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Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

A Streetcar Named Desire

by Tennessee Williams

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A Streetcar Named Desire

Note To The Teacher

The teacher may want to point out the following at appropriate times:

1. Blanche's husband, Allan, is a sensitive young man, a poet, and a homosexual. Blanche walks in on Allan and another man. Later, at the club, after Blanche calls Allan a degenerate, he shoots himself.
2. In the opening scenes of the original production, Stanley enters carrying a large bag of bloody meat, which he tosses to Stella.
3. In the last scene of the original production, Stanley slips his hand inside Stella's blouse, and she does not object.

To make it easier to use the study guide, we have identified the scenes as they appear in the 1951 video production, starring Marlon Brando. *

* In 1995, the video was re-released and three minutes were restored that had been cut from the 1951 film to get it by the Legion of Decency. This could slightly alter the scene identification, if you are showing the 1995 re-release.

A Streetcar Named Desire

Note to the Student

Williams followed the 1945 production of his first play, *A Glass Menagerie*, with the 1947 production of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. With these two plays, Williams secured his place in the American theater. Indeed, there are critics who say that Williams' work never again equaled these two early masterpieces.

The students familiar with *The Glass Menagerie* will see some points in this play that remind them of the earlier play. For example, Blanche's illusions come from the same earth as Amanda's illusion. In fact, the themes of illusion as deception and illusion as an approach to reality are obvious in both plays. On the other hand, much is different in the plays. Most notably, the staging and the moods of both plays have little in common. Where *The Glass Menagerie*, with its bittersweet sadness, is seen through the hazy filter of memory, *A Streetcar Named Desire* is more a slice of life seen in the harsh light of reality.

All references come from the Signet edition of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Copyright 1974.

A Streetcar Named Desire

Objectives

By the end of this unit, the student will be able to:

1. discuss the following themes in this play:
 - A. loneliness and our feeble attempts to overcome it
 - B. illusion as an attempt to deceive, and illusion as an approach to reality
 - C. sexuality as a primitive, powerful force capable of creating or destroying life
 - D. the clash of the primitive, the brutish, with the civilized, the rational, and the cultured.
2. identify and point out the significance of some of the play's symbols.
3. present an argument demonstrating that Blanche is a tragic heroine.
4. write an essay that explains how the two endings in this play point in opposite thematic directions.
5. write a paragraph that explains Stanley's behavior and motivation.
6. discuss the motifs of desire and death, focusing on how Blanche presents them as two sides of one coin.

A Streetcar Named Desire

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. As the play opens, Blanche tells the sailor she needs to get the streetcar *Desire* and then change to the streetcar *Cemeteries*. Point out incidents in the play where desire and/or death is mentioned or suggested (show how Blanche synthesizes the two motifs and brings them together as one.)
2. Tragic heroes' lives usually end in defeat or death because of a flaw in their character. As we, the viewers, watch the tragedy unfold, there is a sense of inevitability about the approaching disaster; that is, because of a "tragic flaw," there seems to be nothing the hero can do but sink further into the trap. Using this as your criterion, state why Blanche fits the description of a tragic hero.
3. Explore how you know that Blanche suffers from an immense sense of loneliness, and describe the steps she takes, imprudent and prudent, to overcome this loneliness.
4. Discuss the differing views expressed by Stanley and Blanche regarding Blanche's illusions. How does Stanley view them? How does Blanche view them?
5. By referring to incidents and comments in the play, prove the assertion that sexuality is a primitive, powerful force capable of creating or destroying life.
6. State some of the ways in which Blanche represents the civilized, rational aspect of life and Stanley represents the primitive, brutish aspect of life.
7. In broad terms, what could be the symbolic significance of the title of this play? What are some of the other symbols you may find in the title?
8. It is easy to see Stanley as the villain in this play, but is there any justification for his actions?
9. Discuss how each of the two different endings of this play affect the way you interpret the play.
10. Elysian Fields is the name of the community where Stanley and Stella live. It is also an allusion: in Greek mythology, Elysian Fields is paradise, the place where heroes go after death. Why does Williams give this name to the area where the Kowalskis live?
11. The DuBois' plantation was named Belle Reve, which means Beautiful Dream. Given Blanche's character, why is that a particularly apt name for her home?

