

DramaWorks Teacher's Guide  
for  
The Glass Menagerie  
the play by Tennessee Williams

Guide by  
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### **Authors' Dedication**

This guide is gratefully dedicated  
to all the classroom teachers  
without whom we would not be  
the lifelong students we are today.

We thank you.

*--Marion & Bill*

### **Publisher's Dedication**

Marion Hoffman was my teacher and friend  
who had a passion for learning and teaching  
and a tremendous love of literature and life.

Her spirited enthusiasm for teaching  
and her classroom experience combined with  
Bill's equally passionate love for and experience  
with the world of theater combined to make  
these DramaWorks guides invaluable resources.

I dedicate these updated editions to  
Marion and Bill.

*--Mary Collins, Founder of Teacher's Pet Publications*

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# Introduction to the DramaWorks Guide

## What DramaWorks Is

DramaWorks has been created to meet the needs of classroom teachers. We have found that many teachers want resource materials directly related to presenting dramatic literature in their classrooms. They want information for themselves about specific plays, help in teaching the plays in the classroom, a large selection of in- and out-of-class activities geared to students working at different learning levels, and some practical guidance in putting all of that material together as quickly and as effortlessly as possible for applied use.

In response to those needs, we have created DramaWorks. It is designed, in a single guide, to give teachers a working understanding of a play, in this instance *The Glass Menagerie*, a high level of comfort in making an interesting and informative presentation of the play to their students, and numerous activities of varying kinds that can be done in class or at home. All activities come with information for the teacher as well as directions for the students. The directions are so flexible that the teacher can copy them and hand them out to the students, can give them out orally, or can adapt them to a variety of different purposes.

The activities include vocabulary exercises that focus on application of the words; classroom presentations; close examination of specially chosen parts of the text; acting exercises; writing assignments for the personal, interview, and research paper; and improvisations. There are, in addition, many suggested extra activities that allow students to practice skills in gathering and thinking about information, presenting information verbally, working with various media, and writing information in a variety of forms. Students also are encouraged to try to learn new skills such as the elements of acting.

Accompanying those materials are very practical suggestions for ways to allot classroom time for direct teaching, interactive discussions, and assigned activities, as well as ways to use out-of-class activities to the best advantage in furthering students' understanding and enjoyment of the play. Everything is presented in ways that conserve the teacher's time and at the same time capitalize on every opportunity to make the classroom interesting and dynamic. Many opportunities are given to actually "act out" parts of the play in class.

What is unique about DramaWorks is that it places emphasis on classroom teaching, discussion, and activity. We hope it gives teachers the confidence to create a dynamic, interactive classroom environment. We know it will help them to introduce *The Glass Menagerie* to their students with minimal preparation but maximal results.

Because DramaWorks actually teaches users about the play while coaching them in teaching their students, it requires relatively little additional preparation time. There is no need to put hours and hours into creating lengthy lesson plans from scratch. Teachers can simply pick and choose from among many pre-designed activities without having to create new ones or devise lengthy instructions for their students.

## Who The DramaWorks Guide Is For

DramaWorks can be used by any busy teacher who wants to introduce drama into the classroom. The most obvious users are probably teaching English, although they might be in another of the humanities or in some area of language arts. Our teachers enjoy teaching and being with young people. They are likely to be relatively new teachers looking for some support while they gain experience, although they could easily be ten- or fifteen-year veterans looking for help in preparing to teach a new play or one they haven't taught for a while.

What we know for sure is that this guide will be used by teachers who believe it will enhance their teaching of *The Glass Menagerie* while saving them some much-needed time in preparation.

We hope our teachers see great value in teaching drama dramatically. Though they probably are teaching drama as part of an overall curriculum, we hope they want to go beyond acquainting students with the play in the same way that they would "read" a novel, poem, or short story. Good teachers know through experience that the only true way to understand drama is to see at least some of it acted out before our eyes. They know that hearing actors' voices, watching characters move, seeing costumes, and looking at sets--even in the imagination--will make more of an impression on students than a million words on a page.

