



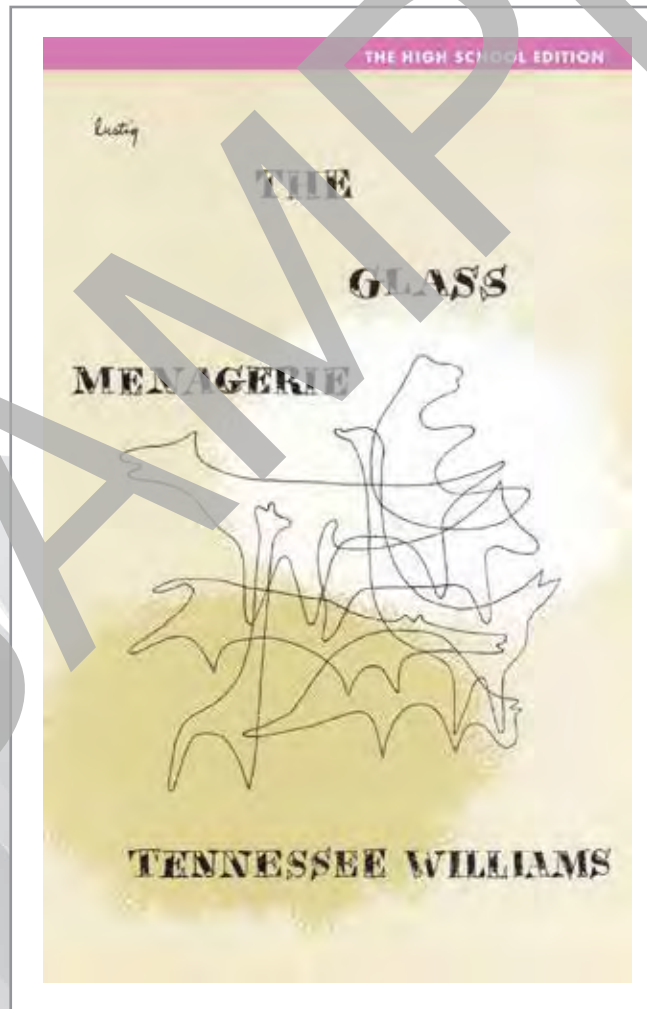
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 9-12

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

The Glass Menagerie

Tennessee Williams



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

The Glass Menagerie

Tennessee Williams

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Table of Contents

Summary.....	3
Background on the Playwright.....	4
Introductory Activities.....	4
Scene-by-Scene.....	14
Scenes include: Vocabulary, Vocabulary Activities, Discussion Questions and Supplementary Activities	
Post-reading Discussion Questions.....	31
Essay Evaluation Form.....	37

Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Brainstorming, compare/contrast, time line

Writing

Free writing, descriptive writing, journal entries, monologue, scene, poetry, letter writing, conversation, newspaper article, short play, short story, flashback, essay, movie review

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, role play, debate, dramatization, talk show, "book talk"

Comprehension

Predicting, log, cause/effect, sequencing

Literary Elements

Setting, dramatic irony, theme, juxtaposition, symbols, atmosphere, conflict, monologue

Other

Stage directions, research, viewing, playbills, posters, props, drawing, collage, cartoon strip, mobile, music, current events

Summary of *The Glass Menagerie*

Scene One: Set during the 1930s, the play's action takes place in the Wingfield family's apartment, located in a grim inner city tenement building. Tom, the narrator, lives with his mother, Amanda, and his sister, Laura. Amanda is an overbearing mother who clings to her memories of the past, before she was deserted by her husband. Laura, an emotionally fragile young woman with an impaired leg, spends most of her time with her collection of glass animals (her "glass menagerie") or playing the old records left behind by her father. At the opening of this scene, Tom tells the audience that this is a "memory play" about a family that is set apart from reality. Tom sits at the dinner table, where Amanda proceeds to nag him about his table manners. She reminisces as she has so often before about all the beaux she used to have and presses Laura about the girl's lack of gentleman callers.

Scene Two: Amanda returns from an outing and berates Laura for dropping out of business school. Laura admits that what her mother has just learned from Laura's teachers is true: Laura has only been pretending to attend class. She threw up from anxiety after about a week and couldn't force herself to go back. Amanda decides that Laura must turn on her charm and find a husband.

Scene Three: Amanda takes a job as a telephone solicitor to earn extra money toward her campaign to find Laura a husband. Amanda interrupts Tom while he is writing and they have a vicious argument. She accuses him of reading dirty books, spending too much time at the movies, jeopardizing his job by drinking, and being selfish. He fires back that he hates his job at the shoe company and is stifling his own dreams in order to support the family. After calling his mother a witch, and intending to storm out of the apartment, he struggles to put on his overcoat, then flings it across the room, breaking one of Laura's glass figurines.

Scene Four: At five the next morning, Laura opens the door for Tom, who is drunk. Later that morning, Laura begs him to apologize, then heads out on an errand for her mother. Tom apologizes and Amanda reveals that she knows about his plans to join the Merchant Marines. She tells him that he is free to go—but only after he helps find a husband for Laura.

