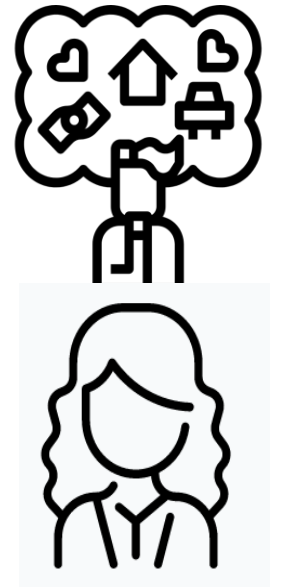
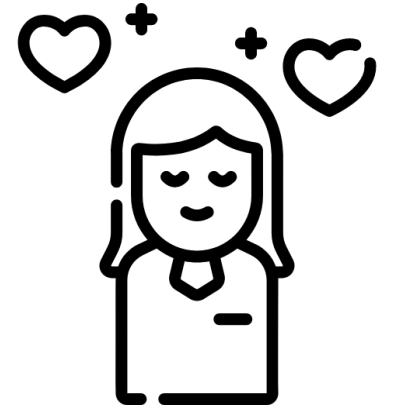
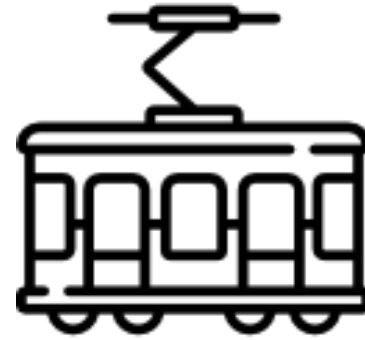


A Streetcar Named Desire Knowledge Book



TIER TWO VOCABULARY

WORD	DEFINITION
Antithetical	Directly opposing to
Appeasing	Someone who tries to pacify others
Conceited	Excessively proud of oneself; vain
Contrapuntal	Two or more pieces of music playing at the same time, usually contrasting
Coquettish	Behaving in such a way as to suggest a playful sexual attraction; flirtatious
Delusional	Holding false beliefs or judgements despite evidence to the contrary
Egalitarian	Relating to or believing in the principle that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities
Exploitative	Making use of a situation or treating others unfairly in order to gain an advantage or benefit.
Frenetic	Fast and energetic in a rather wild and uncontrolled way

WORD	DEFINITION
Hedonistic	Engaged in the pursuit of pleasure; sensually self-indulgent
loquacious	Tending to talk a great deal
Melancholy	Someone who is prone to moping and being depressed.
Moribund	A state of inactivity, declining, weak
Predacious	Predatory
Promiscuous	Having lots of short-lived sexual relationships
Quixotic	Extremely idealistic: unrealistic and impractical
Stalwart	Loyal and reliable
Tempestuous	Someone who is unpredictable
Virile	Having strength, energy, and a strong sex drive

TIER THREE VOCABULARY

WORD	DEFINITION
Anagnorises	The point in a text when a character realises the true identity of another character or the true nature of their own circumstances
Allusion	A reference to another literary text, event or person
Ambiguous	More than one interpretation
Antagonist	The main character who opposes the protagonist in a narrative or play
Bestial imagery	Like a beast or animal
Declarative sentence	Used for conveying information, making a statement, expressing an opinion.
Denouement	The final part of a play when the strands of a plot are drawn together and matters are explained or resolved

WORD	DEFINITION
Didactic	Intended to teach something, particularly in having moral instruction as a motive
Exclamatory sentence	Used to express strong emotions or feelings
Expressionism	Characters are mostly nameless and impersonal; they represent some general class or attitude; their characteristics are emphasized by costumes, masks or make-up
Foil	A device that uses a character to contrast or highlight the traits of another character
Grice's Maxims	The cooperative principles of conversation that if broken give rise to implications. Maxims of quantity, quality, relevance and manner.
Hamartia	A fatal moral flaw in a protagonist of a tragedy
Hubris	Excessive pride or arrogance in a character that offends leads to their downfall

TIER THREE VOCABULARY

WORD	DEFINITION
Imperative sentence	Used to give a command or instruction
Interrogative sentence	Used to ask a question
Intertextuality	The relationship between texts, especially literary ones. Where a writer is inspired by or refers to another text
Melodrama	A sensational dramatic piece with exaggerated characters and exciting events intended to appeal to the emotions
Motif	An object or idea that is repeated throughout a text to help to explain a theme
Pathetic fallacy	Where the weather or nature is directly connected to the feelings of characters or atmosphere
Peripeteia	A sudden reversal in fortune or change in circumstances for a character
Protagonist	The principal character in a work of fiction
Realism	A literary genre that attempts to represent subject-matter truthfully avoiding speculative fiction and supernatural elements.

