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Advanced Placement in
English Literature and Composition

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

The Glass Menagerie

by Tennessee Williams

written by Elizabeth Osborne

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The Glass Menagerie

Objectives

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

1. trace the development of the motif of illusion/magic in the play.
2. analyze the fantasy/reality dichotomy in the play and explain how each character fits into it.
3. analyze Williams's use of religious imagery and language in the play.
4. analyze the use of props, music, and lighting to underscore symbols, tone, and theme in the play.
5. examine the "sensitive artist" archetype within the play and explain how Tom uses words and writing as a means of self-empowerment and escape.
6. explain what *pathos* is and how the playwright creates it.
7. analyze Jim O'Connor and Mr. Wingfield as parallel characters.
8. analyze each of the main characters and the relationships between them and explain why each character is static or dynamic.
9. respond to multiple choice questions similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
10. determine whether the text makes a general statement about the middle class.
11. respond to writing prompts similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
12. offer a close reading of *The Glass Menagerie* and support all assertions and interpretations with direct evidence from the text, from authoritative critical knowledge of the genre, or from authoritative criticism of the novel.

Background Lecture

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Thomas Lanier Williams, later known as Tennessee Williams, was born in Columbus, Mississippi, in 1911. His family moved around frequently, first in Mississippi, then to a suburb of St. Louis, Missouri, where Williams spent most of his school years. He did not get along with his father, a traveling salesman; his mother, Edwina, was overbearing and somewhat hysterical, although supportive of her son's desire to write. Williams also had a younger brother, Dakin. His older sister, Rose, was one of the most important figures in his life, and Williams and others described her as beautiful, sweet, and highly intelligent. Unfortunately, she also suffered from schizophrenia, which worsened as she got older.

In 1929, Williams graduated from University City High School and enrolled at the University of Missouri. He transferred to several other schools and had to take two years off from college to work, but did finally graduate from the University of Iowa in 1938 with a bachelor of arts degree.

The most devastating event of his life occurred before this, though. In 1937, his parents authorized a prefrontal lobotomy for Rose, who was growing more paranoid and troubled. The procedure involved inserting an ice pick through the patient's eye socket to sever nerves that joined the prefrontal cortex to the rest of the brain; it was supposed to relieve psychiatric strain. Instead, it completely destroyed Rose mentally; she was never able to care for herself again. It also broke Williams's heart and caused him to suffer his own mental collapse.

Williams would later say that the difference between himself and Rose was that he had a way to deal with his fragile mental state—he could write. He turned Rose's suffering into a short story and then a play, *The Glass Menagerie*. Laura, Tom's fragile, sensitive sister in the play, suffers from a personality disorder, just as Rose did; Tom is unable to escape from his memories of Laura and his guilt of abandoning her.

The Glass Menagerie made Williams famous as a playwright. It premiered in 1944 and received excellent reviews. It then won a New York Drama Critics Circle Award. In an essay that accompanies the play, Williams notes that he had difficulty dealing with this new fame and escaped to Mexico for a time to write.

In the 1960s, Williams suffered a mental breakdown. His later works did not receive critical praise, but he continued to write. He died in New York City in 1983.

Background Lecture: *The Glass Menagerie*

Tennessee Williams called *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) a “memory play.” It is a dramatic rendering of the memories of the narrator, Tom Wingfield; because he is not an objective director or narrator, the play unfolds in an impressionistic, highly symbolic fashion.

The play contains characters very clearly drawn from Williams’s own life, although the play’s purpose is not autobiography. Rather, Williams seeks to show how any artist can engage mental and emotional pain through the process of art itself.

1. Social and Historical Background of the Play

Tom, as a narrator conscious of his own role in a play, deliberately sets the action in a very specific time and place. The historical events of the 1930s seem very distant to the Wingfields, and yet they are symbolically linked to the internal changes through which the family goes.

In Scene One, Tom describes sporadic labor riots in American cities, the bombing of Guernica in Spain, and the declining economy, establishing the time of the play as 1937. The Great Depression is keeping the country’s economy stagnant. Labor disputes in big cities hint at the unrest that will soon upset the balance of the whole world and start World War II.

- **The Great Depression**

Through the 1920s, there was wild speculation on the stock market all over the world. Eventually, the system collapsed, and the stock market crashed in October of 1929. Unemployment eventually reached 25%. The Great Depression changed the political balance in the United States. President Herbert Hoover, unable to provide solutions to the economic catastrophe, lost the 1932 election to Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Roosevelt immediately instituted a series of economic initiatives that are collectively called the “New Deal.” The reforms of the New Deal showed tolerance toward labor unions and workers’ rights. Although the American economy improved a little through the 1930s, 1937 (the year the play takes place) saw another recession.

- **Labor Riots in the United States**

Since the late 1800s, there had been ongoing tension in both Europe and America between large, powerful corporations and groups of workers trying to organize into unions. The unions tried to use the power of numbers to bargain for higher salaries, better working conditions, and better job security; the corporations tried to protect their own interests.

Early in the twentieth century, the plight of workers and the trend toward unionism led also to the promulgation of socialist economic and political theories, resulting in civil wars in Russia and Spain and the establishment of socialist governments, most of which slowly devolved into totalitarian states. The 1930s saw worldwide political and economic tensions increase as the Great Depression forced people into economic desperation.

The *Little Steel Strike* took place when a group of steel companies refused to sign a union contract. On May 30, 1937, protesting steelworkers marched in Chicago and were fired upon by police. Ten of them were killed.

The *Flint Sit-Down Strike* also took place in 1936 and 1937. The General Motors Corporation was crippled by the strike, which was orchestrated by the United Auto Workers (UAW). Several court injunctions ordering the strikers to leave the plant they were physically occupying were either found to be illegal or were simply ignored. Not only did General Motors eventually agree to go through the UAW for future bargaining, but the UAW also signed up hundreds of thousands of new members.

- **The Bombing of Guernica** (April 26, 1937. is mentioned several times in the play. Guernica was a town in Spain that was heavily bombed by a combination of German and Spanish forces during the Spanish Civil War. Revolutionaries were trying to overthrow the leftist coalition that had won the 1936 elections. (Leftist groups generally support workers' rights and the organization of labor.)

In *The Glass Menagerie*, Tom himself is a young man forced by economic necessity—exacerbated by the abandonment of his father—to work in the warehouse of Continental Shoemakers. Tom has little power over his own job or life, but instead of joining a movement, he escapes from the endless labor and mental tedium through books and movies.

2. Themes and Motifs

- **The Absent Father**
Williams draws on his own childhood when depicting the Wingfield family, and his ideas about fathers are not favorable. Mr. Wingfield plays a prominent role in *The Glass Menagerie*, even though he is not an active character in it. His abandonment of the family is the act that shaped all of their expectations about their future. The opening stage directions specify the presence of the photograph of the absent Mr. Wingfield, the “telephone man who fell in love with long distances,” establishing that he is to be *visibly* present in the play, even when he is not being discussed. One can only wonder how much of the Wingfields' poverty and the sense of desperation it causes is the result of the father's abandonment and how much merely the result of their own actions and choices. To what extent is Tom doomed to be his father, and to what extent does the audience's sympathy with Tom help us to understand the father?
- **The Artistic Temperament**
Tennessee Williams' sister, Rose, was mentally fragile, suffering from schizophrenia. Eventually, she had a prefrontal lobotomy, which permanently disabled her. Williams loosely based the character of Laura on Rose. Note that Tom, whom Williams based on himself, also has problems, which come from being sensitive and artistic. Neither Laura nor Tom is well-suited for the cold, dream-crushing world outside the apartment and their own minds. However, Tom, unlike Laura, is able to escape through writing.

- **The Decline of the Old South**

In the play, Amanda Wingfield is obsessed with the decline of the gracious Southern environment she remembers, and to which she cannot return. Williams's own mother wanted to claim her place in the Southern aristocracy. In fact, Tennessee, whose birth name was Thomas, may have gotten his nickname because of his Southern accent. Notice ways that Williams undercuts Amanda's romanticized depiction of the South, both in the things that she says and in Tom's response to her.

- **The Importance of Words, Books, and Art**

Tom reacts strongly to Amanda when she intrudes upon his personal life, ambitions, and form of mental escape. As he says, books and movies represent his only source of relief in a terrible, dreary world. While his family's financial hardship binds Tom to his job at Continental Shoemakers, he lives vicariously through the characters on the page and the screen. Notice how he uses words, as opposed to avoidance or physical violence, to battle Amanda; they represent his ability to save himself. Laura is unable to do the same thing.

- **Magic and Illusions**

The opening stage directions of *The Glass Menagerie* explain that Tom will be both a character and a narrator in the play; he exists both in the present time, as a guide to the events onstage, and as a character in the time of the play (the 1930s). This is the first suggestion we have of the "magic" of authors and artists—they are able to manipulate time, space, and the emotions of the audience, which remain completely in their control.

Narrator Tom then steps onstage, saying that unlike a magician, he will give the audience "truth in the pleasant disguise of an illusion." For the audience, a play is a kind of escape.

Tom himself indulges in a similar method of escape: he loses himself in movies. In Scene Four, he comes home and tells Laura that he saw a fantastic magician, a master of illusion, who was able to get out of a coffin "without removing one nail." He also gives Laura a "shimmering rainbow-colored scarf" that he got from the magician. Magic and illusion are able to provide escape from the ugliness of life, but only barely—like Laura's glass menagerie, things that seem beautiful can turn out to be cheap and easily destroyed.

3. Symbolism and Imagery

- **The Glass Menagerie**

As a symbol, Laura's glass menagerie is both simple and complex. Laura is a delicate and sensitive person (the stage directions mention the "fragile, unearthly prettiness that usually escapes attention"). The glass, too, is easily broken. On the other hand, even Laura acknowledges that some damage is to be expected; things that are too delicate cannot survive the rough conditions of everyday life.

Besides representing Laura, the glass animals serve as a preoccupation that allows Laura to avoid venturing into the harsh outside world. Both Tom and Amanda see the menagerie as a symbol of Laura's troubled mind and unpromising future—at separate times, they speak derisively of the animals as playthings or amusements. The glass menagerie is something a child—especially a young girl entranced by small, delicate trinkets—would treasure. Laura is not a child, however, a fact that becomes painfully obvious when Jim asks what she has been doing since high school, and she responds that she has spent her time caring for her glass animal collection.

- **Religious Imagery**

Tom's inability to escape from his position as narrator of an endless cycle of painful memories is a kind of hell; his own guilt will not let him have peace. Take notice of any mention of prayers, religious ceremonies, or sacrifice, as well as food or drink normally associated with Christ.

