

THE GLASS MENAGERIE

by Tennessee Williams



Teacher's Study Guide



Alive & Aloud • Radio Plays for Learning in the Classroom

Dear Participating Teacher,

Winter 1999

We are pleased to provide you this Study Guide as part of our educational program **ALIVE & ALOUD: Radio Plays for Learning in the Classroom**. It is our hope that the enclosures will support your classroom lesson plans for all your students—wherever they are on the learning continuum. Using the educational materials to prepare the students to listen to the radio play will deepen the educational value of the theatre experience.

For many, Tennessee Williams' **THE GLASS MENAGERIE** is their favorite play of this prolific writer's canon of literary works. It became Williams' introduction into the world of fame and fortune. With its lyrical and haunting quality this enduring drama portrays the delicacy of family life. Listening to the artistry of the author's writing and the intimacy of his own family's story can be an inspiration to young people and a motivation for reading so many of his other extraordinary plays and novels.

You may want to experiment with various approaches to integrating **ALIVE & ALOUD** into your lesson plans. Students can listen to the audio plays individually with their own headset, in a group setting or on their own time outside of class. You may find that certain Study Guide exercises and activities require group listening in teams of students or with the class as a whole. Dividing the play into sections to focus on one part at a time can enhance group listening to the plays.

The Study Guide emphasizes the curriculum core subjects of secondary schools. It is organized to pose important questions and to develop significant study units inspired by the content of the play. These curriculum ideas are our way of promoting academic achievement and enriching the learning process of young people in the classroom.

Sincerely,



Susan Albert Loewenberg



THE GLASS MENAGERIE by Tennessee Williams

Director, Gordon House

Executive Producer, Susan Albert Loewenberg

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The Glass Menagerie

by Tennessee Williams

·TEACHER'S STUDY GUIDE·

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TENNESSEE WILLIAMS



EDWINA WILLIAMS



ROSE WILLIAMS

BIOGRAPHY
Tennessee Williams
(1911 - 1983)

"Attempting to find in motion what was lost in space..."

TOM – THE GLASS MENAGERIE

Tennessee Williams was in search of a pure heart. All through his life he was driven to move from one place to another. The strong echo of his past was reflected in his decisions and direction. Aspiring writers are often told to write what they know most intimately. It was a compulsion of Williams to translate what was happening to him in reality into a fictional written form. Williams' sensitivity to his past and the emotional violence of his early life seemed to be the great force behind the body of dramatic work that he produced.

Few playwrights have seen so much of their work made into major motion pictures or received so many distinguished awards in their lifetime. None of this appeared to bring him harmony nor lessen his deep felt regret over his sister Rose's tragic life. Courage was most important to him and he showed his own valor. He was consistently generous to friends and struggling writers and pushed himself to produce through illness and discouragement. The members of his family live on in his poetry, stories and plays as his contribution to the understanding of the complexity of human relationships.



He was born Thomas Lainer Williams in Columbus, Mississippi in 1911. His grandfather was the town's Episcopalian Rector and for many of his formative years he lived with his grandparents, sister, and mother while his father traveled for the telephone company.

At the age of seven, and when his sister Rose was nine years old, his wandering father suddenly took a job with a shoe company and the entire family moved to the bustling city of St. Louis. The move from the country to the city was traumatic and the family lived together for the first time without the grandparents. Tom and Rose were each other's constant friend and companion. The changes for Tom were painful but for Rose they were disastrous. She began to slip into a make-believe world cut off from the outside.

During the early days in St. Louis, Tom and Rose used to play with her prized collection of small glass animals. They continued to be each other's best friend. Their mother, Edwina, never accepted her daughter's limitations and tried to force her to take secretarial courses or would introduce her to prospective friends. In 1937, Rose's parents were convinced by a mental hospital to allow her doctors to operate on her brain to correct her increasing erratic behavior. After that, she became forever a childlike woman.

In high school, Tom began writing poetry on a second-hand typewriter. He submitted his work to local journals and began to receive acceptance notices and prizes. When he applied to college at the University of Missouri, he wanted to major in poetry but was convinced that he would starve and enrolled instead in the school's highly regarded journalism department. He entered the university in 1936, and immediately formed the St. Louis Poet's Workshop. After two years, his

grades were poor and his father pulled him out of college and sent him to work at the shoe company.