Our teachers also want to introduce theatre into the classroom to acquaint their students with great works of drama and help them to understand their plots, language, characters, and ideas. Our teachers want to make their classroom presentations interesting. They want to keep the attention of their students and impress upon them some of the pleasure of learning that brought the teachers into the classroom in the first place. They know there is no better way to capture and keep students' attention than through the natural dynamics of drama.

Our teachers also know that drama is one way to open students' eyes to an understanding of real life. If students understand the motivations of a play's characters, they will be better armed to see the motivations of people they meet in their own lives. If they see models of both trustworthy and untrustworthy behavior, they will be able to make more informed decisions about how they view the behavior of others and about how they themselves behave. If they understand more about language and other historical periods and have discussed some new ideas, students will perhaps be just a little more prepared to live their lives in ways that will give them satisfaction.

## What The DramaWorks Guide Contains

The DramaWorks guide contains several sections.

The first section is **About the Playwright and His Art**, which contains a brief write-up on the life and art of Tennessee Williams.

Next is **A Synopsis of *The Glass Menagerie*** that both teachers and students may use to gain a quick and easy understanding of the overall plot of the play. Although some teachers may object to giving students notes on the plot of the play because doing so seems somehow like “cheating,” we believe that it is very helpful to students to refer to. But, as with all of the parts of the Guide, teachers get to make the decision as to which parts to use and which not.

In the section entitled **Learning and Teaching**, really the heart of the Guide, teachers will learn about *The Glass Menagerie* at the same time that they gain techniques for teaching the play to their students. There is information on choosing a good text, reading the play for enjoyment and for teaching preparation, considerable information about the play’s characters, plot, thematic ideas, costuming, props, and set, and interesting and informative ways to present those aspects of drama to students. Throughout this section, we talk with teachers and share our thoughts on each part of *The Glass Menagerie*.

Also included in **Learning and Teaching** are ways to act out parts of the play in the classroom using the sketchiest of props, sets, and costumes or no props, sets, or costumes at all. If teachers want to use the acting portions of the Guide, then the ideas in props, sets, and costumes will be very beneficial.

Throughout the **Learning and Teaching** section, teachers will find many casual suggestions for activities that can be used with students at varying learning levels.

What **Learning and Teaching** really is is a section of coaching for the teacher. As educators with many years of experience in a variety of settings with lots of different students, we try to give teachers as many ideas as possible for ways to learn about the play and to pass that learning along to their students in as dynamic and informative a way as possible. By combining their own ideas and methodology with ours, teachers will create a vast assortment of ideas, approaches, and teaching techniques.

And that brings us to an important note: we don’t propose that our suggestions are the **only** way(s) to teach this or any other play. As teachers approach *The Glass Menagerie* and other dramas, they will no doubt add notes, thoughts, and activities that will change their teaching over the years. What **Learning and Teaching** represents is a beginning, a variety of ways to approach *The Glass Menagerie* that we believe will be successful in many classrooms.

Following the **Learning and Teaching** section are a series of more formally presented activities. Some may be done with students at varying learning levels while others require substantially capable and interested students.

**Vocabulary Words from the Text** is designed to make students more familiar with the meanings of over 60 words from the play's text. Each word is quoted as it is used in *The Glass Menagerie* and is accompanied by a clear dictionary definition. Students apply the words in interesting ways to assist them in understanding and becoming more familiar with them. Some of these activities may be done individually at home and some may be done in pairs and small groups in class.

The part called **Sections of the Text for Close Examination** gives students ways of acquiring better understanding of the play by focusing closely on parts of scenes. By looking closely at small segments of text, students will be better able to understand and assimilate the play's characters, plot, and major ideas. The **Sections of the Text for Close Examination** lend themselves either to individual or group work and should be approached as a fun activity, if at all possible.

**The Written Word** is included for teachers who are most comfortable with evaluating students through traditional writing assignments. There are multiple suggestions for writing based on personal experience, writing that evolves from investigation and research, and writing based on interviews. The writing itself is an individualized activity done by students either in or outside of the classroom, but in the interest of time, we assume that most of the writing will be completed at home.

