



# SCOTTISH SET TEXT GUIDE

National 5 English

## Tally's Blood

- ▼ Understand, analyse and evaluate the text of *Tally's Blood*
- ▼ Think more deeply about the plot, characters and themes
- ▼ Pick up grade-boosting tips for the Critical Reading paper

**David Thomas**

Series Editor:  
Carolyn Cunningham

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# Getting the most from this guide

This is a 'guide' to help you study the play *Tally's Blood*. It is aimed at helping you prepare to answer on *Tally's Blood* for the Scottish text section of the SQA English National 5 Critical Reading paper. It will tell you what to expect in that section of the examination and how best to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of the play. It will also give you advice on how to use *Tally's Blood* for the critical essay section, if you decide to use it that way.

This study guide will use and refer to the Hodder Gibson edition of *Tally's Blood*, by Ann Marie Di Mambro (published 2014), ISBN: 978 1 4718 0840 1. This edition is the complete text, exactly as Ann Marie Di Mambro wants it to be. It contains a very interesting and helpful introduction by the writer herself.

Watch out for the following features used throughout this guide, which will help you focus your understanding of the play.

## Target your thinking

This feature appears at the start of each chapter or numbered section. It will help you focus on key ideas which will be important in the chapter.

### Build critical skills

You will see this feature at various points in each chapter. The questions in this box will encourage you to think deeply, analyse and explore the texts more fully.

### Glossary

This box will highlight and define key words, for example techniques used in *Tally's Blood*.

### REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

This feature appears throughout. It includes questions to help you reinforce your learning by reminding you of key elements of the text and/or how to approach the exam. The answers to these questions can be found in Chapter 6.

### Exam tip

Top tips to help you maximise your chances of success in the exam.

# 1 Introduction



## Target your thinking

- How should I use this study guide?
- How can *Tally's Blood* be used for the National 5 English Critical Reading question paper?
- What things should I revise?

## How to approach and revise the text

The likelihood is that you will have studied this play, *Tally's Blood*, in class with your teacher. You may well have volunteered to take a part and read aloud to the class. This is a good thing as plays are meant to be performed: both seen and heard. If there is an opportunity to see *Tally's Blood* performed live on stage, take it. Nothing is quite like a live performance, and you will be experiencing the play in the way that the writer would like you to.

Having said this, it is important to remember that an actor or a theatre director will study and learn about the play in the same way as you are doing. Just as you need to know the play well for your exam, they need to know the play well to prepare their performance. And that all starts with looking closely at the words put down on the page by the writer.

## How to use this study guide, and how not to use it

The comparison made above – about you investigating the play in the same way that an actor or director learning the play would do – is perhaps a useful one to bear in mind when using this study guide. A director deciding how best to stage a scene, or an actor weighing up what is going on in a character's mind, will involve thinking and discussion. You too will have to do some thinking:

- What do you think are the important themes?
- Do you feel sympathy for Rosinella?
- Do you agree with all the things she says?

Hopefully, this study guide will help you with your thinking. The intention is that it is 'another voice' to listen to about the play. A lot of the time, again hopefully, you will read bits and react with, 'Oh, yes, I thought that too.' Please do not think that this guide has 'all the answers' – it doesn't. It's just another voice to listen to, one that will help you to organise your thinking and revision for the exam.

## What is the SQA English National 5 Critical Reading paper?

The National 5 Critical Reading paper has two compulsory sections:

- Section 1: **Scottish text** – you must answer a set of questions on the work of one Scottish writer from the set list. There are 20 marks available for this section. You should aim to spend 45 minutes reading the extract and answering the questions.
- Section 2: **Critical essay** – this requires you to write one essay about a text that you have studied. The paper is worth a total of 20 marks. You should aim to spend 45 minutes writing your essay.

In the Critical Reading paper you have to show what are called your critical reading skills. Now, what exactly are they, and how do you show them?