A Streetcar Named Desire

Test

I. Multiple Choice

1. When challenged by Mitch, Blanche justifies the illusions she creates by stating that
 - A. life is corrupt and everyone cheats.
 - B. she wants to create magic.
 - C. she does not want things the way they are but the way they ought to be.
 - D. Both B and C
 - E. A, B, and C

2. We know that Blanche feels guilty about her husband's death because
 - A. she provoked him into joining the army.
 - B. he killed himself after she called him weak.
 - C. she threatened that she would leave him for someone else, causing his suicide.
 - D. her spending has caused him to lose all his money, which led him to commit suicide.
 - E. she humiliated him in front of all their friends.

3. Blanche's last, and most famous, line in this play is
 - A. "Stanley, you're common."
 - B. "I've always depended on the kindness of strangers."
 - C. "You're not Shep Huntleigh."
 - D. "Stella, don't leave me! Don't do this to me! Please!"
 - E. "I am going to a far better place."

4. The real reason Blanche left her job in Mississippi is
 - A. for seducing a student, which caused her to be fired.
 - B. for having a nervous breakdown.
 - C. her notorious affair with Mr. Shaw.
 - D. for her reputation as a town character.
 - E. Both B and C

5. In translation, the name of the DuBois' plantation is
 - A. Happy Land.
 - B. Blessed Women.
 - C. Beautiful Dream.
 - D. Paradise Valley.
 - E. Letters of the Spirit.

6. Stanley is meant to represent
 - A. all Americans.
 - B. the primitive nature of man.
 - C. the civilized nature of man.
 - D. unrestrained sexuality.
 - E. Both B and D
7. The reason or reasons Stanley does not like Blanche is/are
 - A. he thinks she puts on airs.
 - B. he feels she is coming between himself and Stella.
 - C. she treats him like an inferior.
 - D. Both A and B
 - E. A, B, and C
8. When Blanche meets Mitch,
 - A. she falls in love with him.
 - B. she cannot stand him.
 - C. she thinks he is more sensitive than the others.
 - D. Both A and C
 - E. A, B and C
9. When Mitch tears down the lantern, it represents that
 - A. he is going to be honest.
 - B. their relationship is over.
 - C. he will let nothing stand between them.
 - D. he is ready to start anew.
 - E. he has an immense longing for Blanche.
10. When Blanche tells Stella that Stanley attacked her, Stella
 - A. orders Blanche to leave her house.
 - B. attacks Stanley with a bottle.
 - C. calls Blanche a liar.
 - D. refuses to believe it.
 - E. makes up an excuse for Stanley's actions and forgives him.
11. As we watch, it appears that Stella is attracted by Stanley's
 - A. sensitive nature under a rough exterior.
 - B. honest and open way of speaking.
 - C. physical being and animal energy.
 - D. realistic approach to life.
 - E. Both B and D

12. Blanche prefers dimly lit rooms because
- A. her eyes are sensitive to the light.
 - B. she is ashamed of her past behavior.
 - C. she believes her looks are fading.
 - D. she feels that, basically, she is a homely, unattractive woman.
 - E. the light reminds her of her dead husband.
13. The scene with the paperboy suggests that Blanche
- A. is a complete flirt.
 - B. is trying to get even with Mitch.
 - C. is very sick.
 - D. has a strong attraction to younger men.
 - E. Both A and B
14. Whenever Blanche wishes to create illusions from her past, Mitch
- A. usually goes along with her.
 - B. usually objects to participating in them.
 - C. wonders what his mother would think.
 - D. asks Stanley if it is okay.
 - E. never has any idea what is happening.
15. Blanche says, “Sometimes,—there’s God—so quickly.” when
- A. she is saved from Stanley’s attack.
 - B. Stanley is put in his place by Mitch and the others.
 - C. Mitch falls in love with her.
 - D. Stella agrees to leave with her.
 - E. she gets the telegram from Shep Huntleigh.