The next few years were referred to by Williams as perhaps the worst in his life. The tension in the family had become unbearable. The shock of realizing what had been done to his adored sister would become even more obvious in the future. Tom blamed himself for leaving her with their parents and letting the terrible operation happen to her. On the verge of physical and mental collapse, he quit the hated shoe company and went to stay with his comforting grandparents, who were now living in Tennessee. It was supposedly over the four months of recuperation with them that he changed his name from Tom to Tennessee and decided to become a writer.

Even during the worst of times he drove himself to write, enrolled in playwriting courses and read the great playwrights. Later in his life, he said it was seeing plays like Anton Chekhov's **THE SEAGULL** that inspired him to playwriting as well as poetry and short stories. He finally finished his formal schooling at the University of Iowa.



He began to travel around the country with a friend and ended up in California and New Orleans. He continued writing and entered a playwriting contest of the Group Theatre in New York. He won the contest, decided to move to New York, and was referred to Audrey Wood, a woman who would become his literary agent for the thirty years of his career. Shortly thereafter, he was able to get a job writing screenplays for MGM Studios, but he despised it. He decided to submit his own work and offered them a piece titled "The Gentleman Caller." It was rejected by MGM, and in one of those classic twists of fate, it became one of the most beloved American plays, **THE GLASS MENAGERIE**.

Sudden fame from a Broadway hit was not to Williams' liking. He left for Mexico, where he felt he could be his old self. There, by a lake in Chapala, he found himself writing what would become his next famous contribution to American drama, **A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE**. In 1947, the play was a huge smash on Broadway. It won the Pulitzer Prize for Williams as well as the New York Drama Critics Circle Award. The characters in that play were also taken from his life. Blanche and Stanley's relationship is a reflection of the tension he saw between his mother and father. Between these two plays, Williams had an assured, secure, abundant income. He arranged for half of the proceeds from **THE GLASS MENAGERIE** to go to his mother. At last she was free from the domination of her husband.



Onward through the years, Tennessee Williams turned out plays almost every other season for thirty years. He maintained a residence in New York and also lived in Key West, Florida. Some critics believe that after 1961, **THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA**, he was not able to harness his creative talent with the same force.

Williams had various health problems in later years, including difficulties with alcohol and addiction. His eyes continued to need operations for cataracts. On the night of February 24, 1983, he choked on a plastic bottle cap and died, alone, at the Hotel Elysee in New York City. Few artists left behind a more personal and intense legacy.

"I hope I have been able to contribute an understanding about people."

— Tennessee Williams

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS' *Comments on Success*



Tennessee Williams did not find much comfort in success. It came to him at the age of thirty-four and tracked him throughout the rest of his life. Fame and fortune were burdens to him, and his outspoken views on the subject were recorded in the following:

“The Catastrophe of Success”: A Condensation

It was **THE GLASS MENAGERIE** which terminated one part of my life and began another. I went from oblivion into wealth and fame—an example: a first-class Manhattan hotel instead of living in cheap rented hotel rooms.

My life before was one of endurance, scratching and clawing but a “good life” because humans were created to live this way. When I had security at last I felt very depressed. I thought, “this is just a period of adjustment.” I lived on hotel room service but this too was a disenchantment. I ordered a sirloin steak and chocolate sauce and poured the chocolate sauce on the steak because I thought it was gravy. I was dislocated spiritually and I even began to become indifferent to people. I got so sick of hearing people say, “I loved your play,” that I couldn’t say thank you anymore.

I went for an operation on my eye for a cataract and once released from the hospital, I fled to Mexico and the pleasure of my natural self in obscurity. I restored myself on a lake there called Chapala and wrote **A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE**. My view is, you should not have too many people waiting on you, you should have to do most things for yourself. Service is most embarrassing, nobody should have to clean up anybody else’s mess in this world.

You cannot say, I will now continue my life as it was before this thing. Success happened to me. But once you understand the emptiness of a life without struggle, you know, then, that the public “Somebody” you are when you “have a name” is a fiction and that the somebody worth being is the solitary and unseen you - knowing this, you can even survive the catastrophe of Success.

