

# INSIDE OUT

A STUDY GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS



Illustration by Kyle Malone

# THE GLASS MENAGERIE

# THE GLASS MENAGERIE

## SYNOPSIS

“Memory is the diary that we all carry about with us.”

—Oscar Wilde

Tom Wingfield, the play’s narrator, stands smoking a cigarette on the fire escape of the family’s St. Louis apartment. He addresses us from both the timeless Now, and the turbulent eve of World War II.

The play is set in 1937 and centers on the Wingfield family: Tom, his mother Amanda and his sister Laura, who live together in a cramped St. Louis flat. Wingfield senior has abandoned the family years earlier and Tom is now the breadwinner, working at a dreary shoe factory warehouse during the day, but slipping away nightly to the movies. Amanda, a faded Southern Belle, tries to be a caring mother, but her meddling and nagging is difficult for her adult children to live with. Laura is a shy, frightened young woman with fragile nerves and a lame leg; she seldom leaves the apartment and instead busies herself caring for her “glass menagerie” of miniature animals. When Amanda learns that Laura, terrified of typing tests, has dropped out of Rubicam’s Business College, she realizes that her daughter will not have a career.

Although Tom and his mother have a troubled relationship, Amanda begs him to bring home a “gentleman caller” to meet and marry Laura, leaving Tom free to leave home for good. Tom brings home Jim O’Conner, Tom’s co-worker from the warehouse, and Laura’s high school crush. Jim dutifully flirts with Laura, but then reveals he has a fiancée and will not be calling again. Laura is devastated and Amanda is furious, accusing Tom of playing a cruel joke. Tom leaves for good, but cannot escape the memory of the sister whom he abandoned years before.



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## THE GLASS MENAGERIE

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# SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE PLAY

“Gentlemen, you have come 60 days too late. The Depression is over”.

—Herbert Hoover

In Scene 1 Tom talks of the declining economy, the sporadic labor riots in American cities and the bombing of Guernica, Spain, by the German Luftwaffe.

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 1929. Unemployment reached a staggering 25 per cent. The Great Depression changed the political balance of the United States; President Herbert Hoover, unable to provide any solutions to this economic catastrophe, lost the 1932 election to Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Roosevelt immediately

instituted a series of economic initiatives that were called the “New Deal.” The reforms of the New Deal showed support for labor unions and workers’ rights. Although the American economy improved somewhat through the 1930s, another recession occurred in 1937, the year the play takes place.

Since the late 1800s, there had been ongoing tension in both Europe and America between large powerful corporations and the labor forces attempting to organize. The unions tried to use the power of numbers to bargain for higher salaries, better working conditions and better job security, while on the other side the corporations fought to protect their own interests.

Murphy, Brenda, ed. *The Theatre of Tennessee Williams*. London: Bloomsbury, 2014.

## THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE WILLIAMS FAMILY AND THE WINGFIELDS

“Maybe they weren’t punks at all, but New York drama critics.”

—Tennessee Williams

*The Glass Menagerie* is an American tragedy on many levels: a father’s desertion, a mother’s struggle as a former socialite and now a single parent to care for her children, and a daughter’s growing helplessness. The greatest tragedy is the portrayal of a troubled family. “Dysfunctional families share similar traits—rigidity, reverence for the past and insistence on rules and rituals.”<sup>1</sup> The absent father haunts each family member, as his larger-than-life influence still dominates the apartment in the form of a photograph that hangs on the living room wall. Amanda, who was raised as a pampered and entitled Southern belle, is totally unequipped to manage family responsibilities on her own after her husband deserts the family. She is tortured by her son’s rebellion and her daughter’s withdrawal.

Amanda’s predicament mirrors that of Edwina Williams’, (Tennessee Williams’ mother), who also became the caregiver for her children due to her own husband being either away from home or busy pursuing his own interests. Edwina complained that her husband Cornelius would spend lavishly on himself but would deny the children the basic necessities such as shoes and clothing. Edwina Williams recounts: “The family fights usually reached their peak at the end of the month when bills arrived and Cornelius’s weekend drinking sprees began. He fumed over the bills and I battled for grocery money.”<sup>2</sup>

Other striking similarities between the Wingfields and the Williams families include Tom’s borrowing his first name (Tom Williams becomes Tom Wingfield

in the play), and that the name of Tennessee’s onetime place of employment, the International Shoe Company, where Williams worked with his father and was fired for writing poetry on the job, appear in the play. Additionally, both Toms wrote late at night, incurring expensive light bills that upset their mothers. Both Toms loathed St. Louis and the apartment with the bedroom window view of the alley and fire escape, and both became movie fanatics to escape from their intolerable family situations. Also interesting to note that Williams’ often absent father once worked for a telephone company in Gulfport, Mississippi, as did Wingfield before he deserted the family.

