2. MASSIMO PEDRESCHI

Unlike his wife, who identifies staunchly as Italian, Massimo seems to have assimilated comfortably into the Scottish way of life and is an established and popular shop owner. He therefore identifies dually as an Italian-Scot. Yet, when Mussolini's Italy enters the war, Massimo's home and livelihood in Scotland are directly threatened. Anxious about what might follow, Massimo admits to seeing the appeal of returning to his father's run-down property in Italy. But the thought is never given time to mature. As cries of 'Get the Tallies! Fascist bastards!' reverberate, and vigilante mobs attack the Pedreshi's shop, Massimo is clearly wounded: *Massimo hovering over them protectively, but looking over his shoulder in direction of the front shop, feeling every blow [...]* (**Act 1:12**). When police officers arrive to arrest him, Massimo knows he must not put up any resistance. During his internment, the thought of two things keep Massimo's fighting spirit alive: Rosinella and the shop.

Massimo can be described in the first instance as a family man – he lives to care for his wife and is entirely enamoured by his niece, Lucia. Whilst Rosinella seems to stifle the child with love, Massimo recognises the need to instil in Lucia some discipline. Often, their differing approaches to disciplining the child cause friction between Massimo and his wife. Importantly, Massimo understands the need for Lucia to assimilate in the community; for this reason, he co-ordinates a friend, in the form of Hughie Devlin, for Lucia to talk to.

Just as Rosinella is emotionally affected by their inability to have children, so, too, is Massimo. When he finally confronts Rosinella about her selfishness (**Act 2:8**), Massimo reveals the weight of grief he bears for the children he never had:

MASSIMO: All these years, I've known what it meant to you, no being able to have a family [...] But did you ever once think what it's been like for me? Did you ever think maybe I would have liked a child? A son to work alongside me, to plan things with. A son to leave my shop to ... (*Voice breaks*) But you! You never think of anyone but yourself.

Massimo's admission helps the audience to better understand his affection for Hughie Devlin, a character who has become a surrogate for the son he never had. Massimo is the most charitable figure within the play: he benevolently lends Bridget the money she so desperately needs and insists that she need not pay him back, and additionally gainfully employs Hughie in the shop (also, see **Act 2:1** for Massimo's dialogue with Luigi in which he donates personal items of clothing). Yet, Massimo's charity is not boundless. Having allowed Rosinella to dominate their relationship, Massimo can take no more, and is compelled to confront his wife with the truth about her prejudices and conduct towards other people.

Whilst this admission seems to fracture their relationship, it ironically brings the couple closer together. At the play's conclusion, the extent of Massimo's love for Rosie is revealed in his sentimental assertion to his wife that his heart is 'beating just for you.'

Teaching Activities: Paired Work on Massimo

Massimo's soliloquy

On first reading, Massimo's soliloquy in **Act 1:14** might seem to sit uncomfortably within the play, given that this is the only instance of Di Mambro diverging from a naturalistic style.

To understand its theatrical effect, pupils might work with a partner to write a page-long dialogue between Massimo and either Rosinella or Lucia in which they discuss the very same details given to us in the soliloquy.

Extension:

Pupils should now make detailed notes using the following structure:

- Summarise what we learn in this episode.
- Explain how this episode contributes to our understanding of the theme of conflict and/or familial relationships.
- Comment on the dramatic effectiveness of this scene.

3. FRANCO PEDRESCHI AND BRIDGET DEVLIN

Franco Pedreschi, Massimo's younger brother, works in a second family shop. At the beginning of the play we learn that Franco has fallen in love with a Scottish girl, Bridget Devlin, much to Rosinella's consternation. Rosinella refuses to accept that her Italian brother-in-law could find any redeeming quality in a Scottish girl, convincing herself that Franco's interest in Bridget is a purely physical one. On the contrary, Franco cares deeply for Bridget and assures her that he respects her enough to wait until she is ready to have a more physical relationship.

Franco is deeply unfulfilled working in his father's shop and feels like the alternatives – working in the mines, for example – are not worth contemplating. When war breaks out, Franco does not hesitate to enlist in the army. Fearful that she might never see Franco again, Bridget consummates her relationship with Franco, telling Franco that she would never forgive herself if something were to happen to them and they had never had the chance to be intimate. As Franco leaves for war, what neither of them realise is that Bridget is pregnant with his child. Franco never returns.

