**Stage Key**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>USR - Upstage Right</th>
<th>USC - Upstage Centre</th>
<th>USL - Upstage Left</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CR - Centre Right</td>
<td>CS - Centre Stage</td>
<td>CL - Centre Left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSR - Downstage Right</td>
<td>DSC - Downstage Centre</td>
<td>DSL - Downstage Left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>Audience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Stages Advantages and Disadvantages**

**Proscenium Arch**

*Proscenium Arch*: The most common stage in purpose-built theatres, where the audience is placed on one side of the stage. Performers must be largely aware of facing the audience most of the time, who themselves act as Peeping Tom’s peering through the (invisible) Fourth Wall. Advantages include the opportunity to hide performers in the wings and sets in the fly tower and wings. Restrictions include sight-line issues with set pieces and a lack of intimacy between actor and audience. Anyone who has sat 2,000 seats away from the stage in the balcony of a large theatre, or at the side of the stalls or dress circle trying to see part of a stage set around a solid wall, will tell you all about the problems of a proscenium arch stage!

**Blood Brothers Links:**

**Advantages**

- Allows for two sides of stage to reflect social class divide and 2 houses.
- Allows for characters to directly address the audience and break fourth wall.
- Allows for ensemble numbers such as ‘I got y’ I shot y’
- Wings for cast members
- Allows for set changes
- Abstract/Non-naturalistic lighting can be used
- Space for orchestral pit
- Actors can always face audience and have back to them
Disadvantages

Difficult to create actor audience relationship, intensity is hard to create
Engagement with audience is forced
Acting has to be exaggerated so that audience can see
Not everyone may be able to see and hear
Set can only work from 2D angles
Actors do not always have the audience in their eyeline

**Traverse:** Uncommon form of staging where, similar to that of a fashion parade, the audience sits on two sides of a long rectangular stage, facing each other. Traverse staging allows for even the worst seats in the house to be relatively close to the stage, but often there is an absence of wings for the performers. Depending whether the seating is raked or not, sometimes props need to be small(ish) and set pieces are often hung from above instead of being placed on the stage. Most of the audience is either going to see actor profiles or backs much of the time.

Blood Brothers Links:

**Advantages**

Acting more naturalistic due to having to turn your back
Seating may be versatile and not set or raked
Stage could be on same level as stage
Set has to work from all angles, 3D design for a designer
The theatre space can form the street
Two social classes can be portrayed at either end of stage
Large space for ensemble
Allows to create actor audience relationship, intensity is easier to create as all on one level
Engagement with audience more natural
Allows lighting from both ends
Disadvantages

Limited exits and entrances for actors

Difficult to define Upstage and Downstage as easily

Movement can be artificial for the actors as they keep moving to ensure they don’t have their back to the audience for a long period of time

Ensemble numbers may be difficult

Directly addressing a whole audience and breaking the fourth wall will not be possible.

Any set changes have to happen in front of the audience

Levels cannot be used such as a balcony for the narrator

Limitation of set design and props

Thrust: The three-sided stage was the preferred option for William Shakespeare. With the audience sitting around threes ides of the acting space, this square or circular space is the inverse of proscenium arch staging. Instead of the acting space being set in, rather it juts out, or ‘thrusts’ itself into the audience area. Considerable advantages occur with the ability to place a large audience around the performance space and yet still feel a certain intimacy. Disadvantages include actors facing their backs to large sections of the audience, the question of whether to block action deep in the space or at its leading edge, and an inability to have any sense of set due to audience sight lines.

Blood Brothers Links:

Advantages

Acting more naturalistic due to having to turn your back in large extension

Seating may be versatile and not set or raked

Stage could be on same level as stage

Set has to work from all angles, 3D design for a designer

The theatre space can form the street at the front of the stage

Space for orchestra at back of staging

Allows to create strong actor audience relationship,

Engagement with audience more natural

Tactical experience with light and set

Narrator and singing can directly address audience on the thrust

Foreshadow close to audience
Disadvantages

Limited exits and entrances for actors

Limited space on thrust

Difficult to block out areas of the stage

Movement can be artificial for the actors as they keep moving to ensure they don’t have their back to the audience for a long period of time

Ensemble numbers may be difficult due to minimal space

Directly addressing a whole audience and breaking the fourth wall will not be possible.