In *The Glass Menagerie*, Tom Wingfield is both narrator who relates his family tragedy in 1937, and also a character in the play, sharing the dingy apartment with his mother and sister in St. Louis. In the play, Tom’s longing for adventure and independence wars with his guilt at deserting the family who depends on his support. In the play’s poignant final scene, Tom pleads with Laura to blow out her candles, which symbolically allows him to get away. It may be that in this speech, Williams is expressing the pain and helplessness he felt about losing his own sister Rose to schizophrenia, and especially her lobotomy. Dakin Williams, Tennessee’s brother, reports that this was the greatest tragedy in his brother’s life. Williams’ deep attachment to his sister is of prime significance: her fate left an indelible mark on him.

Tom and his sister Rose were inseparable in childhood, and though Rose was two years Tom’s senior, their nurse, Ozzie, referred to them as “the couple” to convey their closeness. When one

became sick, the other faked illness.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, Laura is also two years older than Tom in the play. Williams' brother Dakin relates how Rose was the only person who accepted Tom without reservation, sharing a secret imaginary world with him. Together they sailed paper boats, tended to white rabbits, and cut out paper dolls from mail order catalogues. One of their favorite childhood pastimes was collecting colored glass from broken bottles.<sup>4</sup>

When they moved to St. Louis, their peers didn't accept them: their Southern accents marginalized them, their apartment was in a poor neighborhood, and they attended a public rather than a private school.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, brother and sister, feeling like aliens, spent more and more time together.<sup>6</sup> It was during this time that Rose began her collection of glass figurines, a hobby that Williams dramatizes in the play.

Following Rose's institutionalization for schizophrenia, Williams felt the pain and guilt of their separation for the rest of his life, and she is thought to represent a significant element of Williams' psyche as it surfaces in his writing. Following Rose's lobotomy, which both his parents Edwina and Cornelius sanctioned, Williams was forever plagued with guilt for not having stopped the procedure. He indicated that *The Glass Menagerie's* Laura represents an abstraction of Rose, most like her in vulnerability and withdrawal. In the play, Williams replaces Rose's mental illness with a physical handicap and an inferiority complex, while maintaining the beauty and fragility of his memory of Rose.

Like Amanda, Edwina centered her life on her children because of her poor relationship with her husband. Cornelius Williams was not only obnoxious and a wild alcoholic, he was also mentally and physically abusive. He called young Tom a "sissy" and a "Miss Nancy" because he was not athletic, and denied him love and encouragement.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, Williams grew up hating his father. Both Dakin and Edwina have discussed Cornelius's use of violence against them and Rose.<sup>10</sup>

Like Amanda, Edwina Williams related stories about garden parties, cotillions and gentleman callers until Tom could recite them by heart. Edwina and Amanda both shared puritanical religious values. When Amanda discovers Tom is reading D. H. Lawrence, she demands that he return the book to the library. Similarly, Edwina held D. H. Lawrence in disdain, and when she discovered Tom was reading *Lady Chatterly's Lover*, she marched Tom and the book back to the library with some choice words for the librarian. Both were ministers' daughters from Mississippi who tried to raise their children to share their beliefs and ideals. Both had marriages that turned out sadly different from their Southern ideals.

Divorce was not an option for Edwina Williams, due to her religious beliefs and her economic helplessness; by necessity she was forced to remain in an abusive marriage.

As with Amanda and Laura in the play, Edwina forced Rose to go to Rubicam's Business School in St. Louis; both mothers seem oblivious to their daughter's social and emotional maladjustment. Amanda tells Laura that all she needs is a positive attitude to overcome her physical deformity. Edwina also forced Rose into social activities such as singing in the church choir and golfing at a country club. Both mothers campaign the elder brother to bring home a "gentleman caller"; Tom Wingfield has the choice of Jim O'Conner or Stanley Kowalski.

