



TEACHER'S PET PUBLICATIONS

LITPLAN TEACHER PACK™

for

A Streetcar Named Desire

based on the play by
Tennessee Williams

Written by
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ISBN 978-1-60249-042-0

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A FEW NOTES ABOUT THE AUTHOR TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

Thomas Lanier “Tennessee” Williams is highly regarded as one of the most important American playwrights of the twentieth century. Born in 1911, Williams’s life spanned a time of great changes in American culture, as he died in 1983.

Williams had a difficult childhood, as his father was abusive and his mother was extremely controlling. Williams had a brother, Dakin, and a sister, Rose. By the time he was in his teens, Williams was already writing, and he enjoyed it so much that he intended to study it in college. He spent a year at the University of Missouri, and despite his skillfulness as a writer, his father forced him to quit and join him in selling shoes. Deeply disappointed, Williams suffered from depression and eventually a nervous breakdown. Williams’s father later relented, and Williams continued his studies at the University of Washington and the University of Iowa, where he eventually earned a degree. Williams continued writing and earned almost immediate renown when his play *The Glass Menagerie* was produced.

Williams’s Southern heritage and family life became strong influences on his writing. While Williams was a prolific writer, writing several books of fiction and poetry, he is best known for his plays, which echo his family and personal conflicts and highlight themes including abuse, mental illness, alcoholism, addiction, and homosexuality. A hallmark of Williams’s plays is a dark sense of dread and danger. This, and the intensity of his characters and the desperation they feel, is part of a tradition of writing called the Southern Gothic, of which Williams was a master. The Southern Gothic explores the social and cultural aftermath of the institution of slavery, where racism, ignorance, loneliness, dislocation, and loss of power are influences on characters.

Williams’s work also often explores the darker side of family life, and again his own life proved to be a deep well from which to draw. His ability to depict the painfully human stories of his characters was widely celebrated, and he won a Pulitzer Prize and a Tony Award during his writing career. Perhaps best known for works such as *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Glass Menagerie*, and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, more than a dozen of Williams’s plays were adapted to become films.

Tennessee Williams shared a similar malaise of many of his characters. Later in his life, sparked by the death of his lover, he sank into a deep depression, which he fueled by abusing alcohol and prescription drugs. Williams died accidentally when he choked on the cap of a prescription bottle during a binge, unable to escape fate—much like the tragic figures of his plays.

INTRODUCTION

This LitPlan has been designed to develop students' reading, writing, thinking, and language skills through exercises and activities related to *A Streetcar Named Desire*. It includes 21 lessons, supported by extra resource materials.

The **introductory lesson** introduces students to the centrality of relationships and expectations that correspond to them within the play. Following the introductory activity, students are given a transition to explain how the activity relates to the book they are about to read. Following the transition, students are given the materials they will be using during the unit. At the end of the lesson, students begin the pre-reading work for the first reading assignment.

The **reading assignments** are approximately thirty pages each; some are a little shorter while others are a little longer. Students have approximately 15 minutes of pre-reading work to do prior to each reading assignment. This pre-reading work involves reviewing the study questions for the assignment and doing some vocabulary work for 6 to 10 vocabulary words they will encounter in their reading.

The **study guide questions** are fact-based questions; students can find the answers to these questions right in the text. These questions come in two formats: short answer or multiple choice. The best use of these materials is probably to use the short answer version of the questions as study guides for students (since answers will be more complete), and to use the multiple choice version for occasional quizzes.

The **vocabulary work** is intended to enrich students' vocabularies as well as to aid in the students' understanding of the book. Prior to each reading assignment, students will complete a two-part worksheet for approximately 6 to 10 vocabulary words in the upcoming reading assignment. Part I focuses on students' use of general knowledge and contextual clues by giving the sentence in which the word appears in the text. Students are then to write down what they think the words mean based on the words' usage. Part II nails down the definitions of the words by giving students dictionary definitions of the words and having students match the words to the correct definitions based on the words' contextual usage. Students should then have an understanding of the words when they meet them in the text.

After each reading assignment, students will go back and formulate answers for the study guide questions. Discussion of these questions serves as a **review** of the most important events and ideas presented in the reading assignments.

After students complete reading the work, there is a **vocabulary review** lesson which pulls together all of the fragmented vocabulary lists for the reading assignments and gives students a review of all of the words they have studied.