WORD	DEFINITION
Sobriquet	A name given to someone or something that is not their real name
Symbolism	The use of symbols to represent ideas or qualities
Tableau vivant	A silent and motionless group of people arranged to represent a scene or incident
Tragedy	A play dealing with tragic events and having an unhappy ending, especially one concerning the downfall of the main character.
Trope	A common and accepted convention of a genre. It could be a plot device, character type, an idiom among others.
Unity of action	A dramatic tragedy should have one principal action
Unity of time	The action in a dramatic tragedy should take place over no more than 24 hours
Unity of place	A dramatic tragedy should take place in a single physical location

And so it was I entered the broken world
To trace the visionary company of love, its voice
An instant in the wind (I know not whither hurled)
But not for long to hold each desperate choice

"The Broken Tower" by Hart Crane

SCENE 1 Introduction to setting and Blanche



PLOT

The play opens in the oppressive summer heat of New Orleans, right after WW2. Elysian Fields (where the ancient Greeks thought Heroes went after death) a diverse city that is antithetical to Blanche's expectations.

Stanley arrives and throws Stella a packet of meat before announcing he is going bowling. Stella goes with him.

Blanche appears and looks lost. Eunice tries to help her and lets her in to Stella's flat. Blanche rudely implies she wants to be left alone. She then helps herself to Stanley's whiskey.

Stella returns home and finds Blanche. They have an awkward reunion where Blanche comes across as superior to Stella and judgmental of the situation she has found herself in. This is ironic.

Blanche reveals that Belle Reve has been 'lost.' In a long speech she tells us about the ancestors she had to care for and how they gambled their fortune away.

KEY QUOTES

The sky...is a peculiarly tender blue, almost turquoise, which invests the scene with a kind of lyricism.'

You are practically always round the corner...from a tinny piano. This blue piano expresses the spirit of the life which goes on here.'

'He heaves the package at her. She cries out in protest but manages to catch it: then she laughs breathlessly'

'They told me to take a streetcar named Desire, and then transfer to one called Cemeteries and ride six blocks and get off – at Elysian Fields!'

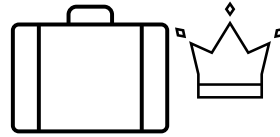
'There is something about her uncertain manner...that suggests a moth.'

'Stella, oh, Stella, Stella! Stella for Star!'

I, I, I took the blows in my face and my body! All of those deaths! The long parade to the graveyard!

'Where were you! In bed with your--Polack!'

SCENE 2 The invasion of Blanche



PLOT

The following evening The Kowlaski apartment is being prepared for a poker game. Stella tells Stanley she is taking Blanche out to Galatoire's in New Orleans' French Quarter for dinner, while Stanley is entertaining his friends. Stanley is incredibly annoyed by this. Blanche is taking a bath.

Stella mentions the loss of Belle Reve and Stanley gets angrier as he thinks she's sold it. Stella brushes it off and asks Stanley to be kind to Blanche and to flatter her.

Stanley rips the belongings out of Blanche's trunk, using them as 'evidence' to Stella that Blanche is 'swindling' them. He mistakes costume jewellery for precious items. Angered by his ignorance, Stella storms out onto the porch.

Blanche appears in a red satin robe and, sensing tension, flirts with Stanley. Worried about upsetting Stella, she sends her to the drugstore. Stanley refuses to be enticed into her game and wants to know only about the estate.

Stella grabs the letters from her husband and Blanche is horrified. He sees the letters from the estate and realises Blanche was being honest about the loss of Belle Reve through male 'fornications.' Stanley lets slip Stella is pregnant.

KEY QUOTES

'She jumps up and kisses him which he accepts with lordly composure.'

'How about my supper, huh? I'm not going to no Galatoire's for supper!'

'Oh it had to be sacrificed or something.'

'That's important with Blanche. Her little weakness!'

'He hurls the furs to the daybed...pulls up a fistful of costume jewelry.'

'Here's your plantation or what was left of it, here!'

'The Kowalskis and the DuBois have different notions.'

'Hello Stanley! Here I am, all freshly bathed and scented...'

'...a little bit on the primitive side. #'

'Now let's cut the re-bop.'

'She sprays herself with an atomiser then playfully sprays him with it.'

'He crosses to the trunk, shoves it roughly...'

'He snatches them up. She speaks fiercely.'