Scene Five: Tom announces that he has invited Jim, a friend from work, to dinner the next night. Amanda quizzes Tom, making sure that Jim is neither a drunkard nor too handsome—then begins making elaborate plans for the dinner.

Scene Six: Amanda puts on a girlish outfit from her youth and dresses Laura in a hand-made dress. When Laura learns that the guest she is about to meet is Jim O'Connor, the one boy she had a crush on in high school, she panics and barely finds the courage to open the door. While the women prepare dinner, Jim warns Tom that Tom is in danger of losing his job and suggests that Tom enroll in the public speaking course that he is taking; Tom reveals that he plans to become a Merchant Seaman. Amanda appears and Jim is shocked at first by her appearance and vivacity, but is soon won over by her charm. Faint from anxiety, Laura rests on the sofa while the others eat.

Scene Seven: The lights go out because Tom failed to pay the electric bill. Amanda engineers it so that Jim and Laura are alone together. Jim treats Laura with gallantry and warmth and she slowly relaxes with him. She reminds him that they when they were in high school together, he called her Blue Roses (after she recovered from an attack of pleurosis). She takes out a yearbook and program that

- g. When you feel trapped ...
- h. I am always waiting for the day when ...
- i. Your parents want you to be ...

11. Play Detective

Suggest that students mark the following places, as they read. They will use these markings as supportive evidence in classroom discussion and writing about the story.

- places where characters face reality (R) and places where characters escape into fantasy (F)
- places where characters are optimistic (O) and places where they are pessimistic (P)
- places where you feel positively toward a character (+) and places where you feel negatively toward a character (-)
- objects or images that appear repeatedly throughout the story (I)

12. Vocabulary Activity

- a) Choose key vocabulary words from the story. (*See individual reading sections for lists.*) Have students indicate their familiarity with each word by placing an "X" in the proper column in a chart like the one below.
- b) Have students provide the definition, using a dictionary if necessary.

	No idea	Have seen or heard	Can define	Definition
portieres (28)				
beaux (34)				
menagerie (42)				
fiasco (47)				
querulous (63)				
ulterior (79)				
paragon (98)				
rejuvenated (131)				
grimacing (134)				

- c) After clarifying definitions for the setting, characters, problem, goal, and resolution of a story or play, have students fill out (and discuss) a chart in which they predict how the author will use the vocabulary words in the story. A word may be used in more than one way.

Setting	Characters	Problem
Goal	Resolution	Something Else

After reading the play, students edit the chart and discuss in small groups any changes they have made.

Story Map

Directions: Fill in each box below with information about the novel.

The diagram consists of five rectangular boxes arranged in a descending staircase pattern from top-left to bottom-right. The boxes are labeled as follows:

- Main Characters:** Located at the top left.
- Setting (time and place):** Located to the right of the Main Characters box.
- Main Conflict:** Located below the Main Characters box.
- Summary of Major Story Events:** The largest box, located below the Main Conflict box.
- Climax:** Located to the left of the Summary of Major Story Events box.
- Resolution of Conflict:** Located at the bottom right, below the Summary of Major Story Events box.

Dashed arrows indicate the following relationships:

- An arrow from the bottom of the **Main Characters** box to the top of the **Setting (time and place)** box.
- An arrow from the right side of the **Main Conflict** box to the right side of the **Summary of Major Story Events** box.
- An arrow from the left side of the **Summary of Major Story Events** box to the right side of the **Climax** box.
- An arrow from the right side of the **Summary of Major Story Events** box to the top of the **Resolution of Conflict** box.
- An arrow from the right side of the **Resolution of Conflict** box to the right side of the **Summary of Major Story Events** box.

A large, light gray watermark reading "SAMPLE" is oriented diagonally across the center of the page.

Guernica ...

... is a town in northern Spain, center of Basque nationalism. Guernica was severely bombed during the Spanish Civil War (1937). Picasso painted "Guernica" in protest of the horror of war.

The Labor Movement ...

... was the historic effort of workers to improve their working conditions and pay. Under FDR's New Deal policies during the 1930s, the right to join a union was ensured (National Labor Relations Act—aka the Wagner Act, 1935) and the pendulum of government support swung from management to labor. The struggle between management and labor sometimes erupted into violence. For example, when workers at several steel plants staged a walkout to secure union recognition, the National Guard was called out in Ohio to maintain order and martial law was established at Johnstown, Pennsylvania, under the state police. There were several other strikes during the late 1930's and the result in most cases was victory for the unions.