II. Essays (answer any two)

1. If, as some critics maintain, Stanley and Blanche represent two cultures or two parts of the human animal, describe what each represents and discuss what the resolution of the conflict suggests about the clash between the two.
2. Consider the two possible endings for this play. Explain how one ending points in one thematic direction and the other ending points in the other.
3. Discuss the symbolic significance of the play’s title.
4. Explain why most viewers find Blanche a sympathetic character despite her sordid history and affected manner.

A Streetcar Named Desire

TEST ANSWERS

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. D | 2. B | 3. B | 4. A | 5. C |
| 6. E | 7. E | 8. C | 9. B | 10. D |
| 11. C | 12. C | 13. D | 14. A | 15. C |

II. ESSAYS

1. Stanley represents the primitive nature of all humans. In the stage version, the play opens with Stanley carrying home a large bag of bloody meat that he tosses to Stella. In the film version, we do not see this action; but Blanche refers to it in a speech that draws the line between Stanley and civilization. She concludes that speech by saying to Stella, “Don’t hang back with the brutes.”

In this speech, Blanche also identifies herself with the products of a civilized society: art, music, and literature. Blanche represents rationality and civilized behavior as it conflicts with Stanley’s unbridled emotion and passion. Where Blanche’s pleasures are associated with those of cultured people, Stanley’s are more elemental and more physical.

It is not only Stanley who is presented in this way. The neighbors are also violent, passionate people. In fact, Mitch stands out from the group because he is not this way. However, by the play’s end, Stanley emerges the winner in the conflict, and Blanche and Mitch are the losers. Thus, if Blanche and Stanley do represent two different groups or two parts of the human animal, it is clearly the baser, lower part that ultimately prevails.

2. In most literature, the ending of the work points in some thematic direction. Therefore, if you make a marked change in the ending, you will, in all probability, change the way a theme is to be interpreted. In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, this is most definitely the case.

In the original stage version, the play ends with Stanley putting his hand into Stella’s blouse as Blanche leaves for the asylum with no apparent objection from Stella. Therefore, the viewer concludes that Stanley and Stella will resume their life much as it was before Blanche’s appearance. This life, which is marked by strong sexual passion, is the life that Stella has decided not to jeopardize. She refuses to believe Blanche’s story about the rape; in effect, she refuses to think about it.

In the film version, Stella, at first, also refuses to believe Blanche's story of the rape. As Stella watches the distraught Blanche being led away, the camera closes in on Stella's face, as she says with determination that she will never return to Stanley. She then goes to the neighbor's apartment upstairs while Stanley screams for her to come to him. It is apparent that her compassion for her sister is stronger than her passion for her husband, and Stanley stands to lose his wife.

Thus, the first ending suggests that a selfish, primitive passion is stronger than any altruistic, selfless emotion like compassion, whereas the second ending suggests just the opposite.

3. While they are the names of two actual streetcars in New Orleans, these two names, "*Desire*" and "*Cemeteries*," come to represent two of the several polarities we see in this play.

"*Cemeteries*" is unambiguous; it represents death, absence of spirit and absence of desire. "*Desire*," on the other hand, may be seen on two levels. First, there is the desire associated with sex that figures prominently in this play. This sexual desire leads to procreation and new life. Undoubtedly, it is for this reason that poets link sexual desire with an affirmation of life, and with an elemental life force.

However, the play also reveals other desires. In fact, one may say that the play focuses on Blanche's desires, which always seem to elude her. While Blanche's desires for peace, security, and love is almost palpable, the tragedy of the play is that we know that Blanche will never attain her desires.