'Then the blue piano and the hot trumpet sound louder.'

SCENE 3 The Poker night



The same night the men play poker and have been drinking. Mitch feels he should leave as he fears his sick mother is waiting for him. Stella and Blanche return home. Stanley rebuffs Blanche's overtures with rudeness.

"The kitchen now suggests that sort of lurid nocturnal brilliance, the raw colours of a childhood's spectrum."

'Stanley gives a loud whack of his hand on her thigh.'



On her way to the bathroom, Blanche meets Mitch. They are attracted to each other. Blanche asks Stella about him. They chat and Blanche turns on the radio. The men, except Stanley, enjoy the music and he demands it is switched off. When the women disobey, he switches it off himself.

"That one seems-superior to the others."

'Blanche moves back into the streak of light.'

'She returns his look without flinching.'



Mitch goes to the bathroom, but Stella is in there, so he chats with Blanche, they smoke together. Blanche has a paper lantern and asks Mitch to put it over the bulb. Stanley becomes increasingly angry at Mitch's absence and because he is losing.

'I can't stand a naked light bulb, any more than I can a rude remark or a vulgar action.'



Stella returns. Blanche switches the radio on again and starts dancing. Mitch joins her. Infuriated, Stanley snatches the radio and throws it out the window. Stella is mortified, calls Stanley a drunken animal and tells everyone to go. Stanley attacks her. The men try to stop him, he resists but then capitulates.

'With a shouted oath, he tosses it out of the window.'

'Drunk-drunk-animal-thing, you!'



Blanche is hysterical. She gathers up Stella's clothes and they go to Eunice's. Stanley tries to phone her and then bellows her name outside the apartment. Stella eventually come out to him, they come together like animals. Blanche fearfully comes out to find Stella. She is shocked that she has gone back to Stanley, but Mitch is unsurprised.

'STELL-LAHHHHHHH!'
'...He subsides and is limp in their grasp.'

'Thye come together with low animal moans.'

PLOT

KEY QUOTES

SCENE 4 The next day



Blanche has stayed the night at Eunice's. When Stanley is gone, she rushes back to Stella, frantic with worry. Stella seems baffled by Blanche's concern; she thinks Blanche is overreacting. Blanche can't understand how Stella can go back to a man who beats her.

'Narcotised tranquility.'
'Looking down at her sister with knuckles pressed to her lips.'



Stella insists that she loves Stanley, and his ferocious and volatile nature is part of what she loves about him.

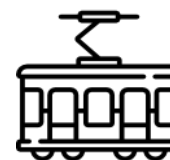
'he was good as a lamb when I came back'

'I was-sort of-thrilled by it.'



Blanche is awash with plans to "escape." She seems oblivious to the fact that Stella does not want to escape Stanley. She recently ran into an old college friend of hers, who has since become a millionaire. She thinks he might provide the funds to set the women up in a shop.

'Blanche suddenly springs up and crosses to the phone. She speaks shrilly.'



As she tries to think of an appropriate way to word the telegraph message, Stella tries to assure Blanche that everything is fine. She tries to share some of the money Stanley has given her, and she also tries to convince Blanche that what she saw was Stanley at his worst. Blanche believes she saw Stanley's true self.

'But there are things that happen between a man and a woman in the dark-that sort of make everything else seem unimportant.'

'...brutal desire-just-Desire!-the name of that rattletrap street-car that bangs through the Quarter.'



Stanley comes home, but the sound of a passing train masks the sound of his coming. He overhears as Blanche condemns him as an animal, a primitive, an ape-like creature. Stanley hears it all. He waits for the sound of another train to leave and make another entrance. He embraces Stella and grins at Blanche over Stella's shoulder

'There's something downright- bestial- about him!' 'Ape-like'

'Stanley hesitates, licking his lips.'

PLOT

KEY QUOTES

SCENE 5 Blanche's fragility

KEY QUOTES

PLOT



Blanche is in the middle of writing a letter full of lies, to Shep, her millionaire friend.

Upstairs, Eunice and Steve are fighting. Eunice rushes down out of the apartment, saying she's going to call the police. Stanley comes home, dressed to bowl. Steve comes down, with a bruise on his forehead; Stanley tells Steve that Eunice has gone to a neighborhood bar. He rushes out to find her.

'Myself, myself for being such a liar!
'Eunice appears on the steps in daemonic disorder.'



Blanche questions Stanley about his star sign and reveals hers. Stanley asks Blanche about being seen at a disreputable hotel. Blanche denies being there. Stanley leaves. Steve and Eunice return, reunited. Blanche asks if Stella has heard any rumours about her. She insinuates that she was sexually intimate with men.

