

Study/Review Questions: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

- 1) What does the stage setting look like and how is that significant (see opening stage directions, etc)?
- 2) Scene 2: Explain the Napoleonic Code and how it used as a tool to develop Stanley's character/traits.
- 3) Why make Stanley: 1) short (5'9) and 2) Polish? Perhaps relate to the previous question.
- 4) Scene 3: In what ways (dramatic techniques, costume, actions, delivery style, props like the lighter) is Mitch set apart from the other card players and made in Blanche's eyes to seem "superior to the others"?
- 5) Scene 3/4: What do you learn about Stella and her character's motivations based on why and how quickly she returns to Stanley after he abuses her?
- 6) To you, what does Blanche come to represent over the play (as perhaps a symbolic character) – see end of Scene 4 "Don't hang back with the brutes" speech (71)?
- 7) To you, what does Stanley come to represent over the play (as perhaps a symbolic character) based on his appearance, delivery style, actions, etc.?
- 8) Scene 5, 10, 11, etc.: What is the importance of the imaginary Shep Huntleigh? (What is the dramatic function of this unseen character/idea?)
- 9) In your opinion, why does Blanche kiss the newspaper boy?
- 10) What is symbolic about how Blanche DuBois (note name symbolism too) comes from Laurel/Belle Reve to Stella's place on the streetcars named Desire and then Cemeteries in order to enter into Elysian Fields?
- 11) Scene 7: What is the significance of Blanche's singing "Paper Moon"? How does her singing it enhance the plot and how do the lyrics help the audience better understand Blanche's character (99-101)?
- 12) Given Blanche's self-perception and other character traits, why does Blanche frequently take long, hot baths? Can this symbol be tied to a similar purpose achieved by the paper lantern (in relationship to Blanche's character development through symbols)?
- 13) What is the significance that Blanche guesses Stanley is astrologically an Aries, but he is actually a Capricorn (goat) and that she is a Virgo (the virgin)? Why has Williams included these details (pg 76-77)?
- 14) Scene 8: What is Stanley's birthday present for Blanche?

- 15) Scene 8, 10 and overall: Is there any justification for Stanley's cruel treatment toward Blanche? Do you come to see him as a villain at any point in the play or are his actions entirely understandable and justifiable?
- 16) Scene 9: What is the dramatic purpose of the Mexican flower woman's presence (what overall themes or character aspects of Blanche are developed)? What does her dialogue remind Blanche of?
- 17) Scene 11: What are the reasons/forces that make it so Stella has to force herself not to believe Blanche's story about Stanley?
- 18) The play ends with the line, "This game is seven-card stud." What are the implications of this last line (what does the card game playing mean/show, why seven card stud, who has won "the game", is the final image of the play [Stanley groping Stella] more significant than the final dialogue)?
- 19) Overall, what do Eunice and Steve help to provide to the dramatic text? (their relationship, the physical location of their flat, any humor provided, the power dynamics between man/woman, etc)
- 20) Even more important than the unseen Shep Huntleigh is the unseen/dead Allan Grey (remember spelling!!). Who is he, why did what happen to him happen to him, what are the consequences of Blanche's treatment of him, how does she feel about him and what she did to him, etc?
- 21) The rape (as a symbolic act) is often seen as: 1) a stripping away of Blanche's pretensions 2) a reassertion of masculine dominance/power over female 3) the physical imposition of reality upon Blanche 4) a negative and grotesque presentation of Williams' view of the modern world 5) and far more other views. Which do you find to be most interesting or accurate? Also, do you find the act to be dramatically necessary (in terms of plot/resolution/character evolution) or is the choice to include it by Williams too extreme, upsetting and/or inconsistent with the characters?
- 22) Some ways of looking at the function or symbolism of Stella and Stanley's baby is as: 1) the physical product/consequence of desire 2) a sign of the physical bond between man and wife 3) the reason she can't believe Blanche in Scene 11 4) the next generation of Stanley (it seems to be in blue – a boy) 5) another sign of Stella's economic dependence on Stanley 6) a literary device to allow for Scene 10 w/o Stella 7) a sign of the death of the Old South (through baby, Stella is initiated into Stanley's world/blood; Belle Reve dies in that creation of that generation). WHICH view do you find to be the most worth discussing or advancing in May's exam?
- 23) In Hamlet (Denmark as a weeded garden, prison), The Visit (end of Act 2 train scene or Ill trapped in room start Act 3, etc.) OR DOAS (the house as "boxed in" with the apartments and dead dreams for Willy or the house as a place where Biff remains "just a boy" trapped in a state of arrested development), you have seen the set/setting or stage as a symbolic trap/prison. In Streetcar (128, 135, etc), how does either Belle Reve become a prison to Blanche or how does the Elysian Fields apartment become a trap/prison too? Provide specific examples.