4. Blanche's affectations could upset most people. Add to that the fact that she has a sordid history as a camp prostitute and a seducer of young men. She is certainly not the stuff of which a sympathetic character is made; yet, we cannot help being moved by Blanche's plight as she struggles to keep her head above water. We recognize that there is a decent, sensitive individual beneath all the silliness, an individual wracked by guilt because, in one critical moment, she fails to be compassionate or sensitive. This insensitivity brings about the death of the only man she ever loved, her husband. From this, the viewer can sense the void she has fallen into and can sympathize with her efforts to climb out, recognizing that it is a futile undertaking.

A Streetcar Named Desire

Terms and Definitions

Motif - a situation, incident, idea, or image that is repeated significantly in a literary work. **Examples:** In *Hamlet*, revenge is a frequently repeated idea. In *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden continually comments on the phoniness of people he meets.

Symbol - an object, person, or place that has a meaning in itself and that also stands for something larger than itself, usually an idea or concept; some concrete thing which represents an abstraction. **Example:** The sea could be symbolic for “the unknown.” Since the sea is something that is physical and can be seen by the reader, and also has elements that cannot be understood, it can be used symbolically to stand for the abstraction of “mystery,” “obscurity,” or “the unknown.”

Tragic hero - the main character in a tragedy; in order to fit the definition, the hero must have a tragic flaw, which causes his or her downfall. **Examples:** Hamlet’s main character weakness is his indecision; Lear’s is his pride.

A Streetcar Named Desire

Study Guide Teacher's Copy

Scene I: Railroad station and bowling alley

Vocabulary

attenuate—to thin out or blunt the effect

redolence—fragrance

incongruence—not compatible

implicit—understood

indulgence—without restraint

unrefined—crude

1. In the opening scene, how is Blanche's vulnerability expressed?

She appears lost and frightened when the sailor helps her find the streetcar.

2. What do we find out about Blanche in this scene?

She has taken a leave of absence from her teaching job in mid-year, she tells us, because she was on the verge of a breakdown. She does seem nervous and, perhaps, drinks too much.

The apartment - Stella and Blanche

1. What, according to Blanche, causes the loss of Belle Reve?

It is heavily mortgaged and eventually lost to pay for medical and funeral expenses.

2. Why does Stella run out of the room crying?

Blanche has said unpleasant things about Stanley, Stella's husband.

Stanley and Blanche

1. How is the basic contrast between Stanley and Blanche brought out?

The name Stanley has come to represent primitive, crude, physical energy, and force without any veneer of tact, feeling, or affectation. Blanche DuBois represents culture, courtesy, refinement; she, as the epitome of civilized behavior, is the opposite of Stanley's brute force.

Scene II: Stanley and Stella; then Stanley and Blanche

Vocabulary

gander—a look

swindle—cheat

treachery—betrayal or disloyalty

1. What do Stella's actions reveal about her feelings for Stanley in this scene?

She is attracted to him physically.

2. Why is Stanley upset about the loss of Belle Reve?

The Napoleonic Code, the law of Louisiana at the time, gives Stanley a financial interest in whatever his wife owns. Her loss is his loss.

3. What does Stanley think Blanche has done with the money? What does Stella tell him?

He thinks that Blanche has spent the money on jewels and furs. Stella tells him that they are fake and inexpensive pieces.

4. Why does Stanley refuse to leave the room when asked by Stella?

It is his house, and he is the boss. Just because Stella's sister is there, does not mean that he plans on changing.

5. How does Stanley react to Blanche's flirting?

Stanley is impervious to it. He cannot be won over by a woman's flattery or charm.

6. How does Blanche characterize Stanley?

She feels he is simple, straightforward, honest, and a bit primitive.

7. How does Stanley dismiss Blanche's affectations?

He shouts, "Let's cut through this rebop!"

8. What reason does Blanche give Stanley for the loss of Belle Reve?

She says that the excessive debauchery of her ancestors resulted in having to sell off the land a piece at a time.