To demonstrate critical reading skills in your answers on *Tally's Blood*, you have to be able to do two things:

- show that you have understood the play and its main ideas
- show that you can analyse ways in which the writer has written the play.

The first part sounds fine – having read the play through you will be able to show an understanding of it. It is more the second aspect that worries people – analysis. But it's really nothing to be concerned about. Once you start to talk about the individual characters in the play – what they say and do – you are immediately analysing. You are making analytical comments about characterisation. If you can recognise when things are difficult between two characters – if they disagree about something, or someone feels hurt at someone else's actions – you have identified conflict, which is a dramatic technique. Again, you are analysing. We will cover the exam in much more detail in Chapter 4.

### Exam tip

IMPORTANT. You must remember that if you choose to write about *Tally's Blood* for Section 1: Scottish text, you may not use *Tally's Blood* to answer Section 2. However, it is possible to use *Tally's Blood* for the critical essay if you focus on a different text for Section 1. To do that, you will need to have prepared on the work of another Scottish writer from the set text list.

### What to expect in Section 1: Scottish text

In the first section of the National 5 Critical Reading paper, you will be given an extract from *Tally's Blood*. This will be done completely at random: there is no way of predicting or of knowing what the extract will be. The plan is that as soon as you see it and start to read it, you will recognise it. (Right away.) To recognise it immediately will give you a huge advantage. To think straight away, 'Oh, I know this bit,' and to have an idea which part of the play it comes from, will really help when it comes to answering the questions, but it will also boost your confidence. So, the first thing is: get to know the play. This guide will help you do that.

### Getting to know *Tally's Blood*

OK, so you know to expect an extract – a passage taken from somewhere in the play – which you will hopefully recognise. What next? What about the questions? There will be three or four questions just on the extract itself. Then there will be one question on how the extract relates to the rest of the play. As mentioned above, these questions test two things: your knowledge and understanding, and your skills of analysis. What is the difference? We have had a quick look at what is meant by analysis already, but what about 'knowledge and understanding'? This is essentially what you have understood about the play: what happens (the story, the narrative) and the themes (the big overarching ideas of the play – what the writer wants you to think about as you are reading it or watching it being performed). This last point is important. Most people preparing for the exam worry about the detail:

- 'How can I remember absolutely everything that happens in the play, and which page it happens on?'
- 'How many quotes should I learn?'
- 'Do I need to know something about every character in the play?'

We'll deal with these questions and issues as we go, but to begin with, it is much more important to have ideas in your head about these questions:

- What are the themes – the big ideas – of the play?
- What is the overall meaning or message of the play?
- What do I make of the main characters? Do they change, or stay the same, as the play goes on? How do I relate to them at different points in the play?

If you have ideas about these kinds of things, it will be much easier to fit your knowledge and understanding into the questions – especially the final question. Because the intention behind this question is to sample from your knowledge and understanding of the whole play, it will likely focus on a 'main idea' (a theme), or a main character, or the relationship between characters.

So, to repeat. As you read the play, be thinking:

- What are the main ideas?
- What is happening to this character?
- How are these characters getting on together? Is there conflict? Why is there conflict?

We will explore all of these key words and ideas in depth in Chapter 3: Study and revision.

Now, let's pick up some of these key words and say what we mean by them.

## REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

(Answers are given on p. 69.)

- 1 What are the two main skills that you need to demonstrate in the Critical Reading paper?

## 2 Context



### Target your thinking

- What would be useful to know about the background to the play?
- Should I mention background events in my exam answers?

#### Glossary

**Context:** the setting in time and place that makes up the background of the play.

### What is context?

The **context** is the background to the play – where and when it is set; what was happening in the world at that time; how people lived their lives.

### General background

I was brought up in Edinburgh. When I was at primary school, there was a girl in my class – let's call her Mia – who was from an Italian family. They were the owners of a café not far from where I lived (it's no longer there). It was our treat on a Saturday night to go down to the café for an ice cream or a bag of sweets. (My brother would go for sports mixtures or wine gums, and I would pick chocolate or, my favourite, coconut ice.) It was a special place.