'Virgo is the virgin.'
'Touches the cologne dampened handkerchief to her temples.'
'I was never hard or self-sufficient enough.'
'Put a paper lantern over the light...I'm fading now.'



Blanche gushes with emotion and affection for Stella; Stella is embarrassed by Blanche's sentimentality. Blanche spills coke on her white blouse. Stella and Blanche talk about Mitch, Blanche wants him. Blanche will be going out with him later that night.

'That fizzy stuff foams over!'
'Blanche gives a piercing cry.'
'I want to deceive him enough to make him want me.'



Stella leaves for an outing with Stanley. Eunice bounds out of the apartment, shrieking with laughter, and Steve chases after her.

'There are joyous calls from above.'



A young man comes to collect for the paper. Blanche hits on him with shocking forwardness. The young man, a boy probably not out of his teens, seems nervous and excited at the same time. Finally, she kisses him, and then sends him on his way. Mitch comes with a dozen roses, and Blanche accepts them with mock-formality

'You look like a young prince out of the Arabian Nights?!'
'You make my mouth water.'
'I've got to be good and keep my hands off children.'

SCENE 6 Blanche's Marriage



Blanche returns from a carnival with Mitch, exhausted. Mitch is upset that she did not have a good time, but Blanche tells him it's her fault. He asks to kiss her. Blanche invites Mitch in for a drink. Blanche briefly speaks flirtatious French to Mitch - he doesn't understand. They discuss Mitch's build; Blanche seems impressed by his physique. He lifts her. They flirt.

"The utter exhaustion that only a neurasthenic personality can know.'
'I want to create- joie de vivre! I'm lighting a candle!'



Blanche proclaims her devotion to old-fashioned values. She asks anxiously if Stanley has said anything about her. Mitch says no. She talks about the difficulties of the situation, staying with Stella and Stanley. Mitch asks Blanche's age, but she deflects the question. They talk about Mitch's mother, who is terminally ill. Mitch is devoted to her.

'She rolls her eyes knowing he can't see her face.'
'She makes a nervous gesture.'
'His voice is hoarse and he clears his throat twice.'



Blanche tells Mitch about her husband. They married as teenagers; he was sensitive and talented. She eloped with him, not realising that the boy needed her help. She found him in bed with someone else. Afterward, everyone pretended that nothing had happened. All three of them went to a casino and danced the polka.

There was something different about the boy a nervousness, , a softness, a tenderness which wasn't like a man's.'



As Blanche retells her memory, she hears the music again. In the middle of their dance, the boy broke away and shot himself. When Blanche describes hearing the gunshot, the music stops. Blanche blames herself.

'The Polka stops abruptly.'
'I know! I know! You disgust me...'



Blanche begins to hear the polka music again. She talks about how much the experience has changed her; she begins to sob. As Mitch embraces her and comforts her, the polka music fades away. Blanche is grateful that he is with her.

'And then the searchlight which had been turned on the world was turned off again.'
Sometimes—there's God—so quickly!

PLOT

KEY QUOTES

SCENE 7 Blanche's recent past



PLOT

In mid-September, Stella is preparing for Blanche's birthday celebration. Stanley comes home with some disturbing information. Blanche is taking a bath, and Stanley takes the opportunity to tell Stella the many rumors he has collected about her. As he unfolds the sordid details of Blanche's last few years in Laurel, Blanche can be heard singing offstage,.

It is revealed that after Belle Reve was lost, Blanche stayed at the Flamingo Hotel; they eventually kicked her out, on account of the endless string of male guests she entertained. She apparently was involved with boys from the nearby military base. She lost her job teaching high school English because of an affair with a seventeen-year-old student.

Stella is horrified and angry that Stanley believes the stories; but apparently, Stanley has checked the rumors with several sources. When Blanche calls for a towel, and Stella brings it, Blanche notices Stella's upset expression. But Stella tries to pretend everything is fine.

Stella defends Blanche, explaining that Blanche was crushed by the death of her husband. Stanley lets slip that Mitch won't be coming to the party tonight, as previously expected; he told Mitch about everything.

Stella is horrified; she had hoped that Mitch would marry Blanche. Blanche emerges, feeling cool and rested; Stanley stomps past her into the bathroom to use the toilet. Blanche notices that Stella is upset, but Stella tries to pretend that nothing has happened.

KEY QUOTES

'A saccharine popular ballad which is used contrapuntally with Stanley's speech.'

'Some canary bird, huh!'

'Sister Blanche is no Lily!'