Some examples of religious imagery in the play:

- Both of the times Amanda calls her neighbors on the telephone, she calls them "Christian martyrs."
 - Jim's arrival is referred to as an "Annunciation."
 - The "devout and ritualistic" dress-fitting.
 - Amanda's comment that they "may—have grace—now" when Jim arrives, and her exclamation that "God's Holy Name be praised—"
 - Jim brings wine into the room with Laura, and Amanda cooks fish for dinner. Both represent Christ.
 - Jim's disappointing news causes "[t]he holy candles on the altar of Laura's face [to be] snuffed out."
- **The Victrola**
- Laura constantly plays the Victrola that her father left behind, suggesting that his departure either contributed to or caused her withdrawal from the world.

Furthermore, the Victrola mitigates Laura's emotional distress. While Tom escapes from their poor situation through movies and writing, Laura finds relief in music and her menagerie.

- **The Fire Escape**

As the stage directions point out, the fire escape is a route by which someone who is figuratively burning from “the implacable fires of human desperation” may flee. Since the fire escape is the only way in which the Wingfields can enter and exit their apartment, its presence reinforces the idea that the home is filled with dejection, and every exit from it is an escape. Furthermore, the exposition, detailing the urbanization and overpopulation of cities, combined with the implication that the apartments in that part of town were built in a haphazard manner, suggest that several of the homes have a single entryway through a fire escape. Thus, the anxiety the Wingfields experience is a condition common to many members of the lower-middle class.

Pay attention to the ways that Tom and Amanda view the fire escape and at what parts of the play they use it to get away from the action occurring within the home.

- **Flowers**

Both Laura and Amanda are associated with particular flowers. Laura is connected with “Blue Roses,” a moniker Jim gave her when she returned to school after being absent with pleurosis (pleurisy). It is a symbol not only of Laura’s relationship with Jim, but also a symbol for Laura’s uniqueness and originality: Laura is unlike other people because of her physical disability, her detachment from reality, her innocent and child-like behavior. Like blue roses, she is an anomaly, but special in her way. In addition, “blue roses” may hint at the relationship between Laura and Williams’s sister, Rose.

Amanda is associated with the jonquil, a bright and cheerful flower, and one that is abundant in the South. By holding jonquils when Jim comes to visit, Amanda attempts to relive the days of her youth, when she was a Southern belle and wooed by many beaux. She used to collect jonquils in the countryside, and while Amanda’s neighbors found her obsession endearing, the act also indicated neurosis, a characteristic that was repressed in Amanda’s youth, but has since come to the surface.

- **The Glass Unicorn**

The unicorn is Laura’s favorite animal in her glass menagerie, most likely because she identifies with him. Just as Laura’s malformed leg and nervousness set her apart from her peers, the unicorn’s horn differentiates him from the other horses.

However, while Laura tends to avoid social interaction and frequently feels like an outcast, in Laura’s imaginary world, the unicorn gets along well with the other horses. It is likely that Laura projects her own desires on the unicorn, hoping that one day she, too, will fit in with and be accepted by other people.

4. Productions of *The Glass Menagerie*

The Glass Menagerie premiered in 1944 in Chicago, and it was presented soon afterward in New York. The first production received special acclamation for the actress playing Amanda, Laurette Taylor. Notable adaptations include a 1973 film made for television, which stars Katharine Hepburn as Amanda and Sam Waterston as Tom, and a 1987 production directed by Paul Newman, starring Joanne Woodward as Amanda and John Malkovich as Tom.

The Glass Menagerie is also a favorite of repertory theaters and high-school drama groups. It is simple to stage, has only four primary characters, and can be interpreted in many different ways. Tom, who has been played on television and in film by actors as different from one another as John Malkovich, Hal Holbrook, and Sam Waterston, can be played as affectionate to Amanda, but frustrated; on the other hand, some directors see him as bitter and enraged. Laura, who is actually based on a character from an earlier Williams short story, can be seen as an innocent victim of her own circumstances and overbearing mother, but she also lacks Tom's strength of character. Her inability to overcome her anxiety is a major, although indirect, cause of Tom's miserable situation. Her passivity is actually a kind of cruelty. Amanda, although depicted as emotionally manipulative, melodramatic, and insensitive to the inner feelings of either of her children, is also highly sympathetic; she feels—and Williams seems to agree—that she has been forced into a terrible life by her deceptive, inconsiderate husband. While Tom may disagree with Amanda's beliefs about the Old South, he admires her fierce determination to maintain her dignity and to make sure that Laura does not suffer a similar fate. At the end of the play, as Amanda comforts Laura in pantomime, "her silliness is gone and she has dignity and tragic beauty." Even Jim, who has only a small role in the play, can be played as an unknowing destroyer of dreams, or as simply a "nice, ordinary, young man" (as Williams' character description calls him) who wanders into a family of very emotional people who regard him as their potential savior. The only character who cannot be transformed by each new interpretation is Mr. Wingfield, the silent, absent father.

Free-Response (Essay) Items

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 1

The distinction between a dynamic character—whose attitudes, values, and beliefs change during the course of a novel or play—and a static character—who does not change but about whom new information may be revealed—is often very subtle. Write a well-organized essay in which you analyze one of the characters from Tennessee Williams’s *The Glass Menagerie* as either a dynamic or a static character. Do not merely provide a character sketch.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 2

Authors often draw parallels between certain characters in a play or novel in order to have the reader pay attention to their differences and question their significance within the work. In a well-organized essay, compare the function of the absent Mr. Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie* to the role of Jim O’Connor.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 3

The setting of a play, while establishing the time and place of the action, is often given a metaphoric or symbolic significance that influences how the audience will perceive the characters and events in the plot. In a well-reasoned and –supported essay, analyze the thematic and symbolic importance of the Wingfields’ apartment in Tennessee Williams’s *The Glass Menagerie*.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 4

Audiences of play and movies usually witness the events of the plot unfold before them without the benefit of—or intrusion by—a narrator. The presence of a narrator in a play, then, indicates a special intent on the part of the playwright: an effect he hopes to create, a meaning he hopes to convey. In a well-reasoned and -organized essay, analyze the function of the narrator in the *The Glass Menagerie*. Pay special attention to the way he mediates tension between past and present.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 5

Read the passage in Scene Seven in which Jim and Laura talk (starting at “Hello there, Laura,” and ending “Good night!”). In a well-organized essay, explain how Tennessee Williams creates dramatic tension in this scene.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 6

Read the passage in Scene Five starting with “A fire escape landing’s a poor excuse for a porch” and ending “Not to the movies.” In a well-organized essay, discuss how Williams uses setting to develop the relationship between Tom and Amanda in this scene.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 7

Read Tom’s speech about Malvolio the Magician in Scene Two (starting with “Tom: Of course!” and ending with him removing his shoes). In a well-organized essay, explain how the motifs that appear in this passage are significant to the rest of the play.

Practice Multiple Choice Questions

PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 1-5

Carefully read the first set of stage directions in Scene One and then, select the best answers to the following questions.

1. The opening stage directions establish that the play will be primarily
 - A. impressionistic.
 - B. sociological.
 - C. mythical.
 - D. political.
 - E. realistic.

2. The stage directions suggest that the characters of the play are going to be
 - A. responsible for their own suffering.
 - B. ignorant of opportunities that could help them.
 - C. trapped by forces beyond their control.
 - D. idealized by the power of memory.
 - E. able to overcome their natural limits.

3. From the context in which it appears, the word “whatnot” means
 - A. living room.
 - B. photograph.
 - C. display case.
 - D. trinket.
 - E. apartment.

4. Which idea is suggested by the description of the alleys on either side of the tenement?
 - A. Successful escape will actually lead the Wingfields further into the “fires of human desperation.”
 - B. The Wingfields and their neighbors are bound to escape from each other eventually.
 - C. The way out of the tenement is through cooperation with others.
 - D. Escape from the tenement and this lifestyle will be difficult, dangerous, and probably unsuccessful.
 - E. Although their lives seem dark, there is a way out for the Wingfields.

5. Through the description of the apartment’s interior, the author evokes
 - A. an atmosphere of severe discipline and thwarted dreams.
 - B. a sense of loss and time gone by.
 - C. a sense of the dread everyone feels about the upcoming war.
 - D. a feeling of danger and suspense.
 - E. an environment of humor and friendliness.

PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 6-10

Carefully read Scene Two of *The Glass Menagerie* from the beginning of the scene to the point when Laura says, “I couldn’t face it.” Then, select the best answers to the following questions.

6. Laura’s “deception” seems to have been
 - A. accidental.
 - B. systematic.
 - C. random.
 - D. passive.
 - E. deliberate.

7. The author elicits humor in this scene through
 - A. The extreme contrast in the women’s personalities.
 - B. Amanda’s exaggerated martyrdom.
 - C. Laura’s skillful wordplay and puns.
 - D. Amanda’s mistaken belief about why Laura dropped out.
 - E. Laura’s deceptive behavior.

8. Amanda’s tone in this scene can best be described as
 - A. disappointed.
 - B. melancholic.
 - C. embarrassed.
 - D. nervous.
 - E. bewildered.

9. Laura’s visits to the tropical flower nursery probably symbolize
 - A. one element of her deception of Amanda.
 - B. her desire to travel out of St. Louis.
 - C. her delicate and sensitive nature.
 - D. delicate and unpredictable future.
 - E. Amanda’s and Laura’s contrasting personalities.

10. Laura’s behavior at the beginning of the scene is an example of
 - A. foreshadowing.
 - B. understatement.
 - C. irony.
 - D. comic relief.
 - E. pantomime.

PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 11-15

Carefully read the argument between Tom and Amanda in Scene Three, from the stage direction, “Legend on screen: ‘You think I’m in love...’” to the end of the scene. Then, select the best answers to the following questions.

11. In the first part of the argument, Tom and Amanda speak mostly in fragments. The author uses these fragments to emphasize
 - A. the imaginary nature of the argument.
 - B. Tom’s inability to use words.
 - C. the characters’ lack of communication.
 - D. Amanda’s fragile grip on reality.
 - E. the disintegration of the Wingfield family.

12. What does Amanda’s returning the books to the library represent for Tom?
 - A. the fundamental cause of Amanda and Tom’s argument.
 - B. an assault upon his mental freedom.
 - C. a turning point in Amanda and Tom’s relationship.
 - D. Amanda’s lack of self-awareness.
 - E. the ultimate cause of his dissatisfaction.

13. In the speech that begins “I’m going to opium dens,” the primary literary device is
 - A. hyperbole.
 - B. parallelism.
 - C. comic relief.
 - D. soliloquy.
 - E. verbal irony.