I honestly can't remember hearing one word about Mia being 'different', or 'foreign', or anything like that. The only thing I remember thinking was how lucky she was being surrounded with all those sweets and ice cream. But how did she feel? She was born in Scotland, but her family had origins and ties and history in Italy. In *Tally's Blood*, Ann Marie Di Mambro explores these circumstances: a sense of belonging across two countries and cultures. A push and pull, with perhaps your family saying one thing and you feeling another.

In the play, Rosinella makes comparisons between Italian people and Scottish people. She finds Scottish people lacking. She thinks they are lazy, and has the opinion that their moral standards (how they behave) are lower than those of Italians. She thinks Italians are better all round. She doesn't want Lucia to get involved with a Scottish boy. She wants the Italian ways for Lucia. But she changes her mind. She sees good (and bad) in both, and is eventually happy for Lucia and Hughie to be together.

The café belonging to Mia's family had been in our neighbourhood for a long time. Much later in life I heard that they had a difficult time during the Second World War. When Italy came into the war against Britain, there was hostility towards people of Italian origin who were living in Britain. This meant that Mia's family had to close their café until

the situation changed. This must have been difficult for them – I don't know how they made a living.

Di Mambro alludes to this kind of hostility in Act One, Scene Twelve of the play when a mob attacks Massimo's shop. Di Mambro also puts a real-life event right in the middle – the heart – of the play, with the sinking of the *Arandora Star*, which is a very important part of Scottish and Italian history.



▲ An Italian café in Scotland

## The historical context: the arrest and internment of Italian people in Britain during the Second World War

Almost immediately after the outbreak of the Second World War (in September 1939), there was a feeling within the UK government that people living in the UK who had come from Germany and Austria (now enemies of the UK) might be dangerous (as potential spies). As a consequence, German and Austrian men were put in front of tribunals (a type of court trial), and a judgement was made about their possible threat to Britain. In June 1940 Italy entered the war, opposing Britain. The new prime minister, Winston Churchill, made sure that the same happened to men of Italian origin – despite the fact that many had been living and working peacefully in Britain for years.

As many as 19,000 Italian men were taken prisoner, removed from their families and sent to internment camps. Roughly 7,000 were sent abroad to Canada or Australia.

(The men who were held captive in this way were called 'internees'.) The tragedy of the Arandora Star sinking was part of this operation of removal. Large cruise liners were used by the navy to transport the men. One of these was the SS Arandora Star. This former luxury liner was heading for Newfoundland in Canada with large numbers of Italian and German internees when it was hit by a torpedo fired from a German U-boat (submarine). This is, of course, ironic because the attack came from the same side that the internees were accused of supporting. There were 734 Italians on board – 486 died. There were 479 Germans on board – 175 died.

As a result of what happened with the Arandora Star, and the ill-treatment of some groups of internees, concern was raised in the Westminster Parliament. This resulted in a programme of release. By February 1941, 10,000 prisoners had been released, many going on to fight for the British armed forces.

There is a very moving account of one Scottish-Italian family's experience of internment on the BBC's 'WW2 People's War' website (see <http://tinyurl.com/yx4e34yr>). It is well worth reading if you want to find out more about the real-life events behind a key aspect of the play.

In her introduction to the play, Ann Marie Di Mambro writes:

*This moment in the play lights a candle to the victims of the Arandora Star. (p. viii)*

If you want to find out more about the Arandora Star tragedy, there is plenty of information easily available online. In Glasgow, there is a memorial garden next to St Andrew's Cathedral that is dedicated to the memory of the 100 Scots-Italians who died in that attack.

## Social background

The play includes the events of the war but treats them not just as history. It deals with the human impact of the events on families: the Pedreschis, the Devlins. In her introduction, Di Mambro observes that:

*Drama lies in what is going on between people at an emotional level. (p. viii)*

It is people that the play is concerned with. The people of the play exist in a time period which is quite far removed from our own. There are differences that you will notice right away: the effects of the war on people in Scotland; the effects of the war in Italy (the poverty, the shortages of food and clothing); smaller differences like Hughie playing marbles, or the mention of 'hot orange' drinks.