As the play (and her pregnancy) progresses, an oblivious Bridget reaches out to Rosinella for word on Franco (**Act 1:11**). Rosinella shuns Bridget, claiming that Scottish girls are all the same and that Franco never loved her. Inconsolable, Bridget approaches Massimo later that day (**Act 1:12**) for a loan of money. She does not explain what this money will be used for. Massimo is only happy to oblige her, as her father was a family friend. In a devastating episode later in the play (**Act 2:8**) we realise what the money has been used for when Bridget

confronts Rosinella with the truth: she had an illegal abortion, paid for by the money Massimo gave to her, and believes that Mrs Pedreschi played a significant role in her decision. Bridget's revelation leads to Rosinella's darkest hour: a woman who has been so proud of her matriarchal status at the head of this Italian family, has acted in a manner antithetical to the maternal. Franco and Bridget's relationship thus becomes the catalyst for Rosinella's transformation.

Teaching Activities – Minor Characters

Activity One:

Pupils should identify three scenes in which Franco and Bridget's relationship is either seen, described or alluded to. How is this relationship portrayed? Pupils should make a detailed note.

Activity Two:

In paired discussions pupils could consider the following:

- In what ways are we made to sympathise with Franco and Bridget?
- What, in your opinion, motivates Franco to enlist to fight for the British?
- What effect does Franco's departure have on Bridget? Think about both the immediate effect and the lasting impact.
- Why is Rosinella so opposed to their relationship?
- Why do you think Bridget decides to reveal the truth of her abortion to Rosinella?

Activity Three:

What is the dramatic function of Bridget in this play? Write a detailed note with supporting evidence from the text.

4. LUCIA IANELLI AND HUGHIE DEVLIN

The relationship between Hughie and Lucia underpins the central action of the play. What begins as an enforced friendship between the Italian girl and her Scottish schoolmate blossoms into a romantic relationship which brings the events of the play to a neat conclusion. When the Pedreschis are informed that 'Lucia

won't speak the right English in the school' (**Act 1:4**). Massimo recruits young Hughie Devlin to work in the Ginger Store with him. When he asks Hughie to 'do a wee job' (**Act 1:5**), the important task is to engage Lucia in conversation in English, rather than to keep the store tidy. In their initial encounters the pair talk with childlike naivety about issues they do not comprehend, most notably about the recent death of Hughie's father, Adam. Lucia shows little tact in her attempts to question Hughie over his failure to emote over his father's death:

LUCIA: Are you not? Are you not going to cry?
[...] How come you're not going to cry?

HUGHIE: I'm not supposed to cry [...] I've to be the big brave man [...] I'm not going to cry. I cannae cry. (**Act 1:6**)

As children do, the pair play fight and argue (e.g. **Act 1:12**). Their friendship is cemented in **Act 1:15** – having botched an attempt to become 'blood-brothers', Lucia and Hughie, somewhat comically, end up 'slewer' brother and sister. The play moves quickly in time, and we note Hughie and Lucia's shared fondness for popular culture, particularly music and dancing.

Hughie's ostensibly friendly invitation to Lucia to accompany him to his brother's wedding is met disapprovingly by Rosinella – she discerns (possibly before Hughie himself fully understands) his budding feelings for Lucia:

ROSINELLA: You don't see it, do you? It's up to me to see everything.
[...] You no see the way he looks at our Lucia? He's crazy for her. (**Act 2:2**)

When Lucia is prohibited from attending the dance, Hughie is crestfallen; on his sister's encouragement, Hughie tries and fails miserably to explain his feelings to Lucia. Rosinella intercepts the letter Hughie has penned to Lucia and prohibits her niece from seeing Hughie (**Act 2:5**). However, it is another letter – this time from Lucia's father summoning his daughter back to Italy – which seems finally to have put

a stop to the fledgling relationship. Only with Bridget's intervention does Rosinella appreciate the need to help Hughie win Lucia back from Italy.

On hearing of Lucia's arranged engagement, the strength of Hughie's love for her becomes apparent as he claims 'I have waited years – YEARS – for Lucia [...] I am not leaving without her' (**Act 2:12**). In many ways, Hughie's relationship with Lucia mirrors that of Rosinella and Massimo – he is subservient to bossy Lucia and her many whims, just as Massimo seems to submit to his dominant wife. It is for this reason that the final scenes – wherein Hughie rescues his amore – must mirror the actions of a young Massimo and Rosinella, who took advantage of an old Italian marital tradition and eloped. Rosinella helps Hughie stage a kidnapping of sorts, emancipating Lucia from her engagement and from her father. In a play of fractured relationships, Hughie and Lucia's reunion (and with it, the reunion of Massimo and Rosinella) offers the audience some light relief.