Security is a kind of death and can come to you anywhere that is removed from the conditions that made you an artist.

“Then what is good?” The writer William Saroyan said,

“In the time of your life - live.” That purity of heart is the one success worth having.

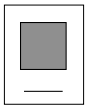
THE GLASS MENAGERIE

by Tennessee Williams

Production Notes

Tennessee Williams left unusually specific production notes as part of his play's manuscript. The detail and points of reference of these notes give insight into the deep sensitivity of Williams' artistic talent.

Being a "memory play," **THE GLASS MENAGERIE** can be presented with unusual freedom. Even if the play has unconventional techniques, the goal is a closer approach to truth through poetic interpretation.



In Williams' first version, there was a screen onto which were projected magic-lantern ***slides*** with images or titles. The purpose of this was to give certain values or a particular point to a scene. Meaning was to be found not only in the spoken word; the screen was to give the primary point of each scene.



The ***music*** is another literary accent. A single tune is repeated to underline certain emotions. It is like circus music — the lightest, most delicate tune and, to Williams, "the saddest." It shows the vitality of life and the sorrow, carried as if by the wind, changing all the time. It is a link between the narrator and the subject of the story. In each scene, the music is a reference to the nostalgia of the play - the condition and spirit of the piece. The music belongs mainly to Laura and is heard most clearly when the play focuses on her and the fragility of glass, which is her image.



The ***lighting*** also reflects the meaning of the play. Laura has the clearest pool of light on her, like the light used in early religious portraits. The atmosphere for the figures on stage is radiant.

These production notes were written not only for this play, but as imaginative ideas for directors. The notes encourage the poetry of the playwriting, along with specific descriptions of real, everyday life.

Cast of Characters

CHARACTERS

ACTORS IN THE L.A. THEATRE WORKS
RADIO THEATRE PRODUCTION

Amanda Wingfield JULIE HARRIS

The mother of Tom and Laura. Her husband deserted her years ago leaving her to raise her two children alone. Amanda escapes the realities of the real world by living partially in the world of her youth and gentlemen callers.



Tom Wingfield ZELJKO IVANEK

Amanda's son and brother of Laura. Tom supports the family by working in a shoe warehouse. He feels stifled by his home and work environments and feels that his poetic nature and creative abilities are being destroyed.



Laura Wingfield CALISTA FLOCKHART

The daughter who is slightly disabled physically, Laura has retreated from the world and surrounds herself with old phonograph records and her glass menagerie (little glass animals).



Jim O'Connor (The Gentleman Caller) KEVIN KILNER

Jim is a nice, ordinary, young man. He's also the only person in the play who is able to exist successfully in the real (normal) world.



Radio Announcer JOHN GOODMAN

Summary of the Play

“Writing is prayer.”

– Franz Kafka, from his biography

THE NIGHTMARE OF REASON

THE GLASS MENAGERIE is Tennessee Williams’ seminal work. This play was not only a piece that opened the door of fame and fortune for the playwright, it also set the stage, so to speak, for the recurring themes and character types that appear in many of his future literary pieces, both in playwriting and prose. Never again, though, would he capture the agony of his family relationships in quite the same gentle and wispy manner. **THE GLASS MENAGERIE** belonged to his youth, and as the years passed, his lingering private obsessions with his past turned into more violent scenes written for the stage and screen.

The delicacy of **THE GLASS MENAGERIE** is a wonder of poetry set in playwriting form. Its form is set in a series of scenes framing episodes that move the story along. Everything about the play creates a unity of fragility that never ceases to awe audiences. It is as if Williams draws all of us into that floating state of memory, past images and bygone dreams. The power of his writing is his way of taking minute physical and emotional details of his own life and transforming them into a prayer for hope and peace for all families. Here is a mother, Amanda, who, through delusions and wishes for total control, forces her children to either stay and be destroyed or flee and remain distant. Later in his life, Williams once said he could only be with his mother for about fifteen minutes at a time.

THE GLASS MENAGERIE was first produced by Eddie Dowling and Louis J. Singer at the Lyric Theatre, Chicago, Illinois, on December 26, 1944.