Even though tensions existed between Amanda and Tom, Williams is sympathetic toward Amanda. He despised her nagging and meddling, yet there was a love between him and Edwina. He resented Edwina's smothering attempts at parenting and the puritanical standards that she imposed on her children. Both mothers protest their sons going to the movies every night. To both Amanda and Edwina, they were fearful their sons would become alcoholic. Despite the conflicts that Williams had with Edwina, he knew she loved him and he felt sorry for her. Out of respect for her high moral principles, he concealed his homosexuality from her for as long as possible. Additionally, he bequeathed half of the royalties from *The Glass Menagerie* to her.<sup>11</sup>

1. Bryffonski, p. 49.

2. Williams and Freeman, p. 67.

3. Ibid, p. 19.

4. Williams and Mead, p. 15.

5. Williams and Freeman, p. 30.

6. Ibid, p. 15.

7. Nelson, p. 15.

8. Ibid, p. 167.

9. Spoto, Donald, p. 83.

10. Ibid, p. 57,59.

11. Williams and Mead, p. 16.

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Digital/commons.liberty.edu/cg/view contents? Article 1270

# PLAYS BY TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

- *The Glass Menagerie* (1943)
- *You Touched Me* (1945)
- *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947)
- *The Rose Tattoo* (1951)
- *Camino Real* (1953)
- *The Purification* (1954)
- *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955)
- *Orpheus Descending* (1957)
- *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958)
- *Sweet Bird of Youth* (1959)
- *Period of Adjustment* (1959)
- *Night of the Iguana* (1961)
- *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* (1963)
- *The Seven Descents of Myrtle* (1968)
- *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel* (1969)
- *Small Craft Warnings* (1972)
- *This is an Entertainment* (1976)
- *Vieux Carré* (1977)
- *Clothes for a Summer Hotel* (1980)
- *Something Cloudy, Something Clear* (1981)
- *Not About Nightingales* (1999)

# SOUTHERN WOMEN

“There is no actress on earth who will not testify that Williams created the best women characters in the modern theatre.”

—Gore Vidal

Amanda’s idealization of the past expresses views that she inherited from many who lived in the Deep South during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. She maintains the myth of the antebellum South fostered by Margaret Mitchell’s novel *Gone with the Wind* when she tries to sell magazine subscriptions. The ideal Southern woman stems from a patriarchal system in which young women were taught to repress and modify their behavior in order to be idealized by their husbands as beautiful, pious and obedient.<sup>1</sup> They expected to be pampered and protected, with their husbands to provide for them and their servants to wait on them. Edwina Williams attests to being a spoiled Southern woman, who had difficulty breaking with tradition when she moved to St. Louis with her husband and children. She explains, “life for me, as well as the children, changed radically. For one thing, I had to learn to cook for the very first time in my life. The seven

years we had lived with my parents, I was not allowed in the kitchen for we always had excellent cooks and I was quite content to give them the stove as domain.”<sup>2</sup>

However, Amanda shows fortitude in accepting the humiliating position of selling brassieres at a department store to pay for Laura’s tuition at business college. She is also enterprising when she tries to sell magazine subscriptions over the phone for extra money. She is unsuccessful at both jobs, being too matronly for the first and too annoying for the second. “Amanda is a universal mother type who shows devotion to her offspring and a determination to suffer for their sakes. Her flaw is that she carries these traits to their limit and beyond.”<sup>3</sup>

1. [historyengine.richmond](http://historyengine.richmond.edu)

2. Williams/Freeman, p. 31.

3. Griffin, p. 23.

[www.historyengine.richmond.edu/episodes/view/2259](http://www.historyengine.richmond.edu/episodes/view/2259)

Williams, Edwina Dakin with Lucy Freeman. *Remember Me to Tom*. New York: Putnam, 1964.

Griffin, Alice. *Understanding Tennessee Williams*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996.

## THE PLAYWRIGHT — TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

Born in Mississippi in 1911 as Thomas Lanier Williams, he adopted the name Tennessee after his father’s birthplace. Moving to New Orleans in 1939, Williams produced an amazing amount of work during his lifetime. He is best known for his plays and film adaptations, but he also wrote poems, short stories and novels.

His first major success came in 1945 in Chicago with the opening of *The Glass Menagerie*. This was followed by the even greater acclaim for *A Streetcar Named Desire*, which launched the career of Marlon Brando and began a series of successful collaborations between Williams and stage and film director, Elia Kazan.