**The Exercises** are of three types. Some ask for investigation followed by a classroom presentation. And because we are learning about drama, other exercises involve creating theatrical improvisations and presenting them in class while still others give students the opportunity to act out parts of the play in class with or without costumes, props, and sets. Some of the exercises can be done individually while some are group activities. The section was created to give teachers a wide choice of each type of activity.

**The Exercises** is a section that can be used in its entirety, in part, or not at all. Although we hope that teachers will use some of the activities in the section, it is entirely possible to teach *The Glass Menagerie* interestingly and successfully without doing the exercises at all. Regardless of how they are used, it is unlikely that any classroom teacher will have the luxury of enough class periods to use the entire **Exercises** section.

One of the last sections is called **More and More Activities**, which includes a list of extra activities that teachers might want to consider. There are fifty activities listed. Many of them have multiple parts. All told, there probably are more than seventy-five activities in the section.

We conclude with **The Epilogue** and a note on the text.

Every activity section contains **Suggestions For The Teacher** which—depending on the type of activity--gives teachers ideas about how to work with the activities, information about why we chose the particular activity, what we hope it will accomplish with students, and things for teachers to think about as they assign the work. Although we make practical suggestions on ways to teach the activities, we always leave all final decisions to teachers because they know their particular students, classrooms, and schools better than anyone else can.

For every series of activities and most individual activities, we offer **Directions For The Students**, which gives guidance about how to complete the activity, how to approach it, and what we hope will be learned from it. We have tried to assure that the directions are very informative but always supportive of teachers. Our desire is that our directions never encroach upon teachers' freedom to use the activities in any way that they please.

As teachers give directions for an activity, they will give students whatever information they think is needed. If they think in some cases that just giving students our directions and letting them get started on the activity is appropriate, that is fine. Students often will be able to do the work by just referring to Directions for Students. When teachers want additional information in making assignments, they will find the basis for it in the Suggestions for the Teacher sections.



## How To Use The DramaWorks Guide

We want teachers to feel free to use the DramaWorks Guide however they choose. But we also understand that teachers are busy people who don't always have time to wade through pages of information and then make hundreds of choices about how to present the material to their students.

We suggest, then, that teachers spend as much time as possible reading the play and the Guide. Then, if they want some practical applications of the material, they will find those under **Teaching Organizers**. In that section are a variety of ways to organize the actual teaching of *The Glass Menagerie*. In the **Organizers**, we break the teaching of the play into relevant parts and suggest pedagogical methods.

All five methods require that the teacher start by giving an overview of what will be taught during the whole unit and how the teaching will be done. Generally, too, teachers will want to be sure that students understand their expectations. We suggest that copies of the synopsis of *The Glass Menagerie* be given to students prior to the first class.

Our pedagogical methods are all based on fifteen class periods of approximately 50 minutes each. If teachers have more or fewer than fifteen class periods to devote to the play, they will necessarily need to adapt the **Organizers** to their own purposes.

Teachers may find these **Organizers** helpful time savers, especially if they are preparing to teach *The Glass Menagerie* for the first time. Some users of the Guide may even be teaching their first play ever. But if teachers know ways that help them to present the material more effectively, then they should do it in whatever way seems best to them. The **Organizers** are presented as a way to save the teachers time. They are meant to help teachers, not dictate to them.

What is special about the DramaWorks Guide is that it has been created to be used by a variety of teachers in a variety of ways. We assume that all teachers and all classes and all classrooms are different. We invite teachers to use all or parts of the Guide exactly as we present them. But we also urge teachers to modify the Guide in any way that they please whenever they see the need.

Every step we have taken in creating the DramaWorks Guide was chosen to make teachers' professional and personal lives easier. It's not, after all, as though teachers can't present dramatic literature without our help. But if we do some of the work for them, they will have more time to think about presenting information to their students, working with them in groups and individually, and seeing that the classroom experience is as valuable as possible for everyone.

## What The DramaWorks Guide Is Not

We are not trying to give a synopsis of everything that has ever been written about *The Glass Menagerie*. There is no way that anyone could do that. We are not writing an academic critique of the play. There are lots of journals available if that's what teachers want and need. We aren't trying to compile the latest literary criticism on the play. Again, that information is readily available.