14. The breaking of the glass unicorn in this scene suggests that
 - A. Tom’s bid for freedom will destroy Laura.
 - B. Laura realizes she is weak.
 - C. Laura will reject Tom.
 - D. The family will soon be broken.
 - E. Laura and Tom will soon be driven apart.

15. In this scene, Williams depicts Amanda as
 - A. supportive.
 - B. paralyzed.
 - C. indifferent.
 - D. desperate.
 - E. malicious.

PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 16-20

Carefully read all of Scene Five. Then, select the best answers to the following questions.

16. In response to Tom's sarcasm, Amanda is
- A. hurt.
 - B. dismissive.
 - C. patronizing.
 - D. sarcastic.
 - E. patient.
17. Williams creates humor in this scene through
- A. Tom's refusal to let Amanda know when the gentleman caller is coming.
 - B. Laura's bewildered reaction to Amanda's request.
 - C. the contrast between Amanda's optimistic determination and Tom's pained reluctance.
 - D. the combination of Tom's sarcasm and Laura's confusion.
 - E. Amanda's inability to grasp that Tom is being sarcastic.
18. The author uses the fire escape and the moon to provide
- A. suspense.
 - B. comic relief.
 - C. irony.
 - D. unity.
 - E. tone.
19. We can infer from this scene that Tom's attitude toward Mr. Wingfield is
- A. negative.
 - B. ambivalent.
 - C. fearful.
 - D. affectionate.
 - E. sympathetic.
20. The stage directions at the end of the scene emphasize that Amanda
- A. has hope for the future.
 - B. wants to destroy Laura.
 - C. regrets her past.
 - D. is completely misguided.
 - E. is proud of Laura.

PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 21-25

Carefully read Scene Seven starting at “Jim comes into the the dining room...” and ending, “Legend: ‘What have you done since high school?’” Then, select the best answers to the following questions.

21. Williams creates pathos in this scene through
 - A. Jim’s realization that his future is bleak.
 - B. the contrast between Laura’s and Jim’s memories.
 - C. Laura’s self-consciousness about her limp.
 - D. the difference between Jim’s and Laura’s social lives.
 - E. Jim and Laura’s delusion about how they know each other.

22. The practical function of the candles in this scene is to
 - A. symbolize the warmth Laura feels toward Jim.
 - B. conceal Jim’s features and hide his shyness.
 - C. delay Jim’s realization about who Laura is.
 - D. prompt Jim and Laura to drink more wine.
 - E. bring Jim and Laura physically closer together.

23. What is ironic about the stage direction, “They smile across the book with mutual wonder”?
 - A. Jim has not seen *The Torch* in many years, but is still able to enjoy it.
 - B. Jim and Laura are brought together by their admiration of Jim.
 - C. The source of Laura’s wonder is not the same as Jim’s.
 - D. Jim appreciates Laura for who she is now, but she only loves the memory of him.
 - E. *The Torch* is not actually the reason for their mutual wonder.

24. Jim’s comments about the Century of Progress reinforce the image of him as
 - A. hopeful but skeptical.
 - B. gullible and foolish.
 - C. optimistic but shallow.
 - D. mature and wise.
 - E. imaginative and prophetic.

25. Williams uses Jim and Laura’s differing memories about her entrance into the chorus room to
 - A. reinforce Jim’s basic unawareness of Laura.
 - B. suggest that Laura will always be late for things.
 - C. increase the suspense of the scene.
 - D. characterize Laura as self-absorbed.
 - E. show that Jim should have noticed Laura.

PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 26-30

Carefully read Scene Seven from “Jim: I’m glad to see that you have a sense of humor,” to the end of the scene. Then, select the best answers to the following questions.

26. In this scene, Williams uses dramatic irony to
- A. increase suspense.
 - B. lighten the tone.
 - C. heighten symbolism.
 - D. intensify pathos.
 - E. develop character.
27. After Jim tells Laura about Betty, the stage directions say that “The holy candles on the altar of Laura’s face have been snuffed out.” This is an example of
- A. metonymy
 - B. irony
 - C. imagery
 - D. foreshadowing
 - E. metaphor
28. Laura’s giving Jim the broken unicorn symbolizes her
- A. newfound strength.
 - B. utter desperation.
 - C. end of self-delusion.
 - D. sense of irony.
 - E. desire for happiness.
29. Judging by this passage, the dance-hall music serves to
- A. foreshadow Jim’s departure.
 - B. echo the dialogue.
 - C. establish the setting.
 - D. emphasize underlying emotions.
 - E. restrict character movement.
30. The epigraph of this play is a line from an e.e. cummings poem that reads, “Nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands.” Judging by what Tom says in his final speech, this allusion serves to
- A. predict the nature of Tom’s life.
 - B. emphasize Laura’s fragility.
 - C. suggest Tom’s lingering feelings for Laura.
 - D. justify Tom’s leaving.
 - E. bring closure to the Wingfield family.

Multiple Choice Answers With Explanations

1. The stage directions say that “the play is memory and therefore nonrealistic,” thus eliminating (E). While (C), mythical, might seem to be a synonym for “nonrealistic,” the emphasis on memory and the personal makes (A) **impressionistic** a better choice. The play “omits some details; others are exaggerated,” according to Tom’s memory. There is a sociological aspect (B), since the stage directions place the Wingfields in a particular class of people, but the primary focus of the stage directions is on the particular fate of one family. (D) Politics are not mentioned here.
2. Words and phrases like “overcrowded,” and “fundamentally enslaved,” as well as the emphasis on the fire escape as a way out of a desperate existence, makes (C) **trapped by forces beyond their control** the best answer. Although the middle class has “the impulse...to exist and function as one interfused mass of automatism,” the fact that it is “fundamentally enslaved” suggests that their condition is the result of a misguided impulse rather than something that deserves blame (A). The middle-class citizens may be naïve and ignorant (B), but that information is not in the stage directions. Certainly, members of the middle class lacks the ability to overcome their situation, so (E) is incorrect.
3. We know that the “whatnot,” whatever it is, is in the living room, which is in the apartment, so (A) and (E) are not correct. The stage directions use the word “photograph” for the picture next to the whatnot, so (B) is also the wrong answer. The glass animals, which are (D) trinkets, rest within the whatnot, so the object must be a kind of shelf or (C) **display case**.
4. The stage directions set the depressing, cynical tone for the play by describing the tenement as a sad, even threatening, place. The alleyways are “dark” and “narrow,” and there are “murky canyons” containing things that could snare or trip people. (D) **Escape from the tenement will be difficult, dangerous, and unsuccessful**, therefore, is the best answer. There is no suggestion of successful escape, so both (A) and (E) are incorrect. Although the garbage cans, clotheslines, and fire escapes of the Wingfields and their neighbors are all tangled together, the rest of the stage directions do not dwell upon the neighbors, never discussing escape through (C) cooperation or (B) repulsion.
5. The author has said that the inside of the apartment is “dim and poetic.” He goes on to use words like “old-fashioned” and “faded” to describe the scene. The photograph of the father is from an earlier time, and through the image, he will be the same handsome, smiling young man forever, even though time has passed. (B) **a sense of loss and time gone by** is therefore the best answer. (A) an atmosphere of bitter fury and thwarted dreams is not a choice because the scene is sentimental, but not completely harsh. While the stage directions mention the First World War, there is no reference to the upcoming war (C). Sadness, rather than a fear of danger (D) or the happiness of living in a friendly, humorous environment (E) is the primary emotion here.

6. Laura says that her deceptive act was “the lesser of two evils.” She knew that she was deceiving Amanda, so (A) accidental is not correct. Her act was a desperate response to the humiliation at the school, and her primary goal was to escape going there, not to deceive Amanda. (B) systematic and (E) deliberate are incorrect because of Laura’s motive. Although the deception was unplanned, her actions were repeated, so (C) random is not right. The correct answer is (D) **passive**, for Laura did not intentionally want to hurt her mother’s feelings; she wanted to avoid an unpleasant circumstance.
7. The stage directions mention Amanda’s “sweet suffering stare” and the “acting” she goes through to make the whole episode more dramatic. As Laura says, not intending to be funny, Amanda looks like the sorrowing Virgin Mary. The (A) contrast between Laura and Amanda’s personalities is great, but the stage direction focuses only on Amanda’s over-the-top reaction. Laura says very little, and she makes no jokes or puns (C). (D) Amanda’s mistaken belief is not humorous, but her (B) **exaggerated martyrdom is**. Although Amanda harps on “deception,” Laura does not seem (E) sneaky so much as desperate.
8. In this scene, Amanda has a (A) **disappointed** tone, since she does not approve of Laura’s actions and wishes Laura had made better decisions. (B) melancholic is incorrect, for Amanda’s speech is bold and confrontational, rather than pensive and depressed. Amanda was (C) embarrassed when she was corrected about Laura’s attendance by her daughter’s teacher, but she does not exhibit characteristics of embarrassment in the present conversation. While Amanda is (D) nervous about Laura’s future, this is not the tone that dominates the scene, and even though Amanda says that she is “bewildered,” she is completely aware of the situation and Laura’s motive.
9. While (A) adding another element of Laura’s deception is a literary technique, it is not a symbolic function. Nothing in the rest of the scene suggests that (B) Laura wants to leave St. Louis. Laura’s future is certainly uncertain, but one of the primary issues in this scene is that, if something in her present does not change, the future is entirely too predictable. This, (D) is not correct. Finally, Laura’s choice of destination reveals something about her, but nothing about Amanda, so (E) is incorrect. (C) **is the best choice, for Laura’s choice of spot to visit not only amplifies her endearing, childlike qualities, but also links Laura to the tropical flower: she, too, is delicate and sensitive.**
10. We gradually learn in this scene that Laura has not been attending Rubicam’s Business College. The first clue the audience gets is her panicked attempt to pretend she has been practicing; it sets up Amanda’s revelation later in the scene. (A) **foreshadowing** is therefore the best answer. Although the contrast between Amanda, preparing for her dramatic entrance, and Laura, hastening to look busy, may be somewhat humorous, this is not an example of (D) comic relief because it raises the tension of the scene instead of diffusing it. Laura is not communicating to anyone through gesture or (E) pantomime, and there is no (C) irony in her action. (B) Understatement is the least correct answer; nothing is being purposely diminished or downplayed.