Williams quickly became a rich and famous writer. He won several awards including two Pulitzer Prizes for drama, four New York Drama Critics’ Circle Awards and one Tony Award for best play. Williams had fifteen plays produced on Broadway between 1945 and 1961. In 1980, President Jimmy Carter presented him with the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Williams was a perfectionist who constantly revised his work. Some critics believe that his writing explores issues and situations from his own life. A perfect example of this is seen in *The Glass Menagerie*, which he considered an autobiographical play. However, some writers feel that Williams is represented in the play not by Tom, but by Laura. Tennessee was an effeminate boy, shy and socially awkward, who was

teased and bullied by his classmates.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout his career, he was simultaneously praised and denounced for addressing taboo subjects. In 1956 Roman Catholic Cardinal Spellman blacklisted him for writing the screenplay *Baby Doll*. In *A Streetcar Named Desire* Williams showed violence never seen on stage before: in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* he dealt with sexual issues never before portrayed onstage. Brooks Atkinson, Broadway’s leading critic in the 1950s, said that Williams was a “master dramatist with a terrifying knowledge of the secrets of the mind.”

Although his work in the theatre made him famous in the United States, his films made him an internationally known figure. Seven of his plays as well as his novella *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* were adapted for the screen during his lifetime. Williams’ work was well suited to the screen because he addressed subjects that were appealing to the film industry, including “the irregular passages of romantic life, the unavoidable discontents of family relations, and the exotic and perverse nature of Southern culture.”<sup>2</sup>

In the mid-1960s, the critics seemed to turn on him and began writing harsh reviews that implied Williams had lost his edge.<sup>3</sup> He also began to lose his popularity with audiences; his plays began closing after extremely short runs. What caused such a shift after such great acclaim? Some believe it was a response to his open homosexuality; others believe it was change in his

writing style in which his plays became less realistic and more idea driven than plot driven. Regardless of the reason, it is true that the works created at the end of his life were basically ignored.

Williams died on February 25, 1983, alone in a hotel room, a depressed alcoholic with writer's block.<sup>4</sup> His later works have been re-examined after his death. Many scholars believe they were not given fair treatment during his lifetime.

1. Gross, p. 45. 3. Gross, p. 35.

2. Palmer, p. ix. 4. Ibid.

Gross, Robert F., ed. *Tennessee Williams: a Casebook*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Palmer, R. Barton. *Hollywood's Tennessee: the Williams Films and Postwar America*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009.

[www.bard.org/study\\_guide/the\\_glass\\_menagerie/Utah\\_Shakespeare\\_festival](http://www.bard.org/study_guide/the_glass_menagerie/Utah_Shakespeare_festival)

## THE FIRST AMANDA — LAURETTE TAYLOR

Laurette Taylor was born in New York City on April 1, 1883 to James and Elizabeth Cooney as Loretta Helen Cooney. She married her first husband, Charles A. Taylor, on May 1, 1901, at age 18. They had two children, Dwight and Marguerite, but divorced around 1910. In 1912, she married British-born playwright J. Hartley Manners, who wrote the play *Peg o' My Heart*, a major triumph for Ms. Taylor, who toured it extensively throughout the U.S. The play's success inspired a 1922 film version starring Taylor and directed by King Vidor.

Taylor began attracting critical acclaim virtually from her first known performance on Broadway in *The Great John Ganton* in 1908 and building her reputation in such stage productions as *The Ringmaster*, *Alias Jimmy Valentine*, *Seven Sisters*, *Lola Lola*, *The Bird of Paradise* and *Peg o' My Heart*, which cemented her fame and reputation with theatre audiences. She achieved great success starring in other such productions as *Out There*, *One Night in Rome*, *The Wooing of Eve* and the special production, *Laurette Taylor in Scenes from Shakespeare* in which she performed scenes from *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Taylor's outsized personality, her mercurial moods and eccentricities became legendary. Her friend Noel Coward spent a weekend at Taylor's home and, inspired by that remarkable visit wrote, in just three days, his devastating, witty comedy of manners, *Hay Fever* (1925). The play about a family whose theatrical excesses drive their unsuspecting visitors to

distraction, became a major hit. Taylor was outraged by Coward's portrayal of her and her family, which caused a permanent rift in her friendship with Coward.

Laurette suffered from severe alcoholism for many years due in large part to her grief at losing her beloved husband J. Hartley Manners. Her drinking limited her appearances from the late 1920s throughout her career. In 1938, she headed the cast in a revival of *Outward Bound* but did not appear again until her re-emergence in *The Glass Menagerie* in 1945. Her performance received rapturous reviews and won her the New York Drama Critics' Award for Best Actress of the Season.

*The New Yorker* magazine of October 2013 describes her performance:

"She simply didn't act. Or so it appeared. She was a tired, silly, irritating, touching, fraught, aging woman with no self-awareness, no censor for her ceaseless flow of words, no sense of the effect she was having on her children—or the audience. Her self-pitying yet valiant voice, reflecting both the desperation of her situation and the faded remnants of her Southern-belle charm was maddening, yet somehow endearing."<sup>1</sup>

Taylor died from coronary thrombosis on December 7, 1946 at age 63. She is interred in Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx, New York City.