But there are other differences too: in people's attitudes to each other and how we live. For example, at the time of the events of the play, abortion was illegal. This had an effect on the lives of many women: think of Bridget, and what she goes through in the play. Think of the attitude of Luigi to Lucia, and what he expects from her, when she goes across to Italy. She eventually rejects all this, but the expectation was there. These are things for you to think about and consider. Perhaps you think that attitudes have changed now. Perhaps you think they haven't.

I am assuming that you are using the Hodder Gibson edition of the play. As mentioned above, it contains a very interesting introduction by the writer of the play herself. I would recommend that you read it.

### Exam tip

Background is interesting. Of course, you should be thinking of these things as you read or watch the play. But background is not really relevant in your exam. Your answers should be based on the play itself, your analysis of it, and your ideas in response to it. Remember that.

## REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

(Answers are given on p. 69.)

- 2 If someone is interned, what does it mean?
- 3 Why were men like Massimo interned during the Second World War?
- 4 How many Scots-Italians died in the sinking of the Arandora Star?

# 3 Study and revision



In this chapter we will cover the play scene by scene. You will find a commentary on what happens, key moments of conflict, and essential character and theme information for each of the scenes of the play.

We will also look in detail, using examples from the play, at:

- plot
- structure
- language features
- characters and relationships
- themes.

## Glossary

**Act:** the main sections into which a play is divided.

## Synopsis: what happens in *Tally's Blood*?

Here is a capsule summary of the play – the outline of it, if you like. It will help to remind you of the events of the play, and which order they come in and in which **act**. Following on from this is a more detailed tour of the play in Section 3.2: a commentary which takes you into every scene.

### Act One

- Rosinella and Massimo take Lucia (Rosinella's niece) from Italy to Scotland following the death of Lucia's mother.
- They give her the best start they can in a new country but end up spoiling her (especially Rosinella).
- Initially, Lucia finds some aspects of life in Scotland hard – she is reluctant to accept English as a first language. Massimo tries to help her by giving a local boy, Hughie Devlin, a job in their shop.
- Lucia and Hughie don't get on at first (they are very young), but a friendship blossoms.
- Franco (Massimo's brother) begins a relationship with Hughie Devlin's sister (Bridget). Rosinella is set against this – she doesn't think Italian men and Scottish women should be together in relationships.
- The Second World War means that Britain is at war with Italy. This causes problems for the Pedreschis because they are associated with the enemy, and their shop is subsequently attacked. Massimo and his father are taken prisoner. Massimo's father is sent abroad on a ship – the Arandora Star – which is attacked and sunk. He dies. Franco volunteers to fight on the British side, but sadly he dies too.

- Bridget is pregnant with Franco's child. When she discovers that Franco is dead, she comes to see Rosinella. Rosinella convinces her that Franco did not love her and Bridget consequently has an abortion (paid for by money borrowed from Massimo).
- Massimo is finally freed and returns to his family in Scotland.

## Act Two

- Ten years have passed. Hughie and Lucia have become closer. Rosinella does everything she can to stop them from being together.
- There is much conflict as the truth comes out about Bridget's abortion – she blames Rosinella. Bridget also accuses Rosinella of being in the wrong about Hughie and Lucia. The conflict extends to Massimo who, unusually for him, joins in the criticism of Rosinella. Massimo and Rosinella go through a difficult period.
- Meanwhile, Lucia's father, Luigi, has insisted that Lucia come back to Italy. Hughie does not quite manage a declaration of love to prevent Lucia from leaving. When Lucia gets to Italy it is clear that Luigi just wants her there to work on his farm and to marry a neighbour's son (who 'has land').
- Rosinella saves the day by bringing Hughie across to Italy where she helps Hughie and Lucia get together (in the same way that she had done with Massimo). Lucia stands up for herself and defies her father's wishes in order to be with the one she loves.
- All ends well with Rosinella and Massimo too: as the play ends, they are firmly back together.

### REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

(Answers are given on p. 69.)

- 5 Can you summarise the main things that happen in the play in ten brief bullet points?

## 3.1 Dramatic techniques

### Target your thinking

- What is meant by the 'themes' of the play?
- What are the main dramatic techniques used by Ann Marie Di Mambro in this play?

## Key concepts and dramatic techniques for analysis

First, we will take a look at some language and dramatic techniques that you will need to have an understanding of in order to successfully analyse the play: theme, conflict, tension, atmosphere, stage directions, setting, structure, foreshadowing and dramatic irony.

### Theme

If I asked you what the play *Tally's Blood* is about, you might say that it is about the lives of an Italian family living in Scotland around the time of the Second World War – the difficulties they have, the problems they face. You would, of course, be right. However, I might come back to you and say, yes, but what is it really about underneath it all? This second question is aimed at trying to move into the territory of theme: what does it all mean? What are the ideas behind the words and actions? What comes into your head when you are trying to make sense of all that is said and happens? What might have been in the author's mind when writing the play?

Saying that the play is about a family and the difficulties they face immediately suggests that one of the **themes** of the play might be family relationships. The mention of the word 'difficulties' brings to mind 'conflict', which could be another possible theme. Just glancing at the very first page of the play will give you a hint of another possible theme. Here are the first words, from the first page:

#### Scene One

**Year: 1936; Italy/Night**


*'Santa Lucia' playing softly; sound of mourning bell in background.*

Now, what do we make of this? The 'sound of mourning bell in background' – these are sad opening words. Do they suggest there are sad things to come? A 'mourning bell' is, of course, associated with death, so do we conclude that 'death' is another possible theme? The words which follow are interesting too: 'in background'. Do these words suggest that death will always be there in the play, in the background?

There are other things we could pick up too. The Italian song 'Santa Lucia'. We know that Lucia is one of the main characters in the play. 'Santa Lucia' is Italian for Saint Lucy. If you try to find out a little bit about who Saint Lucy was, you will discover that she lost a parent too, her mother, just like Lucia in this play. Her name means 'light'. It is a hopeful name, 'the giver of light'. The day that Saint Lucy is remembered – her 'Saint's Day' – is the 13th of December, a dark day. Saint Lucy might be said to bring light to a dark day. The very name Lucia gives a positive message

### Glossary

**Themes:** the ideas behind the words and actions of the play. The big ideas that you think about as the play goes on and after it has ended.



# 4 Approaching the Critical Reading paper

## 4.1 Critical Reading Section 1: Scottish text

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### Target your thinking

- What kind of questions should I expect in Section 1: Scottish text?
- How should I approach the final question, which deals with the whole play?

### Introduction

The Critical Reading paper has two sections. For Section 1: Scottish text, you must answer a set of questions on the work of one Scottish writer from the set list. Remember to head straight away for the *Tally's Blood* extract. It will be near the beginning of the paper, in the Drama section. Once you have found the *Tally's Blood* extract, you don't need to look at any of the other parts of Section 1. Start to read the extract quickly, trying to identify, as you read it, where in the play it comes from. There are 20 marks available. You should spend 45 minutes on this section.

### Example questions – set 1

#### SQA Past Papers National 5 English – Critical Reading – Scottish text section, 2017

You will find here the extract from *Tally's Blood* which appeared in the 2017 SQA National 5 English exam. The passage comes first, then the questions. What follows is a guided commentary on answering them. So, try to answer the questions first and then compare your answers with what is written here. Hopefully, it will give you an idea of what to prepare for your exam, and will help to clear up anything that you are unsure about.

The extract and questions are set out just as they will be in your exam. There is an instruction at the beginning which tells you an important rule of the question paper: if you answer on *Tally's Blood* here you must choose a different genre for the critical essay question (in other words, a poem, a novel or short story, or a media or language text).