11. The entire play is based on Tom's memories of his family, and therefore, it is a reenactment of events that occurred in the past. The scene is not (A) imaginary. We know from Tom's long speech at the end of the scene that he can use language well, so (B) is not right. (D) is incorrect because Amanda does not seem delusional or out of touch with reality; she just wants Tom to lower his voice. While the family does appear to be disintegrating, this idea cannot be inferred from the fragments alone. (C) **the lack of communication between Tom and Amanda** is the correct answer because both characters are so eager to voice their own opinions that they do not listen to what each other is saying. Neither Tom nor Amanda can complete a thought without being interrupted by the other person.
12. The word that Tom uses to describe Amanda's returning the books is "confiscated." (B) **is therefore the best answer, for the word "assault" matches the negative connotation of the word "confiscated," and it expresses the source of Tom's anger: Amanda is taking away Tom's mental freedom and ability to escape reality through literature.** (A) is not correct because the fundamental cause of the argument is the tension between Amanda and Tom. Amanda's returning the books is just another manifestation of this tension. It is not clear from this scene whether there is (C) a turning point in their relationship. Nothing about taking the books back has to do with Amanda's (D) self-awareness. Finally, Laura's anxiety (E) is caused by the shouting match, not directly by Amanda's action.
13. In this passage, Tom is using sarcasm, or (E) **verbal irony to mock and insult his mother.** (A) hyperbole is incorrect because it would indicate that there is an element of truth to Tom's story, but it is distorted by exaggeration. While there is parallelism (B) present, it is not the primary rhetorical device at work. (C) Comic relief is incorrect because Tom's story and the tone in which he tells it increase the tension of the scene instead of diffusing it. Finally, since Tom is addressing another character, Amanda, (D) soliloquy is incorrect.
14. In his frenzied effort to get away from Amanda and the apartment, Tom causes Laura pain and suffering; he "breaks" her, symbolically. The important thing about his action is that in his deliberate escape attempt, he accidentally hurts Laura, and this foreshadows that (A) **his bid for freedom will be destructive to her.** (B) Laura accepts that she is too weak to be confrontational and (C) Laura will reject Tom when he gains strength as a person are not correct because they focus on Laura rather than Tom. He is the active force here; Laura is the passive victim. While (D) the whole family will soon be broken and (E) Laura and Tom will soon be driven apart may be correct answers, they do not specifically link to the breaking of the glass menagerie, a symbol closely linked to Laura.

15. Amanda fears that immoral influences are entering her home and tainting her family. She will not allow Tom's books, which contain "the output of diseased minds," in the house. She also fears that Tom is doing something shameful when he stays out late. She fears the ruin of her home and family. **(D) desperate**, therefore, is the best answer. Amanda does not (A) support Tom's ambitions, and although she is worried about the future, the fact that she is actively fighting against it shows that she is not (B) paralyzed by fear. Although Amanda's speech is abrasive, she has the best interest of her family in mind. She is not (C) indifferent to her children's suffering, nor is she (E) deliberately malicious and cruel. She is simply doing the best she can based on what she believes is just.
16. Amanda notices Tom's barbed responses, but her mind is on the preparations she has to make and she is **(B) dismissive**. Her feelings are not (A) hurt; she simply dismisses the sarcasm as an affectation of Tom's. Although she knows she is the authority figure in the home, she does not speak to Tom in a (C) patronizing fashion, nor is she sarcastic in reply (D). Her only visible reaction to Tom is impatience, since he is getting in the way of her plans, so (E) patient is not correct.
17. When Amanda learns that the family will have a "gentleman caller," she automatically starts making "plans and provisions." Tom, at first pleased to be able to tell Amanda about the caller, begins to feel embarrassed when she starts plotting to set him up with Laura. The humor in this scene arises from **(C) the contrast between Amanda's optimistic determination and Tom's pained reluctance**. His teasing at the beginning of the scene and his (A) refusal to let Amanda know when the gentleman caller is coming does not last long, so it can't be the primary source of humor in the scene; the same is true of (B) Laura's bewildered reaction. Tom and Laura are not together in this scene, so (D) the combination of Tom's sarcasm and Laura's confusion is incorrect. Amanda grasps Tom's intent, but ignores him, so (E) is not right.
18. At the beginning of the scene, Tom steps out onto the fire escape and looks at the moon. The moon provides a conversation topic when Amanda joins him. At the end of the scene, Amanda watches Tom leave, then calls Laura to look at the moon and make a wish on it. The moon ties the scene together and creates **(D) unity**. Williams does not use it as a device for (A) suspense because it builds no tension, (B) comedy because it is not humorous, or (C) irony because the words and actions are meant to be taken literally. Amanda romanticizes the moon, but Tom deflates her romanticism by saying that the moon "is rising over Garfinkel's Delicatessen," a small, run-down shop that would not be part of a romantic landscape. The primary (E) tone of the scene is not enhanced in any way by the author's use of the moon.
19. Amanda is (A) negative towards Mr. Wingfield; she mentions his drinking and does not want Tom to emulate him except in looking tidy. However, Tom does not share his mother's sentiments and tells her to change the subject. He also sarcastically asks her how she made the "tragic mistake" of marrying the man. All of these things, plus the fact that Tom seems to find Amanda exasperating, suggest that Tom is at least partially **(E) sympathetic** toward his father. He does not express (C) fear or (D) affection for Mr. Wingfield. Because he does not express both positive and negative feelings about his father, Tom cannot be called (B) ambivalent.

20. Earlier in the scene, Amanda expresses her concern that the gentleman caller might turn out to be a drunkard. She even hopes that Mr. O'Connor is "not too good-looking" so that he will have less of a chance to fool Laura the way Mr. Wingfield fooled Amanda. She believes that, unlike herself, Laura will now have a wonderful future with a good husband. (A) That Amanda has hope for the future is partially right, but not as good an answer as the fact that (C) **Amanda regrets her past**. Since most of what she says in this scene is about Laura's chances for a good match, it is very unlikely that she (B) wants to destroy Laura. Tom warns her that Laura is "not like other girls," i.e., unlikely to marry, and while Amanda may be mistaken, she is not (D) completely misguided. Finally, her tears and trembling voice show pain, not (E) pride in Laura.
21. We know from the stage directions that Jim is extremely important to Laura. The reverse is not true; Laura has to give Jim clues for him to remember their past acquaintance. His friendliness toward her is the same friendliness he would extend to any stranger. (B) **the contrast between Laura's and Jim's memories**, therefore, is the best answer. (A) Jim's realization that his future is bleak is incorrect because Jim is nothing but optimistic about his career. Although Laura recalls how embarrassed her limp made her feel in high school (C), the feeling is not the main point of their conversation. The scene suggests that Jim is less sensitive than Laura, but it does not contrast their lives (D). As they begin to share memories about high school, they are never deluded, so (E) is also incorrect.
22. The candles have both a practical and a symbolic function. Dramatically, since the candles do not give off much light, (E) **Jim and Laura are forced to sit closer together** in order to see each other. The stage directions tell us that "Laura's shyness is dissolving in [Jim's] warmth," so we know that the light and heat of the candles mirror something happening in Laura's heart (A); however, this is not the candles' practical purpose. Jim is not shy, so (B) is incorrect, and there is no indication that he is having trouble recognizing Laura because he cannot see her (C). Additionally, there is no mention of the wine after Jim teasingly warns Laura not to get drunk, so (D) is a wrong answer.
23. Throughout this section, we see that Jim appreciates Laura as someone who appreciates him. Once he discovers that she remembers him in his days of high school glory, he assumes that she will recall things like "that wonderful write-up [he] had in *The Torch*." She does. (B), **Jim and Laura are brought together by their admiration of Jim**, therefore, is the best answer. Jim clearly remembers the write-up in *The Torch*, so (A) is incorrect. Jim's excitement comes from his positive view of himself, so (C) the source of Laura's wonder is not the same as Jim's and (D) he appreciates Laura for who she is now, but she only loves the memory of him are not correct. (E) is true, but since the passage is centered on Jim, (B) **makes a better answer**.

24. Jim seems to have the reaction to the Century of Progress that someone designing such an exhibition would desire. He does not think about it critically, so (A) hopeful but skeptical is not correct; instead, he believes all of its promises of perfection through technology. There is no indication in this passage that Jim is (B) gullible and foolish to hold such a belief, but the text does suggest that he is enthusiastic without really questioning his own reaction. (C) **optimistic but shallow**, therefore, is the best answer. Jim does not come across as especially (D) mature or wise, and although he is thinking about the future, which could suggest that he has (E) imaginative qualities, his unthinking optimism is not complex enough to be prophetic.
25. Jim's responses to Laura in the rest of the passage indicate that (A) **is the correct answer, for Jim only vaguely remembers Laura, but Laura can recall minute details about Jim**. Jim does not remember Laura's "clump" because he was too focused on himself. The passage does not suggest that (B) Laura will always be late, nor does the memory contribute to (C) suspense. Laura was, and still is, self-conscious, but she is not (D) self-absorbed. Furthermore, the author does not seem to indicate that Jim (E) should have noticed Laura.
26. The dramatic irony in this scene occurs when Amanda, not knowing that Jim has just upset Laura, emerges from the kitchen in a joyous mood and encourages the "young folks" to keep talking. The audience has already witnessed Laura's heartbreak; now Amanda unknowingly makes it worse, (D) **intensifying the pathos of the scene**. The period before she learns the truth is (A) suspenseful, but it is even more disheartening. The irony definitely does not (B) lighten the tone of the scene. No (C) symbol is made more meaningful by Amanda's moment of blissful ignorance, and no (E) character is better developed.
27. Metonymy (A) is the use of a thing to represent another thing with which it is closely associated; Laura's face is not traditionally a symbol of an altar or vice versa, so (A) is not correct. There is nothing (B) ironic about the statement. It does use (C) religious imagery, but (E) **metaphor** is a better choice because of the comparison of Laura's face to an altar. We know that this is not (D) foreshadowing because the worst thing that could happen to Laura has taken place, and the play is near its end.
28. The glass unicorn, like Laura, has been dealt a devastating injury. While she may argue that "now he is just like all the other horses," thus suggesting some sort of healing for Laura, she knows—as does the audience—that she is not a "horse," but a "broken unicorn." Therefore, she has Jim—whom she perceives as her only chance for happiness and a "normal" life—take the symbol of her "new normality" with him. She will remain in the apartment, now aware as her mother has been, that there is no chance for her. **Thus, (D) is the best answer**. After he reveals the engagement, her first reaction is to clutch the sofa (A), an action that reveals her grief rather than her acceptance. (B) Winding the Victrola and (E) wishing him happiness are actions that she does because of Amanda; however, her gift to Jim is her own idea, and she does it under her own power.