Teaching Activities – Minor Characters

- Why does Hughie love Lucia? Discuss this question with a partner.
- Lucia can be a manipulative character. Thinking of the play as a whole, find examples of Lucia manipulating Hughie. Discuss with a partner the reasons why Lucia might treat Hughie in this way.
- In what ways does Hughie defy Rosinella's stereotypical view of Scottish men. Discuss with a partner and support your discussion with reference to the text.

Teaching Activities: The Role of Men

Arguably, the plot of the story is driven by three very strong women: Rosinella, Lucia and Bridget. But what are the functions of the male characters within the play? Some male characters are more present than others – for example, Massimo's father and Hughie's father are merely mentioned throughout, whilst Lucia's father plays a very minor role in the opening scene and in Act Two. Working with a partner or within a small group complete a six-piece jigsaw. Each

jigsaw piece should contain the name of one male character, their role and a key quotation related to that role. Order the jigsaw pieces so that each of the touching pieces link together in some way.

Male Characters

- Massimo
- Franco
- Hughie
- Lucia's Dad
- Massimo's father
- Hughie's father

Humour

Juxtaposing the biting social commentaries on topics such as prejudice and abortion are a series of relatively light-hearted comedic vignettes. These jocular episodes provide much-needed relief for the audience, alleviating tension in the first instance, but reinforcing the strength of the familial, friendly and romantic bonds forged between Pedreschis, Ianelli's and Devlins in the second instance. There are two types of humour applied by Di Mambro: visual and verbal. Verbal sparring is the predominant form of humour employed by the playwright, but she also makes effective use of visual humour. The linguistic barrier between the Scottish characters and their Italian counterparts provides another rich layer of comedy in this play. Perhaps the best example of visual humour comes late in the play, with Hughie's fumbled attempt at emancipating Lucia from her father's home. Having scaled the wall with a ladder, Hughie finds himself tumbling through the wrong window. Here we seem to have a parodic subversion of fairytale – the chivalric knight is supposed to rescue the damsel in distress from the turreted tower in which she is being held captive. There are moments of slapstick humour to be found in Act Two, Scene Eleven, too:

(Hughie and Rosinella are in the foreground, getting ready to go: Hughie bare-chested, sunburnt, Rosinella rubbing on calamine lotion.)

HUGHIE: Haaaaa! Waaaaa! Eeeee! Ah! Oh!
Oh! Oh! Oh! ...

Teaching Activity: Humour

At National 5, an eight-mark question might ask pupils to discuss Di Mambro's use of humour throughout the play. In preparation for such a question, pupils should revisit the play, finding examples of verbal (sparring, word play, linguistic confusion, jokes etc.) and visual humour (slapstick, stage directions etc.). Pupils should remember to fully analyse the effect of each example.

Teaching Activity: *Tally's Blood* and Critical Essays

Rather than study *Tally's Blood* for the Set Text paper, pupils might study this play in order to complete the Critical Essay component of the National 5 Critical Reading Paper. The play lends itself well to the following questions:

- Choose a play in which there is a character who is important in relation to the theme of the play. Referring to appropriate techniques, explain how this character affects our understanding of theme.

Tip: Focus on Rosinella and theme of prejudice/conflict/familial relationships

- Choose a play in which there is a key scene. Briefly describe what happens in this scene then, by referring to dramatic techniques, go on to explain why this scene is important to the play as a whole.

Tip: Focus on Act 2:8, Bridget explains the circumstances of her abortion to Rosinella

- Choose a play in which one of the main concerns is love or jealousy or betrayal or reconciliation. Explain what the concern is, and by referring to appropriate techniques show how it is explored throughout the play.

Tip: focus on love and the characters of Hughie and Lucia

- Choose a play in which there is conflict between two characters in a family or a group. Show how the conflict occurs and then, by referring to appropriate techniques, explain how it affects the characters and the events of the play

Tip: focus on Rosinella and Bridget

- Choose a play in which a main character's actions have a significant effect on the rest of the play.

Tip: focus on Rosinella