Scene III: Poker Game

Vocabulary

kibitz—to watch and make comments on

flinch—step back with fear

reverence—a feeling of respect for

rickety—falling apart, shaky

1. What kind of people are the couple upstairs?

Like Stanley, they are loud and physical.

2. Why does Mitch say he has to leave?

He says he has to get home to his sick mother.

3. Why is Blanche interested in Mitch?

He is more sensitive than other men. The fact that he is single makes him eligible. Financially and emotionally, she appears to need someone. He, also, appears to need someone.

4. How does Stanley show his domination?

First, he orders that the hens stop cackling; then, he gets up, strides in the room as Blanche cowers, and shuts off the radio.

5. What lie about herself and Stella does Blanche tell Mitch? Why?

She says that Stella is her older sister. The fact that she is aging bothers her.

6. Why does Blanche ask Mitch to hang the paper lantern?

The paper lantern covers the bright light, which reveals Blanche's aging face. In asking Mitch to hang it, she draws him into her circle of intimacy.

7. Why are we not surprised when Stanley explodes?

He is a physical person who responds to any threat in a physical fashion. At this point, he feels threatened.

8. Why is Stanley standing in the courtyard calling Stella? Why does Stella come downstairs?

Stanley's cry in this scene has been compared to a wounded animal. He wants and needs Stella desperately. Stella responds to Stanley's need because she is strongly attracted to him.

Scene IV: Blanche and Stella

Vocabulary

narcotized—as if drugged

bestial—like a beast, uncivilized

1. Why does Blanche find it hard to believe that Stella is uninterested in leaving Stanley?

Blanche thinks Stanley is common, an animal, a sub-human primitive. Blanche and Stella both come from a very civilized past. Blanche concludes, "Don't hang back with the brutes."

2. As this scene ends, how are Stella's feelings visually revealed?

She looks at Blanche, looks at Stanley, then walks over to his embrace. Stanley's look tells Blanche and us that he knows Blanche does not have a chance of coming between Stella and himself.

Scene V: Stanley and Blanche; Blanche and Stella; Blanche and young man

1. Why is the mention of Stanley's friend, Shaw, threatening to Blanche?

Shaw travels to Blanche's hometown on a regular basis, and he has heard some rumors that he is going to check out about Blanche and the Flamingo Hotel.

2. In her conversation with Stella, what are two of Blanche's concerns?

She is concerned about what rumors Stella might have heard, and she is concerned about getting old and losing her looks.

3. Blanche is trying to attract Mitch. Why?

She would like Mitch to fall in love with and marry her. She does not seem to find Mitch interesting, but he is a sensitive, decent person and could give her financial security and a home.

4. What in the young boy attracts Blanche?

She says he looks like a young prince. Because of his youth, he may remind her of her dead husband.

Scene VI: Blanche and Mitch

Vocabulary

neurasthenic—extremely tired, without and energy

stolid—without emotion

reprove—to find fault with

1. Why must a young girl, according to Blanche, keep a check on her emotions?

If she gives herself up to physical passion, she is lost. At a different point in A Streetcar Named Desire, she says men do not value what they get too easily.

2. Why does Blanche resist Mitch's advances?

She plan to marry Mitch and only then, as is proper, will she submit to his sexual advances.

3. What is significant about Mitch's mother asking about Blanche's age?

Mitch's mother is dying and wants Mitch married. Apparently, she and Mitch think that Blanche may make Mitch a good wife.

4. Why is loneliness a specter for Mitch? Why is Blanche so familiar with loneliness?

When his mother dies, Mitch will have no one. Blanche has had someone she loved, but he died a violent death.

5. Why do you suppose Blanche tells Mitch the details surrounding her husband's death?

Some critics suggest that Blanche tells Mitch to gain his sympathy, and perhaps that is part of her motivation. In part, though, it seems to be a burden that she must talk about, given a sympathetic ear.

6. In what way does Blanche feel responsible for her husband's death?

She told him he was weak and she despised him. He then killed himself.