29. In the scene, the music from the dance-hall (D) **emphasizes underlying emotions**. During the dance, the band at the Paradise plays a waltz—a traditionally romantic form of music. Laura is caught up in romance at this point, although Jim does not share her feelings and, in fact, is oblivious to them. When Jim tells Amanda he is engaged, another waltz, described as “tender,” is heard, highlighting the devastating blow to both Laura’s and Amanda’s romantic fantasies. Finally, as Tom, in an emotional storm, rushes onto the fire escape, the music grows louder, reflecting his chaos. (A) is incorrect because some of the music is heard after Jim leaves. Furthermore, the music does not always exactly (B) mirror the characters’ words; the waltz that picks up after Jim speaks is tender in opposition to Jim’s casual attitude. Nothing in the music (C) establishes the time and place of the scene or has the effect of (E) forcing the characters away from the fire escape.
30. The final paragraph conveys Tom’s intense guilt about leaving his fragile sister behind. The light reflected off a delicate glass bottle or a bit of music can bring up these feelings in Tom when he is not expecting it. Therefore, (C) **suggest Tom’s lingering feelings for Laura** is the best answer. Not much else seems to move him; he says “the cities swept about [him] like dead leaves.” The “small hands” of the poem, then, are able to get into his heart when nothing else can. (B) emphasize Laura’s fragility would be redundant at this point, and the final speech returns the audience to Tom’s memory and feelings. Nothing in Tom’s speech supports that (D) Tom was justified in leaving his mother and sister to their fates. Finally, Amanda’s last line to Tom and the then the pantomime of Laura and Amanda blowing out the candles leave their futures very ambiguous rather than offering the audience a sense of closure (E).

The Glass Menagerie

Scene One

1. What themes and ideas are introduced by the opening stage directions?

The opening stage directions emphasize the trapped condition of the American middle classes and the near impossibility of escape. Its members are forced to deny their individuality and their dreams of a better life, causing terrible internal conflict.

2. The stage directions say that the term “fire escape” has “a touch of accidental poetic truth.” How does this image set the mood of the play?

The fire escape is the only way in and out of the apartment, and inside, the inhabitants are “burning” with desperate desires that will never be realized except through some drastic action like sudden departure. The fire escape, therefore, becomes associated with ideas of captivity and suffering, creating a tense and dismal mood.

3. The stage directions say that “the play is memory and therefore nonrealistic.” Whose memories will the play present? How does the narrator fit into the structure of the “memory play”?

The play will show Tom’s memories through the filter of his present emotions. The stage directions say that Tom is a “convention of the play”; he is aware of himself as narrator, and he also controls the plot. But like a recurring memory, the play encompasses him as a character. He is both a viewer and a victim of it, forced to continually relive its events through the retelling of the story.

4. How does Williams weave ideas of magic and illusion into this opening scene?

Tom says he is “the opposite of a stage magician” because he, instead of trying to deceive the audience through tricks that look real, will try to present real events through scenes that are impressionistic and sometimes manipulated for effect. As the controller of the play, he can govern space, time, and the audience’s feelings.

5. Why does Tom mention “the social background of the play”?

The opening stage directions discuss the Wingfields’ living environment in terms of social class. The apartment is in one of many “overcrowded urban centers,” and the people who live there long to get away. Tom says that the middle class of the thirties was confronting a declining economy, resulting in labor riots in America and a war overseas. The repeated mention of the poor social condition tells the audience that it will be important thematically and will perhaps influence the characters in the play.

6. Why is the gentleman caller an “emissary”?

An emissary is someone sent to bring a message, and by definition, he is also someone who travels. The gentleman caller visits from “a world of reality”; Tom explicitly says that he, Amanda, and Laura do not live in such a world.

7. What is significant about the first lines spoken by Amanda in the play?

Amanda says, “We can’t say grace until you come to the table!” Tom’s feelings of guilt are evident in the opening scene; he remains outside a state of grace because of his separation from his mother and sister.

8. There is a gap in between the times when Amanda calls Tom and we first see him at the table. He says that Amanda has been nagging him throughout the meal, but we have not seen the nagging staged. What accounts for this gap between events?

As Tom has said, the play is based on memory. The things that are exaggerated in his memory are what we see in the play, so those episodes are shown in consecutive order, without the material in between. He remembers Amanda nagging him to come to the table, telling him how to eat, etc., but the particular words she said were not significant enough for Tom to remember.

9. Describe the relationship between Tom and Amanda.

Tom is exasperated by Amanda’s constant attempts to change him. Amanda seems to have high expectations of Tom that he can never reach. However, she is not hurt by his frustration with her, so she must have a strong self-image and confidence that she can hold together and improve her family.

10. Why is it significant that Amanda calls Laura “sister”?

Amanda’s happiest memories are those of her own youth in Blue Mountain. She wants to hold on to those moments and delude herself into thinking that not much has changed in her life since then, so she refers to herself as Laura’s sister rather than her mother.

11. How is Laura characterized, judging by her first lines?

Laura is a self-conscious individual, and her lack of self-esteem makes her passive and over-obliging. She is gently tolerant of Amanda’s bragging, humoring her desire to retell the story of the gentlemen callers. She is more patient than Tom, but she is no fool—she can understand Amanda’s failings, but still sympathize with her.

12. What is the significance of the screen legend “Ou sont les neiges d’antan”?

These are the words of a famous French ballad lamenting the departure of beautiful women. Amanda, who is now a middle-aged woman, is now lost in the memories of when she was a Southern belle.

13. Why might it be significant that Amanda chooses not to mention any surviving suitors?

Amanda lives in her memory. The young men she knew who died cannot contradict her vision of the past. Her beaux that have passed away will be forever young in her memory, and unlike her, they have not aged. If the men she chose to dwell upon were still living, she would have to accept that several years have passed since her carefree days at Blue Mountain, and those years have been filled with hardship, suffering, and disappointment.

14. Describe Tom’s relationship with Laura.

Tom groans when he hears Laura apologize. He seems to regard Amanda with some hostility, but Laura with despair—he loves her, but she will never stand up to her mother. She will always be tragically shy, unable to see her own beauty.

Scene Two

1. What image of Laura is presented in the stage directions that open this scene? How does Williams emphasize this image?

The chair Laura is sitting in is “delicate,” and her dress is “soft.” The prominent colors of the scene—blue for the roses, violet for the dress—suggest coolness and calm. Laura is shown polishing the glass ornaments that were described in the opening of Scene One. The overall effect is of quiet, gentle activity. The actions and images reinforce the idea that Laura is a meek, quiet, and frail individual.

2. How does the description of Amanda’s appearance in the stage directions contribute to the characterization of her?

Amanda wears a coat that is “cheap or imitation” and “one of those dreadful cloche hats.” She also has a huge purse. Her expression is “grim and hopeless and a little absurd.” The description is much more negative than that of Laura, but it is not entirely unsympathetic.

Additionally, Amanda is portrayed as someone superficial and fake, who puts on airs of importance despite her poor social status. The image is consistent with Amanda’s character as it was developed in Scene One, for even though Amanda was once wealthy and admired by men, she fell into hard times. Now, although she cannot afford the same lifestyle she once had, she is unwilling to alter her image.

3. What is significant about Amanda's opening word of this scene?

Amanda repeats the word "deception" several times. We have already been introduced to ideas of magic and illusion by Tom's introduction in Scene One. Deception is the other side of illusion. Ironically, Amanda is deceiving Laura through her overwrought performance here.

4. Is Amanda sincere in her confrontation with Laura?

Amanda is given to theater and hyperbole. She deliberately makes a big entrance and portrays the situation involving the business college as drastic, but she also sincerely fears for Laura's future. It may be difficult for Amanda to separate her own feelings from her sense of drama.

5. What was Laura's reason for deceiving her mother and walking around town instead of going back to the business school? What does this show the audience about their relationship?

Laura was so embarrassed by her original mishap that she was unable to return to the school. As she said, she "couldn't face it." Her fear of humiliation was stronger than her sense of duty toward Amanda. Although they live in close proximity, in some ways, they do not know or understand one another.

6. To what does Laura compare her mother?

She says that Amanda looks like the suffering Virgin Mary—the archetypal Mother suffering because of her child(ren)'s suffering.

7. What is significant about the place Laura visits?

Her main destination was a greenhouse where tropical flowers are grown. Laura herself is like a delicate flower.

8. Notice that Tom is not present in this scene, and yet it is based on his memories. What can we tell about the way he remembers things from this scene?

The images on the screen show the parts of Tom's memories that are highlighted. Laura still lives in the world of her dreams, which largely revolve around the heroic Jim and his acknowledgment of her (the blue roses). Amanda is shown as melodramatic and baffled by Laura, but not deliberately cruel.

9. What is ironic about Amanda saying to Laura, "I thought that you were an adult"?

Amanda went to the Business College without Laura's knowledge to ask the teachers about Laura's progress. Amanda still tries to control Laura's life; she prevents Laura from living in the real world, even as she criticizes her for her lack of responsibility.

10. Why does Amanda think Laura walked around town instead of going to school? Why did Laura actually do it? What does this show about Amanda?

Amanda thinks that Laura skipped school purely to deceive her mother; she cannot conceive of the problems Laura has because of her shyness. Amanda loves Laura, but cannot understand her.

11. What do we learn about the phonograph records that Laura plays on the Victrola in this scene?

The records were left behind by Mr. Wingfield. Laura's endless playing of them symbolizes her inability to move past the trauma of his departure.

12. Two pictures of men are important in this scene. Compare and discuss these pictures.

Laura has the picture of Jim from high school in her mind; Amanda, at the end of the scene, turns to the picture of the absent Mr. Wingfield. Both women loved the charm of the men; both men exist more in memory and the women's dreams than in reality. Perhaps, whatever Amanda says, she was more like Laura when she was a young girl than she would like to acknowledge.

Scene Three

1. Where is Tom when he introduces this scene? Why is this significant?

Tom is on the fire escape. Tom and the audience are back in the present, looking into the past as one might look into the apartment—from the outside—in the time after he has made his getaway. Mentally, however, he never quite escaped the past. As Tom remembers Amanda's sales calls, he gradually becomes absorbed into his memories.

2. Why does Williams include only part of the argument between Tom and Amanda?

The subject matter of the fight is not as important as the ongoing battle between Tom and Amanda, so the audience do not need to know what the argument was originally about. The points Williams wants to stress are that there is tension between Amanda and Tom regarding Tom's ambitions and values, and Tom breaks Laura's glass and Amanda's feelings.

3. What is Amanda doing when she first appears in this scene? Why is this important?

Amanda is trying to make extra money by selling subscriptions to a women's magazine to her friends. The act highlights her reduced circumstances: once, she had the chance to marry a very wealthy man, and now she has to beg acquaintances to buy her magazines. Despite her hardships, however, Amanda remains determined and does not acknowledge her poor situation.

4. Who is the “insane Mr. Lawrence” to whom Amanda refers?

D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930) was an English writer whose novels were famous for their open descriptions of sex.

5. What particular act seems to have prompted the fight between Tom and Amanda?

Amanda took Tom's D.H. Lawrence book (and possibly some others, since he says “books”) back to the library without his permission.