Scene 2, pages 37–45

Vocabulary

subsidies (37)	kimono (37)	cloche (37)	martyred (38)
deception (38)	inaudibly (38)	Victrola (41)	menagerie (42)
humility (42)	dependency (42)	patronage (43)	annual (43)
absently (43)	pleurosis (44)	vivacity (45)	

Vocabulary Activity

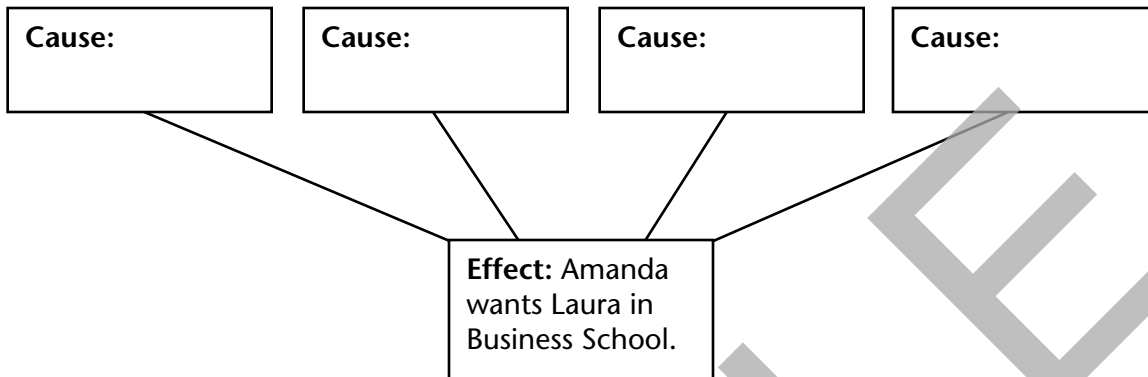
Give students these three options for small-group work:

- Create a crossword puzzle with the vocabulary words (using puzzle-making software, if you wish).
- Create "Jeopardy"-like statements for each word (e.g., **Answer:** This is the trademark name for an old phonograph. **Question:** What is a Victrola?)
- Create a picture puzzle for each word. On one side of a card goes a drawing or cutout that represents the word. The player tries to guess the word (printed on the other side). For example, the "deception" card might show a comic with Calvin (of "Calvin and Hobbes") trying to deceive his teacher about his homework.

Discussion Questions

- How does Laura switch activities when her mother shows up on the fire escape steps? (*She stops washing her figurines and pretends to be studying the keyboard.*) Why? (*She wants her mother to think she has been practicing her typing skills.*) Why do you think Laura is so preoccupied with her glass menagerie and her old records? (*She is unhappy, finds escape through them.*)
- What is the D.A.R.? (*Daughters of the American Revolution*) Why hasn't Amanda gone to her D.A.R. meeting? (*She says she was too upset after learning that Laura has dropped out of school.*)
- Why does Amanda say to Laura, "Deception? Deception?"? —p. 38 (*She knows Laura is only pretending to study the keyboard and has been only pretending to attend school.*) How does she know Laura dropped out? (*Amanda had stopped by the school to check on her progress.*) Is Amanda an overly pushy mother—or just a concerned one? Do you think Amanda is "dramatizing" or is she really as upset as she acts? (*Stage directions tell us there is "a bit of acting"—p. 38.*) How can you tell when someone is "laying it on thick"?

-
4. There are probably several reasons Amanda wanted Laura to stick with school. What are some of these? (*She had paid \$50; she wants Laura to have a business career and not lead a life of dependency.*) Which do you think is the most important to Amanda?



5. Why did Laura drop out of school? (*anxiety*) Does she explain? (*She describes her walks and says she couldn't face her mother's disappointment, then says she threw up on the floor.*) Have you ever been in a situation at all like this?
6. Why do you suppose Laura didn't tell her mother she had quit attending school? (*She knew Amanda would be angry and disappointed.*) How do you think her mother should have reacted? What did Amanda do instead? (*made it clear that Laura had let her down*)
7. Why does the legend, "The Crust of Humility" appear on the screen (p. 42)? (*Amanda warns Laura that she will become a spinster dependent on in-laws.*) What alternatives does Amanda see, now that Laura has dropped out? (*miserable spinsterhood or marriage*) Why does she keep referring to "we" and "us" (p. 42) instead of "you"? (*She is living through Laura.*)
8. Who is Jim? (*co-worker of Tom's who was high school classmate of Laura's and a star athlete*) Why did he used to call Laura "Blue Roses"? (*She had been sick with "pleurosis."*) Where have you seen blue roses mentioned before in the stage directions? (*p. 37, to be put on the screen*)
9. Why does Amanda brighten up at the end of this scene? (*She has set herself a new goal.*) What new plans is she making for Laura? (*finding a husband for her*) Do you agree that "girls that aren't cut out for business careers usually wind up married to some nice man"? What other options does Laura have in the 1930s? What other options would she have today?
10. **Prediction:** Will Laura marry?

The Author's Craft: Dramatic Irony

When a character's words or actions carry a meaning the character doesn't perceive—but the audience does—we have **dramatic irony**. Refer students to the end of the scene, where Amanda talks about cultivating Laura's charm and ask what is ironic about Amanda's final line. Why does Amanda mention her husband, here? How does her intended meaning contrast with the significance understood by the audience? What happened to her charming husband? (*Amanda doesn't seem to realize how ironic it is that she wants her daughter to work on being charming like her father—a man who deserted the family.*)

Writing Activity

Write two journal entries about Laura dropping out of business school—one entry by Laura and one by her mother, Amanda.