7. At the close of this scene, why does Blanche say, "Sometimes—there's God—so quickly."?

Life looks pretty bleak for her, but she appears to have a savior in Mitch.

Scene VII: Blanche, Stanley, Stella

1. What is significant about the song Blanche is singing?

“Paper Moon” is about how phony the world is, except when someone is in love. It reemphasizes how unreal Blanche’s world is.

2. What has Stanley found out about Blanche?

She was asked to move out of her hotel because of her carrying on; she became notorious in town, and she was fired from her job because she seduced a 17-year-old student.

3. Why is Mitch not coming to Blanche’s birthday party?

Stanley has told him what he found out about Blanche.

Scene VIII: Stanley, Blanche, and Stella

Vocabulary

contemptible—worthy of being despised; despicable

1. What is behind Stanley’s anger when he is told by Stella that he eats like a pig? What is it he wants?

Again, he feels threatened in his own house. He feels that he is the boss, and whatever he wants to do is right and should not be criticized. This was the way it was before Blanche visited, and this is the way he wants it again.

2. What is the birthday remembrance that Stanley gives Blanche?

He gives her a bus ticket home.

3. Why, according to Stella, has Blanche changed?

Stella says that Blanche, when younger, was tender and trusting but that hard people have caused Blanche to change.

4. Why does Stanley give Blanche the ticket? How does he say that he has changed Stella?

He wants to get rid of her and have things the way they used to be. He says that he pulled Stella off the columns of the plantation and brought her down to his world, and she loves it. He implies that Stella would have sophisticated ways like Blanche if it were not for him.

Scene IX: Blanche and Mitch

Vocabulary

malarky—nonsense

recrimination—a countercharge

1. Why does Mitch refuse Stanley's liquor?

Mitch is feeling a good deal of resentment toward both Stanley and Blanche. He tells her that Stanley has accused Blanche of lapping up his liquor all summer.

2. Why does Mitch want to see Blanche in the light?

He wants to unmask some of the deception. He wants, specifically, to see how old she looks.

3. What might be the symbolic significance of Mitch ripping the paper lantern from the light?

It signifies the end of their relationship, just as his putting the lantern up for Blanche was the start of their relationship. It also symbolizes the end of illusion, throwing full light on the true nature of Blanche.

4. Blanche says that she does not want realism; she wants magic. She wants things not the way they are but the way they ought to be. What does this imply about her use of deceptions and her view of life?

She believes that her deceptions and illusions are harmless and necessary. These illusions make reality less grim and harsh for her, making her life more endurable. She is a romantic hiding from her sins and hoping for a fantasy to deliver her from reality.

5. What explanation does Blanche give for her promiscuity?

After her husband's death, she goes to pieces with grief and guilt. In an attempt to fill this void, she becomes promiscuous. (This point is not made explicitly, but she is promiscuous with young soldiers. The youth of the soldiers, her student, and the death of her young husband all seem linked.)

6. Blanche concludes that death is the opposite of desire. What does she mean?

Desire makes us feel alive, and sexual desire leads to procreation and life. Without desire, without passion for the beauty in life, one might as well be dead.

7. In what way is Blanche a little different in this scene?

She has lost some of her affectation and is more in touch with the real world. She becomes more sympathetic in this scene.

8. What does Mitch say that devastates Blanche?

He says he will not marry her because she is too unclean to bring into his mother's house.

Scene X: Stanley and Blanche

Vocabulary

spectral—ghost-like

destitute—very poor

1. As this scene opens, what illusion is Blanche creating?

Dressed in finery, Blanche is conversing with an old beau at a party that took place many years ago.

2. Whom does she claim to have gotten a telegram from, and what does the telegram purportedly say?

She claims that an old beau from Dallas, Shep Huntleigh, has invited her to take a cruise on his yacht.

3. What does Blanche say she can offer someone like Shep?

In answer to Stanley's implication about sex, Blanche says that she has intelligence, refinement, and good companionship to offer someone like Shep.

