



May 2007

ANSWER SHEET  
FEUILLE DE RÉPONSES  
HOJA DE RESPUESTAS

Sample E<sup>ABUZ</sup>

Please

07 Sample E: Many works of literature deal with a sense of longing. How, and to what effect, have two or three writers you have studied made use of a sense of longing in their works?

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5. b)

In many works of literature, a character's longing contributes to the play in some way or another. In 'Death of a Salesman' by Arthur Miller and 'A Streetcar Named Desire' by Tennessee Williams, the sense of longing is explored in different ways for different effect. Miller uses longing to help reveal character, highlight themes and contribute to Willy's downfall. Williams similarly presents the themes and contributes to the downfall of Blanche using the sense of longing, and also uses this longing to dictate character's decisions in the play.

In 'Death of A salesman', Willy's longing to achieve to American Dream and gain material success outlines the effect of the American Dream on a man. Willy strives for richness and popularity throughout the play. Williams initially introduces the Dream in the opening stage directions, describing "an air of the dream clings to the place. It is a dream rising out of reality." Here it is clear that from the beginning of the play the dream is present surrounding Willy's existence. The verb "clings" implies the unlikelihood



of the dream leaving. In addition, "a melody is heard played upon a flute" creates the sense of Willy's longing in the background as music; the flute is symbolic of Willy's father and so Willy's desperation to do well and succeed.

Throughout the play, Willy's ~~clear~~ line of thinking is displayed to revolve around the American Dream. He says "be liked and you will never want" underlining the importance of popularity in his eyes. Willy's longing turns into desperation later in the play, when he realises "the woods are burning"; in essence his world of opportunity as represented by the jungle in which Ben found success, is in flames. "Nothing's planted. I don't have a thing in the ground" highlights Willy's yearning for material goods, something tangible to prove his success. Indeed it is ~~this~~ <sup>this</sup> longing that drives Willy to commit suicide. When Ben informs Willy "the jungle is dark but full of diamonds", Willy is convinced claiming his insurance money will prove to be a material reward. The "diamond" Willy is searching for is the hard, concrete success, and so the American Dream is driven by his longing for success and popularity.

In 'A Streetcar Named Desire', ~~the~~ Blanche's longing for the fantasy world she imagines and her desire to escape reality highlight the theme of appearance versus reality. Blanche's appearance in scene one expresses subtly her desire to be seen as pure and clean, hence Wilkins dresses her "daintily in a white suit" to achieve





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this image. Blanche later claims she "can't stand a naked light bulb" indicating her dislike of light, which represents to Blanche, confrontation with the truth. ~~and~~ Just as the light will reveal Blanche's true age, that which she longs to conceal, confrontation will expose her lies. Blanche openly states "I don't want realism" to Mitch, a clear refusal of the truth and a desire to escape reality. Blanche's avoidance of the truth characterizes her actions throughout the play. At one point she claims "je suis la Dame aux Camellias", reiterating the idea she wants to escape reality. This is a fantasy world she has created with Mitch, yet the irony is she will turn out just like "la Dame aux Camellias": rejected by the one she loves or in this case Mitch, because of her ~~sex~~ sexual escapades. Blanche is caught, as reality and her past prevent her from achieving the illusion and peace she desires. Even at the end of the play she says "whoever you are - I have always depended on the kindness of strangers". Williams aims



to show how even now, it is Blanche's delusion that lessens the effect of being taken away. Blanche's attempts to achieve the fantasy world she imagines is essentially undermined by the truth, reflecting the appearance vs. reality theme running through the play.

Willy's longing for Biff's approval is a desire in 'Death of a Salesman' which drives Willy's downfall. Willy's inner contradictions are based on the conflict present between him and Biff. The flashbacks Willy experiences are when "most of the time he's talking to [Biff]" as Happy says. Willy has felt guilty ever since Biff discovered Willy's affair, and so the problems stemmed from there. Biff's frustration is apparent in the play, and Williams deliberately characterizes Willy's and Biff's dreams as opposite, to ensure Willy will ~~never~~ never not gain the acceptance and favour he desires from Biff. "I can't talk to him." A single trumpet note jars the ear." The trumpet note after Biff's statement underlines the clash between Biff and Willy, they will never get along ~~for~~ well so Willy's downfall appears inevitable. In fact when Willy realises "isn't that incredible - Biff, he likes me" he has achieved what he perceives as acceptance. The whole reason driving his mental deterioration becomes no longer relevant, and perhaps Willy's feeling of being free from guilt leads him to commit suicide in what he believes is one final act





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to prove his success.

In "A Streetcar Named Desire" Stanley's longing to discover Blanche's past is a key reason for Blanche's inability to survive. Blanche begins badly by calling Stanley a "polack" and Stanley overhears her telling Stella Stanley is "ape-like" and "primitive". Hence Stanley is keen to uncover Blanche's past, and although he does not initially intend to, reveals a lot more about her actions that causes Blanche's downfall. "Sister Blanche is no lily" expresses how Stanley feels powerful and content at having found out Blanche's tainted past. Indeed when he rapes her, he claims "we've had this date from the beginning". This explains how Stanley has, right from the beginning, set about bringing Blanche down. Her derogatory terms of address to Stanley fuel his desire to bring her down, and by the end of the play his longing is finally achieved when he rapes Blanche then admits her to a psychiatric hospital.



Happy's longing to be noticed by Willy in 'Death of a Salesman' displays Willy's focus on Biff and also echoes Willy's flaws related to the American Dream. Happy searches for Willy's attention at every opportunity, saying "I'm losing weight, you notice, Pop?" and "I'm gonna retire you, Pop". The comment over losing weight also demonstrates Happy's care of his appearance, just like Willy, and the second quotation his striving to be a business success. Again Willy's dreams and values are highlighted. Willy early on in the play tells his children "be liked and you will never want" displaying how he views popularity as important. Happy's longing for appreciation from Willy is never achieved. That Willy doesn't <sup>openly</sup> recognize or appreciate Happy's dreams are the same as his, perhaps indicates he sees his own flaws <sup>are negative</sup> and understands Biff's potential is more than his own ever was. At the end of the play however, Happy is still striving for his father's acceptance and to prove his worth even when Willy is dead. "It's the only dream you can have - to come out number one man." And so the American Dream is shown to be ongoing, living on through Happy.

• A streetcar named Desire presents Stella's longing for a 'normal' settled life as ~~the~~ key to much of her actions and decisions. Stella's longing is made apparent through her admitting "people have





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got to tolerate each other's habits", so essentially saying that she will put up with Stanley's violence just to avoid living an unsettled life. Stella's pregnancy is a major factor in her decisions also; she knows that she would rather stay with Stanley and a baby than admit Stanley raped her: "I couldn't believe her story and go on living with Stanley". When faced with the choice, Stella chooses security and comfort that she longed for, a decision which cost Blanche her future. Williams confirms Stella's desire through some of the final lines of the play "Eunice descends to Stella and places the child in her arms. Stella accepts the child, sobbingly." Here it is clear Stella is accepting her future by taking the child. All she desires is a stable life and so chooses Stanley.

In conclusion, both plays present the sense of longing in slightly different manners, though longing plays an equally important role in both:



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it ~~dictates~~ <sup>dictates</sup> the downfall of both protagonists.

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