THE PLOT

Scene One *“I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion.”*
– Tom

1 The narrator, Tom, explains directly to the audience that the scenes are “memory,” therefore nonrealistic. Memory omits details and exaggerates them according to the value of the memory. Memory, as he explains, rests mainly in the heart. We learn from the narrator that the gentleman-caller character is the most realistic because he is from the world of reality and symbolizes the “expected something that we live for.” The photograph is of the father who left the family a long time ago. Amanda begins talking, describing all her gentleman-callers from her southern Blue Mountain days, and Laura simply tells her mother that none of those “callers” are coming for her.

Scene Two *“Hello, Mother, I was — ”*
— Laura

2 Amanda comes home and says, “deceptions.” She tells Laura that she visited Laura’s business college and now knows that she has been lying to her. Instead, Laura explains, she has been walking all day because she threw up when she went to typing class. Amanda whines to her daughter about her terror of what will happen to the two of them if Laura remains untrained for work. Amanda decides Laura will have to marry. Laura again tries to tell the truth to her mother and says it will never happen because she is “crippled.” Amanda answers Laura by warning her never to call herself that and, she insists, Laura will just have to be more charming.

Scene Three *“... the idea of getting a gentleman caller for Laura began to play a more and more important...”*
— Tom

3 After the fiasco of the business college, the idea of a gentleman caller for Laura becomes an obsession with Amanda. Tom and Amanda quarrel after she has sent back his library books without telling him. She accuses him of doing things he is ashamed of and not going to the movies every night. He tells her how he hates working in the warehouse, how he yearns to leave. Tom dashes for the door, struggles with his coat, and finally flings it across the room into the glass menagerie. He stops, bends to the shelf of glass, collects the pieces but cannot speak.

Scene Four *“One crack — and it falls through!”*
— Tom

4 Tom appears drunk and loses his key at the door in the middle of the night. Laura comes to him and begs him to make up with their mother and talk to her. The next morning at breakfast, Tom speaks to Amanda and apologizes. Amanda declares her devotion to the children and starts giving him instructions again on how to eat. She makes him promise not to become a drunkard, and then asks him how he feels about his life in the apartment. She says they have to make “plans and provisions” for Laura and that once Laura has a husband he can leave. Until then, she demands that he not think about “self” and that he ask someone at work to be a “gentleman caller” for Laura.

Scene Five *“Comb your hair! You look so pretty when your hair is combed!”*
— Amanda to Tom

5 Amanda is giving Tom instructions as usual and telling him that he smokes too much. Tom becomes the narrator in memory once again, and talks about the Paradise Dance Hall across the alley from them, and how couples were caught up in their private lives while in Spain there was Guernica (Civil War) and in Europe “the world was waiting” (on the brink of war).

Tom then turns back to Amanda and tells her they are, at last, going to have a gentleman caller. He explains that he has asked someone from work to come over for dinner the very next night. Amanda must now rush around in excited preparation. Tom, meanwhile, is worried about Laura being different and peculiar. Amanda brushes that aside, and the scene ends with Amanda asking Laura to make a wish on the moon -a wish for “happiness and good fortune.”

Scene Six “And so the following evening I brought Jim home to dinner.”
– Tom

6 The apartment is ready for the “gentleman caller,” Jim O’Connor, who was “the most likely to succeed” at the high school he attended with Tom. Jim likes to be around Tom at work because Tom remembers the glory of his high school days. Amanda puts on a dress from her past, one that she wore when she met her husband. When Laura finds out that the “caller” might be the boy she had had a crush on in high school, she refuses to answer the door and threatens not to eat at the dinner table.

When Jim arrives, Amanda oozes her southern charm, talking nonstop. Tom tells him secretly that he bought a seaman ticket with the money for their light bill. Laura realizes the “caller” is the young man she knew at school, and she hides in the kitchen, becoming faint and ill with a fever.

Scene Seven “Which of you gentlemen can provide a match?”
– Amanda

7 The lights go out in the apartment, and Amanda declares how lucky they are that they have candles on the table. When Amanda realizes that Tom has not paid the light bill, she maintains her southern charm and punishes him by making him come with her into the kitchen and wash the dishes.