1. [www.newyorker.com](http://www.newyorker.com)

[www.en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Laurette-Taylor](http://www.en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Laurette-Taylor)

[www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-greatest-menagerie](http://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-greatest-menagerie)

## BUSINESS SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Stenographer education programs generally train students to transcribe live or recorded speech into documents. The U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics notes that while training requirements depend on the individual's chosen specialty, all employers require stenographers to have a high school diploma or GED certificate. Training programs typically award a stenography or court-reporting certificate; certificate programs vary in length from one to four semesters and typically include courses in real time reporting, captioning, legal terminology and computer use.

A certification in typing can be earned traditionally in a business college or employment agency. Certification in the field is voluntary. The certificate is conferred when a student passes a timed test that concerns basic typing skills through evaluation of words per minute, total errors made and total words typed within the span of several minutes. Earning such a certificate can directly result in industry recognized certification, which is appreciated by employers.

[www.study.com/stenographer/typing\\_training.html](http://www.study.com/stenographer/typing_training.html)

# THE GLASS MENAGERIE — THEMES

Among the most prominent themes of the play is the difficulty the characters have in accepting and relating to reality and the isolation they feel because of it. Each member of the Wingfield family is unable to overcome this difficulty, and each, as a result, withdraws into a private world of illusion where he or she finds the comfort and meaning that the real world does not seem to offer. Of the three Wingfields, Laura has the weakest grasp on reality. The private world in which she lives is populated by old Victrola records and glass animals, as fragile and delicate as she is.

Unlike his sister, Tom is capable of functioning in the real world as he holds down a job and deals with strangers. But, in the end, he has no more motivation than Laura does to pursue professional success, romantic relationships or even ordinary friendships. He prefers to retreat into the fantasies provided by literature, movies and alcohol.

Amanda's relationship to reality is the most complicated. Unlike her children, she is partial to real world values and longs for social and financial success. Yet her attachment to these values is what prevents her from realizing a number of truths about her life. She cannot accept that she is no longer the pampered Southern belle she was brought up to be, that Laura is peculiar, that Tom is not a budding businessman, and that she might be responsible for the flaws of her children. Amanda's retreat into illusion is more pathetic than her children's because it is "a wistful distortion of reality."<sup>1</sup>

In addition, the outside world is just as susceptible to illusion as the Wingfields, illustrated by the young people at the Paradise Dance Hall, dancing under the short-lived illusion created by the glass ball—another version of Laura's glass animals. Tom tells Jim that the other moviegoers are substituting on-screen adventures for real life, finding

fulfillment in illusion rather than the real world. Even Jim, who represents the "world of reality" is banking his future on public speaking, television and radio—all of which are meant to create illusions and to persuade audiences that these illusions are true. The avoidance of reality is a huge and growing aspect of the human condition in 1937.

At the beginning of Scene Four, Tom tells Laura of a magic show in which a magician managed to escape from a nailed coffin. Tom views his whole life with his family as a kind of coffin-cramped, suffocating and morbid—in which he is confined. The promise of escape, represented by his missing father, the Merchant Marine Service and the fire escape outside the apartment, plagues Tom from the beginning of the play, and in the end, he does choose to free himself from this entrapment. He is bound to this place by emotional ties and one cannot say for certain that leaving home means escape for Tom.

According to Tom, *The Glass Menagerie* is a memory play; both its style and content are shaped by memory. The story that the play tells is told because of the grip that it has on the narrator's memory, indeed, on all people's lives and consciousness. Williams writes in the Production Notes that "nostalgia is the first condition of the play."<sup>2</sup> For all the characters in the play, memory is a crippling force that prevents them from finding happiness in the present or in the future.

1. sparknotes.

2. Williams, p. xix.

[www.sparknotes.com/lit/menagerie/themes/html](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/menagerie/themes/html)

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# GLOSSARY

**Guernica**

Artist Pablo Picasso was inspired to create a massive painting that evoked the horrors of war. He named it after the town in which thousands of innocent people were killed in a bombing on April 26, 1937 during the Spanish Civil War.

**Gentleman Caller**

boyfriend. A young man interested in dating a young woman.

**Victrola**

an early type of record player that was wound with a crank.

**Spinster**

an unmarried woman.

**Pirates of Penzance**

one of the many comic, light operas written by Gilbert and Sullivan.