4. What story does Blanche fabricate about Mitch? What does she say she cannot forgive?

She tells Stanley that he had returned with flowers to apologize, but she would not accept his apology because she is unable to forgive deliberate cruelty.

5. What motivates Stanley's sexual attack on Blanche?

He resents Blanche and her manner. He especially resents her intrusion on his life. He has been putting her down throughout the play, and this is his response to his deep-seated anger.

Scene XI: Stanley, Stella, and Blanche

Vocabulary

lurid—bright, vivid, glaring colors

callous—hard hearted; without feeling

perplexity—confusion

sinister—threatening; scary

1. How does Stanley's rape affect Blanche?

She has withdrawn from reality and is now in her own world.

2. Why does Stella refuse to believe that Stanley attacked Blanche? What do the neighbors say?

She could not go on living with Stanley if she believes it, so she refuses to believe it. The neighbors validate her position by saying that people have to live.

3. Where is Blanche going; where does she think she is going?

Blanche is being sent to an asylum, but she thinks she is waiting for a gentleman caller, Shep Huntleigh, and that she is going on the cruise she invented.

4. When the doctor removes his hat and offers Blanche his arm, what effect does this have on Blanche? Why?

It is the gallant, courteous gesture of a gentleman, and this calms and reassures Blanche.

5. What does the ending of this production suggest?

Stella has taken the baby and has gone upstairs with the intention of never returning to Stanley. His scream "Stella!" reminds us of his earlier scream.

6. The play ends with Stanley putting his hand inside Stella's blouse and her not objecting. What does this type of ending suggest?

Life will go on as before between Stanley and Stella.

A Streetcar Named Desire

Study Guide Student Copy

Scene I: Railroad station and bowling alley

Vocabulary

attenuate—to thin out or blunt the effect

redolence—fragrance

incongruence—not compatible

implicit—understood

indulgence—without restraint

unrefined—crude

1. In the opening scene, how is Blanche's vulnerability expressed?
2. What do we find out about Blanche in this scene?

The apartment - Stella and Blanche

1. What, according to Blanche, causes the loss of Belle Reve?
2. Why does Stella run out of the room crying?

Stanley and Blanche

1. How is the basic contrast between Stanley and Blanche brought out?

Scene II: Stanley and Stella; then Stanley and Blanche

Vocabulary

gander—a look

swindle—cheat

treachery—betrayal or disloyalty

1. What do Stella's actions reveal about her feelings for Stanley in this scene?
2. Why is Stanley upset about the loss of Belle Reve?
3. What does Stanley think Blanche has done with the money? What does Stella tell him?
4. Why does Stanley refuse to leave the room when asked by Stella?
5. How does Stanley react to Blanche's flirting?
6. How does Blanche characterize Stanley?
7. How does Stanley dismiss Blanche's affectations?
8. What reason does Blanche give Stanley for the loss of Belle Reve?

Scene III: Poker Game

Vocabulary

kibitz—to watch and make comments on

flinch—step back with fear

reverence—a feeling of respect for

rickety—falling apart, shaky

1. What kind of people are the couple upstairs?
2. Why does Mitch say he has to leave?
3. Why is Blanche interested in Mitch?
4. How does Stanley show his domination?
5. What lie about herself and Stella does Blanche tell Mitch? Why?
6. Why does Blanche ask Mitch to hang the paper lantern?
7. Why are we not surprised when Stanley explodes?
8. Why is Stanley standing in the courtyard calling Stella? Why does Stella come downstairs?

Scene IV: Blanche and Stella

Vocabulary

narcotized—as if drugged

bestial—like a beast, uncivilized

1. Why does Blanche find it hard to believe that Stella is uninterested in leaving Stanley?
2. As this scene ends, how are Stella's feelings visually revealed?