Jim and Laura are left alone in the living room. Jim puts the candles on the floor and asks Laura to sit on the floor with him. He immediately tells Laura she is “an old-fashioned type of girl,” and Laura suddenly asks him if he still sings. It is then that Jim realizes that he recognizes Laura and that he called her “Blue Roses” in school because she had been ill with pleurosis. They look at their high school yearbook together, and Jim tries to cheer Laura. He tells her that if she is disappointed with her life, not to be discouraged.

Laura tells Jim that her greatest interest is her collection of glass animals. He tells her that he is going to go into television and make something of himself. She shows him her unicorn (a horse with a horn coming from its forehead). Jim places the glass unicorn on the coffee table and asks Laura to dance to the music coming from across the alley. She lets herself go, whirls around and they knock the table, throwing the unicorn on the floor and breaking off its horn. Jim feels terrible, but Laura tells him it is alright because now the animal is more like the others and will feel more comfortable.

Jim tells Laura how pretty she is. He confesses that he won’t be coming back again for another visit because of “strings” - he is engaged to be married. His fiancée is out of town and that is why he accepted the dinner invitation from Tom. Laura hands him the broken unicorn and wants him to have it as a souvenir.

When Amanda finds out Jim is engaged, she fights with Tom after Jim says good-bye to the three of them. Tom runs away, and as he turns to the audience we see Amanda comforting Laura in a rare, loving moment in the background. Tom tells of how far and fast he has kept moving, trying to leave Laura’s image behind. In his last words, he asks Laura to blow out the light of her candles. She leans toward them and, in a moment, the theatre is dark.

“...an arc of forgiveness
...a ray of apologetic celebration
...a beam of understanding...”
– Donald Spoto

THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS: The Life of Tennessee Williams

Suggested Vocabulary

Rr

academic
atmospheric
convention

essence
expressionism

fantasy

fiction

haunting

illusion

menagerie

narrator

naturalness

nostalgia

organic

plot

reality

subtle

symbolism

tenuous

transformation

truth

unconventional

unicorn

valid

vitality

S

y

Aa

Core Curriculum Support

ACTIVITIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF
CRITICAL THINKING, WRITING, LISTENING AND READING



WRITING AND READING EXERCISES

Objectives:

To stimulate interest in writing.

To increase vocabulary development.

To increase ability to organize and express ideas in writing.

1. Pick one theme in the play THE GLASS MENAGERIE and write your own story using the same idea.
2. Describe how you think the Wingfield family deals with their problems.
3. If you could change something for the better in your family life, what would it be? How would you help this change happen?
4. What do you think are the strengths or weaknesses of each character in THE GLASS MENAGERIE? Describe.
5. Is there anyone in the play who reminds you of someone you know? Explain.
6. Pick a character in the play and pretend you are that person. Make up the story of your life before the time when the play begins.
7. Whom do you most identify with and why? Whom do you least identify with?
8. Describe what the play, THE GLASS MENAGERIE, is about.
9. Read another play by Tennessee Williams and compare the two plays. Include plot, characters and themes.
10. What is a menagerie? How does it relate to the story of the play THE GLASS MENAGERIE? If you have ever seen one or had such a menagerie yourself, describe it. Be specific.

11. This is called a “memory” play. Write a “memory” story based on your family life that happened over five years ago. Make sure to mention how old you were at that time.
12. What do you think of Laura and Amanda’s relationship?
Why does Amanda keep referring to “us” when she is talking about Laura?
13. What would you do if you had a mother like Amanda?
14. Is there anyone in your past who haunts you as Tom is haunted by the presence of Laura? Describe.
15. What do you think of the ending of the play?
Write a different ending to THE GLASS MENAGERIE.
16. Read about the life of the playwright, Tennessee Williams. Find at least three examples in THE GLASS MENAGERIE that relate to Williams’ life. Be specific.
17. Choose Tom or Amanda and argue how that character should be considered the main character of the play.
18. What do you think are Williams’ ideas about illusion and reality. Explain.
19. Which characters face life most realistically? Defend your choice.
20. Write a paper depicting Amanda’s strengths and weaknesses. Do you think she is an admirable person or simply a silly, frustrated woman, why?
21. The scenes in this play are told as Tom remembers them. Do you think the story might be different if Amanda were telling it? Write one or more of the scenes as one of the other characters might tell them. You may use some of the dialogue from the play, if you wish.
22. Most people have dreams or goals. Write about one of your dreams or make one up.
23. Imagine life in the tenement apartment from the point of view of Amanda. Write a brief description, as if you were Amanda, of your neighborhood, your day-to-day life, your worries about your children, and your hopes for the future.
24. Imagine the characters from THE GLASS MENAGERIE ten years into the future. Select one of the characters and write a letter as if you were that person describing what you are feeling and how you feel now about the events that happened in the play.