We're not trying to make teachers instant experts on either *The Glass Menagerie* or Tennessee Williams. If teachers choose to spend a lot of time researching Williams and his plays, there is sufficient information for them to choose from.

The DramaWorks Guide is not intended to be the final word on any aspect of *The Glass Menagerie*. It is intended to provide help for teachers and their students. We hope it is viewed as a useful resource supportive of an informative, enjoyable, and enlightened teaching process. We hope that teachers enjoy using it as much as we enjoyed writing it.

## The Characters in the Play

[CCSS: RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.9, SL.9-10.1 | RL.11-12.1, RL.11-12.10, SL.11-12.1]

The notes below will help you discuss the characters in *The Glass Menagerie* with your class. There is a lot of information and there are several suggestions as to ways to get your students to understand the characters through discussions and exercises. Choose the timing and methods you feel are most appropriate for your own students.]

At the beginning of this section on character, we remind you of what you have already read in the information about Tennessee Williams and his life: Williams' works are highly autobiographical. Everyone who has ever written about *The Glass Menagerie* has noted comparisons between Tom Wingfield and Tennessee Williams and between Amanda and Laura Wingfield and Williams' mother and sister. From time to time we will mention these similarities, but for the most part we will not belabor them. If you enjoy reading this kind of information, there are good biographies available as well as Tennessee Williams' own autobiography.

There are many other ways to examine the characters in this play. For example, we could examine their language, think about the circumstances in which they live, see them reflected in the eyes of other characters, examine their behavior throughout the play, notice their growth or lack of growth as the play progresses, and think about them as everyday people such as the ones in our real lives. We can even imagine what it would feel like to be characters in the play ourselves and to interact with the other characters. All of these pieces of evidence together give us a whole person.

Let's look, for instance, at a single character, Amanda Wingfield. Amanda has one model for a successful life, and it is the one that she was taught as a child and as a young woman. A woman must be charming, attractive, and attentive and must rely on attracting men in order to survive. She must find a man with whom marriage is possible. Her only other alternative is to develop some kind of career.

Let's look at what we know about Amanda. She is old enough to have two grown children, so she is perhaps about fifty years old. Her charming and attractive husband, whom she claims to have loved very much, hasn't been in the family for years. He left her and their children for a life of greater adventure. Her daughter is handicapped both physically and emotionally. Her son, on whom she counts for support, is about to take the route his father took. Amanda has enough spirit to support herself through her sales, but she cannot possibly support both herself and Laura.

The best part of her life seems to be behind her. At one time she was pretty and lively and young. To hear her tell it, she had numerous suitors, all of them wealthy, and could have chosen any one of them for a husband. "One Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountain," she tells her children, "your mother received—**seventeen!**--gentleman callers! Why, sometimes there weren't chairs enough to accommodate them all...." Her future at that point as rosy and secure. Her financial future was without limits.

**Text between the previous page and this one has been omitted for the sample.]**

As she is described in Lyle Leverich's biography of Williams, Edwina "...not merely talked—and talked—she had the ability to overcome friend and adversary alike, usually leaving them limp and defenseless under the sheer weight of words." (TOM: The Unknown Tennessee Williams)

Try to get students to think about where the Wingfield family would be without Amanda. Is her behavior necessary in such a family? What has happened to Amanda to make her so domineering and manipulative? Ask students if they think Amanda has always been this way. Then get students to move on to think about what it might be like to know Amanda themselves. What would it be like to have someone like Amanda as a friend? as a mother? as a wife?

Get students to think about whether or not Amanda would behave differently in different circumstances. What if she were married to a very successful businessman? Would she be a different person? Would she talk less? Would she be more inclined to let people live their own lives if she were happier with her own? Ask students to picture Amanda in a variety of different circumstances.

Suppose Amanda were alive today and had a successful career of her own. Would she continue to be so domineering? How much of Amanda's behavior is simply a part of Amanda's personality and how much of it has been influenced by her life circumstances?

Do whatever you have to do to stimulate the students' thinking about Amanda's character. Urge them to lift her out of *The Glass Menagerie* in order to think about her as a real person. Sometimes it is easier for students to think about a character by taking that character out of a piece of literature. The person somehow becomes more real when she is considered outside of her literary niche.