A lesson is devoted to the **extra discussion questions/writing assignments**. These questions focus on interpretation, critical analysis, and personal response, employing a variety of thinking skills and adding to the students' understanding of the novel.

There is an **independent project** in this unit. Students will create time capsules to contain the mementos of their lives, as Blanche has her love letters, tiara and dresses, and they will write about the symbolic importance of each item.

There are three **writing assignments** in this unit, each with the purpose of informing, persuading, or having students express personal opinions. The first assignment gives students an opportunity to use details from the play to write a letter to Stella, advising her on her relationship with Stanley. Though students will adopt a persona from which to write, they should express their personal opinions about Stanley as both a husband and father. The second writing assignment asks students to practice using secondary sources and to write using facts gleaned from them. Students will write a report detailing an actual incident in which someone suffered as a result of discrimination. This assignment will use the articles students prepared for their non-fiction reading assignment. The final writing assignment requires students to write persuasively about connections they perceive between passages. Students will select three passages which they feel “echo” one another in some way. Students must analyze their passages and put forward an argument about the significance of their discovery.

There is a **non-fiction reading assignment**. Students must read non-fiction articles, books, etc. to learn more about discrimination on the basis of race, gender, class, age or sexual orientation.

The **review lesson** pulls together all of the aspects of the unit. The teacher is given four or five choices of activities or games to use which all serve the same basic function of reviewing all of the information presented in the unit.

The **unit test** comes in two formats: multiple choice or short answer. As a convenience, two different tests for each format have been included. There is also an advanced short answer unit test for advanced students.

There are additional **support materials** included with this unit. The **Unit Resource Materials** section includes suggestions for an in-class library, crossword, and word search puzzles related to the novel, and extra worksheets. There is a list of **bulletin board ideas** which gives the teacher suggestions for bulletin boards to go along with this unit. In addition, there is a list of **extra class activities** the teacher could choose from to enhance the unit or as a substitution for an exercise the teacher might feel is inappropriate for his/her class. **Answer keys** are located directly after the **reproducible student materials** throughout the unit. The **Vocabulary Resource Materials** section includes similar worksheets and games to reinforce the vocabulary words.

The **level** of this unit can be varied depending upon the criteria on which the individual assignments are graded, the teacher's expectations of his/her students in class discussions, and the formats chosen for the study guides, quizzes and test. If teachers have other ideas/activities they wish to use, they can usually easily be inserted prior to the review lesson.

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UNIT OBJECTIVES - *A Streetcar Named Desire*

1. Through reading Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire*, students will study the subtleties of characterization to understand the redemptive qualities of flawed characters.
2. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the text on four levels: factual, interpretive, critical, and personal.
3. Students will explore the importance of motif, paying especial attention to motifs related to the senses.
4. Students will be given the opportunity to practice reading aloud and silently to improve their skills in each area.
5. Students will practice writing fiction, as inspired by the play.
6. Students will consider their attitudes toward aging and will document their adolescence through a scrapbook project.
7. Students will answer questions to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the main events and characters in *A Streetcar Named Desire* as they relate to the author's theme development.
8. Students will enrich their vocabularies and improve their understanding of the novel through the vocabulary lessons prepared for use in conjunction with the novel.
9. The writing assignments in this unit are geared to several purposes:
 - a. To have students demonstrate their abilities to inform, to persuade, or to express their own personal ideas
Note: Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to inform by developing and organizing facts to convey information. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to persuade by selecting and organizing relevant information, establishing an argumentative purpose, and by designing an appropriate strategy for an identified audience. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to express personal ideas by selecting a form and its appropriate elements.
 - b. To check the students' reading comprehension
 - c. To make students think about the ideas presented by the novel
 - d. To encourage logical thinking
 - e. To provide an opportunity to practice good grammar and improve students' use of the English language.

READING ASSIGNMENT SHEET - *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Date Assigned	Scenes Assigned	Completion Date
	1	
	2	
	3	
	4	
	5	
	6	
	7	
	8	
	9	
	10	
	11	