6. What does this act mean to Tom?

Tom says he does not have anything that he can call his own. The only thing that he has are ideas. By returning his books, Amanda took away his means of mental escape.

7. Why did Amanda take the books back to the library? What might have been her larger fears about the books?

For Tom, the books represented escape. Amanda may have feared that the books would prompt Tom to literally escape, leaving his family and job in order to pursue a career or dream. Ironically, the removal of the books makes the chance of his escape more likely and real.

8. What kind of literature does Amanda prefer, judging by what she says to Ida Scott on the phone?

*Amanda likes romantic stories like *Gone With the Wind*. The stories, like her own fantasies, paint an idealized portrait of the Southern past.*

9. How do the staging and lighting reflect Laura's mood during the fight between Tom and Amanda?

The light in the dining room is red, and the shadows of Tom and Amanda appear on the wall. Their fight is hellish and nightmarish to Laura.

10. What words does Tom use to describe his job at Continental Shoemakers? What idea that Tom mentioned earlier in the play does this description follow up on?

Tom puts stress on the “fluorescent tubes” and “celotex interior.” The shoe factory is an artificial, nonliving, mechanical environment, and it sounds almost like a morgue. Tom points out that he is making an enormous sacrifice by spending most of his life there.

In Scene One, the narrator mentioned the “disturbances of labor” in cities like Chicago. Clearly, Tom feels forced into a job that does not interest him or use his abilities well. The kind of misery Tom experiences contributes to the labor riots.

11. How does Tom almost destroy both Amanda and Laura at the end of this scene?

Tom attempts to destroy Amanda by shattering her illusion of herself as young and beautiful. At the same time, he breaks Laura's glass menagerie, her most treasured possession.

12. Describe the language in the speech that Tom makes to Amanda at the end of the scene.

The Hogan Gang was a criminal group in St. Louis in the 1920s, but otherwise, he describes himself as a clichéd movie villain. All of the outlandish details—the green whiskers, opium dens, false mustache, gun in a violin case—come from the movies he has been absorbing while his life slips away at the factory. This outburst shows the frustrated creativity building up inside him. It also foreshadows his final departure.

Scene Four

1. The end of Scene Three was a climax to the first part of the play. How does the author bring the energy level back down in this scene?

Williams uses the setting to lower the dramatic tension. Scene Four opens at a quiet time of night, just before dawn. The people in the apartment are asleep; a lone bell is tolling. This scene begins the second cycle of the memory play.

2. From the interaction between Tom and Laura at the beginning of this scene, how can we describe their relationship?

Tom is more gentle with Laura than he is with Amanda. His answers, although sarcastic, are not intended to be attacks. Laura, on the other hand, needs for there to be peace between Tom and Amanda. Tom, in her opinion, is more capable of controlling himself and making peace than Amanda; it is Tom she turns to when the fights get out of hand. She seems to understand that Amanda cannot help being the way she is, while Tom, as much as he suffers, is still capable of changing his ways.

3. Tom seems to have a sense of humor and self-awareness in describing to Laura the shows he watched. Give some evidence of his sense of humor.

Tom mentions the fight between the usher and the fat lady as if it were a truly exciting story. We know from previous scenes, however, that he goes to the movies to escape his misery. He has also been drinking, further underscoring his attempt to escape from his unhappiness. The tone of his retelling of the story to Laura is gleeful, but the contrast between this tone and the mood that has been established for Tom lets us know that he is being sarcastic.

4. What motif reappears when Tom tells Laura about where he spent the night?

Ideas of magic and illusion resurface in Tom's story. Tom saw a magician who performed "wonderful tricks" like turning water into alcohol and getting out of a coffin without removing a nail. Both of these tricks bring Mr. Wingfield—an alcoholic who escaped his family without any feelings of regret—to mind; his picture lights up in response to Tom's question.

5. Why does the picture of Mr. Wingfield light up right after Tom talks about escaping from the coffin? From what we have seen of Tom's character, might he be able to do the same?

Mr. Wingfield left his family behind without any remorse. Tom has a strong desire to escape his life, but he also feels guilty and torn. The audience knows Tom's feelings because the present-day Tom is narrating the play, and the memories that appear show his main concerns and regrets.

6. Why is Laura so anxious about Tom and Amanda getting along?

Tom is seen by everyone in the family as a substitution for Mr. Wingfield. Laura may be afraid that conflict between Tom and Amanda will have the same result that the conflict between Mr. Wingfield and Amanda did and Tom, like Mr. Wingfield, will leave.

7. Why does "Ave Maria" play before Tom apologizes to Amanda?

Earlier in the play, Laura said that Amanda looks "like the picture of Jesus' mother" when she is disappointed. "Ave Maria" is a traditional hymn dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The song highlights Amanda's status as a martyr.

8. Why is Amanda afraid that Tom will become a drunkard?

Mr. Wingfield was an alcoholic, and in many ways, Tom emulates his father. He used alcohol the way Tom uses movies and books: to try to escape from his stifling existence.

9. How does the relationship between Amanda and Tom almost change in this scene? Why does it go back to being the way it was?

They come close to understanding one another as emotional beings. Amanda has had to make sacrifices just as Tom must; she, too, has to reconcile the ugliness of life with the beauty of her dreams. She stops short of understanding this similarity, however, because Tom's dreams and means of escape do not resemble her own.

10. The stage directions note that Tom and Amanda, after their moment of near-understanding, slip back into their usual roles. Describe their typical relationship, using details from this scene.

The usual exchanges between Tom and Amanda involve Amanda lecturing Tom and Tom making sarcastic retorts. When they break out of this pattern even for a moment, Amanda asks questions instead of delivering statements, while Tom offers explanation instead of sarcastic replies.

11. What knowledge does Amanda reveal in this scene? What condition does she place upon Tom?

Amanda knows that Tom is thinking of leaving, and she will allow him to leave if he can find someone to take care of Laura. This, of course, is exactly what Mr. Wingfield did not do.

12. How does this scene end? What does Williams' decision to end the scene this way suggest?

Amanda is back on the phone, selling magazines. When Tom leaves, she has “a troubled but faintly hopeful expression”; although she is concerned, she holds on to her hope that things will turn out well. Her determination in spite of the hopelessness of the situation creates sympathy in the audience—an example of pathos.

Scene Five

1. Why does the screen say “Annunciation” at the beginning of this scene?

The Annunciation was when the angel Gabriel came to the Virgin Mary to tell her she was pregnant with Jesus. While the phrase is an example of allusion, it is also hyperbole. Amanda treats the upcoming arrival of the gentleman caller as such a major event that it could be compared to the Annunciation. It is also another instance of religious imagery in the play.

2. What allusions does Tom make to the upcoming war in this scene?

Tom mentions Berchtesgaden, the retreat in the mountains where Hitler entertained other members of the Nazi party, and Chamberlain, the Prime Minister of England who famously gave in to Hitler, thinking war could be avoided. War will become a reality for the young people at the dance-hall in the near future. The bombing of civilians in Guernica, Spain, by Fascist German and Spanish forces is also happening at the same time as the play, so the year is probably 1937.

3. What is the significance of Amanda saying, “A fire escape’s a poor excuse for a porch”?

This detail reminds us that Amanda generally lives in her past; she compares the apartment to the Southern plantation of her memory, and the fire escape to the porch. Tom tries to violently interrupt her romantic reverie by pointing out that the moon is rising over Garfinkel’s Delicatessen, a prosaic detail, but she cheerfully ignores him.

4. Describe the way Amanda and Tom’s relationship is developed in this scene.

The violent disagreement between the two of them seems to have abated. Tom has asked the gentleman caller to dinner to please his mother, and Tom is less sarcastic than usual. Amanda is more vulnerable; she expresses her wish that her children succeed, and she shows the maternal side of her character. The scene ends not in an argument, but in a sincere discussion of Laura, about whom they both worry.

5. Explain how Tennessee Williams creates humor in this scene.

Tom resists Amanda’s attempts to “make over” the apartment and family. Her anxiety and enthusiasm are in contrast to his reluctance; the more worked up she becomes, the drier the humor of his responses. For instance, when Amanda tries to make sure that Jim O’Connor does not drink, Tom asks, “Shall I call him up and ask him right this minute?” To her serious question about O’Connor’s appearance, he answers that Jim is “medium homely.”

6. Explain the symbolic significance of the Paradise Dance Hall.

Like the Garden of Eden, the Paradise Dance Hall is a place of heedless happiness, despite the apprehension of war. The people there are all young and free, enjoying the present moment without fear of the events to come.

7. Why is Amanda’s desire that Laura wish for “happiness” and “good fortune” poignant?

We know from Tom’s mention of the “bombardments” to come that the play will probably not have a happy ending; however, Laura and Amanda are oblivious to this fact.

8. Describe the importance of the moon in this scene.

The moon is a symbol of magic and unity—all the family members wish for things on it.

Scene Six

1. How does Tom describe his relationship with Jim?

Tom does not have close friendships with anyone at the warehouse because none of the other men share his interests. Tom feels that Jim uses him as someone who can appreciate his (Jim's) former glory.

2. Describe the language Tom uses to tell the audience about Jim.

Tom gives a poetic description of Jim in high school. Jim had "the scrubbed and polished look of white chinaware" and seemed to be almost "defeating the law of gravity." In Tom's imagination, as in Laura's, the high school Jim was a hero. This, however, is another instance of imagination and memory conflicting with reality.

3. What allusion is the author making when he speaks of the spring "scattering poems in the sky"?

He is referencing Sonnet IX by e.e. cummings, in which the poet says that "the world/ goes forth to murder dreams." The stage directions continue to be impressionistic rather than exact. Lines from a poem by cummings also form the epigraph of the play.

4. Why do the stage directions describe the dress-fitting as "devout and ritualistic"?

The gestures Amanda and Laura make come from Tom's memory. Because he knows what is going to happen, he imagines the preparations for the gentleman caller almost like the preparation for a religious event, perhaps a sacrifice.

5. What is significant about the way the stage directions describe Laura?

They say that she is like a piece of glass. The special arrangements have made her seem pretty in the same way a beam of light makes a piece of glass sparkle, but the radiance is "not actual, not lasting." This beauty is also called "fragile" and "unearthly." Laura, however, does not will this prettiness, as she is a passive, shy person; it appears to others who look at her because she suddenly becomes noticeable with her new clothing and hairstyle.

6. Judging by the "Gay Deceivers," how does Amanda view love?

Amanda says that "pretty girls are a trap." In Scene Five, she explained how Mr. Wingfield "had everyone fooled," and before that she declared that "one thing [he] had...was charm!" Amanda's views of love are not those of a naive romantic.