'But even the management of the Flamingo was impressed by Dame Blanche!'

'It's only a paper moon just as phony as can be.'

'Stella draws back'
'This is making me-sick!'

'But when she was young, very young, she had an experience that-killed her illusions!'

'Hey canary bird! TOOTS! Get OUT of the BATHROOM!'

'The distant piano goes into a hectic breakdown.'

SCENE 8 Blanche's birthday dinner



PLOT

It is Blanche's birthday dinner. One of the places at the table is empty; Mitch has stood Blanche up. Stella seems upset and embarrassed; Stanley is sullen; Blanche is making painful attempts to seem happy. To lighten the mood, Blanche asks Stanley to tell a joke. When he refuses, she tells one, it flops.

Stanley is eating like a pig. Stella comments so and asks him to clear the table. Infuriated by her tone, he throws his plate on the floor. Stella begins to cry, and Stanley goes out on the porch to smoke. Blanche goes to call Mitch; he doesn't come to the phone.

Stella goes out to talk to Stanley; she scolds him for telling Mitch. Stanley defends his actions; he longs for the day when he can have privacy back with Stella, without worrying about Blanche being there.

Back at the table, Stella lights the candle's for Blanche's birthday cake. Blanche is upset. The phone rings, but it turns out to be for Stanley. After the call, Stanley presents his present: a bus ticket back to Laurel. She runs to the bathroom, sick. Stella reproaches Stanley, Stanley tells her that Blanche has changed everything between them.

Stella becomes distracted suddenly. She tells him to take her to the hospital. The baby is coming.

KEY QUOTES

'Blanche has a tight artificial smile on her face.'

'Pig-Polack-disgusting-vulgar-greasy!'

'I am the King around here, so don't forget it!'

'He grunts and turns away from her.'

'It's gonna be sweet when we can make noise l the night again.'

'The Varsouviana music steals in softly.'

'He crosses into the bedroom, ripping off his shirt.'

'He is with her now, supporting her with his arm.'

The Varsouviana heard, it's music rising with sinister rapidity as the bathroom door opens.'



PLOT

Later that evening, Blanche is home alone. She has been drinking - and the polka is playing. Mitch enters, unkempt. He, too, has been drinking. She tries to brush aside his standing her up earlier; he treats her coldly.

She offers a drink, but he insists he doesn't want one. Blanche hears the music of the polka again; the music ends with the gunshot, as always. She continues to offer Mitch a drink, but he refuses.

Mitch wants to turn on the light as he's never seen Blanche in the light. Blanche gasps. He tells her he doesn't mind her being older than he thought, but he does mind the act she has put on all summer; pretending to be old-fashioned and chaste. He's heard the stories from Stanley and confirmed them.

Blanche admits the truth. After Alan, she had intimacies with strangers, looking for protection; until she became involved with a seventeen-year-old boy, and lost her job. She had nowhere to go; her youth, beauty and innocence were gone. Mitch confronts Blanche about lying to her, Blanche doesn't believe she has lied.

Outside, a Mexican woman comes by, selling flowers for the dead. Blanche remembers the terrible days caring for her dying relatives. She tells of feeling lonely and abandoned by her sister and local young soldiers; calling for her. The only relative left was an old deaf woman, who suspected nothing. Sometimes, she slipped out of the house and went to the boys.

Mitch approaches Blanche to embrace her. Blanche asks him to marry her. He rebuffs her because of her tainted past. Blanche tells him to get out, or she'll scream. When he doesn't comply, she starts to scream. He leaves quickly.

KEY QUOTES

'A distant revolver shot is heard, Blanche seems relieved.'

'He says you've been lapping it up all summer like a wildcat!'

'He tears the paper lantern off the lightbulb.'

'I don't want realism...I'll tell you what I want . Magic!'

'I stayed at a hotel called the Tarantula Arms!'

'Lies, lies, inside and out, all lies.'

'Death was close as you are.'

'The opposite is desire.'

'You're not clean enough to bring in the house with my mother.'

'Her throat is tightening with hysteria!'

'The distant piano is slow and blue.'

SCENE 10 The climax



Several hours later, that same night. Blanche has been drinking since Mitch left. Stanley comes home. The baby won't come until morning, so he has been sent home for some sleep. He asks why she's all dressed up; she tells him that while he was away a millionaire admirer called and invited her on vacation. Stanley plays along wryly.

'Somewhat soiled and crumpled white satin evening gown and a pair of scuffed silver sippers.'

'Slams the mirror down with such violence that the glass cracks.'

'As he peers in at Blanche, he gives a low whistle.'