Character examination may be easier in the case of Tom. More students, we would expect, will sympathize with Tom than with Amanda. Tom Wingfield, at the time of the episode presented in *The Glass Menagerie*, is a young man with a dream who is trapped in the harsh realities of a life he hates. His creativity is being stifled by his unimaginative job in a shoe factory. His love for his sister is being transformed into a trap that keeps him firmly planted in a small, cramped apartment in St. Louis where his only escape is to sit in dark theatres and watch movies and to drink to excess. If Amanda's present life is a disappointment to her, Tom's is no less so to him.

At the time of the play's action, Tom is working in a shoe warehouse where he is absolutely miserable. His job is in jeopardy because he has been going to work tired, hung over, and disinterested. At no time are his heart and his mind in his work. Whenever he has an opportunity, he composes poetry on the job. At home he is nagged as though he were a child. His mother tells him when to come to the table, how to eat, how much to smoke, what to do with his spare time, how to comb his hair, how to dress, and what his responsibilities are to the family. Although he is financially supporting his mother and sister and himself, he has no say in how they live.

At the time of the play, Amanda has been making inroads into Tom's creative process, interrupting him when he is trying to write and passing judgments on his choice of reading materials. Recently she returned one of his library books—a novel by D. H. Lawrence that she

## Some Thematic Ideas for Discussion

CCSS: RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.2, RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.10, SL.9-10.1  
RL.11-12.1, RL.11-12.2, RL.11-12.5, RL.11-12.10, SL.11-12.1

### Obsession

There are multiple ways to discuss any good play. Every work has a variety of potential ideas for interesting discussion. One idea that students might easily become interested in is obsession. Amanda, Tom, and Laura all have obsessive personalities. Although each of the characters is different from the others, each of them leads an obsessive life which frequently focuses on themselves to the exclusion of others.

For Amanda, the obsession is her youth. Everything she believes may be right for her but wrong for others. Almost all of her ideas are as dated as her outfits. As soon as any opportunity presents itself, Amanda reverts to stories of her growing up in Mississippi. Stories of her gentleman callers and her lively social life have been told and retold until everyone knows them by heart.

Amanda has been disappointed by life, but she has not been humbled. She is strong, she is tough, and she endures. She believes that all things will come to her and her family if she just works and plans hard enough. She is tenacious. She is obsessive even in her tenacity.

The trouble with Amanda's obsession with her own youth is that her own life is her only model for how a person can live. She fails to realize how outdated some of her views are and how unworkable they might be in the current world she lives in. But much more dangerous is her failure to realize how different her children are from her. When they behave in ways that conflict with her own behavior, she just assumes that they are being difficult or aren't trying hard enough.

Amanda believes in the notion that hard work will pay off in a good career making reasonable money. She thinks that women should use their attractive looks and their wiles to attract men. She believes that one does whatever is necessary and always rises to the occasion. She believes that her particular brand of southern hospitality will always prevail.

Unfortunately, Tom has very different notions of success. He lives creatively, by instinct, and he craves adventure. He loves to read and write and dreams of adventure on the high seas. When Tom and his mother talk, it is as though they are speaking two different languages. She nags him toward one goal, and he tugs just as firmly toward a totally different goal. She nags because he pulls away from her, and he pulls away from her because she nags.

Just as Tom resists Amanda's nagging because he knows what he wants, Laura resists—albeit much more passively—because she knows what she is and is not capable of. She knows that she isn't the pretty, lively, southern girl that Amanda was. She knows that she isn't especially attractive to boys, at least partly because she is slightly handicapped.

## Vocabulary Words from the Text Activity #2

### Directions for Students

For this activity, you aren't being asked to figure out word meanings or look up words in a dictionary. All of the words are defined for you ahead of time. The purpose of the activity is to be sure that you understand all vocabulary words and that you have an additional opportunity to focus on small aspects of the play. Sometimes looking at smaller units of the play in isolation can make it easier for you to remember those parts.