**Pleurosis**

an inflammation of the lungs.

**Mr. Lawrence**

D. H. Lawrence was a famous writer whose books were known for their overt depictions of sexuality—a taboo subject during the early part of the 20th century.

**Sixty-Five dollars a month**

a low, but not unusually so, salary during the 1930s.

**Cathouse**

house of ill-repute.

**Merchant Marine**

a fleet of ships which carries imports and exports during peacetime and becomes a naval auxiliary during wartime to deliver troops and war material.

**Berchtesgaden**

a beautiful area of Germany where Hitler had his home.

**Chamberlain**

Neville Chamberlain, British Prime Minister from 1937 to 1940 who appeased Germany by giving them part of Czechoslovakia.

**Cretonne**

a printed cotton fabric used for upholstery.

**Jonquils**

a yellow flower similar to a daffodil.

**Cake-walk**

a light hearted dance competition played in the late 1800s or early 1900s often in the Southern states.

**Cotillion**

a formal dance occasion.

**Malaria fever**

a mosquito -borne disease that causes fever or weakness.

**Dizzy Dean**

popular baseball player of the 1930s known for his bragging.

**Southern Behavior**

stereotypical idea of people from the South having particularly good manners.

**Sons of planters**

wealthy young men who inherited significant amounts of property.

**Dandelion wine**

a light wine made from dandelion flowers served in Southern states during the summer months.

**Century of Progress**

a major exhibit in the 1933-34 Chicago Exposition which was intended to highlight the century 1833-1933.

**Dance “Program”**

a dance card signed by prospective dance partners.

**Stumblejohn**

clumsy or foolish person.

**D. A. R.**

Daughters of the American Revolution, a woman’s organization dedicated to promoting patriotism.

**Hogan Gang**

an Irish crime gang in St. Louis led by “Jelly Roll” Hogan.

**Paragon**

a model of excellence.

**Quinine**

a drug used to treat malaria.

<http://theoldglobe.org/pdf./studyguides/glassmenagerie/pdf>.

[www.milwaukeeerep.com/pdf/sl/glassmenagerie/SG.pdf](http://www.milwaukeeerep.com/pdf/sl/glassmenagerie/SG.pdf)

# STAGE, FILM AND TELEVISION PRODUCTIONS OF *THE GLASS MENAGERIE*

*The Glass Menagerie* was first produced in Chicago, then New York, in 1943. Eddie Dowling was Tom Wingfield; Laurette Taylor was Amanda; Julie Haydon played Laura and Anthony Ross was Jim O'Conner. In May 1965 a new production was mounted with George Grizzard as Tom, Maureen Stapleton as Amanda, Piper Laurie as Laura and Pat Hingle as Jim. Maureen Stapleton returned to the role of Amanda in December 1975 with Rip Torn as Tom, Pamela Payton Wright as Laura and Paul Rudd as Jim.

In December 1983, Jessica Tandy took on the role of Amanda; Bruce Davison played Tom; Amanda Plummer played Laura and John Heard played Jim. In November 1994, Julie Harris played Amanda, with Zeljko Ivanek as Tom, Calista Flockhart as Laura and Kevin Kilner as Jim. In March 2005 Jessica Lange played Amanda, with Sarah Paulson as Laura,

Christian Slater as Tom and Josh Lucas as Jim.

A film adaptation was made in 1950. Gertrude Lawrence played Amanda, with Jane Wyman as Laura, Arthur Kennedy as Tom and Kirk Douglas as Jim. In 1987 Paul Newman directed a film version in which his wife, Joanne Woodward played Amanda, with Karen Allen as Laura, John Malkovich as Tom and James Naughton as Jim.

The first television version was broadcast in 1966 as part of CBS Playhouse. Shirley Booth was Amanda, with Barbara Loden as Laura, Hal Holbrook as Tom, and Pat Hingle as Jim. A second television adaptation was broadcast on ABC on December 16, 1973. It starred Katherine Hepburn as Amanda, with Sam Waterston as Tom; Michael Moriarty as Jim and Joanna Miles as Laura.

[www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Glass\\_Menagerie](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Glass_Menagerie).

## TENNESSEE WILLIAMS AND ANTON CHEKHOV

When Williams was asked what three writers he admired the most, he said, "Chekhov, Chekhov, Chekhov."<sup>1</sup> In the 1980s, Williams gained fans in the Soviet Union because of his admiration for Chekhov. He admired the juxtaposition of the humorous and tragic, his lonely characters, his portrayal of daily life and its never-ending crises. Chekhov illustrated how the average person suffers, the person's imperfections, and how life is a mixture of emotions.<sup>2</sup>

The characters in Chekhov's plays such as *The Sea Gull* and *The Cherry Orchard* do not seem to hear each other at all; each follows his own pattern of thought and individual concerns. Problems do not get settled by argument but by being overtaken by events.