Any set changes have to happen in front of the audience

Levels cannot be used such as a balcony for the narrator

Limitation of set design and props

Costumes and props have to be realistic as they will be seen much closer to the audience

Intensity of actor audience relationship

In The Round: Whether square or circular, this is the four-sided stage with the audience placed all around the performance space. This type of staging has similar, but enhanced features of the thrust stage. Large audiences can be seated close to the action in theatre-in-the-round, but blocking and sight line issues abound, as do set design considerations. Dressing rooms are often built under a raised performance space or elsewhere, with performers often moving through the audience area in order to get to them.

Blood Brothers Links:

Advantages

Acting more naturalistic due to having to turn your back in large extension

Seating may be versatile and not set or raked

Stage could be on same level as stage

Set has to work from all angles, 3D design for a designer

Allows to create strong actor audience relationship,

Engagement with audience more natural

Tactical experience with light and set

Several entrances and exits

Foreshadow close to audience
Audience see performance from a range of angles

Audience close to characters

Audience feel part of action – Mickey & Eddie feel involved

Closer to tension and action

Closer to direct address

**Disadvantages**

More naturalistic lighting needed

Lighting is hard as it needs to come from the top of stage

No wings as such, limited exits and entrances for actors

Difficult to block out areas of the stage

Movement can be artificial for the actors as they keep moving to ensure they don’t have their back to the audience for a long period of time

Ensemble numbers may be difficult due to minimal space

Directly addressing a whole audience and breaking the fourth wall will not be possible.

Any set changes have to happen in front of the audience

Levels cannot be used such as a balcony for the narrator

Limitation of set design and props

Costumes and props have to be realistic as they will be seen much closer to the audience

Intensity of actor audience relationship

**Example**

The advantages of using the stage space ‘In the Round’ for the play Blood Brothers would be that this space allows for the actors to be in close proximity of the audience and therefore this creates a stronger and more natural actor audience relationship on stage. This would be effective for example when Mrs Johnstone directly addresses the audience in the final scene as she sings ‘Tell me it’s not true’ at this moment the audience would be able to engage with the expressions and characteristics of the character from a range of angles. This would also allow the audience to instantly feel a connection of empathy for her as they would feel immersed within this key moment due to the fact that they are so close to the action on stage. However this close proximity does create disadvantages when staging the performance text such as this creates a limited space for the actors to perform. This therefore means that it is difficult to block scenes such as the foreshadow at the beginning of the play where the narrator directly addresses his audience as it is difficult to define the areas of stage in which he narrate towards them. Also the actor audience relationship can be an intense experience for the actors as they would be directly faced by members of the public and this could impact their development of their character as they could begin to feel nervous or intimidated.
The advantage of this would be that the audience can witness the expressions and characteristics of a character from a range of angles and would therefore have a more vivid description and be able to connect with that character more so, for example when Mickey and Sammy are out playing if they are running around frantically ‘shooting the indians’ the audience would naturally feel part of the action. When the brothers die at the end having the audience much closer also builds the tension. The disadvantage would be the limitation of set design and props but as Willy Russell states that it should be minimalist and changes done with lighting this would work in this plays favour. Staging with the audience on all four sides can be difficult and tiresome to block/direct and tiring for the actors to keep playing out to all sides of the audience.

Top Tips
- You need to start with advantage and NOT disadvantage
- You must include examples from the play text to support your answer
- You must make a comparison (where as.. however...)
- You must include both advantages and disadvantages

How to structure my response
1. The advantage of________________ would be______ (this is your opening sentence)
2. Explain the advantage
3. Make a reference or example of where this would be useful in the play text
4. Make point to explain an advantage
5. Make a reference or example of where this would be useful in the play text
6. However a disadvantage of this would be________________
7. Explain why this would be a disadvantage
8. Give an example of why this would have a negative impact within the performance text