Scene V: Stanley and Blanche; Blanche and Stella; Blanche and young man

1. Why is the mention of Stanley's friend, Shaw, threatening to Blanche?
2. In her conversation with Stella, what are two of Blanche's concerns?
3. Blanche is trying to attract Mitch. Why?
4. What in the young boy attracts Blanche?

Scene VI: Blanche and Mitch

Vocabulary

neurasthenic—extremely tired, without and energy

stolid—without emotion

reprove—to find fault with

1. Why must a young girl, according to Blanche, keep a check on her emotions?
2. Why does Blanche resist Mitch's advances?
3. What is significant about Mitch's mother asking about Blanche's age?
4. Why is loneliness a specter for Mitch? Why is Blanche so familiar with loneliness?
5. Why do you suppose Blanche tells Mitch the details surrounding her husband's death?
6. In what way does Blanche feel responsible for her husband's death?
7. At the close of this scene, why does Blanche say, "Sometimes—there's God—so quickly."?

Scene VII: Blanche, Stanley, Stella

1. What is significant about the song Blanche is singing?
2. What has Stanley found out about Blanche?
3. Why is Mitch not coming to Blanche's birthday party?

Scene VIII: Stanley, Blanche, and Stella

Vocabulary

contemptible—worthy of being despised; despicable

1. What is behind Stanley's anger when he is told by Stella that he eats like a pig? What is it he wants?
2. What is the birthday remembrance that Stanley gives Blanche?
3. Why, according to Stella, has Blanche changed?
4. Why does Stanley give Blanche the ticket? How does he say that he has changed Stella?

Scene IX: Blanche and Mitch

Vocabulary

malarky—nonsense

recrimination—a countercharge

1. Why does Mitch refuse Stanley's liquor?
2. Why does Mitch want to see Blanche in the light?
3. What might be the symbolic significance of Mitch ripping the paper lantern from the light?
4. Blanche says that she does not want realism; she wants magic. She wants things not the way they are but the way they ought to be. What does this imply about her use of deceptions and her view of life?
5. What explanation does Blanche give for her promiscuity?
6. Blanche concludes that death is the opposite of desire. What does she mean?
7. In what way is Blanche a little different in this scene?
8. What does Mitch say that devastates Blanche?

Scene X: Stanley and Blanche

Vocabulary

spectral—ghost-like

destitute—very poor

1. As this scene opens, what illusion is Blanche creating?
2. Whom does she claim to have gotten a telegram from, and what does the telegram purportedly say?
3. What does Blanche say she can offer someone like Shep?
4. What story does Blanche fabricate about Mitch? What does she say she cannot forgive?
5. What motivates Stanley's sexual attack on Blanche?

Scene XI: Stanley, Stella, and Blanche

Vocabulary

lurid—bright, vivid, glaring colors

callous—hard hearted; without feeling

perplexity—confusion

sinister—threatening; scary

1. How does Stanley's rape affect Blanche?
2. Why does Stella refuse to believe that Stanley attacked Blanche? What do the neighbors say?
3. Where is Blanche going; where does she think she is going?
4. When the doctor removes his hat and offers Blanche his arm, what effect does this have on Blanche? Why?
5. What does the ending of this production suggest?
6. The play ends with Stanley putting his hand inside Stella's blouse and her not objecting. What does this type of ending suggest?

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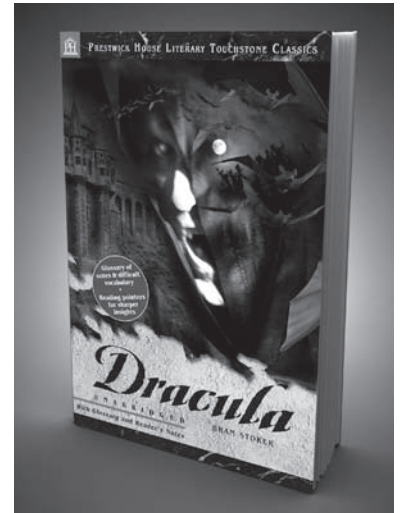
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