Williams thought his own family was straight out of Chekhov. His parents despised one another; his grandparents were unwelcome guests; his sister was close to the madhouse, and Tennessee was miserable with each turn of events. He loved these people, but could not stand to be around them.

1. [www.uncleguidefacts.com/Chekhov](http://www.uncleguidefacts.com/Chekhov)

2. [www.cascanada.net/index/pbps/](http://www.cascanada.net/index/pbps/)

Tischler, Nancy M. *Student Companion to Tennessee Williams*.

London: Greenwood Press, 2000.

[www.uncleguidefacts.com/2011/09/Chekhov's-three-sisters-and-tennessee.html](http://www.uncleguidefacts.com/2011/09/Chekhov's-three-sisters-and-tennessee.html)

[www.cascanada.net/index/pbps/article/index/download/ste](http://www.cascanada.net/index/pbps/article/index/download/ste).

## STUDY QUESTIONS

### Pre-Performance Questions

1. What makes a memory? How does a memory evolve through time? How do we manipulate our memories to cope with the world around us?
2. What does the term “American Dream” mean to you? Has the American Dream changed from generation to generation or is it still the same today as it was in the 1930s? Why or why not is the American Dream possible to attain?

### Post-Performance Questions

1. What is a “memory” play? How does a “memory” play differ from a conventional play? What, if any, theatrical conventions are used to heighten the effect?
2. How does the use of music in the play effect the storytelling? How does the music effect the way that the audience perceives the story?
3. How does the setting of the play enhance the story? Would the story change if it was set ten years earlier or later? What changes would have to be made?
4. How does Tom’s opening monologue set the tone for the play? How does he prepare you for the play? Why does some of the play take place on the fire escape?
5. How would you describe the relationship between the family members; Tom and Amanda, Amanda and Laura, Tom and Laura? How does the fourth member of the family, Tom and Laura’s father, fit into the family’s dynamic? How do Tom and Laura reflect their parent’s traits?
6. How would you describe the role of women in this play? How do familial archetypes of “mother” and “daughter” maintain or challenge the role(s) of female?
7. As a character, what is the purpose of the Gentleman Caller, Jim? In what ways does he change to meet the individual needs of each family member?
8. How does Williams use symbols in the play? Find a few objects that you believe to be symbols. In what ways is the object illuminated to be a symbol and what does it represent?
9. How do the historical world events, as mentioned in the play, create and impact the world of the play? Do you think Williams’ incorporation of world events and the Wingfield’s domestic events enhance or detract from the play’s premise as a “memory” play?
10. What can be inferred from Tom’s obsession with movies; Laura’s obsession with her glass menagerie; Amanda’s obsession with her past?
11. What do you think happens to each family member after the events of the play and beyond what Tom tells us?

## ACTIVITIES

### Historic Timeline

1. Ask students to research significant events in the United States and the world leading up to, during and following the play *The Glass Menagerie* and to place them in chronological order.
2. Create a timeline using the information gathered.
3. Discussion Questions: What changes or innovations were happening during these times? How was the world changing? How are these historical events included in the play *The Glass Menagerie*? How did these significant events affect the characters in the play?

### The Glass Menagerie Character Timeline

1. Ask students to chart the events of a certain character's life before and after the production of *The Glass Menagerie*.
2. Use the timeline from the study guide as a starting point and add other historical/social, both national and international during the time of the play.
3. Discuss: Why were these events important to the individual character? How did these events effect the character's life?

**History PG: Develop an understanding of how people view, construct, and interpret history.**

**History PG: Analyze key historical periods and patterns of change over time within and across nations and cultures.**

### Personal Narrative: Success and Perceptions of the American Dream

1. What is your personal definition for success?
2. What is your definition for the term, The American Dream?
3. What are your indicators of success and achievement of The American Dream?
4. Write about a moment in your life about when you were successful. Be sure to include specific examples of what factors helped you to achieve this success. When did you know that you had achieved success? Was this success part of/similar to your definition of The American Dream?
5. Interview a parent or an adult about their definitions of success. Then ask them their definition for the term The American Dream. What are the similarities and differences between their definitions and your definitions?
6. Ask your interviewee, about a specific example when they were successful. What factors helped them to achieve this success? Was this success part of/similar to their definition of The American Dream? What do they think their parent's definition of success would be? What are the similarities and differences of the answers across the three generations?

