

IT TALLY'S BLOOD — STUDY GUIDE

Author: Ann Marie di Mambro

First staged: 1989

Genre: Scottish Drama / Social Realism

Setting: Scotland & Italy (1936–1955)

Why it's studied: Explores identity, migration, prejudice, love, and cultural conflict within Scotland's Italian community.

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1. Introduction

Tally's Blood tells the story of the **Pedreschi family**, Italian immigrants living in Glasgow before, during and after World War II. The play examines family, cultural identity, love across cultural boundaries, and the impact of war on immigrant communities.

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2. Plot Summary

Overview

The action spans nearly twenty years, following the relationships between Italian and Scottish characters as tensions rise due to war, prejudice, and cultural barriers.

Act One (1936–1940)

- Opens in Italy during the funeral of Lucia's mother.
- Baby **Lucia** is taken to Scotland to be raised by her aunt **Rosinella** and uncle **Massimo Pedreschi**, who run a Glasgow café.
- Massimo's brother **Franco** is in love with **Bridget Devlin**, a Scottish girl.
- Rosinella disapproves of romances with "outsiders," preferring Italians to "marry their own kind."

[\[studylib.net\]](https://www.studylib.net)

- Lucia forms a childhood friendship with **Hughie Devlin** (Bridget's brother).
- War breaks out. The Pedreschi shop is attacked by a mob, and Massimo is arrested as an enemy alien.

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Act Two (Post-war years – early 1950s)

- Lucia returns to Italy to stay with her father **Luigi**.
 - Bridget is heartbroken over Franco's death in the war and angry at Rosinella for interfering in her life.
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 - Rosinella continues to block Lucia and Hughie's relationship, still clinging to Italian traditionalism.
 - Eventually Rosinella realises she has been selfish and prejudiced.
 - She takes Hughie to Italy to help Lucia avoid an arranged marriage, allowing the young couple to reunite.
 - Play ends with reconciliation: Rosinella finally accepts that **love matters more than nationality**.
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3. Setting & Context

Italian Immigration in Scotland

- Many Italians ran cafés, ice-cream shops and small businesses.
- They faced suspicion and hostility during WWII, including mob violence and internment.
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Historical Context

- Set 1936–1955 — includes Mussolini's alliance with Hitler, anti-Italian riots, and the internment of Italian men in Scotland.
- Franco joins the British army, symbolising divided loyalties.
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Cultural Context

- Strong emphasis on family loyalty, Catholic traditions, and cultural pride among Italian-Scots.
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4. Characters

Rosinella Pedreschi

- Fiercely proud of her Italian roots: "Nobody loves their families like the Italians."
[\[studylib.net\]](https://studylib.net)
- Protective of Lucia; prejudiced against Scottish people.
- Controls and interferes in relationships.
- Undergoes transformation toward acceptance and understanding.

Massimo Pedreschi

- Kind, compassionate, hard-working café owner.
- Caught between two cultures; feels he belongs to "nowhere" during the war.
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- Loves Rosinella but becomes disillusioned by her prejudice.

Lucia Ianelli

- Brought to Scotland as a baby, grows up between two cultures.
- Loving, naive, torn between expectations and her love for Hughie.
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Franco Pedreschi

- Massimo's brother
- In love with Bridget
- Joins British army; dies in the war
- Symbol of cultural integration and tragic consequences of conflict

Bridget Devlin

- Scottish; independent and outspoken
- Resents Rosinella's interference
- Reveals how prejudice hurts both communities
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Hughie Devlin

- Innocent, loyal, supportive
- Represents genuine love and kindness
- Ultimately accepted by Rosinella after her change of heart

5. Themes

Cultural Identity & Prejudice

Rosinella's belief in Italian superiority creates conflict:

- "It's one thing to play around with them, so long as you marry your own kind."

The play challenges these attitudes and promotes cross-cultural understanding.
[\[studylib.net\]](https://studylib.net)

Family & Loyalty

Rosinella's fierce protectiveness drives the plot — both positive and destructive.

Love Across Boundaries

Franco & Bridget, Hughie & Lucia illustrate that love can transcend culture — if allowed.