This is likely to be an at-home activity. Using the fifteen words from Scenes Two and Three, write some sentences describing any one character in *The Glass Menagerie*. But don't write about their activities in the play. Write about something else that you think your chosen character might be doing and put them in the current year instead of the 1940's. Use as many of the fifteen words as you possibly can without losing clear meaning. Probably good use of six or seven words would be about right.

Don't rush through the activity. Try instead to do something challenging with the words supplied to you. Don't worry, however, if your description of a character is somewhat contrived. It is difficult to use particular words just because they are assigned to you, but it is also challenging to attempt to apply words learning in one context to another situation.

Here's one example of how the activity might be done:

Years after failing to be **inducted** into the D.A.R., Amanda's Wingfield's life is a **fiasco**. An **obsessive** woman who could never come to grips with changing times, she is **aghast** at what she sees on television, **precipitates** many quarrels with her friends with her **insolent** behavior, and is **pinioned** in another age by her antiquated views.

## Sections of the Text for Close Examination

### Activity #1

CCSS: RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.2, RL.9-10.4, RL.9-10.10, SL.9-10.1, W.9-10.10  
RL.11-12.1, RL.10-11.2, RL.11-12.4, RL.11-12.10, SL.11-12.1, W.11-12.10

#### Suggestions For the Teacher

We have chosen this first section of the text for close examination because it is comprised entirely of introductory material from Tennessee Williams. By reading it carefully, students may come to a fuller understanding of what the playwright was trying to say in *The Glass Menagerie*. Certainly they will know more about what Williams thought about the characters, their living arrangements, and their lives. They surely will better understand how Williams meant to portray the set to audiences.

Examining this section will also force students to look at small detail, to get into the mood of the play's environment, and perhaps also to envision the play unfolding upon an actual stage. Understanding how the Wingfield family lives and what the playwright thought of their lives is essential to understanding the plot of the play, the motivation of its characters, and the entire milieu in which the play is set.

The language in this section is difficult because many of the words will be unfamiliar to students. You probably will need to move through the passage slowly, and you probably will want to have a dictionary close at hand in the classroom.

Perhaps one way to address the first paragraph is to find out whether or not students have ever seen living quarters such as these. If they don't live in an urban setting, you may want to use pictures in magazines to demonstrate the sameness of tenement life. Think of and share with your students the picture of being closed in, of narrowness. The building itself, the fire escape, the alley—all are close and narrow and confining. The fire escape especially serves as an immediate and early symbol of lives from which the people in *The Glass Menagerie* would like to escape.

Notice that the third paragraph encourages us to think of things that exist in the memory. Remember how different something can actually be when compared with one's memory of it. Encourage students to think back to some event in their past and to consider how hazy their memory of it may be. Get them to think back on some event that they **think** they remember well but which may be getting vague in their memories. Get them to think too about how memory cannot sometimes be distorted, how things that once seemed large can in reality be much smaller. The point is just to encourage students to be thinking about memory and events from the past.

Something to point out in paragraph 4 is Williams' language. Everything is negative: **dark, grim, narrow, murky, tangled, sinister**—these words are carefully chosen to point to a kind of despair on the part of the tenants living in this apartment house. Thus, before we ever see

## **Writing from Personal Experience** (Directions and Topic Choices)

### **Directions for Students**

To write from personal experience, you must respond to a question or a situation based on your own current knowledge, feelings, and beliefs. You should not have to do any real research for this but should need to give the topic a lot of thought and consideration.

Your teacher may give you additional expectations for this assignment. But, at the very least, your writing should make a clear point, it should be well organized, and it should support its ideas with enough details to convince the reader that your point is valid. Below is a list of possible topics:

### **Personal Experience Topic #1**

*The Glass Menagerie* was written in the 1940's and reflects back to the 1930's. The play presents some of the views toward women held by Americans at that time. However, many of the issues about women presented in the play are no longer relevant today. American women now have access to a vast number of professions. A large number of women feel that they have a real choice between living a relatively traditional life by marrying and perhaps raising a family or choosing to remain single and pursue a career. Although there always are exceptions, few American women feel as trapped as Laura Wingfield is, given such difficult choices and isolated somehow with no career, no marriage prospects, and no alternative plans.

You may choose one of two different approaches to this activity.