Core Curriculum Support



FOCUSING EXERCISES: LISTENING

Objectives:

To increase evaluative listening skills.

To stimulate cognitive learning.

1. Why does Tom go to the movies so often?
2. What are the similarities between Tom and his father?
3. Why does Amanda nag Tom so much?
4. Why does it take Tom so long to decide to leave home?
5. Why does Amanda blame Tom for the failure of the evening?
6. Why does Laura give the unicorn to Jim?
7. Does Jim have the potential for greatness attributed to him by Laura?
8. Why does Jim, an ordinary person, seem so wonderful and exceptional to Laura?
9. Does Laura understand the responsibility that Tom feels for her? Explain.
10. What do you think of Tom's act of rebellion at the end of the play? Is he justified in what he does? Explain.
11. In his opening monologue to the audience, Tom says that the stage magician "gives you illusion that has the appearance of truth, I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion." What does he mean?
12. Amanda has closed her mind to the reality that Laura has no prospects for gentleman callers. Does Amanda want the callers for Laura or does she want them so that she can relive her own youth? Explain, using examples from the play.
13. Tom is a character in the story of the play and the narrator who steps outside of the story and creates the memory. Do you like that technique in playwriting? Why, why not? How do Tom's explanations and comments about his family life affect you? Describe.

Core Curriculum Support

EXERCISES IN SYMBOLISM

Objectives:

- To increase analytic thinking.*
- To stimulate imagination.*

Writers often use objects or events to represent and emphasize complicated ideas. These symbols often get the attention of the reader better than an explanation of that idea. Symbols make important ideas easier to notice and remember.



1. How is the fire escape a symbol that reveals something about each character's personality? Do you think the fire escape represents one character more than another? Explain.
2. In what way is Laura's limp symbolic of her inner nature? In what ways are her glass animals symbols of her personality?
3. When, in scene seven, the unicorn is knocked off the table and it loses its horn, how does this incident relate to Laura? What is the playwright saying about Laura when she says, "now the unicorn will be like the other animals"?
4. What other symbols can you find in the play? Be specific. Make up a symbol that describes what you think about your school.
5. At the very end of the play, Tom asks Laura to blow out her candles. What do you think that action symbolizes to Tom?

Activities

UNIT I:

INTERDISCIPLINARY ART PROJECTS

Use the atmosphere and tone of THE GLASS MENAGERIE to inspire artistic expression and the use of various art disciplines; *visual, musical and literary.*



1. Using pictures and words from magazines, construct a collage for each character in the play that describes the essence of his or her personality. Remember that it is not just the individual items or words, but the total feeling of the picture that will provide insight into the personality being described. For example, Laura's collage may have a faint, gauzy, pastel look to it, and might include images of fragile objects such as glass, flowers or lace.
2. Do the same activity to construct a collage for and about yourself. You could include images of who you are as well as images that reflect your dreams, hopes and aspirations.
3. Select or compose music that gives an impression of one of the characters in the play. Title it for the character you have chosen (e.g., "Laura's Theme" or "Daydream Hero" for Tom or Jim). Share your selection with the class, and explain why that particular music and title were chosen.
4. Make a class project using the symbol of hanging lanterns. Ask each student to write the main goal of his or her life, in five words or less, on the top of a lantern, and string them across the classroom.
5. Paint a mural with both abstract and realistic qualities to depict a scene from THE GLASS MENAGERIE.
6. Study American/European art of the 1930s, and search for paintings that evoke the same mood as in THE GLASS MENAGERIE.
7. Picasso, like Tennessee Williams, created art which was autobiographical. Study the work that Picasso produced during the 1930s, the same period of time in which THE GLASS MENAGERIE takes place. How was the painting "Guernica" part of Picasso's life? Why did Williams mention it in THE GLASS MENAGERIE?