UNIT OUTLINE - *A Streetcar Named Desire*

1 Introduction PVR 1 Oral Reading	2 Study ?s 1 PVR 2 Character Examination	3 Study ?s 2 Writing Assignment #1 PVR 3	4 Study ?s 3 Poker Theme and Motif PVR 4	5 Study ?s 4 Freewrite PVR 5
6 Study ?s 5 Juxatposition PV 6	7 R 6 Study ?s 6 Oral Reading Evaluation PVR 7	8 Study ?s 7 Birthday Art Activity PVR 8	9 Study ?s 8 Writing Assignment #2 Nonfiction Reading PVR 9	10 Non-fiction Reading Library Writing Conferences
11 Study ?s 9 Critical Thinking/Group Work PVR 10	12 Study ?s 10 Symbols PVR 11	13 Study ?s 11 Close Passage Analysis Project	14 Character Improvisation	15 Extra Discussion Questions Writing Assignment #3
16 Complete Writing Assignment #3 Vocabulary Review	17 Fiction Writing Workshop	18 Fiction Writing Workshop	19 Vocabulary Review	20 Test Review
21 Unit Test				

Key: P = Preview Study Questions V = Vocabulary Work R= Read

LESSON ONE

Objectives

1. To introduce the *A Streetcar Named Desire* unit
2. To distribute books and other related materials
3. To preview the study questions for Scene 1
4. To familiarize students with the vocabulary for Scene 1
5. To read Scene 1

Activity #1

Before reading or introducing the play, begin with the following freewrite. You can write it on the board or you can give a handout with the following copied on it. You can collect student responses or just discuss them, or if you use student journals, this can be the first entry. You can allow students to choose which relationship they would like to address, or you can assign them.

Freewrite Prompt:

Relationships are often influenced by our expectations of others. Consider the following roles in relationships:

husband
wife
siblings
in-laws

Select one of these roles and write 1-2 paragraphs about the “expectations” for that role. In other words, what kinds of responsibilities does that person have, what kinds of attitudes should he or she have, etc.

When students have completed their responses (it should take 4-7 minutes for them to write), ask for volunteers to share their responses. As student share, ask if others agree or disagree with their ideas. This is a good time to remind students about making I-statements (rather than you-statements). Promoting some healthy disagreement will make reading the play more interesting.

Transition: Ask students to keep this question of roles and expectations in mind as you begin reading the play. Ask them to look for latent or manifest statements, relationships, and role expectations occurring in the play.

Activity #2

Distribute the materials students will use in this unit. Explain in detail how students are to use these materials.

Study Guides Students should read the study guide questions for each reading assignment prior to beginning the reading assignment to get a feeling for what events and ideas are important in the section they are about to read. After reading the section, students will (as a class or individually)

WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 - *A Streetcar Named Desire*

PROMPT

In Scenes 3 and 4, Tennessee Williams explores domestic abuse in the play when Stanley strikes Stella offstage. Stella's initial response is to leave, though she later has a change of heart and returns, a decision which mystifies Blanche. Imagine Stella and Blanche have another sister. You will adopt the persona of this sister and write Stella a letter which advises her on what to do about her marital situation. You can assume that you know all the details of the play, as Blanche was afraid and telephoned you to ask for your advice.

In short, your letter should either suggest that Stella stay in the relationship or leave it. Then, your letter should give advice: should she move away, try to pacify Stanley, learn how to defend herself, or what? As you give advice and share your personal opinions, be sure to show your knowledge of the play by adding important details. Also, make sure that you address the role of love in the Kowalskis' relationship. Do you think Stanley truly loves Stella? Does Stella truly love Stanley? Use details from the play to support your claims. Your letter should be 4-6 paragraphs.

PREWRITING

The first task is to make sure you understand Stella's attitude toward Stanley. You should skim the scenes and make note of moments when she voices satisfaction or dissatisfaction with her marriage.

DRAFTING

Your first paragraph should explain your perception of the Stella's conflict and why she has kept the details of her life with Stanley largely a secret from her family. This paragraph should also explain your personal opinion of the situation and clearly indicate if you advise Stella to try to work things out or to leave the marriage.

Your body paragraphs should explain different criteria for your advice; for example, are love and loyalty important, or safety, or Stella's unborn child? You should also use details from the play to support your reasoning. For example, has Stella demonstrated love for Stanley, or merely obligation?

In your conclusion paragraph you should summarize your hopes for Stella and emphasize your view of her and how she has changed during the marriage. Be sure you use the proper formatting for your letter.

PROOFREADING

When you finish the rough draft of your letter, ask a student who sits near you to read it. After reading your rough draft, he/she should tell you what he/she liked best about your work, which parts were difficult to understand, and ways in which your work could be improved. Reread your letter considering your critic's comments, and make the corrections you think are necessary.

Do a final proofreading of your letter double-checking your grammar, spelling, organization, and the clarity of your ideas.