1) Assume for the purposes of this activity that you are Laura Wingfield. But you no longer are living in a tenement house in St. Louis in the 1930's. Instead, you suddenly have been projected into the late 1990's. Write a letter to Amanda Wingfield from Laura explaining how American society has changed toward women in the ensuing years. Be sure to discuss what these changes might mean to Laura. You may feel that the changes would be very appealing to Laura or that she would feel pretty much the same now as she did then. But whatever your views, be sure to discuss them in the letter.

2) Pretend that you are Jim O'Connor, the gentleman caller, and somehow you have been allowed to visit the 1990's. Now you are back in St. Louis in the 1930's and you want to share what you have learned about women's issues in the 1990's with Laura Wingfield. Write a page or two of script for a sequel to *The Glass Menagerie* in which Jim explains to Laura how times are going to change for women in the years to come.



## Improvisation #1

### Directions for Students

This first improvisation requires two student actors to portray Amanda and Laura Wingfield. Remember that Laura and her mother will have the same basic personalities, the same motivations, the same goals that they have in *The Glass Menagerie*. They will basically **be** the same people.

But we're going to try to bring out even more of their personalities than you were able to see while you read the play. And we're going to throw the Amanda character a bit of a curve because what Laura has to tell her mother in the improvisation is going to come as a surprise.

You already know that *The Glass Menagerie* is an episodic play. This improv will represent another episode in the lives of the Wingfield family.

Amanda and Laura are sitting in the living room. The time is perhaps a month before Tom leaves to seek a new life. Amanda and Laura have been listening to some music. Suddenly Laura tells her mother that she has something that she wants to discuss.

Laura says that she has met a very nice woman with whom she has become friendly. The woman, who is rather wealthy, is planning a lengthy trip to Europe in the next month and has proposed that Laura go along with her. The friend will pay all of Laura's expenses. Amanda has never even heard of this new friend, much less met her.

Laura's goal is to go on the trip. Amanda's goal is to convince Laura that the trip represents too big an adventure for her to undertake. Laura will of course have a lot of questions about Laura's new friend.

Laura is just announcing her plan when the improvisation starts.

## More and More Activities

What follows is basically a resource list of activities for you, the teacher. Some of them are simple, and some are very difficult. Some require no special skills, but some require especially talented and dedicated students. How you wish to use them is absolutely up to you. They are presented in the sincere hope that somewhere in this grab bag of activities there is a project that appeals to every student and every teacher.

Although there are only 50 numbered activities, many of them actually are multiple assignments. There are eleven major characters in *The Glass Menagerie*. When an activity calls for choosing a character on which to base an assignment, the students actually have eleven different choices. And in the case of some other assignments, there are even more possible combinations.

The suggested activities are presented in no special order and are attached to only the barest of suggestions for their use. They are what they are—more and more activities.

1. Students could pretend that a very handsome and charming rich man has met Laura Wingfield on one of the days she spent walking in the park. He has fallen in love with Laura and wants to marry her. Ask the students to consider how Amanda and Tom would respond to the man and his proposal of marriage. Have the students write a paper explaining what Amanda and Tom's views would be and why.
2. Students could suppose that Tom meets a charming, beautiful woman who is a published poet. He has fallen in love with her and wants to marry her. Even better, the woman is perfectly willing to move into the apartment with Tom and his family. Ask the students to consider how Amanda and Laura would respond to the woman and Tom's plans. Have the students write a paper explaining what Amanda and Laura's views would be and why.
3. Students could keep journals during the time that they are studying *The Glass Menagerie* and record in them daily their honest thoughts about the play. If you choose this activity, be prepared for the need to make comments back to the students. Be prepared, too, for what could be some pointedly honest comments from them.
4. Students—singly or in a group—could set one or more of the scenes of *The Glass Menagerie* to music. The music could be recorded and performed solely for the teacher or presented to the whole class. If you choose this activity, you might have the music playing when students enter the classroom each day and play a little bit more each day to set the scene for studying *The Glass Menagerie*.
5. Have students pretend that one of the characters in *The Glass Menagerie* has died suddenly. Ask them to imagine a memorial service and write a eulogy that could be delivered by one of the other characters in the play.