Stanley opens a drink that foams over his head. He then takes out the pyjamas he wore on his wedding night. He wants to be wearing them when the hospital calls to tell him he has a new son. They continue to talk about the millionaire, with Blanche telling of how he respects her. She says that she does not consider herself a poor woman due to all her other attributes. As she speaks, she fights hard to stifle her sobs.

'The bottle cap pops off and a geyser of foam shoots up.'

'Beauty of the mind and richness of spirit...aren't taken away but grow!'



Blanche regrets being open and amenable to Stanley and Mitch. She is angry that Stanley has told him about her past and fabricates that she then rejected him when he came back begging for forgiveness.

'But I have been foolish-casting my pearls before swine!'

'Deliberate cruelty is not forgivable.'



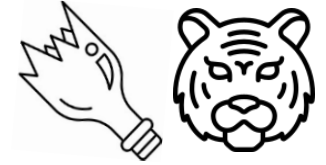
Stanley is merciless. He tears down her illusions one by one, Blanche only able to cry out as he does it. She tries to wire Shep, the millionaire, with a desperate message begging for help. She never finishes: Stanley emerges from the bathroom, wearing his silk pyjamas.

'There isn't a goddam thing but imagination!'

'Queen of the Nile!'

'The night is filled with inhuman voices like cries in a jungle.'

'Come to think of it-maybe you wouldn't be bad to-interfere with...'



She breaks a bottle, trying to use it as a weapon, but she's no match for Stanley, who can't resist a confrontation. He wrests the bottle out of her hands.

'Oh! So, you want some rough house?'

'Tiger-tiger! Drop the bottle-top! Drop it! We've had this date with each other from the beginning!'

'He picks up her inert figure and carries her to the bed.'

PLOT

KEY QUOTES

SCENE 11 Blanche is taken away



It is several weeks later. The men are again playing poker. Stella is upset and packing for Blanche. Eunice, helping Stella, complains that men are unfeeling; it becomes clear that it is the day the doctors come to take Blanche away. Blanche believe she is going to stay in the country. Stella tells Eunice that Blanche's story is too wild to believe. Eunice tells her not to believe it, no matter what, because life has to go on.

'The atmosphere of the kitchen is the same raw, lurid one as the disastrous poker night.'

I couldn't believe her story and go on living with Stanley.'



Blanche comes out fresh from her bath. The polka music plays in the background. Stella and Eunice compliment her, and Blanche continues to make deluded comments. Mitch is unnerved by Blanche's madness. Stanley tries to get Mitch to snap out of it; the sound of Stanley's voice frightens Blanche. She demands to know what's going on. The women assure her that everything is fine. They tell her that she is going to go on vacation. Blanche speaks dreamily about the sea, and living by the ocean until she dies.

'She has a tragic radiance in her red satin robe.'

'This place is a trap!'



The doctor and nurse arrive to take Blanche away. She sees them and retreats back into the apartment. She grabs a chair in defense. The nurse goes in to capture her. Stella cannot bear to watch the struggle. Eunice comforts Stella, telling her not to go inside. The men call for the doctor as Blanche continues to fight the nurse.

Please don't get up. I'm only passing through.'

'You left nothing here but spilt talcum and old empty perfume bottles—unless it's the paper lantern you want...'

'The echo sounds in threatening whispers.'



Mitch is furious; he tells Stanley that this tragedy is all due to his interfering. Mitch hits Stanley, but the other men rush to restrain him; he breaks down into sobs. The Nurse has succeeded in pinning down Blanche. The doctor enters, and at Blanche's plea, he commands the Nurse to release her.

'The lurid reflections fade from the walls.'

'Whoever you are—I have always depended on the kindness of strangers.'



Blanche walks by her and says nothing. Eunice gives Stella her baby, and Stella continues to sob. Stanley comes out onto the porch to comfort her. In the kitchen, the men have silently resumed their places at the card table. Steve deals a new hand.

'She allows him to lead her as if she is blind.'

'She sobs with inhuman abandon.'