**Writing PG: Effectively use content-specific language, style, tone and text structure to compose or adapt writing for different audiences and purposes.**

**Writing PG: Write with clear focus, coherent organization, sufficient elaboration, and detail.**

## Perspective Writing — Character Narrative

1. **Have students select an important moment** from *The Glass Menagerie*. This should be a moment that has more than one person in attendance. For example, the first meeting between Laura and Jim or an exchange between Amanda and Tom.
2. From this moment, the students are to pick a character from the story and, in their own words (paraphrase), provide the character's perspective and attitude of what transpired. Specifically, emotions, behavior, and how the moment affects the character should be explored.
3. From the exploration of a moment from the play, each student will write a short monologue describing the moment from the character's perspective of what they experienced.
4. Compare the monologues about the event from other characters that were involved. Discuss the similarities and differences that arose during the writing process. Was there general agreement of what happened or marked differences? Why were the moments similar or different? Were they subtle or obvious variations? Did students agree on what was important to include and why? If not, how would the elimination of some elements change the way the moment would be understood or remembered by the character?

**Writing PG: Articulate the position of self and others using experiential and material logic.**

**Writing PG: Write with clear focus, coherent organization, sufficient elaboration, and detail.**

## Collage of Personality

### Materials:

Construction paper  
Glue or Tape  
Old magazines, newspapers and/or other pieces of ephemera  
Scissors, if needed

1. Select a character from the play *The Glass Menagerie*: Tom Wingfield, Amanda Wingfield, Laura Wingfield or Jim O'Connor
2. Once you have decided on the character, review how the characters describe themselves, how the other character's describe them, and how the playwright describes them.
3. Based on these descriptions, collect images and words from magazines, newspapers, the internet and/or other pieces of ephemera.
4. Find a specific image of an animal, a household item, an image of nature, and an urban image that represents your selected character and incorporate these images with those found in Step 3 to create a collage.
5. After gathering imagery, glue or tape the pieces to a piece of construction paper.
6. Raise the Bar: Draw an outline of a human figure. Place the images within the outline as parts of the human body: what image best represents the character's heart, the brain, etc.

**Visual Arts PG: Recognize, interpret, and validate that the creative process builds on the development of ideas through a process of inquiry, discovery, and research.**

**Visual Arts PG: Recognize, articulate, and implement critical thinking in the visual arts by synthesizing, evaluating, and analyzing visual information.**

# PERSPECTIVES

**Make your experience unforgettable when you join us for one of these insightful, educational events:**

## Creative Team Perspectives

**Sep 9 | 6pm, The Jones**

Get an exclusive insider's perspective before the show when you join us for a free, professionally-moderated discussion with the creative team.

## Cast Perspectives

**After the Sep 18 matinee**

Join a fun and engaging discussion with the actors

## Perspectives: Higher Education Advisory Council

**After the Sep 25 matinee**

Participate in a topical discussion led by members of our academic community

## Perspectives: Theatre & Theology

**After the Sep 27 performance**

Join Pastor Dan Bollman of the Rocky Mountain Evangelical Lutheran Synod to examine each show through a theological lens

# WANT TO KNOW MORE?

## The Denver Public Library recommends:

### Read!

***Fun Home* by Alison Bechdel**

This “tragicomic” memoir, which became an award winning Broadway play, by Alison Bechdel offers a heartbreaking, and at times, funny look at family life and the high cost of repressed desires and dreams deferred. Set in the family-run funeral home, and centered around her father’s death, *Fun Home* tells the story of a woman coming to terms with the hidden stories of her childhood and the tragedies of her parents’ lives.

### Watch!

***Dancing at Lughnasa* written by Brian Friel** and starring Meryl Streep this film adapts another “memory play” about the Mundy family struggling to make ends meet in late 1930s Ireland.

### Listen!

You’ve seen the play, now learn more about Tennessee Williams’ life which inspired the characters of Tom and Laura. ***Tennessee Williams : Mad Pilgrimage Of The Flesh* by John Lahr**. This is the definitive biography of Williams, written by long time *New York Times* theatre critic Lahr. This title is available as a book on cd.

### Download!

***How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie**

Channel your inner Jim and strive for success by learning and using Carnegie’s timeless methods! This title available for download at [downloadmedia.denverlibrary.org](http://downloadmedia.denverlibrary.org).



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