7. What do the jonquils symbolize for Amanda?

Amanda wore jonquils when she was a young woman, so the jonquils represent the beautiful (and unchanging) world of the past, in which Amanda prefers to live.

8. Why does Laura react with such alarm when she learns that Jim O'Connor may be the gentleman caller?

Jim, whom Tom described as "a hero" when they were in high school, is the love interest in Laura's romantic, idealized world. The arrival of the real Jim threatens the stability of the world in which Laura dwells.

9. The screen legend reads, "The Opening of a Door!" Why might phrase this be highlighted?

Literally, the phrase refers to the Jim's arrival at the apartment and Laura's reluctance to open the door for him; however, the phrase also has a deeper significance. Throughout the play, the idea of escape has been important. Mr. Wingfield exited through the door, and we see Tom longing for his own exit. In Laura's case, there is an opportunity to "open a door," and her willingly doing so would be a positive action that could change the outcome of her life. In addition, Jim's entrance is like a door opening without her having to do anything. He could be her way out of the apartment. Finally, this is an instance of someone opening a door into Laura's private life.

10. What details does Williams use to give information about time in this scene?

"Dardanella," the record that Laura puts on the Victrola is an old romantic ballad popular from the 1920s. It is a song addressed by a supposedly Middle Eastern man to his love. The phonograph and the records belonged to Mr. Wingfield, so the music is probably a decade or more old.

Dizzy Dean was a pitcher for the St. Louis Cardinals. The stage directions previously told the audience that it is late spring. Dizzy Dean pitched in the All-Star Game in 1937, so this gives us another clue about what year it is.

11. What is the significance of Jim's encouraging Tom to take a course in public speaking and apply for "executive positions"?

Jim's advice and encouragement sets up a foil between him and Tom. Jim is a young man of the world, and he strives to achieve power and status. Tom, however, is a man of dream, and he wants to avoid reality as much as possible.

12. What is ironic about Jim's pointing out the similarities between factory workers and office employees?

Jim seems to be saying that any factory worker is as good as any office worker, but since his goal is to be an office worker—as he is “not the warehouse type,”—we can tell that he does not have a noble conception of human equality. He seems to find hope in the fact that the leaders are no more qualified than anyone else. Tom, however, probably finds it depressing.

13. Explain how Amanda's transformation emphasizes the parallels between Jim O'Connor and Mr. Wingfield in this scene.

The family, especially Amanda, has reached a great level of excitement by the upcoming visit of the gentleman caller. Jim will fulfill all the promises that were destroyed when Mr. Wingfield left. Living vicariously through Laura, Amanda is reliving her courtship with Mr. Wingfield, trying to change the outcome. She puts on the same dress she wore when she met him and holds the same flowers. Also, she hardly waits for Jim to respond to her questions; he is really secondary to the drama she is reliving through her memories.

14. Why is Tom's praying at the end of the chapter symbolic?

We have already seen Tom's revelation about the gentleman caller referred to as “The Annunciation,” Amanda compared to the Virgin Mary, and the dress-fitting described as “devout and ritualistic.” Now we have reached a moment of crisis for Laura and an extremely painful moment in Tom's memory. When Amanda says “I think we may—have grace—now” her words have a double meaning. Tom is haunted by his abandonment of his family, and he wants some kind of absolution for the suffering of his sister.

Scene Seven

1. What symbolic function does the extinguishing of the lights have? How does this detail change the tone of the scene?

Amanda jokes about the “everlasting darkness,” but Tom, as narrator, is going through a spiritual darkness as he remembers his break with his family. Note that the darkness is his fault: he forgot to pay the light bill. It is therefore symbolic of his guilt.

The extinguishing of the lights also allows Jim and Laura to have a quieter, more intimate conversation than they would otherwise. It reinforces the solemn, holy atmosphere of the scene, which actually takes place in Tom's memory.

2. What is symbolic about the lights going out?

When darkness appears in a work, it often signifies that one or more of the characters is experiencing some kind of blindness or lack of perception, perhaps a spiritual blindness. Tom tended to his own needs instead of helping the family; as result, he brought darkness and sadness upon them all. In a more straightforward way, this is a reminder of the family's bad economic situation--another ugly reality that threatens the fantasies of each of the Wingfields.

3. Explain some of the religious symbolism in this scene.

Jim comes in with wine, which is traditionally drunk during the Eucharist, the ceremony commemorating the death of Christ. Laura is "lit inwardly with altar candles." Clearly, this plays out like a religious ceremony in Tom's mind. The scene also takes place on a Friday, the day Jesus was crucified. Laura prepared fish—a symbol of Christ—for dinner.

4. What gradually happens to Laura as Jim speaks to her? How can we tell?

Laura is drawn out of herself; her speech becomes less halting.

5. Give some details from Jim's conversation with Laura that reveal his character.

Jim is friendly, but not very self-aware. He has no problem telling Laura all his opinions and carrying the conversation, and he often unconsciously looks at himself in the mirror. He is interested in business and the vague notions of "progress" that are popularly held.

6. What is the "Century of Progress" that Jim mentions? What might we think about this in light of other things Tom has hinted at?

The Century of Progress was an exhibition held in Chicago in 1934 to showcase advances in science and technology. Jim is totally optimistic about science and progress. Tom, as narrator, has hinted at the upcoming war and the labor riots in Chicago, however, so the play's ultimate conclusion about technology is not as optimistic as Jim's. The future will not be "even more wonderful than the present time is," and the present time is not so wonderful for everyone.

7. How does Williams foreshadow the disaster that will befall Laura at the end of the scene?

Jim cannot even place where he knows Laura from, and with her help, he narrows it down to high school. Then, she has to tell him which class they had together. The conversation makes it very apparent that he is much more important to her than she is to him.

8. How does Jim view Laura? What evidence in the play supports this idea?

Jim is kind to Laura, but sees her only as a reflection of himself. Laura is valuable to him as someone who remembers and appreciates him. He does Laura the favor of signing her program, then gives her the advice that he feels is right for her, based on his own experience. His slight lack of sensitivity may be good for her, however, if she is going to leave her fantasies and live in reality.

9. What is the “tumult” that Laura is feeling after Jim reveals that he was never engaged to Emily Meisenbach?

Laura now believes that Jim is unattached. The vision she had of Jim has to be altered if he is not married—it opens up new and rather intimidating opportunities for Laura.

10. What does Jim’s aside about the gum emphasize about his character?

Jim, while polite and friendly, is a very ordinary, rather prosaic person. Tom, for instance, would never explain why he was taking his gum out or say “I know how it is to get it stuck on a shoe.”

11. What is ironic about Jim’s “pep talk” to Laura?

Jim, like a motivational speaker, says things that are positive, but not specifically directed at Laura. He did not know her well in high school, and he has not seen her for many years. For instance, he says, “Which of them has one-tenth of your good points,” which sounds complimentary, but then he follows up by adding, “Or mine! Or anyone else’s” somewhat dampening the impact of his statement. Jim does not mention any good qualities specific to Laura, and he directs the conversation back to himself, emphasizing his own pride.

12. Does the play seem to agree with Jim that knowledge, money, and power are “the cycle democracy is built on”?

The play seems less optimistic about democracy and progress than Jim is; Williams keeps bringing up the war, the labor riots, and other troubles the United States is facing or will face.

13. Laura says that the oldest of her glass animals is “nearly thirteen.” Since she is almost twenty-four, we can infer that she got the unicorn when she was ten or eleven. What might have happened to Laura at that time?

Tom said to Jim before they came into the apartment that Mr. Wingfield has “been absent going on sixteen years.” That means he left when Laura (who is about to turn twenty-four) was seven or eight and Tom was about six. She got the unicorn, the first of her glass pieces, three years later, perhaps when she realized her father was not coming back.

14. Laura says to Jim, “[the unicorn] loves the light! You see how the light shines through him?” Who else has been described this way?

Laura herself has been described as “a piece of translucent glass touched by light.” She reflects Jim’s attention as the moon reflects the sun’s light.

15. What does the breaking of the unicorn’s horn foreshadow?

Laura, like the unicorn, and unlike Jim, is unearthly. Whatever happens to bring her into the real world will necessarily involve pain and damage. The breaking of the unicorn’s horn foreshadows the trauma Laura will feel when she realizes that Jim is engaged and her fantasy cannot become a reality.

16. Why does Jim seem to grow so enamored with Laura in this scene? Is there any evidence, before he says so himself, that his feelings are not what Laura thinks they are?

Jim is actually trying to make Laura feel better because he sees that she is shy. His telling her that she is pretty has as much meaning as if Tom or Amanda were to tell her so; it is not a sign of attraction or love. His statement, “I wish that you were my sister” is evidence of this, although it may be easy for Laura to ignore such signals. Eventually, Jim gets so caught up in his pep talk that he kisses Laura.

It is worth noting, especially considering some of the religious symbols in the scene, that Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss.

17. What is the significance of Jim’s saying “Stumblejohn!” right after he kisses Laura?

“Stumblejohn” is a word people shout in anger or frustration, but the word has further overtones: it suggests the idea of stumbling in one’s path—i.e., sinning. Though he may not be completely conscious of it, Jim knows in some way that he has made a serious error. This follows up on the religious language and imagery that has been used before this point.

18. The legend on the screen right after Jim kisses Laura reads “a souvenir.” What legend from earlier in the play does this recall?

Tom mentioned a postcard that Mr. Wingfield sent from Mazatlan—it was the only time the family ever heard from him after he abandoned them. Now Jim, too, is about to depart, taking with him a keepsake from Laura’s world.

19. How do Jim’s demeanor and language change after he draws back from Laura?

Before, Jim was fluent, friendly, and talkative; now he is awkward and more hesitant.

20. How does Jim describe his relationship with Betty? What does this tell us about him?

He says, "in a great many ways, we—get along fine." This is hardly how Laura's vision of romantic love, if it could be described, would be put into words. Jim is much more prosaic than Laura.

21. Why does Laura give Jim the unicorn?

The glass menagerie was Laura's way of escaping the real world; her romantic fantasies about Jim may have been another. Her giving Jim the unicorn is a way of acknowledging the death of these dreams; as the stage directions say, "the holy candles on the altar of Laura's face have been snuffed out."

22. What is ironic about the song that Amanda sings for Jim?

The song mentions an old maid, which is what Laura will now become.

23. Explain the dramatic irony in this scene.

Amanda is, for a few moments, unaware of the disaster that has befallen Laura, although Laura, Jim, and the audience know about it. Amanda continues to behave with the reclaimed gaiety of her youth, increasing the tension of the scene.

24. What rhetorical device is the author using in the stage directions that read, "He smiles charmingly. The sky falls"?

Both sentences are about the same length; the juxtaposition of the hyperbole with Jim's charming smile emphasizes both the magnitude of Laura and Amanda's suffering and the obliviousness of Jim.