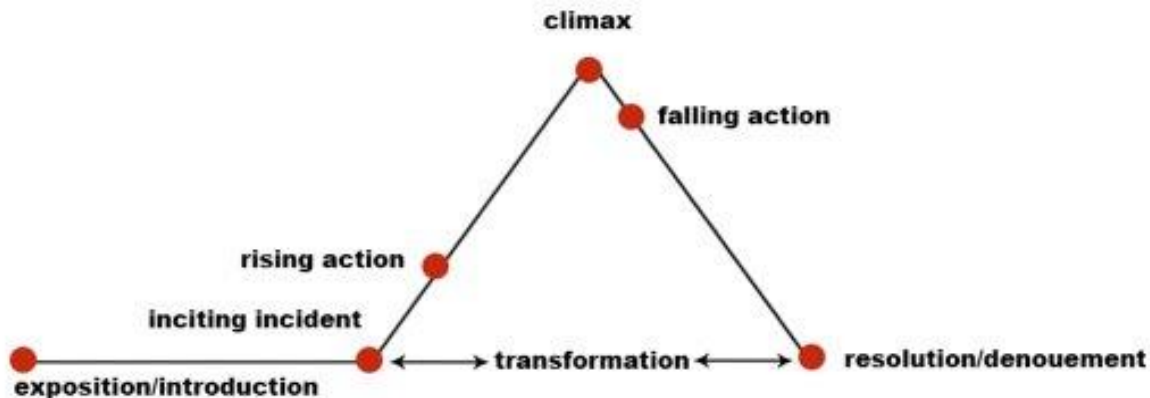
'He kneels beside her and his fingers find the opening of her blouse.'

'This game is seven card stud.'

PLOT

KEY QUOTES

The Tragic arc



Fantasy and reality

Blanche retreats into a fantasy world to shield herself from a painful present reality. By the end she can no longer distinguish the difference between the two



Masculinity and physicality

Stanley's overt, aggressive sexuality overcomes Stella and Blanche. Stanley is the alpha male, Mitch is a beta male: still a masculine force, but not asserting the same kind of physical dominance over the space. But Mitch still finds his power through physical assertion.



Femininity and dependence

Stella and Blanche are both dependent on Men. Stella's desire for Stanley pulls her away from Belle Reve and ultimately Blanche. Blanche needs male approval to cling to her fading desirability



Interior and exterior appearance

Social and class distinctions are evidenced by Blanche trying to 'keep up appearances'. The "blue piano" that frequently plays outside evokes tension and fraught emotions inside the apartment. Although the blue piano is a part of the exterior world, it expresses the feelings occurring inside the characters

Symbolism



The Streetcar

The Streetcar symbolises Blanche's journey of uncontrolled desire (passion) into disaster (the living death of the asylum)

The rails symbolise the inevitability of fate



**The lightbulb
and the lantern**

The lightbulb – reality

The lantern – covering over to cope, magic, illusion



The moth

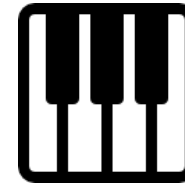
Blanche's fragility

Her attraction to danger and destruction



The coke stain

The coke stain symbolises the blood spilt by her husband's suicide. Also, Blanche's stained reputation and guilt associated with her promiscuous past.



The blue piano

Represents the life and vitality of the neighbourhood



The Polka (Varasouviana)

Blanche associates the polka with her young husband's suicide. Blanche and her husband were dancing the polka when she lashed out at him for his homosexual behaviour.. He left the dance floor and shot himself. The music plays when Blanche is reminded of her husband in specific or when she is disturbed by the past in general.



Tennessee Williams

Alcoholism, depression, desire loneliness and insanity were all part of the author's life.

Blanche is based on his sister Rose, who was sent to an asylum when he was 16.

Stanley Kowalski is based on Williams' acquaintance from work at his shoe company and his personality is derived from Williams' father and others who tormented him during his childhood.

"Desire" is part of the title as it was a real streetcar route in New Orleans, when Williams lived there. Williams was homosexual, and Blanche's husband's character was based on this aspect of his life.

Context

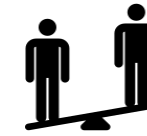


Gender

In post war America gender roles were distinctly defined, despite women entering the workplace during WW2. Traditional gender roles are established in the play but twisted as Blanche shows masculine traits in her sexuality and arrogance. Similarly, Mitch and Allan display sensitivity, traditional feminine traits.

Stanley is a new American, an immigrant, a man of the city. He asserts his maleness and lack of refinement. Where he cannot dominate sexually, he uses force. He shows the more acceptable face of masculinity and macho behaviour that was popularised in movies in 1930's America.

The play reinforces ideas of women as either child bearers or homemakers or as whores, good hearted or otherwise. Stella is a home maker and child bearer. Blanche is neither and so might be expected to be 'no good'.



Race

Racism was rife in 1940's America; the Jim Crow laws and segregation reinforced prejudice. New Orleans however was more open and welcoming to those of all classes and races. The main characters are all white but other characters of other ethnicities appear and these along with dialects and jazz music contribute to a more diverse feel. The racism towards Black Americans is not addressed however the prejudice suffered by European immigrants is explored. Blanche's attitude towards Stanley exposes her as xenophobic.