Activities

UNIT II:

“EVERYBODY IS A CRITIC”

A critique is a critical review or commentary.
“Critical” as used here does not necessarily mean an unfavorable judgment.
It means, rather, a careful and exact analysis and evaluation.



Most newspapers and magazines have reviewers or critics – people who write or give a critical report on a new work or performance. Look at your local papers. Read the reviews about plays, movies and other performances in your area. Study the styles and the basic information contained in each. After you listen to the L.A. Theatre Works recording of *THE GLASS MENAGERIE*, write a critique or review of the play and production qualities. Make notes to yourself during the performance to help you remember specific lines or details. Don’t forget to include the strengths and weaknesses in your critique. Compare your review with those of your classmates. On what points did you agree or disagree? Have a discussion with your class about special points in each review.

UNIT III:

CLASS DISCUSSION — ACTING OUT

Explore the deeper, more personal elements
of Tennessee Williams’ playwriting,
relating his vision to the individual.



1. Ask students to act out the themes, environments and emotions that make them feel most lonely. Discuss ways of handling these times, places and emotions.
2. Ask students to take turns pantomiming a situation in which they are “trapped.” Scenarios will probably range from physical entrapment (a box or cage) to situations or emotions that trap them. Discuss “traps” and the many varieties and forms they can take. How do people feel about being trapped, and what do they often do about it? Discuss how people “trap” themselves. Discuss strategies that people can use to free themselves (e.g., education).

Major Literary Works

BY TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

plays

Baby Doll (*screenplay*)
Camino Real
Cat on a Hot Tin Roof
Clothes for a Summer Hotel
The Glass Menagerie
A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur
Small Craft Warnings
A Streetcar Named Desire
Sweet Bird of Youth
Summer and Smoke
The Rose Tattoo
Orpheus Descending
Suddenly Last Summer (*screenplay*)
Period of Adjustment
The Night of the Iguana
The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore
Kingdom of Earth
The Two-Character Play
Vieux Carre
27 Wagons Full of Cotton and Other Short Plays
In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel and Other Plays

poetry

Androgne, Mon Amour
In the Winter of Cities

non-fiction

Eight Mortal Ladies Possessed
Hard Candy and Other Stories
The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone
Where I Live and Selected Essays
Memoirs (*autobiography*)



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TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: AN INTIMATE BIOGRAPHY, by Dakin Williams and Shepherd Mead; New York; Arbor House, 1983.

THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS: THE LIFE OF TENNESSEE WILLIAMS, by Donald Spoto; Little Brown & Co., 1985.

CONVERSATIONS WITH TENNESSEE WILLIAMS, Albert J. Devlin (Editor); University Press of Mississippi, 1986.

CRITICAL ESSAYS ON TENNESSEE WILLIAMS, Robert A. Martin (Editor); Twayne Publishers, 1997.

MIMETIC DISILLUSION: EUGENE O'NEILL, TENNESSEE WILLIAMS, AND U.S. DRAMATIC REALISM, by Anne Fleche; University of Alabama Press, 1997.

READINGS ON THE GLASS MENAGERIE, Thomas Siebold (Editor); Greenhaven Press, 1998.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS' LETTERS TO DONALD WINDHAM 1940-1963, Tennessee Williams and Donald Windham (Editor); University of Georgia Press, 1996.

TOM: THE UNKNOWN TENNESSEE WILLIAMS, by Lyle Leverich; W.W. Norton & Co., 1997.



Resources on the Internet

<http://educeth.ethz.ch/english/readinglist/williams,tennessee.html>

- links to photos and drawings by Tennessee Williams and his sister Rose from Columbia University's Rare Book and Manuscript Library
- links to grave site
- Barron's Booknotes
- detailed summary of the play and how it relates to Williams' life

<http://library.wustl.edu/~spec/exhibits/perform/williams.html>

- photo of Williams at Washington University, St. Louis, MO in 1937

http://www.mtsu.edu/~crharris/Tennessee_Williams_photos.html

- 3 photos of Williams in New Orleans, LA, 1977 and '79

<http://www.st-louis.mo.us/st-louis/walkofame/inductees/williams.html>

- picture of Williams
- list of awards, brief biography