War & Its Impact

Mob attacks, internment, and Franco's death show personal consequences of global conflict.
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Migration & Belonging

Characters struggle with dual identity — being both Italian and Scottish.
[\[quizlet.com\]](https://quizlet.com)

6. Form, Structure & Language

Form

- Two-act play with fast-moving scenes
- Mix of humour, tragedy, and romance
- Focus on domestic and community life

Structure

- Act One: introduces cultural tensions before war
- Act Two: aftermath — deaths, guilt, reconciliation

Language

- Naturalistic dialogue
- Occasional Italian phrases
- Contrast between passionate Italian speech and down-to-earth Scottish dialogue

7. Key Quotations

- "Nobody loves their families like the Italians." (Rosinella) [\[studylib.net\]](#)
 - "I used to think I had two countries... now I feel I've got nowhere." (Massimo) [\[studylib.net\]](#)
 - "It's one thing to play around with them, so long as you marry your own kind." (Rosinella) [\[studylib.net\]](#)
 - Bridget: furious that Rosinella pushed her into an abortion — reveals consequences of prejudice. [\[savemyexams.com\]](#)
 - "If you knew what I've been through." (Rosinella's self-pity before her change) [\[studylib.net\]](#)
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8. Symbolism & Motifs

Tally Shop

- Represents immigrant success, cultural blending, and vulnerability during wartime.

Italy vs Scotland

- Dual identity, tension between tradition and assimilation.

Family Photographs

- Symbol of roots, memory, and identity.

The Journey to Italy

- Represents change, forgiveness, and cultural reconciliation.
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9. Important Scenes

- Opening in Italy — Lucia's adoption
- Mob attack on the Pedreschi shop
- Franco and Bridget's romance
- Rosinella persuading Bridget to get an abortion
- Lucia returning to Italy

- Rosinella's confrontation with Hughie
 - Final elopement and reconciliation
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10. Writer's Purpose

Ann Marie di Mambro aims to:

- Explore the experiences of Scottish-Italian immigrant families
 - Challenge prejudice within and between cultures
 - Show that love and humanity are stronger than nationalism
 - Present war's devastating impact on ordinary people
[\[asls.org.uk\]](https://www.asls.org.uk)
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11. Sample Essay Questions

- **Theme:** How does Di Mambro explore cultural prejudice in *Tally's Blood*?
 - **Character:** Discuss Rosinella's development throughout the play.
 - **Turning Point:** Why is the mob attack a key moment?
 - **Symbolism:** How does Di Mambro use Italy and Scotland to explore identity?
 - **Relationships:** Contrast Franco & Bridget with Lucia & Hughie.
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12. Model PEA Paragraph

Point: Di Mambro uses Rosinella's prejudice to highlight how cultural superiority damages relationships.

Evidence: Rosinella claims, "It's one thing to play around with them, so long as you marry your own kind."

Analysis: This line exposes her belief that Italians are inherently better than Scots. Her interference harms both Bridget and Lucia, and ultimately isolates Rosinella. By the end, Rosinella learns that love, not nationality, should determine relationships — a key message of the play.
[\[studylib.net\]](https://www.studylib.net)

13. Quick-Revision Checklist

- **Themes:** prejudice, identity, war, family, love
- **Characters:** Rosinella, Massimo, Lucia, Franco, Bridget, Hughie
- **Symbols:** shop, Italy/Scotland, family, journeys
- **Key quotes:** cultural superiority, dual identity, love vs tradition
- **Turning points:** mob attack, Franco's death, act of reconciliation

DRAMA — SQA-style Model Mini-Essay

Tally's Blood (Anne Marie Di Mambro) — Theme: Migration, prejudice, and family love

Di Mambro's play reframes Scotland's 20th-century story through the Italian-Scottish Pedreschi family, revealing how enterprise, tenderness, and prejudice intertwine. The sweetshop is a metaphorical **meeting-place**—commerce, community, and cultural collision. When wartime hysteria brands Luigi and his kin "enemy aliens," Di Mambro exposes how quickly neighbourliness curdles into suspicion. Yet the drama's heartbeat is Massimo and Rosinella's marriage: comic bickering masks deep devotion, tested by Lucia's future. Rosinella's insistence that "Italian is best" is less bigotry than protective pride, born of losses offstage and on; Lucia's romance with Hughie threatens the fragile identity Rosinella has built in exile. Di Mambro mixes light and dark—wedding dresses and arrests; chocolate and razor-edged gossip—to show how love crosses borders that politics erects. The poignant resolution doesn't erase prejudice or grief, but it widens the family circle. By letting ordinary people carry history, the play insists migration is not an abstract "issue" but the texture of Scottish life, sweet and bitter at once—tally's blood indeed.