Context



The Jazz Age

New Orleans is sometimes referred to as "the cradle of jazz." An American musical style that originated around the turn of the twentieth century among Southern black musicians, jazz is heavily rhythmic, melancholy, and impromptu. It was born of the musical traditions associated with slavery- West African rhythms, work songs, spirituals, and American folk songs. The blues, a slower, more melancholy kind of jazz music, may have originated in the music played at African American funerals. Since the 1920s, jazz and, more specifically, blues have been played throughout the French Quarter and all areas of New Orleans, . In general, jazz represented to many people the music of rebellion and sensuality, associated as it was with the nightlife, interracial socialising, and the sultry South.



The Great Depression

In the 1920s, the USA had been an enormously prosperous nation. However, in **October 1929** millions of dollars were wiped out in an event that became known as the **Wall Street Crash**. This triggered the **Great Depression**. 15 million (one third of the population at the time) became **unemployed and** many people lost their life savings as banks went bust. There was no social support system, many families were left to face poverty.



The Deep South

The prosperous economy of the southern states, founded on cotton plantations worked by slaves, was ruined after defeat in the American Civil War..

Blanch Dubois, a previously aristocratic Southern belle is defeated by a new working-class society as industrialisation swept away their traditional power base.



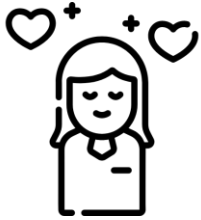
The American Dream

The American Dream is a national ethos of the United States, which declares that freedoms, prosperity, success, and social mobility, can all be achieved through hard work.

It implies that society has few barriers preventing anyone from achieving their dreams, should they be willing to put in enough effort.

Characters: Stella and Blanche

Stella



- Stella is the calm, reasonable foil to Blanche's frenetic hysteria, and she is the soothing, feminine voice that counteracts Stanley's violence.
- Unlike Blanche, Stella lives in the present and has made her life in New Orleans with Stanley. Stanley dominates Stella.
- By modern-day standards, Stella is the victim of domestic violence, but in the play, her decision to return to Stanley even after he hits her is not judged.

SYMBOLIC OF:

- Femininity and domesticity
- Hope of compromise between two worlds

KEY VOCABULARY

Submissive	Ready to conform to the authority or will of others; meekly obedient or passive
Stalwart	Loyal and reliable.
Quixotic	Someone who tries to pacify other

Blanche



- About thirty years old. Was a high school English teacher in Laurel, Mississippi until forced to leave.
- Blanche appears constantly on edge, as though any slight disturbance could shatter her sanity.
- As a young woman, she married a man she later discovered to be homosexual, and who committed suicide.
- When Blanche arrives at the Kowalskis' apartment, she has spiraled into a pattern of notorious promiscuity and alcoholism.
- Blanche is repulsed by Stanley yet finds herself almost hypnotically attracted by his physical power, like a moth to the flame.

SYMBOLIC OF:

- Romanticised ideals
- The old South and the now defunct social hierarchy

KEY VOCABULARY

Frenetic	Fast and energetic in a rather wild and uncontrolled way.
Melancholy	Someone who is prone to moping and being depressed.
Quixotic	Extremely idealistic: unrealistic and impractical

Characters: Stanley and Mitch

Stanley



- Stanley is full of raw strength, ferocity, violent masculinity, and animal magnetism.
- His extreme virility is a direct contrast to Blanche's homosexual husband who committed suicide.
- Stanley loves Stella—she is the soft, feminine foil to his violent ways.
- However, Stanley is drawn to Blanche, and in the play's climax, he rapes her while Stella is in the hospital having the baby.

SYMBOLIC OF:

- Sexual power
- Overcoming class background

KEY VOCABULARY	
Tempestuous	Someone who is unpredictable.
Virile	having strength, energy, and a strong sex drive.
Predacious	Predatory.

Mitch



- Much more genteel and mannered than the animalistic Stanley, though still a man with physical desires.
- He and Blanche develop a relationship, but Blanche pretends to be much more naïve and innocent than she actually is, and Mitch is ultimately driven away when he learns of her sordid past.

SYMBOLIC OF:

- Masculinity as offering safety and security

KEY VOCABULARY	
Decorous	in keeping with good taste and propriety; polite and restrained
Sensitive	having or displaying a quick and delicate appreciation of others' feelings
Maladroit	inefficient or inept; clumsy