25. What scene from earlier in the play does Amanda's wishing Jim "luck—and happiness—and success!" echo?

Amanda had Laura wish for happiness and good fortune on the moon in Scene Five.

26. The stage directions say that Jim "ducks jauntily out." Who else in the play was described this way?

In Scene One, Mr. Wingfield is "gallantly smiling, ineluctably smiling" in his picture. In Scene Four, "the father's grinning photograph lights up." The second great betrayal recalls the first.

27. What is Laura's last line in the play? What does this tell us about her?

The last thing she says is "Yes!" in response to Amanda's urging of politeness towards Jim. That she manages to say this shows a kind of bravery and grace; after all, when Jim first arrived, she could barely speak at all. On the other hand, she only says what Amanda tells her to; we know now that she will never live a life apart from her mother.

28. Why does Laura start to play the Victrola after Jim leaves? How does Amanda react, and why?

Playing the Victrola is a compulsion of Laura's when she feels nervous, but we have also learned that the old records she plays belonged to her father. It is fitting that as Jim departs, she starts to play the records again. Amanda's disappointment may be as crushing as Laura's, and she may also be reminded, very painfully, of Mr. Wingfield. In a calm voice, without any of her usual melodrama, she tells Laura not to play the records.

29. Why does Amanda construe the events of this scene as a cruel joke on Tom's behalf? Why is it this that finally drives him away?

Tom has been a stand-in for Mr. Wingfield since the father's departure, and he has remained under suspicion because of what his father did. Now Amanda blames him for a repetition of the abandonment. He therefore accepts the responsibility for it by leaving.

30. What are Amanda's last words in the play? Why are these words significant?

Amanda shouts, "Go to the moon—you selfish dreamer!" In Scene Five, Amanda had Laura wish for happiness and good fortune on the moon. Tom also wished on the moon, and he is the only one of the family to actually break out of a futile cycle of wishing. Unfortunately, to be successful, he has to sacrifice the happiness of Amanda and Laura.

Tom will never escape the guilt he feels for leaving his family. At the same time, the choice has allowed him to grow and be his own person.

31. What does Tom mean when he says, "For nowadays the world is lit by lightning!"

Throughout the play, Tom has hinted at the storm of war that is to come—he talked about "bombardments" in Scene Five, for instance. Laura's world, the one of fragile romance and candlelight, will be overtaken by a much more complex, frightening world, where the energy of young men like Tom can be realized. The painful memory of Laura, however, is one that Tom is unable to escape.

The Glass Menagerie

Scene One

1. What themes and ideas are introduced by the opening stage directions?

2. The stage directions say that the term “fire escape” has “a touch of accidental poetic truth.” How does this image set the mood of the play?

3. The stage directions say that “the play is memory and therefore nonrealistic.” Whose memories will the play present? How does the narrator fit into the structure of the “memory play”?

4. How does Williams weave ideas of magic and illusion into this opening scene?

5. Why does Tom mention “the social background of the play”?

6. Why is the gentleman caller an “emissary”?

7. What is significant about the first lines spoken by Amanda in the play?

8. There is a gap in between the times when Amanda calls Tom and we first see him at the table. He says that Amanda has been nagging him throughout the meal, but we have not seen the nagging staged. What accounts for this gap between events?

9. Describe the relationship between Tom and Amanda.

10. Why is it significant that Amanda calls Laura “sister”?

11. How is Laura characterized, judging by her first lines?

12. What is the significance of the screen legend “Ou sont les neiges d’antan”?

13. Why might it be significant that Amanda chooses not to mention any surviving suitors?

14. Describe Tom’s relationship with Laura.

Scene Two

1. What image of Laura is presented in the stage directions that open this scene? How does Williams emphasize this image?

2. How does the description of Amanda's appearance in the stage directions contribute to the characterization of her?

3. What is significant about Amanda's opening word of this scene?

4. Is Amanda sincere in her confrontation with Laura?

5. What was Laura's reason for deceiving her mother and walking around town instead of going back to the business school? What does this show the audience about their relationship?

6. To what does Laura compare her mother?

7. What is significant about the place Laura visits?

8. Notice that Tom is not present in this scene, and yet it is based on his memories. What can we tell about the way he remembers things from this scene?

9. What is ironic about Amanda saying to Laura, "I thought that you were an adult"?

10. Why does Amanda think Laura walked around town instead of going to school? Why did Laura actually do it? What does this show about Amanda?

11. What do we learn about the phonograph records that Laura plays on the Victrola in this scene?

12. Two pictures of men are important in this scene. Compare and discuss these pictures.

Scene Three

1. Where is Tom when he introduces this scene? Why is this significant?

2. Why does Williams include only part of the argument between Tom and Amanda?

3. What is Amanda doing when she first appears in this scene? Why is this important?

4. Who is the “insane Mr. Lawrence” to whom Amanda refers?

5. What particular act seems to have prompted the fight between Tom and Amanda?

6. What does this act mean to Tom?

7. Why did Amanda take the books back to the library? What might have been her larger fears about the books?

8. What kind of literature does Amanda prefer, judging by what she says to Ida Scott on the phone?

9. How do the staging and lighting reflect Laura's mood during the fight between Tom and Amanda?

10. What words does Tom use to describe his job at Continental Shoemakers? What idea that Tom mentioned earlier in the play does this description follow up on?

11. How does Tom almost destroy both Amanda and Laura at the end of this scene?

12. Describe the language in the speech that Tom makes to Amanda at the end of the scene.

Scene Four

1. The end of Scene Three was a climax to the first part of the play. How does the author bring the energy level back down in this scene?

2. From the interaction between Tom and Laura at the beginning of this scene, how can we describe their relationship?

3. Tom seems to have a sense of humor and self-awareness in describing to Laura the shows he watched. Give some evidence of his sense of humor.

4. What motif reappears when Tom tells Laura about where he spent the night?

5. Why does the picture of Mr. Wingfield light up right after Tom talks about escaping from the coffin? From what we have seen of Tom's character, might he be able to do the same?

6. Why is Laura so anxious about Tom and Amanda getting along?

7. Why does “Ave Maria” play before Tom apologizes to Amanda?

8. Why is Amanda afraid that Tom will become a drunkard?

9. How does the relationship between Amanda and Tom almost change in this scene? Why does it go back to being the way it was?

10. The stage directions note that Tom and Amanda, after their moment of near-understanding, slip back into their usual roles. Describe their typical relationship, using details from this scene.

11. What knowledge does Amanda reveal in this scene? What condition does she place upon Tom?

12. How does this scene end? What does Williams’ decision to end the scene this way suggest?

Scene Five

1. Why does the screen say “Annunciation” at the beginning of this scene?

2. What allusions does Tom make to the upcoming war in this scene?

3. What is the significance of Amanda saying, “A fire escape’s a poor excuse for a porch”?

4. Describe the way Amanda and Tom’s relationship is developed in this scene.

5. Explain how Tennessee Williams creates humor in this scene.

6. Explain the symbolic significance of the Paradise Dance Hall.

7. Why is Amanda's desire that Laura wish for "happiness" and "good fortune" poignant?

8. Describe the importance of the moon in this scene.

Scene Six

1. How does Tom describe his relationship with Jim?

2. Describe the language Tom uses to tell the audience about Jim.

3. What allusion is the author making when he speaks of the spring “scattering poems in the sky”?

4. Why do the stage directions describe the dress-fitting as “devout and ritualistic”?

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11. What is the significance of Jim's encouraging Tom to take a course in public speaking and apply for "executive positions"?

12. What is ironic about Jim's pointing out the similarities between factory workers and office employees?

13. Explain how Amanda's transformation emphasizes the parallels between Jim O'Connor and Mr. Wingfield in this scene.

14. Why is Tom's praying at the end of the chapter symbolic?

Scene Seven

1. What symbolic function does the extinguishing of the lights have? How does this detail change the tone of the scene?

2. What is symbolic about the lights going out?

3. Explain some of the religious symbolism in this scene.

4. What gradually happens to Laura as Jim speaks to her? How can we tell?

5. Give some details from Jim’s conversation with Laura that reveal his character.

6. What is the “Century of Progress” that Jim mentions? What might we think about this in light of other things Tom has hinted at?

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17. What is the significance of Jim’s saying “Stumblejohn!” right after he kisses Laura?

18. The legend on the screen right after Jim kisses Laura reads “a souvenir.” What legend from earlier in the play does this recall?

19. How do Jim’s demeanor and language change after he draws back from Laura?

20. How does Jim describe his relationship with Betty? What does this tell us about him?

21. Why does Laura give Jim the unicorn?

22. What is ironic about the song that Amanda sings for Jim?

23. Explain the dramatic irony in this scene.

24. What rhetorical device is the author using in the stage directions that read, “He smiles charmingly. The sky falls”?

25. What scene from earlier in the play does Amanda’s wishing Jim “luck—and happiness—and success!” echo?

26. The stage directions say that Jim “ducks jauntily out.” Who else in the play was described this way?

27. What is Laura’s last line in the play? What does this tell us about her?

28. Why does Laura start to play the Victrola after Jim leaves? How does Amanda react, and why?

29. Why does Amanda construe the events of this scene as a cruel joke on Tom's behalf? Why is it this that finally drives him away?

30. What are Amanda's last words in the play? Why are these words significant?

31. What does Tom mean when he says, "For nowadays the world is lit by lightning!"

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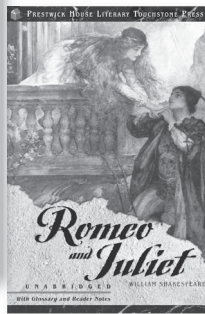
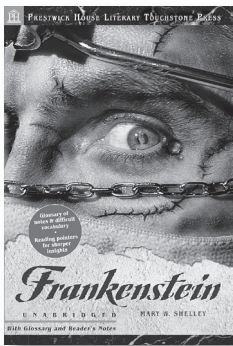
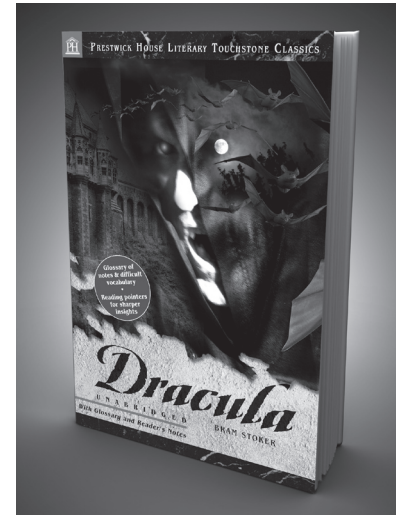
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