- 24) A number of overarching metaphors are attached to Blanche such as a false queen (107, 127), a paper lantern (117, 127, 140), a candle (109), a broken glass (122), a moth (15), a flower that has been picked a few days ago, and as the Old South, a potentially noble part of civilization that descends into madness/oblivion. Which do you find to be highly effective choices of the playwright and why?
- 25) If Blanche is meant to be seen as breaking the world of illusion of Allan Grey, and Blanche's world of illusion has been crushed by the end, who now lives in a world of illusion?
- 26) What is the most famous or memorable line you remember from Stella?

SECTION II:

Blanche lives in a world of soft, light, romantic melodies, and the faded illusions of her past. Her dream world of security, gentility, and culture, however, can only be sustained by ignoring the sexual promiscuity of her past and the sexual desires of her present. Therefore, there is a continual discrepancy between the illusion she must sustain in order to survive and the reality of the situation. Here are some examples of those illusions. Please determine what the real situation is.

ILLUSION: pg 93 – “A teacher's salary is barely sufficient for her living expenses. I didn't save a penny last year and so I had to come here for the summer.”

REALITY:

ILLUSION: pg 77 – “The Hotel Flamingo is not the sort of establishment I would dare to be seen in.”

REALITY:

ILLUSION: pg 15 – “Here's something, Southern Comfort! What is that, I wonder?”

REALITY:

ILLUSION: pg 55 – “Yes, Stella is my precious little sister. I call her little in spite of the fact she's somewhat older than I.”

REALITY:

ILLUSION: pg 123- “I received a telegram from an old admirer of mine.”

REALITY:

ILLUSION: pg 126 – ““ Deliberate cruelty is not forgivable. It is the one unforgivable thing in my opinion and it is the one things of which I have never, never been guilty.”

REALITY:

ILLUSION: pg 91 – “I guess it is just that I have old-fashioned ideals.”

REALITY:

ILLUSION: pg 84 – “Young, young man! Has anyone ever told you that you look like a young Prince out of the Arabian Nights?”

REALITY:

IB ESSAY PREP BRAINSTORMING

General Prompt: What elements of protest - and against what - have you found in the plays you have read/seen/experienced? How important a place in the dramatic work have the different authors given those elements?

Show your brainstorm of at least 4 SPECIFIC “elements of protest – and against what” in your choice of 2 plays THEN come up with a clear statement of argumentative thesis (unified assertion about the prompt and 2 texts that could drive a 1000 word response)

QUICK SCENE (or ACT) LOCATION QUIZZES

STREETCAR (give scene #):

- ___ The rape
- ___ Stanley reporting on Blanche to Stella (while Blanche bathes)
- ___ Blanche and Mitch discuss Allan Grey
- ___ Stanley takes issue with being “a Pollack”; clears the table
- ___ Blanche and Mitch talk about Mitch’s lighter
- ___ Blanche dresses up in tiara, is drunk
- ___ Mexican Flower Lady
- ___ Blanche takes her first drink in the play
- ___ Stella goes into labor
- ___ First appearance of Stella’s baby
- ___ The bus ticket back to Laurel from Stanley
- ___ The newspaper boy scene
- ___ Blanche: “Don’t hang back with the brutes”
- ___ Blanche stating tragic flaw, “I can’t be alone”
- ___ Discussion of Napoleonic code
- ___ Intermissions after scenes # ?, ?

DOAS (give Act # or Requiem)

- ___ Willy and Howard scene
- ___ Linda saying “We’re free”
- ___ Linda’s “Attention must be paid” speech
- ___ “A man’s not a piece of fruit”
- ___ Boston affair scene
- ___ First appearance of “The Woman”

- ___ Willy and Charley playing cards
- ___ Charley: “A salesman’s gotta dream...”
- ___ The whole family in Willy’s room
- ___ Biff taking the rubber tubing
- ___ Happy saying “That’s not my father.”

Arcadia (give Scene #)

- ___ First mention of Ezra dying of monkey bite in Martinique studying dwarf dahlias
- ___ Kiss b/w Septimus and Thomasina
- ___ When Bernard disguises name from Hannah (Peacock/Nightingale)
- ___ Bernard kisses Hannah (for telling link b/w Byron and Septimus as Trinity College)
- ___ the mention of Cleopatra/the Egyptian noodle
- ___ the detail that Capt Brice married Mrs Chater in 1810
- ___ The Period party
- ___ God as an Etonian joke
- ___ the 3 “present” scenes before scene 7
- ___ Bernard reads his initial lecture on Byron/Chater
- ___ Dancing b/w Gus and Hannah
- ___ the shot rabbit (first mention)
- ___ the discovery it was Augustus who actually shot the hare
- ___ Hannah’s revelation that Thomasina died in a fire